

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

2 KINGS 15-17

One of the most influential paintings of all time was Michelangelo's "[The Last Judgment](#)". It covers the wall behind the altar in the Vatican's Sistine Chapel.

The painting took Michelangelo six years to complete. When it was unveiled it caused all Europe to tremble. The painting pictures Jesus judging the wicked and sending them into damnation. Some of the painting's elements are *unbiblical*, but its impact was *undeniable*. The masterpiece ingrained God's judgment in the hearts and minds of Europeans. It convicted the conscience of a continent.

Tonight, we also come to a picture of God's judgment.

We'll observe the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel – *and it should shake us up*. Like you and me, these were God's people – chosen by God, blessed by God. But *God's blessing* didn't immunize them from *God's judgment*.

God is rich in mercy - generous with grace – plentiful in patience - but when His people persist in their sin God has no other choice but to judge their wickedness.

For 200 years God was patient with the northern kingdom of Israel in hopes they would repent. Nineteen kings ruled over Israel, but tragically they all led the people into idolatry. Repentance never occurred and God brought judgment.

Tonight we'll witness the decline and fall of the northern kingdom.

Before we dive in let's get the global picture...

The date was 790 BC, and a great kingdom – a military juggernaut - was growing northeast of Israel – on the Euphrates River. The Assyrian empire was on the rise. And their spread preoccupied Israel's northern adversary, the Syrians.

This afforded Israel a final period of prosperity – enjoyed by King Joash and King Jeroboam II. This was a final reprieve – the calm before the storm.

One last period of *God's blessing*, before *God's judgment*.

And during this time God sent prophets to warn Israel - Joel, Jonah, Hosea, and Amos. This flurry of prophetic activity was God's final call to Israel.

After the death of Jeroboam II, the northern kingdom was plunged into a 30 year period of chaos and confusion which ends with their conquest in 722 BC.

The instability in the north was framed by the stability enjoyed in the south.

The king of Judah, Azariah or Uzziah, reined for 52 years. While this one king sits on the throne in Judah – Israel experiences a run of six different kings.

This instability weakened Israel and made her easy prey for the Assyrians.

Chapter 15 begins, “In the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Azariah the son of Amaziah, king of Judah, became king.” This king was more commonly known as “Uzziah.” In fact, verse 13 refers to him as *Uzziah*.

Azariah, or Uzziah, was one of Judah's eight "good kings".

"He was 16 years old when he became king, and he reigned 52 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jecholiah of Jerusalem." Of course, today is Mother's Day so its fitting his mother gets mentioned. I'm sure behind every good king there's a mom who taught him God's ways and trained him to rule wisely.

Uzziah was 16 years old when he became king. Imagine, getting your driver's license and taking the throne the same year. Hey, when a 16 year old boy gets his license, I know he feels like king of the road. 792 BC was a big year for Uzziah.

"And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done, except that the high places were not removed; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places."

And this was not the only mistake Uzziah made.

2 Chronicles 26:16 tells us, "when he was strong his heart was lifted up, to his destruction, for he transgressed against the LORD his God by entering the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense." Uzziah became proud.

He was no longer content to be king. He also wanted to be priest.

Under God's Law there was strict separation between church and state. The king was never to be a priest, but Uzziah considered himself above God's Law.

In the colonial days of America there was a great debate. British loyalists spoke of "Rex Lex" – "the king is law." Patriots

insisted on “Lex Rex” – “the law is king.”

Which is it? Well, God weighs in on the subject in verse 5...

“Then the LORD struck the king, so that he was a leper until the day of his death; so he dwelt in an isolated house.” Uriah lived the rest of his life under quarantine. Because of pride he ended up neither priest nor king...

Evidently, as far as God is concerned, His Law trumps the king!

We’re told, “And Jotham the king's son was over the royal house, judging the people of the land.” His son had to take over the royal duties of a rebellious dad.

“Now the rest of the acts of Azariah, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

So Azariah rested with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers in the City of David. Then Jotham his son reigned in his place.”

Verses 8-31 document the chaos that was occurring in the northern kingdom while Uzziah was on the throne in Judah. Tragically but expectedly, Israel’s final days were marked by treachery, murder, treason, anarchy, and assassination...

“In the 38th year of Azariah king of Judah, Zechariah the son of Jeroboam reigned over Israel in Samaria six months.” All he lasted was half-a-year.

“And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, as his fathers had done; he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin.”

“Then Shallum the son of Jabesh conspired against him, and struck and killed him in front of the people; and he reigned in his place.” Jeroboam II’s successor was assassinated in broad daylight – in a public place in front of the people.

“Now the rest of the acts of Zechariah, indeed they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. This was the word of the LORD which He spoke to Jehu, saying, “Your sons shall sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation.” And so it was.” In 2 Kings 10:30 God promised Jehu because he’d faithfully judged the house of Ahab – his heir would sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation. Zechariah was the fourth and final king in Jehu’s dynasty.

Verse 13 tells us Zechariah’s assassin “Shallum the son of Jabesh became king in the 39th year of Uzziah king of Judah; and he reigned a full month in Samaria.” Shallum managed to sit on the throne for 30 days.

Obviously, he didn’t come to power with a groundswell of support.

“For Menahem the son of Gadi went up from Tirzah, came to Samaria, and struck Shallum the son of Jabesh in Samaria and killed him; and he reigned in his place.” The kings of Israel are toppling like dominoes. Israel is going through monarchs like the University of Alabama goes through football coaches.

Josephus says Shallum was supposedly Zechariah’s friend – Menachem was his general. When Menachem heard of

Shallum's treachery he came to Samaria to take vengeance. Menachem killed Shallum and took the throne for himself.

“Now the rest of the acts of Shallum, and the conspiracy which he led, indeed they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

Then from Tirzah, Menahem attacked Tiphseh, all who were there, and its territory. Because they did not surrender, therefore he attacked it.

All the women there who were with child he ripped open.”

Obviously, Menachem was not a nice guy. He was a military general by trade. He was short on diplomacy and prone to violence and vindictiveness.

“In the 39th year of Azariah king of Judah, Menahem the son of Gadi became king over Israel, and reigned 10 years in Samaria. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart all his days from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin.” And it was in the reign of a king known for his violence that suddenly the most ruthless people in history appear on the scene.

“Pul king of Assyria came against the land...” The Assyrian army turned savagery and butchery into an art form. They made Menahem seem gentle.

This “Pul” was also known as **Tiglath-Pileser III.**

One historian calls him, “one of the most successful military commanders in world history, conquering most of the world known to the ancient Assyrians.”

This is the first mention in the Scriptures of the Assyrians –

which is strange since they had been a world power for 150 years by this point in history.

Some believe their absence as a threat to Israel was the result of Jonah's ministry to Nineveh – the Assyrian capital. Remember, Jonah's time in the belly of the fish convinced him to heed the call of God. He journeyed to the Gentile city and preached a message of repentance. To Jonah's surprise – and even his dismay - Nineveh repented of their idolatry and turned to the God of Israel.

It could be that's why the next few Assyrian leaders were reluctant to invade. But Pul shows no such inhibition. He attacks the northern kingdom.

“And Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, that his hand might be with him to strengthen the kingdom under his control.” He pays him a ransom.

And he gets it by taxing his people. “Menahem exacted the money from Israel, from all the very wealthy, from each man 50 shekels of silver, to give to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria turned back, and did not stay there in the land.”

But Israel has not seen the last of the Assyrians and Tiglath-Pileser.

“Now the rest of the acts of Menahem, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? So Menahem rested with his fathers. Then Pekahiah his son reigned in his place.”

Verse 23, “In the 50th year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekahiah the son of Menahem became king over Israel in Samaria, and reigned two years.

And he did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin. Then Pekah the son of Remaliah, an officer of his, conspired against him and killed him in Samaria, in the citadel of the king's house, along with Argob and Arieah (his accomplices); and with him were 50 men of Gilead. He killed him and reigned in his place.”

“Now the rest of the acts of Pekahiah, and all that he did, indeed they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. In the 52nd (and final) year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekah the son of Remaliah became king over Israel in Samaria, and reigned 20 years. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin.”

And how many times have we read this about the sin of Jeroboam? Nineteen times we read, he “**made Israel sin.**” Israel’s first king left such a sad legacy.

Remember Jeroboam’s sin was a subtle idolatry. He erected golden calves in Dan and Bethel – not as *replacements for God*, but as *representations of God*.

It was a violation of the second commandment that led to disobedience of the first. Jeroboam worshipped God – but not in the way He desired to be worshipped.

Jeroboam invented his own religion – *one that was convenient, not faithful*.

And sadly, all 19 of his predecessors followed in his footsteps. In the end, the corrupt worship of Jeroboam was the primary sin for which God judged Israel.

Make sure your worship *obeys God* – not just *appeases you*.

Verse 29 “In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came and took Ijon, Abel Beth Maachah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali; and he carried them captive to Assyria.” The Assyrians attacked the border towns and took their inhabitants prisoner.

It was the beginning of the end for the northern kingdom of Israel.

“Then Hoshea the son of Elah led a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and struck and killed him; so he reigned in his place in the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah. Now the rest of the acts of Pekah, and all that he did, indeed they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.”

Hoshea will reign 9 more years, but he will be the last of Israel’s kings.

In Judah, the death of Uzziah, was followed by the reign of his son, Jotham. Jotham was also a good and godly king, who reigned 16 years in Jerusalem.

But notice the reoccurring problem. 2 Kings 15:35 reads, “**However the high places were not removed...**” This is an omission that eventually bites them.

The rest of the chapter takes us south to Judah – and Uzziah’s successor.

Verse 32 “In the second year of Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, Jotham the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, began to reign. He was 25 years old when he became king, and he reigned 16 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jerusha the daughter of Zadok. And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD; he did according to all that his father Uzziah had done.

However the high places were not removed; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places. He built the Upper Gate of the house of the LORD.” The high places were the altars where idolatry could be practiced.

God centralized worshipped in Israel. Everyone worshipped at the Temple. You were not supposed to erect your own altar or high place. Worship remained pure.

Yet even when the Jews went to the Temple they still liked to hold on to their high places. They didn't bow to the idol, but they liked to polish its pedestal.

I think there's an equivalent in our lives...

It happens subtly, though I promise to serve God I leave my options open. I want to follow God, but I've never burned my contacts with the world – or cut off supply lines. I've kept sin within reach if I ever want to go back. *I've taken down the idol, but I'm maintaining the pedestal.* It's a sin that leads to compromise.

“Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

In those days the LORD began to send Rezin king of Syria

and Pekah the son of Remaliah against Judah. So Jotham rested with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the City of David his father. Then Ahaz his son reigned in his place.”

Chapter 16, “In the 17th year of Pekah the son of Remaliah, Ahaz the son of Jotham, king of Judah, began to reign. Ahaz was 20 years old when he became king, and he reigned 16 years in Jerusalem; and he did not do what was right in the sight of the LORD his God, as his father David had done. But he 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.” The father’s high places yielded full-blown idolatry in the son.

Ahaz forsakes Jehovah God, and worshipped Molech, god of the Moabites.

One of the practices of Molech was child sacrifice – making your sons pass through the fire. These were the sins for which God judged the Canaanites.

“And he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree.” Notice one generation’s *compromise* morphs into the second generation’s *outright idolatry*. Be careful what you tolerate. Your little compromises are permission for a child to travel the same path, yet further.

Your social drinking can be a teenager’s excuse to go off on a binge.

Verse 5 “Then Rezin king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, came up to Jerusalem to make war...” King Ahaz’s two northern neighbors team up to pick on Judah. “And they besieged Ahaz but could not overcome him.” At that time Rezin king of Syria captured Elath for Syria, and drove the men of Judah from Elath. Then the Edomites went to Elath, and dwell there to this day.”

So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, saying, "I am your servant and your son. Come up and save me from the hand of the king of Syria and from the hand of the king of Israel, who rise up against me." This was a terrible mistake. Rather than trust the Lord, Ahaz buys Assyrian protection...

“Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasuries of the king's house, and sent it as a present to the king of Assyria.”

What an insult to God! Not only does Ahaz not trust God - he buys Assyrian protection with treasures dedicated to God. It was like pouring salt on a wound.

“So the king of Assyria heeded him; for the king of Assyria went up against Damascus and took it, carried its people captive to Kir, and killed Rezin.”

I’m sure Ahaz liked the initial results. The capital of Syria – Damascus - fell to the Assyrians in 732 BC. But this was like inviting a serial killer into your house to protect you from your neighbor. It’s only a matter of time before he turns on you.

At first Assyria fights for Judah, but by chapter 18 she’s fighting against Judah.

Verse 10 “Now King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, and saw an altar that was at Damascus; and King Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the design of the altar and its pattern, according to all its workmanship.

Then Urijah the priest built an altar according to all that King Ahaz had sent from Damascus. So Urijah the priest made it before King Ahaz came from Damascus. And when the king came from Damascus, the king saw the altar; and the king approached the altar and made offerings on it.

So he burned his burnt offering and his grain offering; and he poured his drink offering and sprinkled the blood of his peace offerings on the altar.

He also brought the bronze altar which was before the LORD, from the front of the temple - from between the new altar and the house of the LORD - and put it on the north side of the new altar.” It’s unclear whether Ahaz did all this in the names of the Assyrian gods, or whether he worshipped Jehovah just in Assyrian style.

This is what some Christians do today when they merge pagan practices with Christian living. Yoga, visualization, chanting your mantra... these techniques are often labeled “relaxation methods.” In reality, they’re forms of eastern mysticism.

Today, yoga has become a fashionable form of exercise. Even some churches have jumped on the bandwagon - somehow ignoring that the ancient practice of yoga is inextricably linked to Hinduism. “Christian yoga” is an

oxymoron.

I read of one church group that calls itself “Yahweh Yoga”. That sounds like a name coined by King Ahaz. Ahaz Assyrianized his altar. He jazzed it up. He adopted the values and forms of Assyrian worship to make it fashionable.

Hey, if you want to exercise, and stretch, and pray while you're at it... fine. But why employ yoga. I believe the idea of *Christian yoga* is a definite *stretch*.

Any amalgamation of Christianity and paganism is an affront to God.

Verse 15 “Then King Ahaz commanded Urijah the priest, saying, "On the great new altar burn the morning burnt offering, the evening grain offering, the king's burnt sacrifice, and his grain offering, with the burnt offering of all the people of the land, their grain offering, and their drink offerings; and sprinkle on it all the blood of the burnt offering and all the blood of the sacrifice.

And the bronze altar shall be for me to inquire by." (To seek God's will)

Thus did Urijah the priest, according to all that King Ahaz commanded.

“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.” Ahaz tailored the Temple to conform to Assyrian

tastes. King Ahaz wanted to please the Assyrians more than God.

“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 (another way of saying he died), and was buried with his fathers in the City of David.

Then Hezekiah his son reigned in his place.”

Chapter 17 records the siege and fall of Israel, and her capital city, Samaria.

Shalmaneser V, son of Pul, is now king of Assyria, and commander of the Assyrian army. Halley’s Bible Handbook comments on Nineveh’s army...

“The Assyrians were great warriors. Most nations then were robber nations. The Assyrians seem to have been about the worst of them all. They built their state on the loot of other peoples. They practiced cruelty. They skinned their prisoners alive, or cut off their hands, feet, noses, ears, or put out their eyes, or pulled out their tongues, and made mounds of human skulls, all to inspire terror.”

These vicious people besieged Samaria for 3 years, sucking the life out of her, until the city was destroyed. But chapter 17 makes it clear that the fall of northern kingdom was not the result of Assyrian might, or Israel’s military weakness.

In Isaiah 10:5 God refers to the Assyrians as “the rod of My anger and the staff in whose hand is My indignation.” The Assyrians were God’s tool of judgment.

Verse 1 “In the 12th 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 3 years.” Siege warfare was an ancient art of battle. You cut off a city’s supply lines, and waited until they either starve to death or surrender.

This final attack was brought on by Hoshea’s conspiracy with the Egyptians.

“In the ninth year of Hoshea (or 722 BC – is the infamous secular date), 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.

The Assyrian policy toward conquered people was one of displacement.

Later we see that the Babylonians took their enemy captive back to Babylon. But the Assyrians scattered their defeated foes into other parts of the empire.

“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.” Their crimes were clear!

The northern tribes had sinned against God and followed pagan practices.

“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.” The wooden images were phallic symbols that were used in the worship of the Canaanite fertility gods.

“There they burned incense on all the high places, like the nations whom the LORD had carried away before them...” Israel became worse than the Canaanite tribes God used them to judge. They mimicked the sins of their predecessors.

“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.” God sent prophets to warn them.

“Nevertheless they would not hear, but stiffened their necks,

like the necks of their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God.” They grew stubborn.

“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 (the sin of Jeroboam), 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.

Also Judah did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made.” Because of Judah’s 8 good kings God still saw hope in Judah, and gave her another 120 years to repent.

“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.” Once again a reference to “the sin of Jeroboam.”

“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...” Because of Israel’s persistent sin Samaria fell, and the northern 10 tribes were scattered among the nations.

They worshipped the golden calves of Jeroboam for their entire history. They sunk to Baal worship at times, and other forms of idolatry. And though God was faithful to warn them – over and over they stubbornly rejected the prophets.

Verse 24 “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.”

Again the Assyrian strategy with the people they conquered was displacement.

They took the natives of one land, and resettled them in some other territory they had conquered... This meant while the Assyrians were deporting Hebrews from Israel they were importing defeated foes from other lands into the area.

And these Gentile immigrants will intermarry with the Hebrews left behind.

“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." Even the officials were bright enough to recognize the lions as a divine judgment.

"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." But sadly, a priest from the northern kingdom was not a godly priest. He would've been a priest of Jeroboam who served the holy COWS.

Hey, whatever this priest told you would be *a bunch of bull!* - no matter how *mooving* his presentation. Hey, I'm going to try to *milk* this one all I can.

"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.” It seems these people learned about the true God, but they failed to embrace Him as the only God.

They added Jehovah to the list of gods they brought with them.

“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.” A strange religion developed in Samaria.

It was a corrupted form of Judaism. Jewish ritual laced with pagan belief.

“And the statutes, the ordinances, the law, and the commandment which (God) 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.” Evidently, the Jewish covenant was offered to these people. They married Hebrews and could live as

Hebrews...

“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.” These people came to be known as the *Samaritans*.

Unlike the northern kingdom, Israel, who was scattered among the nations - the southern kingdom of Judah is eventually judged and taken to Babylon as exiles.

Eventually, Judah is allowed to return and Nehemiah rebuilds Jerusalem, but guess who tries to thwart them? These same folks... the Samaritans.

The Samaritans were a mixed race – part Hebrew, part Gentile.

They were a people who worshipped Jehovah in name – but who never fully embraced the Law of Moses. They became the hated enemies of the Jews.

This is why Jesus talked about the “[Good Samaritan](#)” – here’s a man who was hated by the Jews, but was more righteous because of his love and compassion.

When we get to the New Testament the Samaritans play a pivotal role in the life of Jesus. Our Lord showed mercy on a Samaritan village. He blessed a Samaritan woman with the gift of living water – *soul-satisfying water*.

There is still a small group of Samaritans in existence today.

Of course the question always arises, what happened to the

northern 10 tribes that were scattered throughout the world? Israel's famous [lost 10 tribes](#).

Wild, fanciful theories have developed around this question.

Herbert W. Armstrong started a cult, the Worldwide Church of God, claiming his followers were the lost 10 tribes of Israel. Some have suggested the tribes resettled in England. Thus, Americans are descendent of the lost tribes.

Other theories have suggested Native American Indians, the Kurds, the Greeks, the Irish, even the Japanese... There's a group known as the *Black Hebrew Israelites* who believe they are the true Israel. I believe they're all wrong.

The Bible teaches the 10 tribes were scattered among the nations.

We'll read later that a few members of the 10 tribes – the most devout – migrated to Jerusalem to worship at the Temple. They integrated into Judah.

We do know that the descendents of the 10 tribes are known by God.

Revelation 7 says in the last days God will choose 12,000 from each of Israel's 12 tribes to be His special witnesses. Obviously, God knows His people...