

2 Kings Chapter 17

Verses 1-6

“Ahaz” became king (in 732 B.C.), reigning for a time with his father Jotham.

During his reign (722 B.C.), the 10 tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel were captured by Assyria, leaving only the southern kingdom, consisting of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and its temple and carried away the southern kingdom of Judah to Babylon (in 586 B.C.; 25:11).

2 Kings 17:1 “In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah began Hoshea the son of Elah to reign in Samaria over Israel nine years.”

“Twelfth year”

732 B.C.

This date for the accession of Hoshea as king of Israel is well established according to biblical and extra biblical data (see note on 15:27).

Therefore, Ahaz of Judah must have become co-regent with his father Jotham, who was himself co-regent with his father, Azariah, at that time (see notes on 15:30, 33; in 744 B.C.; see note on 16:1-2).

“Nine years”:

732-722 B.C.

According to the accession-year system.

Hoshea was imprisoned (See verse 4), during the siege of Samaria by Assyria (724-722 B.C.; verse 5).

“Samaria” was the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel.

It was built about 880 B.C. by Omri, the sixth king of Israel (1 Kings 16:24).

Samaria occupied a three hundred foot high hill about 42 miles north of Jerusalem and 25 miles east of the Mediterranean sea.

This hill was situated on the major north-south road through Palestine.

It also commanded the east-west route to the Plain of Sharon and the Mediterranean sea.

It could easily be defended because it was on the hill; however, its great weakness was that the nearest spring was a mile away.

Samaria repopulated by “men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim” (verse 24), all bringing their pagan idolatries with them.

Intermarriage of native Jews with these foreigners led to the mixed race of Samaritans so despised by full-blooded Jews during the time of Jesus (John 4:1-10).

Hoshea will be the last king to reign over the ten tribes of Israel as a unit.

His reign will be a short nine years, of which three years he will be under siege from the Assyrians.

The Assyrians will defeat Israel, and take their people captive.

2 Kings 17:2 “And he did [that which was] evil in the sight of the LORD, but not as the kings of Israel that were before him.”

“He did that which was evil”:

Though Hoshea was characterized as a wicked king, it is not stated that he promoted the religious practices of Jeroboam I.

In this way, he was some improvement on the kings of Israel who had gone before him.

However, this slight improvement did not offset the centuries of sin by Israel’s kings nor divert her inevitable doom.

He still allowed the calf worship, and he did not listen to the warnings from the prophets.

These were his worst sins.

2 Kings 17:3 “Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria; and Hoshea became his servant, and gave him presents.”

“Shalmaneser” succeeded his father Tiglath-pileser III as king of Assyria and reigned from 727-722 B.C.

During the siege of Samaria, when the Assyrians began the destruction and captivity of the northern kingdom, Shalmaneser V died and was succeeded by Sargon II (see Isa. 20:1), who completed the siege, captured the city, destroyed the nation of Israel, and exiled the inhabitants (verse 6).

Sargon II reigned as king from (722-705 B.C.; see note on Hosea 10:14).

Shalmaneser reigned for about five years in the place of Tiglath-pileser.

Shalmaneser was an old prominent name for leaders of Assyria.

It appears that Hoshea had been paying tribute before and had revolted when the king Tiglath-pileser died.

It seems this role had been assumed here, and tribute must be paid to the new king.

2 Kings 17:4 “And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea: for he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and brought no present to the king of Assyria, as [he had done] year by year: therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison.”

Apparently “Hoshea” had thought that the death of Tiglath-pileser III must provide a good opportunity for freedom from Assyrian vassalage.

“So” is the Hebrew name of the capital city of Egypt’s Twenty fourth Dynasty where Tef Nekht was king.

“So king of Egypt”:

Instead of paying his yearly tribute owed as a vassal of Assyria, Hoshea tried to make a treaty with Osokon IV (ca. 722-716 B.C.), Pharaoh of Egypt.

This was foolish because Assyria was powerful.

It was also against God’s will, which forbade such alliances with pagan rulers (Deut. 7:2).

This rebellion led to Israel’s destruction (verses 5-6).

Hoshea had stopped the tribute, and sent to the king of Egypt to help him.

The king of Assyria finds out, arrests Hoshea, and puts him in prison in chains.

2 Kings 17:5 “Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years.”

“Samaria ... besieged”:

In 724 B.C., Shalmaneser V invaded Israel and quickly conquered the land and captured Hoshea.

However, the capital city of Samaria resisted the Assyrian invaders until 722 B.C.

Like all major cities Samaria had an internal water supply and plenty of stored food that allowed her to endure the siege for 3 years.

It appears, the capital city is surrounded for three years.

It seems they will not be as easily defeated as the small towns.

2 Kings 17:6 “In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor [by] the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.”

“King of Assyria”:

Sargon II (see note on 17:3).

“Carried Israel away”:

The capture of Samaria marked the end of the northern kingdom.

According to Assyrian records, the Assyrians deported 27,290 inhabitants of Israel to distant locations.

The relocation of populations was characteristic of Assyrian policy during that era.

The Israelites were resettled in the upper Tigris-Euphrates Valley and never returned to the Promised Land.

“Halah” was a city northeast of Nineveh.

The “Habor” River was a northern tributary of the Euphrates.

The “cities of the Medes” were northeast of Nineveh.

Samaria was resettled with foreigners (verse 24).

God did what He said He would do (in Deut. 28).

The Jews were carried as far east as Susa, where the book of Esther later took place.

We found earlier, that the Assyrians would rather take captives for slaves than kill the people.

The last year of Hoshea’s reign the city of Samaria fell, and the Assyrians took the people captive to Halah and Habor, which was by the river Gozan, and to the cities of the Medes.

Verses 7-12

God had commanded His people to fear (revere), Him for their good (Deut. 6: 2, 13, 24; Exodus 20:20).

Instead, the Israelites “feared other gods” (a violation of the first of the Ten Commandments).

This was their chief sin, the one that led to their fall and exile (Joshua 23:16; Hosea 13:16).

2 Kings 17:7 “For [so] it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods,”

“Feared other gods”:

The primary cause of Israel’s exile was the worship of other gods.

The fear of the LORD led to listening to His Word and obeying His ordinances and statutes (Deut. 4:10; 5:29; 6:24).

But the fear of the gods of Canaan led Israel to obey the laws of the Canaanite gods (verse 8).

The result of this obedience to false gods is recorded (in verses 9:12, 16-17).

God had sent these Israelites a deliverer to bring them out of bondage in Egypt.

They had been ungrateful to the extent, that they did not remain faithful to Him.

Instead of worshipping God, who brought them out of Egypt, they worshipped and followed false gods.

2 Kings 17:8 “And walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made.”

“Walked in the statutes of the heathen”:

This was expressly forbidden (in Lev. 18:3; 20:23).

God had warned them in the beginning not to intermarry with the heathen.

They had not kept the commandments and ordinances God had given them.

They had even rebelled, and wanted an earthly king like the people around them.

All of this was showing lack of faith in God.

The heathen did not learn from them.

They took up the ways of the heathen, instead.

These evil heathen people had been the very same that God had run off the land to give it to Israel.

2 Kings 17:9 “And the children of Israel did secretly [those] things that [were] not right against the LORD their God, and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.”

“Built ... high places”:

In addition to their private sins (“secret”), judgment came for public wickedness and idolatry.

These were not the high places utilized by Israel for worshiping God before the building of the temple (see note on 1 Kings 3:2).

In direct disobedience to (Deut. 12:1-4), the Israelites built new raised altars in the Canaanite pattern after the temple was constructed.

These “high places” were in all the habitations of Israel, from small fortified structures to large garrison cities, i.e., from the smallest to largest towns.

The altars were on wooded hills with images representing the false gods (verse 10; Deut. 16:21-22).

The secret things they did, had to do with divination and witchcraft.

God’s temple in Jerusalem was the one appropriate place to worship the LORD.

They had made places pleasing and convenient to themselves to worship.

2 Kings 17:10 “And they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree:”

That is, statues and idols; for groves of trees could not be set under green trees; but they placed idols of stone, and of wood, as the latter were, in such places as Heathens were wont to do (see Jer. 3:6; 1 Kings 14:23).

So, the Indians to this day have idols dispersed here and there in the fields, placed in little groves, or at the foot of some hill that casts a shadow.

This heathen religion, which the high places and the groves symbolized, were everywhere.

They were still openly worshipping God, while all the time worshipping false gods.

2 Kings 17:11 “And there they burnt incense in all the high places, as [did] the heathen whom the LORD carried away before them; and wrought wicked things to provoke the LORD to anger:”

As even the tribe of Judah did, which is observed in all the preceding reigns.

“As did the Heathen whom the LORD carried away before them”:

The Canaanites, and therefore they might justly expect to be carried captive also.

“And wrought wicked things to provoke the LORD to anger”:

By their several immoralities, but especially their idolatries.

The burning of incense symbolized the prayers of the saints rising to heaven.

You can see how sinful it would be, to do this at places other than that chosen of God.

God had not allowed the heathen to do this, and He would not allow them to either.

2 Kings 17:12 “For they served idols, whereof the LORD had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing.”

Baalim, as the Targum.

Dunghill gods, as the word signifies, as they are often called in Scripture.

And Sterculius was one of the names of Saturn, a Heathen deity, which he had, as is supposed, by his finding out the method of making land fruitful with dung.

“Whereof the LORD had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing”:

See Exodus 20:3.

An idol is a nothing.

It has no value and no power.

Anything that is elevated above God is an idol.

In our time, many people have cars and homes that are idols.

2 Kings 17:13 “Yet the LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, [and by] all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments [and] my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets.”

“Turn ye from your evil ways”:

The prophets continually called the people to repentance (Jer. 7:3, 5; 18:11; Ezek. 33:11).

They could not claim they did not know, because the LORD had sent prophets and seers to tell them how they were breaking God’s commandments.

They were also warned over and over what would happen, if they did not repent of their sins and return to the worship of the One True God.

The twelve tribes of Israel (Judah and Israel), had been entrusted with the laws and commandments of God.

They were without excuse.

2 Kings 17:14 “Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the LORD their God.”

“Hardened their necks”:

A stubborn refusal to respond (see note on Deut. 9:6; compare Exodus 32:9; 33:3, 5; 34:9; Acts 7:51).

God wanted to bless them, but they would not stay faithful to Him.

They had been called stiffnecked more than once.

This meant they were unbending.

They were proud, instead of humble, before their LORD.

Verses 15-16

The people of God have always had to take care in a spiritually unfriendly world.

Israel was warned about becoming like her neighbors when she inherited the Promise Land (Deut. 29:25; 32:21).

Paul exhorted the church on the same subject: “Do not be conformed to this world” (Rom. 12:2).

2 Kings 17:15 “And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that [were] round about them, [concerning] whom the LORD had charged them, that they should not do like them.”

At Sinai and Horeb (see Exodus 24:8).

“And his testimonies which he testified against them”:

Calling heaven and earth to witness what he would do to them if they broke his laws (Deuteronomy 4:26).

And which were so many testimonies of his mind and will what they should do.

Or otherwise what should be done to them.

Ben Gersom also interprets this of the feasts of the Passover and tabernacles, which were witnesses of Israel’s coming out of Egypt, and of the sanctification and redemption of the firstborn, a testimony of the slaying the firstborn in Egypt.

“And they followed vanity”:

Idols, which are vain things for help, can neither hear, see, speak, etc.

“And became vain”:

As sottish and stupid as the idols they worshipped; which is the usual fruit and effect of idolatry (see Rom. 1:21).

“And went after the heathen that were round about them”:

Imitated them in their idolatrous practices, as the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, etc. concerning.

“Whom the LORD had charged them, that they should not do like them”:

Of this charge (see Deut. 6:13).

They were an arrogant, proud people.

At Sinai, on the way to the Promised Land, they had promised to follow God and keep His commandments and statutes.

False gods are called vanity over and over in the Bible.

Solomon, after he had sinned greatly, thought all was vanity.

They had been chosen out of all the people of the world, to set an example for others.

They were not to be like the heathen, who knew not God.

The very thing they cried out, was that they wanted to be like the nations around them.

2 Kings 17:16 “And they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made them molten images, [even] two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal.”

“Molten images, even two calves”:

Worship of these idols was instituted by Jeroboam (see 1 Kings 12:25-33).

“Made a grove”:

A wooden symbol of a female deity built by Rehoboam (see 1 Kings 14:15, 23).

“The host of heaven”:

In the ancient Near East, the sun, moon, and stars were deified and worshiped.

This astral worship entered Israel and Judah (21:5; 23:4-5; Ezek. 8:15-16; Amos 5:26).

The worship of the heavenly bodies was prohibited by the Mosaic Law (Deut. 4:19; 17:3).

The worship of the two golden calves was to be a substitute for going to the temple in Jerusalem.

Jeroboam had brought the two calves and set them up at Dan and at Beth-el.

Ahab and Jezebel had introduced them to Baal worship and the worship of Astarte.

The very first commandment warns of having no other Gods.

In the Ten Commandments, they were told to make no images.

These calves, they have made, are images.

The worship of Baal, which was brought to Israel by Ahab and Jezebel, was done away with by Jehu. The golden calves remained.

Vereses17-18

The cause of Israel’s demise is rehearsed.

“Israel” had a case record of continual spiritual harlotry (Michah 6:3-5, 9-16).

Time and again God had sent chastisement and His prophets to bring about their repentance and restoration.

Ultimately, He could do nothing else than bring about the threatened judgment (verses 20-23 with Deut. 28:47-68).

2 Kings 17:17 “And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.”

“Pass through the fire”:

See notes on 3:27; 16:3.

“Divination and enchantments”:

Isaiah prophesied of the devastation these practices would produce (see note on Deut. 18:9-12).

The sacrifice of children had to do with the worship of Molech.

This was not openly done in Israel.

Witchcraft and magic were part of the national pastimes.

Jezebel had been heavily involved in this.

It is certainly an abomination to God to depend on magic and all sorts of divination, instead of placing faith in almighty God.

Verses 18-23

The sins of both Israel and Judah were so great that the LORD “removed” or cast “them out of His sight”, which means they were taken captive by other nations and forced to leave their land.

2 Kings 17:18 “Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only.”

Nothing being more provoking to him than idolatry.

“And removed them out of his sight”:

Not out of the reach of his all seeing eye, but from all tokens of his favor, from the good land he had given them.

And all the benefits and privileges of it.

“There was none left but the tribe of Judah only”:

And part of Benjamin, which was annexed to it, and incorporated in it, and made one kingdom, and maintained the same worship.

And there was the lot of Simeon, which was within the tribe of Judah.

And the priests and the Levites, and various individuals of the several tribes, that came and settled among them for the sake of worship.

But no perfect, distinct, tribe besides.

The ten tribes are taken captive in the time of Hoshea, and dispersed among the nations.

They never became a nation again.

They were absorbed by the surrounding countries that took them hostage.

Judah and Benjamin, which make up the tribe of Judah, are the only remaining tribes of the original 12.

2 Kings 17:19 “Also Judah kept not the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made.”

Judah was no real or permanent exception to the sins and punishment of Israel; she imitated the apostasy of her sister-kingdom, and was visited with a similar penalty.

Judah followed Israel into sin and judgment.

Judah had some good kings along the way, so they were not taken captive until many years later.

Even in their captivity by the Babylonians, they did not lose their identity.

They followed in the footsteps of Israel, even getting involved in the worship of Baal.

The only difference is, that many of their kings followed the LORD to the best of their ability.

2 Kings 17:20 “And the LORD rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight.”

The ten tribes, with loathing and contempt, and wrote a “Loammi” on them, rejected them from being his people, gave them a bill of divorce, and declared them no more under his care and patronage.

“And afflicted them”:

As he did before he utterly cast them off, as by famine, drought, and pestilence (Amos 4:6).

“And delivered them into the hands of spoilers”:

As first, into the hands of Hazael and Benhadad, kings of Syria, and then of Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria (2 Kings 13:3).

“Until he had cast them out of his sight”:

By suffering them, as now, to be carried captive by Shalmaneser (2 Kings 17:6).

Israel had been rejected for their failure to keep God’s commandments, and for following after false gods.

God had cast them away from Him, and dispersed them in the nations around.

2 Kings 17:21 “For he rent Israel from the house of David; and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king: and Jeroboam drove Israel from following the LORD, and made them sin a great sin.”

“He rent Israel”:

See notes on 1 Kings 11:11-13, 29-39.

“The “sin a great sin” of Jeroboam I, was in leading Israel to worship calves at Dan and Bethel and installing priests from the general population (1 Kings 12:28-33).

His wickedness became the standard for evil in the northern kingdom.

Israel was no longer considered part of the house of David.

Jeroboam was the king, who had made the golden calves for them to use in their worship services.

He did not want them to go to Jerusalem to worship.

He was afraid, if Israel went to Jerusalem regularly to worship in the temple, they would join back in with Judah and be 12 tribes again.

He started the worship of the two calves, so they would remain separate from Judah.

He led them into sin with the calf worship.

2 Kings 17:22 “For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them;”

“The sins of Jeroboam”:

See notes on 1 Kings 12:25-32.

The sins of that king put in motion an unbroken pattern of idolatrous iniquity (see note on 13:2).

Each king had an opportunity to do away with the calves, but they did not.

Jehu destroyed the worship of Baal, but left the calf worship.

2 Kings 17:23 “Until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day.”

“Unto this day”:

The exiles of Israel never returned in a group as did Judah (see note on 1 Chron. 9:1).

It was the wrath of God that placed Israel into captivity to the Assyrians.

He gave them every opportunity to repent, and they did not.

Many of them did return in the time of Ezra.

Verses 24-41:

This section describes the origin and practices of the Samaritans.

They were a mixed people, the result of marriage between Israelites and Gentiles, who practiced a mixed form of worship (17:33).

2 Kings 17:24 “And the king of Assyria brought [men] from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed [them] in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof.”

Sargon sent people from various parts of the Assyrian Empire to replace the deported Israelites.

They intermarried with the remaining Israelites, and a new people known as Samaritans came into being.

“Samaria”:

After its conquest by the Assyrians, the central hill and coastal plain region of the former northern kingdom of Israel became an Assyrian province, all of which was called “Samaria” after the ancient capital city (verse 28-29).

The Assyrian king, Sargon II, settled alien people, who came from widely scattered areas also conquered by Assyria, into the abandoned Israelite towns.

Babylon and Cuthah were located in southern Mesopotamia.

Hamath was a town on the Orontes River in Syria.

The exact location of Ava and Sepharvaim are unknown.

These people, who intermarried with the Jews who escaped exile, became the Samaritans.

A mixed Jew and Gentile people, later hated by New Testament Jews (Matt. 10:5; John 4:9; see notes on Luke 10:29-36).

In the Scripture above, Samaria is a country and not a city.

This is just saying, that all of the people of Israel had been taken captive and the Assyrians sent some of their own people to populate their cities.

2 Kings 17:25 “And [so] it was at the beginning of their dwelling there, [that] they feared not the LORD: therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which slew [some] of them.”

“Lions among them”:

Lions were employed occasionally as instruments of punishment by God (1 Kings 13:24; 20:36).

It is interesting that they would realize, that God had sent the lions to devour these people who know not God.

2 Kings 17:26 “Wherefore they spake to the king of Assyria, saying, The nations which thou hast removed, and placed in the cities of Samaria, know not the manner of the God of the land: therefore he hath sent lions among them, and, behold, they slay them, because they know not the manner of the God of the land.”

“The manner of the God”:

The newcomers interpreted the lions as a punishment from the God of Israel, whom they viewed as a deity who needed to be placated.

Since they did not know how to appease Him, they appealed for help to Sargon II.

The Assyrians believed that each country had its own god.

They did not know the One True God, but believed a god controlled that country.

The people complained to the king to do something about this problem.

Verses 27-28

“One of the priests”:

In response, the Assyrian king ordered an Israelite priest back to Samaria from exile to teach the people what the God of the land required in worship.

2 Kings 17:27 “Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, Carry thither one of the priests whom ye brought from thence; and let them go and dwell there, and let him teach them the manner of the God of the land.”

Gave the following orders and directions.

“Carry thither one of the priests whom ye brought from thence”:

For they carried away all the people of every class, civil and religious.

“And let them go and dwell there, and let him teach them the manner of the God of the land”:

It is in the plural number, “let them go”, etc.

There might be more priests than one ordered, or, however, others, to attend and assist him in his work.

The Jews say, two were sent to circumcise them, and teach them the book of the law.

And they give their names, Dosthai, or Dosithaeus, and Zachariah.

And Josephus says, the people desired that priests might be sent to them of the captives.

The king of Assyria sends a priest and those who attended him back, so he might advise the people the manner of God they were to worship.

He would teach them the ways of the God of Israel.

This was done to appease the God of Israel.

Of course, the king of Assyria was not aware that He was the True God.

2 Kings 17:28 “Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Beth-el, and taught them how they should fear the LORD.”

According to an Arabic writer, his name was Uzziah.

But Epiphanius says his name was Esdras.

But he wrongly makes him to be sent by Nebuchadnezzar, thirty years after the captivity of the Jews in Babylon.

This priest was, doubtless, one of the priests of the calves; for there were none else in the kingdom of Israel carried captive, and as seems also by his choosing to dwell in Beth-el, where probably he formerly dwelt, and officiated in the service of the calf there.

And by teaching to make priests of the lowest order of the people, as Jeroboam’s priests were (2 Kings 17:32).

“And taught them how they should fear the LORD”:

Serve and worship him.

He might not teach them the worship of the calves, that being a political business, and now no end to be answered by it.

And besides, they were now carried out of the land.

This priest taught, no doubt, according to the Law of Moses, but was not the author of the Pentateuch.

We know the golden calf had been taken to Assyria, so perhaps it stayed there and they went back to the worship of Jehovah, without the idol.

We must remember, that this was not the true priesthood.

This was the priesthood, who had been involved in the calf worship.

I do not understand the exact manner of worship here.

They believed they were worshipping Jehovah.

Verses 29-32

Though they had been taught the proper way to worship God, these people all placed God alongside their other gods in an eclectic kind of worship that was blasphemy to the one true and living God.

2 Kings 17:29 “Howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and put [them] in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt.”

Served and worshipped those they brought with them, and which were the work of their own hands, even the nations, or those out of the nations, mentioned (2 Kings 17:24).

These, notwithstanding the instructions they had about the worship of the God of Israel, retained and served their own deities.

And put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made.

Every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt; as the Israelites had built high places everywhere for idolatry, and put images in them (2 Kings 17:9).

These Heathens placed their gods there in the room of them, which were as follow.

We could say this was a land filled with false gods.

2 Kings 17:30 “And the men of Babylon made Succoth-benoth, and the men of Cuth made Nergal, and the men of Hamath made Ashima,”

“Succoth-benoth”:

Literally “tents of the daughters”, probably indicating some deity worshiped by sexual orgies.

“Nergal” Perhaps the Assyrian god of war.”

“Ashima”:

An idol in the form of a bald he-goat.

2 Kings 17:31 “And the Avites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burnt their children in fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim.”

“Nibhaz”:

A dog-like idol.

“Tartak”:

Either a donkey or a celestial body, Saturn.

“Adrammelech”:

Perhaps the same as Molech, worshiped in the form of the sun, a mule or a peacock.

“Anammelech”:

A rabbit or a goat idol.

These false gods had been the national god of the countries mentioned.

This was some of the vilest forms of worship of false gods that sacrificed children.

Verses 32-33

The newly established religion of the Samaritans was largely a mixture of Israel’s corrupted religion and the paganism brought by those who were settled in the northern kingdom.

Accordingly, it was apostate, from the onset and so the Jews rejected both the Samaritans and their religion (John 4:9; 8:48).

2 Kings 17:32 “So they feared the LORD, and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places, which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places.”

Worshipped the God of Israel in the manner they were taught.

“And made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places”:

Which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places.

These were made after the manner of Jeroboam’s priests (1 Kings 12:31).

And were to sacrifice to the God of Israel in the high places, and temples built there.

For otherwise they had, no doubt, priests of their own to sacrifice to their gods, and which they brought with them.

This is an interesting statement.

On the one hand, they feared the LORD.

On the other hand, they kept their false gods.

This is a mixed bag.

They worshipped the LORD and the false gods.

They elevated the LORD a little higher than the others.

2 Kings 17:33 “They feared the LORD, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence.”

Worshipped both.

“After the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence”:

The Israelites, whom they had carried captive from Samaria; they worshipped the LORD in their idols, as they did, who pretended to worship God in the calves.

So they worshipped the supreme God in and by their idols, and made use of them as mediators with him.

This is the very reason the LORD had let them capture the ten tribes of Israel.

These people are worshipping in the same way the Israelites did, before they were captured.

Verses 34-41

Having shown how the Samaritan people and their religion came into being (verses 24-33), the writer of Kings shows how the syncretistic worship of the Samaritans continued for generations, even to his own day (verse 41; during the Babylonian exile).

The religion of the Samaritans was, at its foundation, no different from Jeroboam I’s deviant religion.

2 Kings 17:34 “Unto this day they do after the former manners: they fear not the LORD, neither do they after their statutes, or after their ordinances, or after the law and commandment which the LORD commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel;”

“Do after the former manners”:

The religion of the Samaritans was syncretistic; it combined elements of the worship of the LORD with the worship practices of the gods which the Assyrian settlers had brought with them (see note on verse 24).

They did not keep the laws or the commandments of God.

It seemed this mixed religion of Jehovah and the false gods together by these captors of Israel, had gone on for over 150 years.

They had not kept the law or the commandments of the God of Israel.

2 Kings 17:35 “With whom the LORD had made a covenant, and charged them, saying, Ye shall not fear other gods, nor bow yourselves to them, nor serve them, nor sacrifice to them:”

As he did at Sinai (2 Kings 17:15).

“And charged them, saying, Ye shall not fear other gods, nor bow yourselves to them, nor serve them, nor sacrifice to them”:

All which is contained in the first and second commandments of the law.

2 Kings 17:36 “But the LORD, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt with great power and a stretched out arm, him shall ye fear, and him shall ye worship, and to him shall ye do sacrifice.”

Which is observed, to show the obligations they lay under, in point of gratitude, to serve the LORD.

“Him shall ye fear, and him shall ye worship, and to him shall ye do sacrifice”:

And him only, and not to other gods.

None but he being the object of religious fear and divine worship, and to whom sacrifices should be offered.

2 Kings 17:37 “And the statutes, and the ordinances, and the law, and the commandment, which he wrote for you, ye shall observe to do for evermore; and ye shall not fear other gods.”

On the two tables of stone.

“Ye shall observe to do for evermore”:

Those commands relating to religious worship, especially the object of it, and to moral duties, being of eternal obligation.

And all other statutes and ordinances of a ceremonial kind he ordered to be written for them, being such that they were to regard until the Messiah came, and a new world began.

“And ye shall not fear other gods”:

Which is repeated, that it might be observed, as it also afterwards is.

This is a reminder of who the real God is, and that He will not share His people.

They should worship God and Him alone, if they want His blessings.

The covenant was conditional.

They would be blessed, if they kept his law and commandments.

They would be cursed, if they did not keep them.

He had proven to them beyond doubt, that He alone was God, when He delivered them out of Egypt.

This was an everlasting covenant to all generations to come.

2 Kings 17:38 “And the covenant that I have made with you ye shall not forget; neither shall ye fear other gods.”

The law given at Mount Sinai; the first table of which chiefly concerned the worship of the one true and living God, and forbid the worship of any other, as follows.

“Neither shall ye fear other gods”:

Or make them the object of worship.

2 Kings 17:39 “But the LORD your God ye shall fear; and he shall deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies.”

Or worship him, both internally and externally, according to his revealed will; For the fear of God includes both internal and external worship.

“And he shall deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies”:

That is, provided they feared and served him as he required, and it became them to do.

This covenant was to be in their minds and in their hearts, all the time.

They were never to forget.

They were to fear God only.

1 Samuel 12:24 “Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great [things] he hath done for you.”

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.

2 Kings 17:40 “Howbeit they did not hearken, but they did after their former manner.”

They did not repent of their idolatries, but persisted in them, and even when they were in captivity in Assyria, or such of them as were left in the land.

They claimed to believe in the LORD, but they worshipped other gods.

2 Kings 17:41 “So these nations feared the LORD, and served their graven images, both their children, and their children’s children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day.”

Just in like manner as the Israelites had done, who served the LORD and the calves, and worshipped God and Baal.

“Both their children, and their children’s children”:

That is, the children and children’s children of the Samaritans.

“As did their fathers, so do they unto this day”:

To the writing of this book, which some ascribe to Jeremiah, to whose times, and even longer, they continued this mixed and mongrel worship.

For the space of three hundred years, to the times of Alexander the great, of whom Sanballat, governor of Samaria, got leave to build a temple, on Gerizim, for his son-in-law Manasseh.

Of which he became priest And the Samaritans were prevailed upon to relinquish their idolatry, and to worship only the God of Israel.

And yet it seems but ignorantly, and not without superstition, to the times of Christ (John 4:22).

Jesus said it best in the following Scripture.

Luke 4:8 “And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the LORD thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”

God will not share His people.

Nergal was the worship of a cock.

Ashima worshipped the form of a goat.

Nibhaz was worship of a dog.

Tartak worshipped the form of a donkey.

Animals were the forms the people used to worship their false gods.

This type of worship is still going on today in much of the Satan worship.

Just as they were instructed, we must do too.

Worship and serve nothing, or no one, except God.

2 Kings Chapter 17 Questions

1. How long did Hoshea reign in Israel?
2. Did he do good, or evil?
3. Whose servant did Hoshea become?
4. Who did Hoshea send to for help?
5. What happened, when the king of Assyria found out?
6. How long was the capital city surrounded?
7. What happened to the people of Israel?
8. Why did all of this happen to Israel?
9. What were some of the secret things the people of Israel did?
10. What does incense symbolize?
11. An idol is a _____.
12. Who had God sent to warn the Israelites?
13. What was meant by them having hardened necks?
14. What terrible thing had they made to worship?
15. What were some of the terrible things they did mentioned in verse 17?
16. Who was left of God's chosen, after Israel had been taken into captivity?
17. Which of the kings had brought in calf worship?
18. Who came and lived in the cities taken from the Israelites?

19. What did the LORD send to devour these evil people?
20. Who did the king of Assyria send to help?
21. What was the author's comment under verse 29?
22. How long had this mixed religion gone on?
23. What was the conditions of the agreement God made with Israel?
24. Did they keep the commandments?