

### *The Dramatic End of the Northern Kingdom*

Selected Passages from 2 Kings 15-17

**Open Your Heart:** Holy Father, enable us to see the profound nature of sin's staggering consequences and its impact on the entire human family—through Your eyes.

After the relatively stable and prosperous reign of Jeroboam II, the Northern Kingdom of Israel collapsed into near anarchy. Internal turmoil and power struggles, combined with a series of assassinations, left Israel in no position to cope with the growing Assyrian menace. And as the prophets Amos and Hosea had pointed out, the spiritual condition of the people had greatly deteriorated through the worship of numerous false gods—factors that further weakened their national identity and resolve.

At the very time that Tiglath-Pileser III was coming to power in Assyria, marking the rebirth of the Assyrian Empire, Israel was self-destructing. The Northern Kingdom would never recover.

The book of 2 Kings covers the rise and fall of the kings of the divided kingdom. 2 Kings begins where 1 Kings leaves off—about 80 years after the division of David's Kingdom. It carries the parallel accounts of the two kingdoms (Israel and Judah) for about 130 years until the fall of the Northern Kingdom—then continues with the history of the kings from the Southern Kingdom for another 120 years until its fall.

1. Faced with the prospect of an Assyrian invasion what did Israel's King Menahem do to avoid a military attack (2 Kings 15:17-20)?
  
2. How long did King Menahem reign over Israel and how is his reign characterized?

Although King Menahem avoided a military attack at that time, for all practical purposes he surrendered the nation to the Assyrians and made it a vassal state of the Assyrian Empire through taxation of the wealthy.

3. Who succeeded Menahem as King of Israel and what events highlight his short reign? (See 2 Kings 15:23-25.)

Pekah's assassination of Pekahiah set the nation on a dangerous course. King Pekah was a powerful military officer who began an aggressive anti-Assyrian program that would prove disastrous. He formed a military alliance with King Rezin of Aram/Damascus (the territory of Syria) to resist the Assyrians. Apparently realizing that even these two combined nations were not enough to withstand Assyria, King Pekah decided, with the aid of King Rezin, to march his army south to Judah in an effort to force Judah to join the alliance against the Assyrian threat (2 Kings 15:37).

Note: 2 Kings 15:37-38 tells us that King Jotham of Judah died sometime during the initial threat from the alliance of Rezin/Pekah, leaving his successor Ahaz to handle the crisis (2 Kings 16:5).

4. How did the decision made by Pekah and Rezin to invade the Southern Kingdom of Judah put the Northern Kingdom and Pekah in imminent peril? (See 2 Kings 16:7-9; 2 Kings 15:29-30.)

In 734 B.C. Tiglath-Pileser's armies decimated the Philistine territories along the coast southwest of Judah, cut off any assistance from Egypt to the south, and then turned back north to deal with Israel. By 733 B.C. the Assyrians had taken most of the northern territories of Israel. *This was the Galilean captivity*. Samaria alone was left in the Northern Kingdom.

5.
  - a. How did Hoshea become the last king of Israel (2 Kings 15:30)?
  - b. What further revelations about Hoshea's character are found in 2 Kings 17:1-6?
  - c. What happened to Hoshea as a result of his deviant behavior?
  - d. Summarize the dramatic events that bring an end to the Northern Kingdom of Israel—the nation of “ten tribes.” (The year was 722 B.C.)

At this stunning moment in history the writer of 2 Kings pauses the narrative for a time of reflection, analysis and reassessment. Two hundred years and 19 kings after the division of David's Kingdom—the Northern Kingdom of Israel ceased to exist. How is one to understand God and His purposes in light of this disaster? What does this imply for Judah? And what does the future hold? Prayerfully **read** and reflect on 2 Kings 17:13-23 along with the writer of 2 Kings.

To whom do you think this message was originally directed? Look at verses 13, 18, 19-20. Then fill in the blanks below.

6. This message is about \_\_\_\_\_ but directed to \_\_\_\_\_.
  
7. What *single word summary* of the message can be found in 2 Kings 17:13? Explain the meaning and significance of this word—a word that has application for readers of all generations who desire to worship the living God alone!

When the Assyrians deported the Israelites to Assyria there was a large vacuum created in the land of Israel until Assyria repopulated the region with Gentiles. The writer of 2 Kings gives us a vivid picture of this development and how the region soon became a melting pot of peoples, each with their own cultures and religions. Thoughtfully **read** 2 Kings 17:24-41.

8. What is most striking to you about this part of the narrative?

Do we, like Israel, worship the LORD and also worship other gods in our life? “Lord help us to stop just reading these challenges, being convicted...and then move on with life as normal.

*Break our hearts... do whatever it takes that we may worship YOU alone!”*

9. Kneel before the LORD in prayer. *Listen* as He speaks to you about what you really worship in your life. *Be receptive* to the Holy Spirit's wooing you to worship God alone. *Prayerfully* write out your “heart cries” to God.

As we reflect on God and His ways—let us remember that there are no accidents in history. Prophecy demonstrates that God knows all of history as well as the hearts of men. History then becomes a revelation of the sovereign God who cares immeasurably for His creation. Every event of history is but a ripple in the sea of His eternal plan for the ages.

*Contemplate the ripple effect of the sins of Israel from the time of the divided kingdom to their exile in Assyria.*

*Then consider the ripple effect of your own sins as they impact your life and the lives of others.*

10. How can you transfer the things you have learned about the consequences of sin to your everyday life and relationships? What changes is God leading you to make in your lifestyle? Your attitudes? Your motives? Your relationships? Be specific.

11. If you have any lingering questions about God and His ways from our study of the fall of the Northern Kingdom note them below. Pray that the all-wise God will continue to teach you and enlighten you as you study His Word.

The God who delivered Israel from the power of Pharaoh (2 Kings 17:7) and gave them into the hands of the Assyrians (2 Kings 17:20), is still the One who will deliver you from the hand of all your enemies (2 Kings 17:39). That may have been but a glimmer of hope for the exiles, but centuries later Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, prophesied using similar phrases. *Finish by lifting your heart in praise to God as you read a portion of this beautiful prophecy from Luke 1:68-75!*