

**December 22**

**Scriptures:** Read 2 Kings 17

**Key Verse:** "...They did wicked things to provoke the Lord to anger, for they served idols...."  
(2 Kings 17:11-12)

## **Overview**

With the upheaval of the Assyrian invasion during the reign of Pekah, king of Israel (15:29), Hoshea conspired and seized control of the land that remained to Israel (15:30). In order to keep his throne, he was forced to pay much tribute of Shalmaneser of Assyria. Because the Assyrian oppression was so great, Hoshea conspired against them. This caused Shalmaneser to invade Israel and, after a lengthy siege, Samaria fell to the Assyrians. Thousands of Israelites were carried away as captives to Assyria. To the reproach of Israel, Assyria brought in strangers to inhabit their land. God gave these people the opportunity to turn to Him and serve Him, for His love has always extended to the whole world; yet, even though they came to fear the God of Israel, they still served their foreign gods.

The verses following this historical narrative (17:7-23) give the prophetic/spiritual reasons for this catastrophe upon Israel. We see the horrifying illustration of "whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Galatians 6:7). As the Bible so clearly portrays, "righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34). Under David and Solomon, God truly exalted the nation of Israel, but after them the nation fell into much sin and truly became a reproach to the Holy God. Israel, as the covenant people of God, was meant to serve as an example of a godly nation; they were to reflect God's glory and be a witness and a light to all nations. This was the reason God had made them a nation and brought them out of Egypt into the promised land. But they miserably failed.

Sin is a crime against God's laws, His nature of perfection, holiness, and moral order. In fact, sin is whatever falls short of His glory (Romans 3:23). When the people of Israel entered into a covenant with the Lord, they pledged themselves to serve and fear Him only. They broke their covenant by following other gods and practicing the same abominations of the Canaanites, even to the point of human sacrifice (17:17). This was the very reason God had used Israel to execute His judgment upon those peoples and drive them out of the land. God did everything possible to make it easy for them to obey Him. He gave them a prepared land ready for occupation, raised up a priesthood and numerous deliverers and prophets, yet that which should have brought forth good brought forth only bad (parable of Isaiah 5:1-7).

Israel continued in sin, even after God, in His mercy, had sent many prophets to warn them, that they might repent and turn to Him. God does not bring judgment without first a warning. "Nevertheless they would not hear, but stiffened their necks..." (17:14). Since Israel had been well warned, not only with the writings of Moses but also with the words of His prophets, they were all the more responsible and guilty for not heeding. Their continued resistance and rebellion against God in breaking the conditions of the covenant relationship (17:14-15) stirred God's anger (for He is a jealous God).

God brought even greater judgment upon Israel; this came with the Assyrian captivity, just as Moses predicted would happen if they sinned against God and turned to idolatry (Deuteronomy 28:64; Jeremiah 2:4-13). If Israel had kept the covenant, they would have enjoyed the many blessings God had promised them through Moses. Keeping the covenant was a solemn responsibility; if broken, the curses for disobedience would fall on them (Deuteronomy 28).

There is a simple rule that applies to mankind for all time: the way in which you walk will determine your destiny. Nations, as well as individuals, have fallen because of sin. The history recorded in the Old Testament certainly attests to this fact. These events have been recorded and preserved in the Holy Canon of Scripture that we might learn from them and see the consequences of sin, namely death (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:10; Romans 6:23).

### **Prayer**

Help us, O Lord, to walk in Your straight path. We know that many are taking the broad road which leads to destruction, but we choose Your straight and narrow way. Keep us true, Lord. We praise You for Your goodness!