



As we finish 2 Kings 16 and go into chapter 17, we see that God's patience does not negate His justice. After extending His arms to a faithless people for 725 years, God finally judged the northern tribes of Israel with exile in Assyria. They became servants to a people who worshipped the false gods they were so enamored with—just as the Lord prophesied by the mouth of His prophet Amos. Then once the Assyrians had placed their own people to inhabit the land of Israel, they realized that the God of Israel was to be feared, for the Lord sent lions to judge these idolaters. However, even when the new people dwelling in Israel learned something about fearing the Lord, they continued to worship idols and only sought to please God to avoid being killed by lions. Unfortunately, many people then and now are doing the same: seeking to avoid judgment from God rather than seeking to love and please God.

1. Context

- a. Israel became a divided kingdom since Rehoboam began to reign.
 - i. The capital of the northern kingdom of Israel was Samaria.
 - ii. The capital of the southern kingdom of Judah was Jerusalem.
- b. Sometimes these two kingdoms would be at war with each other.
 - i. In chapter 15, the king of Israel, Pekah, allied himself with the king of Syria, Rezin, to fight against the king of Judah, Ahaz.
- c. Ahaz
 - i. Ahaz was one of the most wicked of the kings of Judah up to that time.
 1. Ahaz worshiped Molech through child sacrifice, putting his child in the red-hot arms of this false god.
 2. **2 Kings 16:3** – *“But he [King Ahaz] walked in the way of the kings of Israel; indeed he made his son pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had cast out from before the children of Israel.”*
 3. Though Ahaz sacrificed one child in 2 Kings 16, he repeated this sin against more of his children later.
 4. **2 Chronicles 28:3** – *“He burned incense in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, and burned his children in the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.”*
 5. Ahaz “walked in the way of the kings of Israel” because none of the kings of Israel were considered good kings.
 - ii. The kings of Israel and Syria rose against the king of Judah, Ahaz.

- iii. Isaiah the prophet of God told Ahaz why the other kings failed to overcome him, and gave him the virgin birth of the Messiah for a sign.
 - 1. **Isaiah 7:14** – *“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.”*
 - 2. Amid our sinful state, God inserts the hope of Messiah.
 - iv. Ahaz saw he was outnumbered and hired the king of Assyria, Tiglath-Pileser III.
 - 1. The kingdom of Assyria was growing to be the largest kingdom at that time.
 - 2. Ahaz stripped gold from the temple of God to pay tribute to Tiglath-Pileser III.
 - v. The king of Assyria agreed and came to defend Ahaz against the kings of Syria and Israel.
 - 1. Do not confuse Assyria with Syria.
 - a. Syria’s capital was Damascus
 - b. Assyria encompassed Iraq and part of Iran.
 - 2. Tiglath-Pileser III killed Rezin, king of Syria, and took over the city of Damascus.
 - vi. Emboldened, Ahaz visited Tiglath-Pileser and instructed Urijah the priest to make an altar like that of the king of Assyria.
 - 1. Instead of thanking God for giving him rest from his enemies, Ahaz worshipped foreign gods on a foreign altar in the temple of God.
 - 2. Urijah obeyed the king rather than the King of Kings. Beware of spiritual leaders who are men-pleasers instead of God-pleasers.
- 2. **2 Kings 16:17–20** – *“And King Ahaz cut off the panels of the carts, and removed the lavers from them; and he took down the Sea from the bronze oxen that were under it, and put it on a pavement of stones. Also he removed the Sabbath pavilion which they had built in the temple, and he removed the king’s outer entrance from the house of the LORD, on account of the king of Assyria. Now the rest of the acts of Ahaz which he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? So Ahaz rested with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the City of David. Then Hezekiah his son reigned in his place.”*
 - a. Ahaz dismantled the articles of the house of God in deference to the king of Assyria.
 - i. When Ahaz paid tribute to the king of Assyria, he became a vassal.
 - b. Ahaz’s son Hezekiah would be a good king.
 - i. You do not need to come from a good family to choose to follow God and do right.

1. **DISCUSS:** How can you take ownership for your personal relationship with God?
3. **2 Kings 17:1–6** – *“In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea the son of Elah became king of Israel in Samaria, and he reigned nine years. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, but not as the kings of Israel who were before him. Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against him; and Hoshea became his vassal, and paid him tribute money. And the king of Assyria uncovered a conspiracy by Hoshea; for he had sent messengers to So, king of Egypt, and brought no tribute 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. Now the king of Assyria went throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria and besieged it for three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away to Assyria, and placed them in Halah and by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.”*
 - a. Hoshea
 - i. Hoshea would be the last king of Israel.
 - ii. During Hoshea’s reign, Shalmaneser the king of Assyria came up against him.
 1. Shalmaneser V was likely the son of Tiglath-Pileser III.
 - iii. Hoshea tried to start a conspiracy, was caught, and went to prison.
 - b. Shalmaneser
 - i. Shalmaneser besieged Samaria, the capital of Israel, for three years, roughly from 725–722 B.C.
 - ii. Shalmaneser was not content with tribute money; he took the land and people as well.
 1. Assyria was known for taking the wisest, wealthiest, and strongest, then leaving the poorest in the land.
 2. Assyrians would then be put in the conquered land to make the land conform to the pattern of their culture.
4. **2 Kings 17:7–18** – *“For so it was that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and they had feared other gods, and had walked in the statutes of the nations whom the LORD had cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made. Also the children of Israel secretly did against the LORD their God things that were not right, and they built for themselves high places in all their cities, from watchtower to fortified city. They set up for themselves sacred pillars and wooden images on every high hill and under every green tree. There they burned incense on all the high places, like the nations whom the LORD had carried away before them; and*

they did wicked things to provoke the LORD to anger, for they served idols, of which the LORD had said to them, 'You shall not do this thing.' Yet the LORD testified against Israel and against Judah, by all of His prophets, every seer, saying, 'Turn 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.' Nevertheless they would not hear, but stiffened their necks, like the necks of their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God. And they rejected His statutes and His covenant that He had made with their fathers, and His testimonies which He had testified against them; they followed idols, became idolaters, and went after the nations who were all around them, concerning whom the LORD had charged them that they should not do like them. So they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, made for themselves a molded image and two calves, made a wooden image and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and soothsaying, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger. Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight; there was none left but the tribe of Judah alone."

a. Israel judged

- i. God allowed Israel to go into captivity because they rejected their God.
 1. Chapter 17 references roughly 725 years of history, from the time of Israel's slavery in Egypt (at around 1450 B.C.) to the time of their captivity by the Assyrians (in 722 B.C.).
- ii. Israel set up "sacred pillars."
 1. These pillars were not sacred in the sense that they were holy, but in that they were sacred objects to the pagan nations.
 2. These pillars were phallic symbols placed across the land for the worship of Canaanite and Sidonian gods.
- iii. God pursued Israel, but the Israelites "stiffened their necks."
 1. To stiffen one's neck is an expression based on how oxen stiffen their necks when refusing to plow the ground.
 2. God was saying that Israel was rebellious and refused to submit to Him.
 3. **DISCUSS:** How do you respond to correction? How can you become more receptive to what God and others have to say?
- iv. God was patient with Israel for 725 years.
 1. God is patient with His mercy, but just with His judgment.
 2. **DISCUSS:** How does the patience and justice of God encourage you to repentance?

b. Only Judah was left.

- i. The word "Jews" comes from the tribe of Judah.

- ii. As this was the only tribe left, the Hebrews became known as “Jews.”
- iii. Though the northern kingdom was ended, some among the northern tribes were saved.

1. **2 Chronicles 11:13–16** – *“And from all their territories the priests and the Levites who were in all Israel took their stand with him. For the Levites left their common-lands and their possessions and came to Judah and Jerusalem, for Jeroboam and his sons had rejected them from serving as priests to the LORD. Then he appointed for himself priests for the high places, for the demons, and the calf idols which he had made. And after the Levites left, those from all the tribes of Israel, such as set their heart to seek the LORD God of Israel, came to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the LORD God of their fathers.”*

- iv. The northern tribes were not lost.

1. Though the northern tribes were disciplined and displaced, they were not all lost as some believe.

2. God always has a remnant.

a. **DISCUSS:** What can we learn about the nature of God from how He always saves for Himself a remnant?

3. God still knows where the tribes of Israel are, and He will raise up 144,000 Jews—12,000 from each tribe—as evangelists in the last days.

4. This displacement was prophesied by the mouth of Amos, a prophet during that time.

a. **Amos 4:2–3** – *“The Lord God has sworn by His holiness: ‘Behold, the days shall come upon you when He will take you away with fishhooks, and your posterity with fishhooks. You will go out through broken walls, each one straight ahead of her, and you will be cast into Harmon,’ says the Lord.”*

b. Harmon was a city, probably in Assyria, and is not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible.

c. Assyrians would take people captive with fishhooks in their noses.

d. **DISCUSS:** The Enemy puts out baits to hook and ensnare us. How is God teaching you to discern what these baits are and resist them?

5. **2 Kings 17:19–24** – *“Also Judah did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made. And the LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel, afflicted them, and delivered them into the*

hand of plunderers, until He had cast them from His sight. For He tore Israel from the house of David, and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. Then Jeroboam drove Israel from following the LORD, and made them commit a great sin. For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them, until the LORD removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away from their own land to Assyria, as it is to this day. Then the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel; and they took possession of Samaria and dwelt in its cities.”

a. Imperfect Judah

i. Judah was not perfect either and would earn God’s judgment also.

1. The judgment against Judah would come at the hand of the Babylonians at around 586 B.C.

b. Israel’s lost land

i. We cede ground to the Enemy when we compromise.

1. **DISCUSS:** How has God convicted you to leave behind compromising with the world, the flesh, and the Devil?

6. **2 Kings 17:25–33** – *“And it was so, at the beginning of their dwelling there, that they did not fear the LORD; therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which killed some of them. So they spoke to the king of Assyria, saying, ‘The nations whom you have removed and placed in the cities of Samaria do not know the rituals of the God of the land; therefore He has sent lions among them, and indeed, they are killing them because they do not know the rituals of the God of the land.’ Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, ‘Send there one of the priests whom you brought from there; let him go and dwell there, and let him teach them the rituals of the God of the land.’ Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the LORD. However every nation continued to make gods of its own, and put them in the shrines on the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in the cities where they dwelt. The men of Babylon made Succoth Benoth, the men of Cuth made Nergal, the men of Hamath made Ashima, and the Avites made Nibhaz and Tartak; and the Sepharvites burned their children in fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim. So they feared the LORD, and from every class they appointed for themselves priests of the high places, who sacrificed for them in the shrines of the high places. They feared the LORD, yet served their own gods—according to the rituals of the nations from among whom they were carried away.”*

a. Lions in Israel

- i. Assyria placed the conquered cities in the land of Israel, but as these people did not respect God, the Lord sent lions to kill them.
 - 1. God is sovereign over the land of Israel.
 - a. Telling Israel to give “land for peace” does not work—Israel is God’s land, and He has promised it to the Jewish people.
- ii. The people sent to Israel cried out to the king of Assyria for help.
- iii. The king of Assyria sent a priest to the land of Israel to teach the people living there some rituals to appease God.
 - 1. The priest was among those who stayed in Israel, so he was not serious about God.
 - 2. The priest did not correctly guide the people dwelling in Israel, for the foreigners continued to worship their gods, only adding the worship of God to their polytheism.
 - 3. **DISCUSS:** Is Jesus Lord of your life, or just an addition to your day?
 - 4. Do not just pay tribute to God on Sunday to “appease the lion,” but then live like the devil during the week.
 - 5. **DISCUSS:** Do you follow God because you desire to avoid His wrath or because you desire to please Him?

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James (NKJV)