

2 Kings 16-17 - The Fall of Israel

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier
Life Bible Ministry

Grab your Bible and open it up to 2 Kings, chapter 16. We're going to continue tonight our study through the Old Testament. While you're turning there, I'll just ask you a hypothetical question.

Can you imagine what it would be like living here in the United States if during the civil war that our nation dealt with, it would have resulted in a splitting of the nation?

So that there were basically two nations or two kingdoms, if you will. Can you imagine what that would have been like if the Confederate army would have established a government, that would have lasted and wouldn't have been overthrown? And the Northern, you have the Northern kingdom and the Southern kingdom of the United States? Well, it would no longer be the United States of America. Who knows what it would have been called and certainly what it would have been like to live in that sort of a situation.

Well, that's exactly what happened to Israel and so many people don't understand this historically speaking, that Israel suffered a split. They split up. You have Israel under the dynasty of David and then his son, Solomon.

And then Solomon's son comes along and the place splits. Northern kingdom, they say, you know what, we're done with you. And we're going to establish our own king. They..., and the king, the king, Jeroboam, basically came up with his own religion. Came up with his own.

He built a couple of golden calves, put them in a couple of prominent places, and two spots in the Northern kingdom of Israel and said, these are your gods, Israel. And the people prostituted themselves to those golden calves.

And the Southern kingdom, which remained under the rule of the line of David, continued. The center of that worship was in Jerusalem. That remained, but it was no longer called Israel. The Southern kingdom was called Judah. So you've got Judah to the south and Israel to the north, and that's the way 1 and 2 Kings essentially deals with life.

Well, tonight in our study, we're going to basically see the end of the Northern kingdom. God had been speaking to them over and over and over again, telling them to repent, to turn back. And He had sent enemies against them to be used as his spanking spoon, to bring hardship and conviction into their lives so that they would turn from their ways.

And God was gracious to them during those years as well. To support them and defend them against their enemies. But they just, they never turned. They never turned. And so the Northern kingdom, which is called Israel, capital being Samaria, is going to be the first one to fall. Now, Judah will fall eventually too, but not right away because they had some good kings and they lasted longer.

But in our study tonight, we will see the fall of the Northern kingdom of Israel. So let's get into it here.

2 Kings chapter 16, verse 1, it... This, and by the way, this is the beginning of, we're going to talk about the reign of a king in Judah named Ahaz, who was a bad king.

“In the seventeenth year of Pekah the son of Remaliah, (by the way, who was the king of the Northern kingdom of Israel) Ahaz the son of Jotham, king of Judah, began to reign. ² Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. And he did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD his God, as his father David had done, ³ but he walked in the way of the kings of Israel. He even burned his son as an offering, according to the despicable practices of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel. (that’s referring to the Canaanites) ⁴ And he sacrificed and made offerings on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree.” (ESV)

In other words, if you stop there for a moment, Ahaz was basically known to be the most evil of David's descendants up to this point in history. The guy was a disaster from the word go, and he led Judah into pagan idolatry. And it was not a good situation by any stretch of the imagination. The only thing good about his reign, is that it only lasted for 16 years.

Verse 5 tells us, *“Then Rezin king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, came up to wage war on Jerusalem, and they besieged Ahaz but could not conquer him.”* Let me just tell you what's going on here.

This is, again this tells you how far down the road to depravity that Israel had gone. Now, they're teaming up with Syria And coming together against the

Southern kingdom of Judah and they're coming to attack Judah. Now what we're going to find out here is that they were able to take some of the cities in the outlying areas. And they were able to conquer those cities and they were able to even inhabit some of those cities.

But when they came to the capital city of Jerusalem, they couldn't get in because the Lord had been fighting for them. And we're going to see how that played out in just a little bit.

We'll but it tells us here in verse 6, *"At that time Rezin the king of Syria recovered (one of the key cities which was) Elath for Syria and drove the men of Judah from Elath, (but apparently they didn't stay there, because) ...the Edomites came to Elath, where they dwell to this day."*

So the king of Syria ousted the people of this one Judean city, but they, again, the king of Syria didn't set up any a permanent dwelling there for his people. And so the people of Edom, the Edomites said, hey, a free city. So they came in and basically inhabited that city and it remained inhabited to the point of the days of this writing.

"So (it says in verse 7 that) Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, (don't confuse Assyria with Syria. I know it's a little bit of a word play, but this is a different kingdom) saying, "I am your servant and your son."

Now stop there for a moment. If you have an NIV tonight, your Bible says, *"I am your servant and your vassal."* Well, the actual Hebrew word is son, but I'm sure that NIV translators were trying to find a word that described better what king Ahaz was trying to do, because he wasn't the son of this Assyrian king, but he was saying it, and it was a statement to say, I am yours and that's why he used that word, son. I am your son.

And the fact of the matter is Ahaz was David's son. He was in the lineage of David. Now it was many, many generations down the road, but still he had the lineage of David behind him. But he, instead of holding true to that lineage he acted like a child of the world and said, I am your son. He goes to the world.

Assyria is a pagan nation, and he says to this pagan king, I'm your son. I got troubles. The king of Syria and the king of Israel are out to get me. Oh, king of Assyria, I am your son. You see what's going on? Interesting, isn't it? I hate to say this, but it sounds familiar. I have seen. Well, let me just say this. Do you know that as a Christian, you are children of God. That is now your birthright. You have a birthright.

There are certain blessings and promises that go along with your birthright as a child of God. But sometimes, just like king Ahaz, we get into trouble and we panic. And instead of remaining true to our birthright and calling upon the name of the Lord, and enjoying all of the wonderful promises that go along with being a child of God, what do we do? We turn to the world just like Ahaz did.

We turn to the paganistic, ritualistic, religiosity of the world and whatever else they can offer us and we go to them for answers. We go to them for deliverance. We go to them for help. We do it. We've done it. You guys, let's just face it. We've done it. I don't know a Christian who hasn't at some point or another, turn to the world, however much they may have done so. But in a sense, we're denying our birthright to act like a child of the world.

And here's how Ahaz did it. I'm in the middle, you'll notice here, of verse 7. Here's how he did it. He said, *“Come up and rescue me from the hand of the king of Syria and from the hand of the king of Israel, who are attacking me.”*

Now here's what's interesting. This very event that we're reading about here in 2 Kings is an event that produced a prophetic message that is one of the most well-known prophecies in the Bible, and it's one that we hear often every Christmas.

Here's what happened. Isaiah lived during the time of king Ahaz. And he prophesied to the king. In fact, he told the king, don't worry about these guys. They're not going to get into Jerusalem. In fact, can I get you to turn to Isaiah chapter 7 for just a moment? Keep your finger here or something that you've got to mark your place. And then go to Isaiah chapter 7. I want to show you this, because this is really very fascinating.

Isaiah, chapter 7, we're going to be reading from the very beginning of the chapter. Alright, are you there? It says, *“In the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, (that's the very king we're talking about) son of Uzziah, king of Judah, Rezin the king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah the king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but could not yet mount an attack against it. ² When the house of David was told, (and that's the king, king Ahaz, he's of the line of David, when he was told) “Syria is in league with Ephraim,” (which is another name for Israel, all right. It says) the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind. (in other words, they got super scared)*

³ *And the LORD said to Isaiah, (look at this) “Go out to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-jashub your son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the*

highway to the Washer's Field. ⁴ And say to him, 'Be careful, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands, at the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria and the son of Remaliah. (who of course is the king of Israel) ⁵ Because Syria, with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has devised evil against you, saying, ⁶ "Let us go up against Judah and terrify it, and let us conquer it for ourselves, and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it," (the Lord is telling him through Isaiah what their plan was. They're going to come, they're going to overthrow Judah, and they're going to set up their own king) ⁷ thus says the LORD God: "It shall not stand, and it shall not come to pass."

Now, if you were the king, wouldn't you be happy to hear that? I would be happy to hear that. He got this word from Isaiah. I mean, here's a king who is just a total idiot anyway.

I mean, he's not walking with the Lord in any stretch of the imagination, and yet God is so gracious, sends Isaiah to him. We have such respect, for this man. And says, "*thus says the LORD...*" Here's what's going on. I'm telling you what their plan is. I know what their plan is. Their plan is to overthrow you and set up another king. Well, guess what? It isn't going to happen. They're not going to be successful.

Wouldn't you have just sent up a shout, and a hoot, and just gone, woo hoo! God is good! He's not going to let Jerusalem be overthrown and we're not going to have to submit to this, and so on, and so on, and so on.

Verse 8. He keeps going here. This is interesting. Remember I told you there's something in this prophecy that's very popular? "*For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin. And within sixty-five years Ephraim will be shattered from being a people.* (and that's Israel) ⁹ *And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah. If you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all.*"

There's a great line, huh? *If you are not firm in your faith, you will not... (stand) firm at all.*" Now that's a challenge to Ahaz. Are you going to stand firm in your faith? This situation is going on. Are you going to stand firm in the Lord? Are you going to trust me? I'm telling you, well, when God goes, bends over backward to send a messenger and to say, it's not going to happen, don't be afraid, don't be afraid. Don't let your heart, but it says they were afraid.

How afraid were they? It says their hearts were shaken like trees in the wind, right? That's, I mean, they were just absolutely just out of their mind with worry

over this thing. But God speaks to him and says, stand firm. Look what it goes on to say.

“¹⁰ Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz: (this sounds like a second message, we’re not really sure) ¹¹ “Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” ¹² But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.”” Boy, that's a really dumb thing to say. God just gave him an open opportunity to do that.

“¹³ And he said, (this is Isaiah speaking now) “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? 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. ¹⁵ He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶ For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted.”

What is God telling Ahaz? He's saying, you're, first of all, He tells him, don't be afraid. Don't, this isn't going to fruition, this attack against you. And then He comes back to Ahaz and says, ask of the Lord, anything, any sign, just ask it doesn't matter if how high or how deep, ask it and I'll do it.

What would you do? Well, Ahaz doesn't ask. I think we already know why, because we've already read in 2 Kings, that he's already sent word to the king of Assyria for help. But God comes to him and says, ask anything of Me as proof that I am going to do this and Ahaz says, I'm not going to ask anything. And he couches it in this religious, I won't put the Lord to the test.

Hey, listen, the Bible says don't put the Lord to a foolish test. But when God says test Me in this, go ahead and do it. That's an invitation. It's just like in Malachi when God speaks of tithing to the nation of Israel, He says, go ahead and test Me and see if I don't blow your socks off just with blessings.

Well, and He's saying, test Me. Check it and see, I'm faithful. So He says to Ahaz, go ahead and test. Oh no, I'm not, I won't do that. He's all right, fine. I'll give you a sign anyway.

And He speaks of this woman who we don't even know who at the time was a virgin and He said He's basically speaking of this woman and saying this woman is going to marry, conceive, and have a child. And by the time, before this child even knows right from wrong, these two nations that you're so scared of, they will be deserted. There'll be no one home.

And what God is prophesying is that the nation of Assyria, the one who Ahaz is trying to reach out for help to, they're the ones who are going to come down and decimate the land.

Ahaz of course, doesn't know that God knows it, and He's telling Ahaz, these countries that you are so afraid of by the time this child, before this child even knows right from wrong. So in those early years, these nations will be gone. They'll be gone.

Let's go back to 2 Kings now. This is the message that, and by the way, that prophecy of course was ultimately fulfilled when the virgin gave birth to the Savior. This is one of those wonderful prophecies in the Old Testament that had a double meaning. There was a short term fulfillment of it in the days of Ahaz, and there was a long term fulfillment in the coming of Messiah, who was, of course, born to a virgin.

But anyway, after all that, look what Ahaz does. Verse 8. *"Ahaz also took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD and in the treasures of the king's house and sent a present to the king of Assyria."* Instead of turning to God, instead of listening to God, he turned instead to his enemy, to the enemy, and sought deliverance.

And look what it says in verse 9. Now, it sounds like this worked. It says, *"And the king of Assyria listened to him. The king of Assyria marched up against Damascus (that's in Syria) and (he) took it, (he took the city, he took the capital city of Syria, Damascus. You know these cities still exist today? And it says he carried) ...its people captive (this is what Assyria does, this is, they come in, they basically decimate a place, they take its people and they put them other places, they make them live other places. And they took him) to Kir, and he killed (the king) Rezin."*

So the king of Assyria came and killed the king of Syria. All right, so did it work? Did Ahaz get his, did his plan work? Remember the Lord told him, don't worry, it's not going to be a problem. And even gave him, said, here's a sign to prove. And he didn't listen. He said no, no, no. It's not what I'm going to do. I'm going to go get help from Assyria. Sends him all this silver and gold.

And the king of Assyria goes, okay, and he comes down and he attacks Syria, trashes the city, kills the king. Now, what do you suppose Ahaz is thinking? It worked! It worked! Yay! It worked! Right? But did it work? No, of course it didn't work. You know that the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles are companions to 1 and 2 Kings only telling the stories of the kings of Judah. And in 1 Chronicles,

chapter 28, let me put this one up on the screen for you. This is interesting. It says in verses 16 and 20,

2 Chronicles 28:16, 20 (ESV)

At that time King Ahaz sent to the king of Assyria for help. So Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came against him and afflicted him instead of strengthening him.

At that time King Ahaz sent to the king of Assyria for help. So Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came against him and afflicted him instead of strengthening him.

That's what really happened. Yeah, he came and he attacked Syria, but then he came down and he messed with the king of Judah, rather than making his life easier, he made his life more difficult.

Listen, there's a lesson there for you and I, too, when we refuse the help that the Lord offers us, when we refuse to walk in the birthright of who we are in Jesus as children of God, and we turn instead to the world.

Listen, you may get temporary reprieve from your trouble. Okay. I don't know if you've got marriage problems, if you've got financial problems, you got problems, problems, whatever your problems are. If you turn to the world, I'm not telling you that you're not going to get some temporary reprieve or relief from your issue because Ahaz did.

And I'll bet for a while he thought, hey, boom, it worked. Yay! Until the king of Assyria got done in Syria and came down to Judah and started messing with him. It says that he afflicted him. He afflicted him. Instead of strengthening the king of Judah's hands, he made it weaker. So much for turning away from the Lord.

Let's keep reading here. Verse 10. *“When King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, (so he’s going up to Syria which, king of Assyria has just conquered, so he's going to go up and visit him) he saw the altar that was at Damascus. (in other words, an altar that the Syrians used to worship their various gods) And King Ahaz sent to Uriah the priest a model of the altar, and its pattern, (literally a sketch, your Bible may say) exact in all its details. ¹¹ And Uriah the priest built the altar; in accordance with all that King Ahaz had sent from Damascus, so Uriah the priest made it, before King Ahaz arrived from Damascus.”*

You guys see what's going on? So not only does King Ahaz not turn to the Lord and follow the promise that God gives him, but he goes up to visit the king of Assyria who's hanging out in Syria right now, because he's just conquered the place and killed the king.

And so I suppose Ahaz goes up to think he's going to probably congratulate him and they're going to hang out for a while, maybe have a few beers, I don't know, watch some movies.

And he gets up there and he sees this altar that the Syrians used to worship and he's just taken by this altar. And so he has a sketch made of it and sends it back home with messengers to the high priest. And he tells him, you build this altar just like this. Just like this.

And we're going to find out that he's going to get back and he's going to worship on that altar. But again, if we've turned to 2 Chronicles, we find an interesting statement. Did I put this one in there? 2 Chronicles 28:22? Yeah, let's go ahead and look at that. Look at this.

2 Chronicles 28:22-23 (ESV)

In the time of his distress he became yet more faithless to the LORD—this same King Ahaz. For he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus that had defeated him and said, “Because the gods of the kings of Syria helped them, I will sacrifice to them that they may help me.” But they were the ruin of him and of all Israel.

In the time of his distress he became (and this is Ahaz, he became) yet more faithless to the LORD—this same King Ahaz. For he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus that had defeated him and said, “Because the gods of the kings of Syria helped them, I will sacrifice to them that they may help me.” But they were the ruin of him and of all Israel.

Now keep in mind something, the only reason the king Ahaz is up in Syria looking at this altar is because the king of Assyria came and bloodied the nose of that country and killed their king. That's the only reason he's up there right now.

The king of Syria, from Damascus, couldn't get into Judah. He tried, along, even when he was joined with the king of Israel, he couldn't come up against Judah. Judah repelled them. They couldn't get into the city. Right?

Now, king Ahaz goes up to Damascus and he's, he says, I want to worship their gods, because they helped them. It's like, are you joking? They weren't strong enough to help them conquer you. You had to call the big guy on the block to come help, right? Their God wasn't strong enough to help them and now you want to worship their God.

Do you see the darkened mind? When people just decide they don't want to worship God, I don't want to worship the Lord God. I don't want to so I'm going to worship other things. I choose to worship other things. It's just dumb. I mean, it makes absolutely no sense what this guy is doing.

Look at verse 12. *“And when the king came from Damascus, (now he’s coming back home to Jerusalem) the king viewed the altar. (he looked it all over, and) Then the king drew near to the altar and went up on it ¹³ and burned his burnt offering and his grain offering and poured his drink offering and threw the blood of his peace offerings on the altar. ¹⁴ And the bronze altar that was before the LORD (which was part of the actual temple) he removed from the front of the house, from the place between his altar and the house of the LORD, and put it on the north side of his altar.”* Meaning in a very obscure place.

So what is Ahaz doing now? He's rearranging the furniture of the temple because he's coming up with his own deal here. He wants to de-emphasize the worship of YAHWEH, and he wants to emphasize the worship of this Damascus born, Syrian born God.

“And King Ahaz (verse 15) commanded Uriah the priest, saying, “On the great altar burn the morning burnt offering and the evening grain offering and the king's burnt offering and his grain offering, with the burnt offering of all the people of the land, and their grain offering and their drink offering. And throw on it all the blood of the burnt offering and all the blood of the sacrifice, but the bronze altar shall be for me to inquire by.” ¹⁶ Uriah the priest did all this, as King Ahaz commanded.

¹⁷ And King Ahaz cut off the frames of the stands and removed the basin from them, and he took down the sea from off the bronze oxen that were under it and put it on a stone pedestal. (you can tell he’s rearranging the furniture) ¹⁸ And the covered way for the Sabbath that had been built inside the house and the outer entrance for the king he caused to go around the house of the LORD, because of the king of Assyria. ¹⁹ Now the rest of the acts of Ahaz that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? ²⁰ And Ahaz slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David, and Hezekiah his son reigned in his place.”

You can see, can't you, from this chapter that king Ahaz was a very spiritual man. I mean, he was very interested in spiritual things. He had absolutely no relationship with the living God, but he was very spiritually minded, and he liked worship things, and he liked altars and he was very confused.

But you see, it's very possible to be spiritual, or even spiritually minded, and not be firing on all cylinders. And that describes this man. When somebody says today that they're spiritual, I get a little red alert. It goes off in my head. In fact, yeah, it happens. People do that. They like to think of themselves as spiritual. I'm a spiritual person. I don't really care, honestly, because that doesn't say anything. It doesn't tell me anything.

But do you know God? Do you know the one true God? Do you have a relationship with Him? Are you His child? Are you in His family? That's the question that we have to ask ourselves. It's not, are you spiritual? I don't care if you're spiritual. You can be spiritual and on your way to hell. Spiritually minded is not godly.

Ahaz was spiritually minded. He was really into it, but he was a very ungodly man, and he took the nation of Israel down a terrible road from which they barely survived.

2 Kings 17, it tells us, *“In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea the son of Elah began to reign in Samaria over Israel, and he reigned nine years.”* Okay, we come to Hoshea. This is the king of the Northern kingdom of Israel, not Judah. And by the way, this is the last king of Israel to reign. The last king of the northern kingdom of Israel to reign in Samaria over that kingdom.

And the usual refrain that we've read about all the other kings of Israel is given to us in verse 2. *“And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, ... (now, there is this small little uptick in Hoshea, and that is that he wasn't quite as bad) as (some of) the kings... who (came) ...before him.”* That's really all. He did evil, he did wrong in the sight of the Lord, but he wasn't quite as bad as some of the other kings. And, if that's any consolation, and frankly, it doesn't turn out to be much of one at all.

But it says, *“³ Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria. (now, hold on to that name, okay? Shalmaneser, king of where? Assyria) And Hoshea became his vassal and paid him tribute.”* What that means is, Shalmaneser said to him, well, actually his father, Tiglath-pileser, who we read about in the previous chapter, set up a system with Israel where, you got to pay me money or, and I'll

let you be king. I'll let you reign on the throne of your country, but you are my vassal.

Meaning you belong to me and you got to pay me every year so much stuff in goods and services, or I'll come and take you down off the throne, and I'll decimate your capital, and kill your people. Simple as that. And because Assyria was stronger, they were able to flex that muscle and do it. But I want you to notice there's a new king on the throne of Assyria. His name is Shalmaneser. We'll talk about that in just a moment.

It says in verse 4, *“But the king of Assyria found treachery in Hoshea, for he had sent messengers to So, king of Egypt, and offered 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.”*⁵ *Then the king of Assyria invaded all the land and came to Samaria, and for three years he besieged it.”* All right, now this is fairly typical.

Now I want to talk to you about the fact that we have a new king on the throne in Assyria and this is the son of Tiglath-pileser who we read about in the last chapter. Shalmaneser, aren't these just great names you might jot these down, you can use them someday for your cat or something.

What would happen when you were the vassal of a nation is you would wait for there to be a change in the kingdom. In other words, a new king coming on the throne. And whenever there was a shift of the king, the vassals would start thinking, okay, there's going to be some instability in the kingdom. This is the time to break free and throw off the chains that this country has placed upon us. And that's exactly what Hoshea does.

So what does he do? He stopped sending his tribute to the king of Assyria and he starts sending little love messages to the king of Egypt. And he says, hey, I think this man has bloodied our nose long enough. I don't know about you, but I'm sick and tired of it so how about you and I get together? We joined forces. We bring our armies together and if this guy comes and starts giving us any trouble, you and I, let's fight against him together, and we'll be able to destroy him. That's what's going on.

And it says that Shalmaneser hears about this and he just waltzes down, and takes the king, and locks him up. Obviously, the plan failed miserably. He's captured, imprisoned, and so forth. And it says that they came and set up an, around the city, they established a siege. You understand what it means to establish a siege around a city. An army would set up camp and not let anybody

go in or go out. And it said they did it for three years. Didn't let anybody leave the city or go into the city.

That means no food. Water is dependent on whether you can dig a well in the city. But there's no food and stuff like that so basically the idea is to starve them out. Well, and it worked.

It says in verse 6, *“In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria, (which is the capital city) and he carried the Israelites away to Assyria and placed them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.”*

So guess what guys? The Northern kingdom of Israel has now fallen. It's gone. And the people have been carted off by the Assyrians to go live somewhere else, in the various cities that are ruled by the Assyrian Empire.

Now, the rest of the chapter is essentially giving us the why. Reminding us of the why, that this happened to Israel. *“⁷ And this occurred because (why) the people 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 had feared other gods ⁸ and walked in the customs of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel, and in the customs that the kings of Israel had practiced. ⁹ And the people of Israel did secretly against the LORD their God things that were not right. They built for themselves high places in all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city. ¹⁰ They set up for themselves pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree, ¹¹ and there they made offerings on all the high places, as the nations did whom the LORD carried away before them. And they did wicked things, provoking the LORD to anger, ¹² and they served idols, of which the Lord had said to them, “You shall not do this.” ¹³ Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, “Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the Law that I commanded your fathers, and that I sent to you by my servants the prophets.””*

And by the way, not only was Isaiah prophesying during this time, but so was Micah. That is going on right at the time that Israel fell.

“¹⁴ But they would not listen, but were stubborn, as their fathers had been, who did not believe in the LORD their God. ¹⁵ They despised his statutes and his covenant that he made with their fathers and the warnings that he gave them. They went after false idols and became false, and they followed the nations that were around them, concerning whom the LORD had commanded them that

they should not do like them. ¹⁶ And they abandoned all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made for themselves metal images of two calves; and they made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal. ¹⁷ And they burned their sons and their daughters as offerings and used divination and omens and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger. ¹⁸ Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight. (look at this next sentence) None was left but the tribe of Judah only.”

Now we know that Judah actually absorbed one of the other tribes and the other 10 tribes made up the Northern kingdom of Israel. This has led many people to believe in the theory of the lost 10 tribes of Israel. I don't know if you've ever heard that. Good grief. There have been whole churches that have risen up claiming to be the lost 10 tribes of Israel. Problem is they weren't lost at all.

When it says that only Judah was left. It means only the kingdom of Judah was left. It doesn't mean that the only people that were left were people from the tribe of Judah. Judah was a huge land mass, that southern area, or kingdom of Israel. And a lot of people over the years, because Israel had so many wicked kings, a lot of the people from the northern kingdom of Israel had defected down to Judah over the point, over the course of those years, so that all of the tribes of Israel were now represented within the context of the land mass, which is now called Judah. And if you don't believe me, I'll prove it to you. 2 Chronicles, chapter 11.

2 Chronicles 11:13-16 (ESV)

And the priests and the Levites who were in all Israel presented themselves to him from all places where they lived. For the Levites left their common lands and their holdings and came to Judah and Jerusalem, because Jeroboam and his sons cast them out from serving as priests of the LORD...

And the priests and the Levites who were in all Israel presented themselves to him (that's the king of Judah) from all places where they lived. For the Levites left their common lands and their holdings (in the Northern kingdom) and came to Judah and Jerusalem, because Jeroboam and his sons cast them out from serving as priests of the LORD...

Here's a statement in 2 Chronicles that tells us that during those years of those wicked kings of Israel, people were migrating down. Isn't that interesting? That's exactly what Jeroboam was trying to keep them from doing. By establishing those golden calves, he was afraid people were going to defect to the Southern kingdom so he established his own religion.

Well, all that ended up doing was chasing away all the godly people in the land because they were like, we're not going to do this. We're not going to worship these golden calves. What's this all about? This is stupid. And they picked up and they left their homeland.

They left their lands which God had given them in their tribal allotments through Joshua and they came down to live in the southern kingdom of Judah, because at least there, there was, from time to time, godly kings on the throne, and the lineage of David.

And you can see from this passage that people had migrated. There are no 10 lost tribes of Israel, okay? There's just Israel and there's the people of Israel. And if somebody brings up one of these conspiracy theories to you, have you heard about the lost tribes of Israel? Listen, God doesn't lose anything. And Paul tells us in Romans, there's always been a remnant. Always has, always will be, so we're not too worried about that.

Verse 19. Let's continue on. But it tells us, *“Judah also did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the customs that Israel had introduced. ²⁰ And the LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel and afflicted them and gave them into the hand of plunderers, until he had cast them out of his sight.*

²¹ When he had torn Israel from the house of David, they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. (now we're going back and giving a history lesson) And Jeroboam drove Israel from following the LORD and made them commit great sin. ²² The people of Israel walked in all the sins that Jeroboam did. They did not depart from them, ²³ until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had spoken by all his servants the prophets. So Israel was exiled from their own land to Assyria until this day.

²⁴ And the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the people of Israel. And they took possession of Samaria and lived in its cities. ²⁵ And at the beginning of their dwelling there, they did not fear the LORD. Therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which killed some of them. ²⁶ So the king of Assyria was told, (hey) “The nations that you have carried away and placed in the cities of Samaria do not know the law of the god of the land. Therefore he has sent lions among them, and behold, they are killing them, because they do not know the law of the god of the land.” (very pagan thinking) ²⁷ Then the king of Assyria commanded, “Send there one of the priests whom you carried away from there, and let him go and

dwell there and teach them the law of the god of the land. ” ²⁸ So one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and lived in Bethel and taught them how they should fear the LORD. ”

You see what's going on here? I mean, it's very superstitious sort of stuff. They're like, okay, obviously we don't know what this God of Israel requires, and He's sending lions to eat our people so we better send one of their priests to go teach them how to appease this God.

See, the pagans were all about appeasing gods, that's why they sacrificed their children sometimes. The gods would periodically get extremely irritated and what you had to do is you had to appease them by offering them something. It's a very pagan mindset.

So I got to do something to make God happy again because He's pouting and he needs a toy to play with or He needs a gift. So send this priest and he'll train the people what they need to do, to do this, so they should, fear the Lord. But what happened?

Verse 29. It says, *“But every nation still made gods of its own and put them in the shrines of the high places that the Samaritans had made, every nation in the cities in which they lived. ³⁰ The men of Babylon made Succoth-benoth, the men of Cuth made Nergal, (these are obviously their gods or their worship practices) the men of Hamath made Ashima, ³¹ and the Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak; and the Sepharvites burned their children in the fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim. ³² They also feared the LORD and appointed from among themselves all sorts of people as priests of the high places, who sacrificed for them in the shrines of the high places. ³³ So they feared the LORD but also served their own gods, after the manner of the nations from among whom they had been carried away. ”*

So what's going on here? These people are just bringing in an amalgamation of their worship practices. And this priest is sent to teach them how to serve YAHWEH, but they're not going to abandon the beliefs of their home countries. They're going to continue to worship their own gods in the way they worshiped their gods. And so what happens? What do you end up with? You end up with this stew with all these different ingredients and nothing is what it should be.

Do you guys understand that this is what happened to Roman Catholicism? Do you understand that? Do you understand that during that period when the Roman Catholic Church was conquering nations because at one particular point during the Crusades, the Roman Catholics believed that the kingdom of God

was Earth. And that meant that when we conquer people and make them Catholic, we are building up the kingdom of God. Even though Jesus said, My kingdom is not of this world. They didn't believe it. So they began conquering people and forcing them to be baptized as Catholic.

So they would go into all these nations during the Crusades, during this period of time, and these people were pagans. They believed all kinds of crazy pagan sorts of beliefs. Well, the Roman Catholics came along with their armies and they basically said submit to the Roman Catholic Church or die.

Well, some people fought them and tried to survive. And some people just said, yeah, fine, we'll bow the knee. And they just got marched out to the nearest body of water and they baptized them into the Catholic Church. They didn't attempt to make them necessarily Catholic from the standpoint of what they believed. These people continued to worship their pagan gods. You get it?

Same thing that happened to Samaria and the Northern kingdom of Israel. That's why Roman Catholicism, if you look carefully, and I'm not bashing Roman Catholicism or Roman Catholics. I have a great love for those people.

My point is, if you look deeply at many aspects of Roman Catholicism today, it still retains some of the qualities that it gained from those conquests so many years ago, when pagan nations were assimilated without being converted to Christ. They were assimilated into the church, but they were never made Christian.

And that's the danger of bringing people into the church and not bringing people into Christ. Right? That's why it's one of the reasons we don't have a membership here, particularly at Calvary chapel. We don't believe in church membership because first of all, there's nothing in the Bible about it.

And second of all, if you make people members of a church, then they start thinking they're good. I'm good. I'm a member of Calvary. I'm a member of Calvary chapel. It's like, as if that means something. It doesn't mean squat. You need to be born again, child of God. You need to be a member of God's family.

And if you're a member of God's family, you're good to go. Right. And it doesn't matter what church you go to, you go, you get fed, you're whatever. you're a part of this church, that church, you're a you're a child of God. That's what's important. We're not interested in building a kingdom on earth.

Jesus's kingdom is not of this world. So it's interesting that we've seen these things happen repeatedly over history. And this is what happened to the Northern kingdom of Israel, which later, they didn't call the Northern kingdom of Israel anymore because it wasn't Israel anymore. So what did they call it? What are we going to call this place? Well, by the time Jesus came around, they called it Samaria, named it after the capital city of Northern kingdom of Israel.

Now the whole land was called Samaria and the Samaritans were a despised people by the time Jesus came along because they were confused. Spiritually, biologically they were confused. There was a little remnant of Jewish DNA in there, but there was a whole lot of pagan DNA in there as well. And the Jews considered, the real true Jews, considered the Samaritans dogs, and they wouldn't walk through their country. They believed that to even set foot on Samaritan soil would defile them.

Remember what Jesus did when he was on his way up to Galilee? Plowed right through Samaria. A lot of people got saved too, because Jesus came to seek and save that which is lost. And they were lost so we've seen these things happen repeatedly over time.

What time is it? About 10 after. Okay, let's finish the chapter here. I think we're at verse 34, are we not? Somebody say yes. Okay, good. There we go. *“To this day they do according to the former manner. They do not fear the LORD, and they do not follow the statutes or the rules or the law or the commandment that the LORD commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel. ³⁵ The LORD made a covenant with them and commanded them, “You shall not fear other gods or bow yourselves to them or serve them or sacrifice to them, ³⁶ but you shall fear the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt with great power and with an outstretched arm. You shall bow yourselves to him, and to him you shall sacrifice. ³⁷ And the statutes and the rules and the law and the commandment that he wrote for you, you shall always be careful to do. You shall not fear other gods, ³⁸ and you shall not forget the covenant that I have made with you. You shall not fear other gods, ³⁹ but you shall fear the LORD your God, and he will deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies.””*

Did that happen? No, because they didn't fear God.

“⁴⁰ However, they would not listen, but they did according to their former manner.

⁴¹ *So these nations feared the LORD and also served their carved images. Their children did likewise, and their children's children—as their fathers did, so they do to this day.*” And we're going to stop there.