



2 Kings 17 records the end of the northern kingdom. Israel, which had long been disobedient, at last received the judgment of God after hundreds of years of rejecting the mercy of God. So the Lord sent the Assyrians against them, and the new inhabitants of the land held a half-hearted, ritualistic fear for God to avoid being judged by God, too. While the north floundered, the south did better, for King Hezekiah led the people to worship God in truth and broke the idols as he led the Jews into national revival. Unfortunately, Hezekiah did stumble, for when the Assyrians set their sights on Judah, he stripped the gold from God's temple to pay them off. This did not work as he intended, and the king of Assyria sent his officials to mock Hezekiah and his God, discouraging the people by telling the Jews to give themselves up because they would lose to the Assyrians in battle anyway. But despite Hezekiah's shortcomings, God would have mercy on him and on the nation of Judah. We serve a just and merciful God!

1. Context

a. Two kingdoms

i. The kingdom of Israel has long been split into two kingdoms ruled by two kings:

1. The king of the northern kingdom of Israel reigned in Samaria.
2. The king of the southern kingdom of Judah reigned in Jerusalem.

ii. Israel had no good kings, but Judah had a few good kings.

b. God's judgment

i. Because of Israel's disobedience over hundreds of years, God disciplined them.

1. Hoshea was the last king of Israel.
2. God sent the growing kingdom of Assyria to besiege Israel around 723 B.C.

a. The Assyrians were ruthless, putting hooks on the noses of their captives, skinning men alive and using their skin as wallpaper, and putting their people in the conquered land to intermarry with the remaining locals and change the culture.

ii. God is longsuffering, but if we reject His patience, we earn His judgment.

c. The Samaritans

i. The intermarriage of Jews left in Israel and Assyrians led to the creation of the Samaritan people.

ii. The Jews in Jesus' day thought of the Samaritans as half-breeds.

1. To get from Galilee to Jerusalem, Jews could take a shortcut in Samaria. But because of a long-standing prejudice between the Jews and Samaritans, the Samaritans would not give Jesus lodging.

2. **Luke 9:51–56** – *“Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to*

Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, 'Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?' But He turned and rebuked them, and said, 'You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them.' And they went to another village."

3. The woman in Sychar, Samaria, at the well was initially unfriendly toward Jesus in John 4.

iii. Back in Jesus' day, there were 1 million Samaritans. Today, only about 800 of them are left.

1. The Samaritans are a close-knit community and only marry each other.

iv. The Samaritans have a mixed religion.

1. The Samaritans only believe in the first five books of the Bible.
2. They practice some of the Jewish feasts, but not all.
3. They worship at Mount Gerizim, for they were not initially allowed to worship at the temple in Jerusalem.
4. Contrary to what the Bible says, the Samaritans believe that the Garden of Eden was in Mount Gerizim, that Noah's ark rested on Mount Gerizim, and that Abraham offered his son Isaac on Mount Gerizim.
5. The Samaritans speak Arabic, live in Palestinian territory, attend synagogue and speak Hebrew there.
6. The Samaritans have a card that lets them go into both Palestinian and Israeli territory.

d. Lions

- i. The Assyrians were having trouble integrating into the land of Israel.
 1. God had sent lions against them, killing some of them, for they were worshipping idols in the land of Israel.
- ii. The Assyrians asked the king to send an Israelite priest to teach them how to pacify the God of Israel.
 1. The priests of Israel were compromised—that was part of why God sent Israel into captivity.
 2. The priest chosen to teach the Assyrians about God only taught them about rituals, not about how to have a relationship with the Lord.

2. **2 Kings 17:34–41** – *"To this day they continue practicing the former rituals; they do not fear the LORD, nor do they follow their statutes or their ordinances, or the law and commandment which the LORD had commanded the children of Jacob, whom He named Israel, with whom the LORD had made a covenant and charged them, saying: 'You shall not fear other gods, nor bow down to them nor serve them nor sacrifice to them; but the LORD, who brought you up from the land of Egypt with great power and an outstretched arm, Him you shall fear, Him you shall worship, and to Him you shall offer sacrifice. And the statutes, the*

ordinances, the law, and the commandment which He wrote for you, you shall be careful to observe forever; you shall not fear other gods. And the covenant that I have made with you, you shall not forget, nor shall you fear other gods. But the LORD your God you shall fear; and He will deliver you from the hand of all your enemies.” However they did not obey, but they followed their former rituals. So these nations feared the LORD, yet served their carved images; also their children and their children’s children have continued doing as their fathers did, even to this day.”

a. Fearing God

- i. The Assyrians feared God, but not in a godly, reverential way.
- ii. The Assyrians were afraid of God and wanted to pacify Him by honoring Him along with their gods.
 1. **DISCUSS:** What are some modern-day idols prevalent in our culture?
 2. **DISCUSS:** What does a godly fear of the Lord look like? How is the Lord developing in you a greater fear of God?

3. **2 Kings 18:1-12** – “Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea the son of Elah, king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz, king of Judah, began to reign. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah. And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done. He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan. He trusted in the LORD God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him. For he held fast to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses. The LORD was with him; he prospered wherever he went. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him. He subdued the Philistines, as far as Gaza and its territory, from watchtower to fortified city. Now it came to pass in the fourth year of King Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of Hoshea the son of Elah, king of Israel, that Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria and besieged it. And at the end of three years they took it. In the sixth year of Hezekiah, that is, the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was taken. Then the king of Assyria carried Israel away captive to Assyria, and put them in Halah and by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes, because they did not obey the voice of the LORD their God, but transgressed His covenant and all that Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded; and they would neither hear nor do them.”

a. Hezekiah, king of the south

- i. Hezekiah’s name means “strength of God.”
 1. Hezekiah’s name is derived from **hāzaq** meaning “strength” and **yâ** meaning “the Lord.”

- ii. Hezekiah was a good king.
 - 1. Only the southern kingdom had any good kings.
 - 2. Like most of the good kings, Hezekiah did something to mar his testimony.
 - 3. Hezekiah broke the altars and idols that dotted the land of Judah.
 - a. **DISCUSS:** What are some idols that you had to tear down before you could see revival?
 - b. One of the things that Hezekiah tore down was the Nehushtan, the bronze serpent.
 - c. During Israel's desert wanderings, God sent venomous snakes as a judgment on the Israelites for their idolatry.
 - d. Moses interceded for the people, so God told Moses to make a staff with a bronze serpent on it so that whoever looked on this would be healed (**Numbers 21**).
 - e. This bronze snake was meant to be a typology of Christ and a sign of God's mercy.
 - f. The people turned the Nehushtan into an idol.
 - g. Even the good things can become idolatrous things if we are not careful.
 - h. **DISCUSS:** Have you made something—even a good thing—more of a priority than God?

b. Israel taken

- i. Because of Israel's disobedience, the Assyrians besieged the northern kingdom.
 - 1. Sin has consequences, and God disciplines those He loves.

4. **2 Kings 18:13–16** – *“And in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them. Then Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying, “I have done wrong; turn away from me; whatever you impose on me I will pay.” And the king of Assyria assessed Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. So Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the king's house. At that time Hezekiah stripped the gold from the doors of the temple of the LORD, and from the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria.”*

a. Sennacherib's ambition

- i. Sennacherib was the next king of Assyria.
- ii. Having had victory over the northern kingdom, Assyria tried to conquer the south.
 - 1. Sennacherib “went up” and took some cities of Judah.
 - a. Judah was to the south of Assyria, but because Jerusalem was a high, holy place you would always go up to it.

b. Hezekiah's folly

- i. Rather than trusting in God, Hezekiah tried to pay off Sennacherib, even stripping the gold off the temple.
 1. Don't surrender to the Enemy or trade the sacred for the secular.
 2. **DISCUSS:** When in dire straits, who or what do you turn to?
5. **2 Kings 18:17–25** – *“Then the king of Assyria sent the Tartan, the Rabсарis, and the Rabshakeh from Lachish, with a great army against Jerusalem, to King Hezekiah. And they went up and came to Jerusalem. When they had come up, they went and stood by the aqueduct from the upper pool, which was on the highway to the Fuller’s Field. And when they had called to the king, Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came out to them. Then the Rabshakeh said to them, ‘Say now to Hezekiah, “Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria: ‘What confidence is this in which you trust? You speak of having plans and power for war; but they are mere words. And in whom do you trust, that you rebel against me? Now look! You are trusting in the staff of this broken reed, Egypt, on which if a man leans, it will go into his hand and pierce it. So is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who trust in him. But if you say to me, “We trust in the LORD our God,” is it not He whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah has taken away, and said to Judah and Jerusalem, “You shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem?”’” Now therefore, I urge you, give a pledge to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give you two thousand horses—if you are able on your part to put riders on them! How then will you repel one captain of the least of my master’s servants, and put your trust in Egypt for chariots and horsemen? Have I now come up without the LORD against this place to destroy it? The LORD said to me, “Go up against this land, and destroy it.”’”*
 - a. The officials
 - i. Assyrian officials
 1. “Tartan” probably means “commander.”
 2. “Rabsaris” probably means “chief.”
 3. “Rabshakeh” probably means “governor.”
 - ii. Hezekiah’s officials spoke with Sennacherib’s officials.
 1. The Rabshakeh mocked Hezekiah for trying to ally himself with Egypt.
 2. The Rabshakeh mocked Hezekiah’s reforms, asking him what he has gained from his revival.
 3. The Rabshakeh, who was pagan, claimed the Lord spoke to him and told him to conquer the land.
 - a. **DISCUSS:** Have you met people who claim to speak for God? How do you safeguard against false claims?
6. **2 Kings 18:26–36** – *“Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, Shebna, and Joah said to the Rabshakeh, ‘Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand it; and*

do not speak to us in Hebrew in the hearing of the people who are on the wall.' But the Rabshakeh said to them, 'Has my master sent me to your master and to you to speak these words, and not to the men who sit on the wall, who will eat and drink their own waste with you?' Then the Rabshakeh stood and called out with a loud voice in Hebrew, and spoke, saying, 'Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria! Thus says the king: "Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he shall not be able to deliver you from his hand; nor let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, 'The LORD will surely deliver us; this city shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.'" Do not listen to Hezekiah; for thus says the king of Assyria: "Make peace with me by a present and come out to me; and every one of you eat from his own vine and every one from his own fig tree, and every one of you drink the waters of his own cistern; until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive groves and honey, that you may live and not die. But do not listen to Hezekiah, lest he persuade you, saying, 'The LORD will deliver us.' Has any of the gods of the nations at all delivered its land from the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim and Hena and Ivah? Indeed, have they delivered Samaria from my hand? Who among all the gods of the lands have delivered their countries from my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem from my hand?"' But the people held their peace and answered him not a word; for the king's commandment was, 'Do not answer him.' Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn, and told him the words of the Rabshakeh."

a. Hezekiah's officials

- i. Hezekiah's officials wanted Rabshakeh to speak to them in Aramaic, not Hebrew.
 1. Hezekiah's officials did not want the Jews to hear and be intimidated.
- ii. Rabshakeh did not care; he continued mocking God and Judah.
 1. Rabshakeh pointed out that the gods of the nations had not been able to protect them against the king of Assyria.
 - a. However, the gods of the nations were false gods, unlike the God of the people of Judah.
 2. The Enemy likes to play on our fears, but perfect love drives out fear (**1 John 4:18**).
 3. **DISCUSS**: What verses do you cling to when you feel afraid?

b. The people's silence

- i. The people of Judah did not answer Rabshakeh's taunts.
 1. Sometimes people will say false things against you, and you must hold your peace to let God defend you.
 2. Jesus did not defend Himself before Pontius Pilate.

3. **DISCUSS:** When has God called you to silence and defended you?
- c. Torn clothes
 - i. To tear one's clothes was a sign of mourning.

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