

2 Kings 17: VV Notes

Assyria Attacks and the fall of the Northern Kingdom

Hoshea reigns in Israel

The northern kingdom of Israel lasted for 209 years before it fell to Assyria in 721 or 722 BCE (there is some debate on the date). The destruction of Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom, was foretold by Hosea and Micah (see [Hosea 13:16](#); [Micah 1:6](#)). Both the people and the place of Samaria would be destroyed.

Hoshea became king in Israel during the reign of Ahaz in Judah. He continued the idol worship set up by Jereboam, first king of Israel. Hoshea was described as not being as evil as some of the other kings of Israel, yet the destruction of Israel happened in his time.

- Why do you think the destruction of Israel came at this time if there were worse kings before Hoshea? God's timing seems a little off – or is it? Discuss.

The trigger for the final destruction of Israel was the conspiracy of Hoshea attempting to form an alliance with Egypt (who was in a constant power struggle with Assyria). The king of Assyria found out and put Hoshea in prison.

It seems that Israel had gone full circle. God had brought Israel out of slavery in Egypt but now Hoshea was turning to Egypt rather than God to get them out from under Assyrian oppression.

- Discuss

Samaria Falls to Assyria

It took three years for the king of Assyria to capture Samaria and the people of Israel were then exiled to Assyria. There is no record of the return of Israel from Assyria but that they remained there.

Verses 7-23 is the author's treatise on why Israel fell as a nation. It is as though the entire books of kings has been leading up to this moment to identify the source of Israel's fall, namely it's sin of idolatry and forsaking God's commands. The author starts with the reminder that God brought Israel out of Egypt and threw out pagan nations before them but that they had then turned to the practices of those nations that God had warned them not to do. From the ordinary people to royalty, Israel turned away from God. Prophets were sent again and again but were not listened to. The people of Israel set up idols of all kinds, sacrificed their children and used sorcery etc. All the things that God commanded them not to do – until the Lord finally swept them from His presence (verse 23).

- Do you agree with the author's conclusion, that Israel was destroyed because of their idolatry, or are there perhaps other reasons?

Foreigners settled in Israel

The King of Assyria replaced the people of Israel with people from a range of nations. The text says that because these people did not worship the Lord, that God sent lions through the people, killing some (it struck me that the lion is a symbol of the tribe of Judah and of God). The people recognise that it's because they don't know how to worship the God of Israel and so they ask the King of Assyria for help. An Israelite priest is sent to teach them but the people, while engaging in correct worship of God, also kept their own gods and worshipped them too. They also appointed all different sorts of people as priests.

The author does not have much good to say about these new Samaritans, yet Jesus often used them to demonstrate the hypocrisy of the Jews of his day. During Jesus discussion with the Samaritan woman at the well, Jesus and the woman talk about worship and salvation (see John 4:19-23). Here is an interesting article about the [Samaritans of Jesus day](#).

It seems the Samaritans were a people characterised by faith but that their faith may not have always been directed in the right direction. Even though God seems to give them trouble to start with the Samaritans dwell in Israel until the time of Jesus and Jesus appears to view them with respect.

- What do you think of God's relationship with the Samaritans from the time of the Assyrian resettlement of Israel to Jesus day and our day (given that some do still live in the same location)?
- If God removed Israel for their idolatry, why does God seem to tolerate the Samaritans mix of Judaic faith and their own beliefs.

Broader Discussion

I read a recent Adventist Today [article](#), in which the statement was made:

“Never in American history have so many Christians been so ready to wield the empire's sword, magnifying its greatness in its military strength and economic wealth rather than in its justice and love for neighbours.”

I was reminded of our study of the books of Samuel and Kings and how they trace the rise and fall of Israel and Judah. The books of Kings in particular point to the fall of both kingdoms as a result of idolatry and the abandonment of God and God's laws.

Yet, it seems that idolatry was a source of power and empire that could be shaped to the wants of the kings.

- What are the links between power and empire and idolatry and what does this mean for us today.

Personal reflections

The AT article also touches briefly on a loss of hope among Christians. I asked myself if I have lost hope? For me, Jesus return is something I have let go of to some extent, i.e. it probably won't happen in my lifetime. Perhaps the church has lost hope in the return of Jesus too. The return of Jesus has long been our hope for the end of the evil of this world as well as escaping it's difficulties. Last Generation Theology may be a symptom of this loss of hope – if we can be perfect enough then Jesus 'has to' come back. Revelation 14: 20 implies it is patiently keeping God's commands and the faith of Jesus that characterises the saints. If we have lost our patient hope and faith in the return of Jesus, the promise of power and empire that Christian Nationalism offers, to satisfy our spiritual longing, becomes a tempting proposition.

- Discuss