

JUNE 30

2 Kings 17:1-18:12

2 Kings 17

This is a very sad chapter of the Bible and is entirely about Israel being taken out of its land. We've read about God's redemptive plan since almost the first day of the year. We've read about the long years with Abraham, how God made a covenant with him, and how the nation of Israel was formed, and began to see the fulfillment of that promise. Yet it seems that the nation never really responded to God, not in the wilderness, nor as a nation with its own land.

We have seen the power of sin. This spiritual sickness is the strongest force on earth, except for the amazing grace of God. His patience and kindness in these last chapters, working with Israel, has truly been a testimony to His love. The summary of this chapter shows that unless the heart of man is changed by the new life of the Spirit, there is no hope for mankind.

Notice in this chapter that it mentions worship and the fear of the Lord, yet vs. 34-35 make it clear that to worship any other god, in addition to God, is not to fear Him at all. That would be true today, too.

This chapter introduces the origin of the "race" of the Samaritans of the New Testament, whom the Jews hated. They were a mixed people, both of race and of religion - doubly despised and hated in the NT.

It should be mentioned here that to take a people into exile was to "exterminate" a race of people by forcing them into another culture to intermarry and lose their cultural identity. Living in another land meant they would be forced to serve and worship other gods, learn new customs and speak another language. This effectively happened to the northern kingdom. But then, they had already lost their identity through their worship of foreign gods, long before they were taken into captivity. Israel survived through the southern kingdom. People from all 12 tribes were represented in Judah and we'll see that there will be something very different about Judah's exile in Babylon.

What things do you find interesting in this chapter? What does this say to you as a disciple in the harvest?

Vs. 1-6 At this point everyone was either paying tribute to Assyria or paying the price of not paying. Hoshea has the distinction of being the last king of Israel, the northern kingdom.

Vs. 7-18 This explanation is for the northern kingdom. You can see this by v. 19, which refers to the kingdom of Judah and their sin. But the people were idolatrous from the death of Joshua to the judgeship of Samuel. Then with Solomon, idolatry was reintroduced into the nation. We have witnessed God's mercy, patience and His outstretched hand over hundreds of years. Remember that what we are seeing is not how bad Israel was, but how deep and irresistible sin is in each of us. Israel is being used as a visual aid for us to learn from. In the future God will restore and bless them for this "ministry" and because of His promise to Abraham. For now, as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:11-12, *Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.*

Vs. 19-20 When we get into Jeremiah and Ezekiel, we'll see that Judah really gets blasted because they saw all that God did to Israel and still didn't follow the Lord.

Notice that since this is mentioning Judah going into exile, this had to have been written after they went into exile.

Vs. 21-23 This short summary covers a couple of hundred years of God reaching out to Israel.

Vs. 24-28 The king of Assyria brought in his own people once he had removed most of the people of Israel. These people from Babylon, Cuthah, etc., were part of what Assyria controlled. As these people mixed with the Jews who were left in Samaria, these mixed people became the hated Samaritans we hear of in the New Testament. It is interesting that God made sure that these people still respected Him. What God will do later in Babylon will be very direct and will actually save Judah/Israel.

Vs. 29-33 This is all to say that those who occupied Samaria were not worshipers of the Lord. They were pagans who worshiped everything. Yahweh was just one of many.

Vs. 34-41 If Kings was written after the return from Babylon, it is explaining why the Jews would not allow the Samaritans to help them with the temple, and why they would not join the Samaritans as "brothers" or in worship. These people called themselves Israelites and they claimed to worship Yahweh, but they were totally lost and embraced all gods. The exiles who returned from Babylon never worshiped idols, and most of them were very strong in the culture of Judaism. When we get into the book of Daniel, we can do some speculating as to why this was.

2 Kings 18:1-12

Vs. 1-8 We will hear more about Hezekiah in this section, in 2 Chronicles and in Isaiah, than any other king besides David and Solomon. You wonder why Hezekiah was a better man than his father. It might have been that he was influenced by Isaiah and Micah the prophets and that he learned from God's judgment against the northern kingdom.

V. 3 Hezekiah walked in the way of David. How? Not in being perfect, but in worshiping no other God but Yahweh. That then is the deciding mark of having the heart of David.

V. 4 Did you even know that thing was still around? Imagine the guts it must have taken for Hezekiah to have destroyed this old relic. I can imagine all the cultural initiatives to have this put into the Smithsonian, and all the rallies with people carrying signs that said, "Save Nehushtan." Apparently no other king, not even David, had objected to people "honoring" that bronze snake.

Notice the beginning of vs. 5, 6 & 7.

V. 5 When it says there was no king like Hezekiah, before or after him, that is a very high honor and it needs to be seen in the full context of what he did. We'll see that full context tomorrow.

Vs. 9-12 Whereas the king of Assyria took Samaria, he would break his back on Jerusalem. The difference was the godliness of the king and the presence of the Lord.

Acts 20

This is the conclusion of the third missionary journey. After the night of fun in Ephesus, Paul was on his way back to Jerusalem.

Vs. 1-2 Paul apparently stopped in Corinth to pick up the aid that was collected for the church in Jerusalem, as per 1 Corinthians 16. This would have been after Paul had written 1 and 2 Corinthians. Paul spent three months there to settle the church and to write Romans.

Vs. 3-6 Apparently Paul had planned to sail directly back to Antioch, but when he learned of the plan to kill him, he went back through Macedonia by foot to Philippi. Paul sent these fellow workers ahead to Troas, maybe to throw his persecutors off of his scent, and then sailed from Philippi to Troas. Notice that Luke is again with Paul.

Vs. 7-12 Paul preached long sermons too!

Vs. 13-16 So, why did Paul avoid Ephesus? It might have been because of Alexander the coppersmith. It may also have been to get to Jerusalem before Pentecost.

Vs. 18-38 Notice the amount of space given to this meeting with the elders from Ephesus. For some reason, this talk Paul has with them is very important.

Vs. 23-24 Notice that Paul did have some foreboding regarding Jerusalem. You can also see this in Romans 15:30-31 (written in Corinth, vs. 1-2), *I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf,* ³¹*that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints...*

Vs. 29-31 Notice Paul's warning. The church in Ephesus survived and is mentioned in Revelation, written probably 25 years after Paul's death. But in 1 Timothy, written after Acts and after Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, Paul was rushing off to Macedonia, while Timothy was trying to rebuild the church in Ephesus. Something happened that almost destroyed that church. Paul is saying here where the main threat will arise. Also, if you look at the problems Paul warns Timothy that he will face, in 1 Timothy, you can also see how that "threat from within" worked to sidetrack and ruin that church. They became very defensive and doctrinal and lost their first love and their effectiveness in the harvest.

Vs. 33-35 This sounds like Moses and Samuel saying that they never took anyone's donkey, meaning that they never took advantage of the people they served. During those 14 years of silence in Paul's life, when he learned the trade of tent manufacturing, God impressed on him working to make the gospel free of charge. This may have been from the fact that as a Pharisee he was rich. But in all of Paul's work, he worked with his hands and expressed this conviction in 1 Corinthians 9.

V. 35 Sounds like what Paul says in Ephesians 4:28, *Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.*

As disciples, keeping the church on track to make disciples and follow Christ in the harvest is not an easy task. The harvest is challenging enough, but when different influences and "missions" come into the church, we need a lot of wisdom and all of God's help. If you read 1 Timothy, notice how often Paul warns about "discussions," and how often he tries to refocus on the mission. The love of Christ and His mission is the key to discipleship and our walk with Christ. Once we lose the mission, we overcompensate by becoming "theological geniuses;" and then we lose everything, and making disciples cannot take place. You follow Christ in the harvest, not in debates about theological issues and purity. Disciples are for the harvest and are made in the harvest, not in discussions. As Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:14-21, *For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died;* ¹⁵*and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.* ¹⁶*From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.* ¹⁷*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.* ¹⁸*All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;* ¹⁹*that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.* ²⁰*Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.* ²¹*For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Psalm 148

Obviously some of this is poetic and some is hyperbolic and some is metaphoric, but we all get the point. We should *praise the Lord*.

Vs. 1-2 I take this to mean that all created beings should worship and praise God.

Vs. 3-4 This would be the vast creation of the universe and earth.

Vs. 5-6 All of these beings and things mentioned represent the majesty of God's power and He deserves praise for all of this.

Vs. 7-10 All of the things and creatures God created should give praise to God.

Vs. 11-12 Everything created in His image on earth should praise Him.

Vs. 13-14 God deserves praise for all of His greatness and majesty, but v. 14 goes further. In God raising *up a horn*, it is talking about a ruler. Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist said it like this in Luke 1:68-69, *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David.*

Proverbs 18:6-7

Notice the art in this. You have *lips* in the first and last clause and two *mouths* in the middle. It's amazing how that hole in our face can get us into so much trouble. But Jesus said, *all these evil things come from within, and they defile a person, and out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.* So the problem is really a heart problem, and the Lord knows how to take care of –that, but do we?