



# 4

# God Judges Israel

## Key Theme

- God judges sin.

## Key Passages

- 2 Kings 17:1–18, 17:24–41; Amos 3:11

## Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe how God brought judgment to Israel.
- Describe the source of tension between the Jews and Samaritans.



## Lesson Overview



### Come On In

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Write on the board, “Can we worship God however we want?”  
Students will work on the Memory Verse Review Sheet.

- Memory Verse Review Sheet for each student



### Studying God’s Word

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For 250 years the people of Israel did what was right in their own eyes—turning their backs on the Lord. So the Lord used the Assyrians to judge Israel. Assyria besieged the walled city of Samaria and conquered Israel. They then scattered the people and moved foreigners in to occupy the land.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Read through 2 Kings 17
- Go Before the Throne.



### Activity: Sorting Out Syncretism

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Students will examine information about yoga and Eastern meditation practices to determine whether they are appropriate ways to worship God.

- Student Guides
- Pencils



# Prepare to Share

## SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the lesson key passages along with this background.

God warned the people that judgment would come (2 Kings 17:13–18). He spoke through His prophets Hosea, Amos, and others. The time had come. Israel was about to be wiped out as a nation and carried away into captivity for their unwillingness to turn from their sin and trust in God.

The 10 tribes of Israel suffered as a result of the wicked kings who led the people to idol worship away from the true God. The suffering was a result of spiritual famine. They had gotten to the place where only a small remnant remained committed to honoring God. The others feasted on their selfish lusts and made their offerings and sacrifices to false gods.

Over time, the leaders did not cling to the truth of the Creator God who alone was to be worshipped. Politics and power became the driving force, and alliances were made with the surrounding nations. In disobedience and rebellion, they turned from the One who had brought them out of Egypt. Worship had been corrupted, and even the priests of God were participating in idol worship. Rather than a sweet-smelling aroma (Philippians 4:18), the worship of the people was a stench in the nostrils of God. In fact, Israel looked a lot like many Western countries today.

God was patient for 250 years, sending many prophets to warn Israel and Judah. But after years of consistent rebellion, idolatry, sin, and hostility toward God, His anger was finally provoked to action, and He judged Israel by removing them from His sight (2 Kings

17:18). The Lord finally rejected Israel, afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of plunderers (2 Kings 17:20). God sent the powerful nation of Assyria to bring judgment upon the nation that had forsaken Him. The Northern territory would never be fully under the control of Israel again. The Promised Land had been torn from them because of their unfaithfulness.

God proves Himself patient and gracious to all of His followers. We all were once alienated and enemies of God by wicked works. Yet He offered us reconciliation through the death of Jesus Christ. This miracle of salvation presents those who trust in Christ as holy, blameless, and above reproach before our holy God (Colossians 1:21–22).

Just as many perished in Samaria, many more will perish eternally one day because of their sin. The judgment on Israel will pale in comparison with that final judgment. We are called to be ambassadors on behalf of Christ, imploring people to turn from their sin and trust in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20–21). That is your calling as you teach. The gospel is the only truth that can save. It is the only truth that can bring the hope and peace we all seek.

## HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

As the capital of Israel, Samaria was the site of the final showdown between Assyria and the Israelites in the North. Shalmaneser V had taken tribute from Hoshea, but Hoshea turned against him to the king of Egypt (2 Kings 17:3–4). Shalmaneser wouldn't stand for that, so he conquered the land of Israel. However, the takeover of Israel's capital, Samaria, took three years.

Why so long? As a fortified city, Samaria had its own supply of food and water within the walls. The Assyrians unglamorous yet effective plan of attack was to set up camp outside the city and wait until the people inside starved or opened the gates.

The siege lasted through the reign of Shalmaneser V, and some believe that he died at the end of the campaign. After the land was fully taken, the Assyrians conducted a campaign of relocation. The Israelites were delivered to the regions of Halah, Habor, Gozan, and the cities of the Medes (2 Kings 17:6). These were regions far to the east in modern-day Iraq, Syria, and Iran. However, many of the poor and non-threatening Jews were left in Israel to work the land.

As the Assyrians conquered more lands, they settled Samaria with the foreigners from those lands (2 Kings 17:24). The new citizens moved in, and with them came their worship of false gods. They did not fear the Lord or know how He demanded to be worshipped (2 Kings 17:25–26). And, as always, this angered God.

In response to God's judgment of sending marauding lions, the foreigners sent for a priest in the hopes they could learn the rituals of the true God and so appease His anger (2 Kings 17:26–27). But God demands nothing short of perfect obedience and worship of Him alone. And although the priest did show them how to worship God, they continued to make gods of their own and put them in the shrines. The worship continued to be blended in perverse ways, and God was not honored (2 Kings 17:28–33). In addition, the Jews intermarried with these foreigners and they became the Samaritans, whom the Jews despised but Jesus reached out to (John 4:1–42).

Here we can see a clear present-day principle to apply from this Old Testament passage: Beware of churches that integrate worship practices from religions around the world. This type of syncretism promotes a false worship of God. This is unacceptable. We are to have no false gods before us. We are to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, our minds, and our souls.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



## BEFORE THE THRONE

Heavenly Father, this lesson reveals your justice. I must admit that I don't always feel comfortable seeing your wrath displayed in the pages of Scripture. My "happy ending" would have been one where Israel turned to you in utter repentance and humility. But the Bible isn't a fairy tale. The Bible is true history that reveals the wretchedness of man in relation to you. When I think of the detestable practices that were part of Israel's worship, I marvel that you were patient for 250 years! Of course, they deserved your judgment. And yes, so do I. I don't deserve your grace, but you've shown me grace. You have offered it to me as a free gift. Thank you that I am justified by Jesus's blood and saved from your wrath through Him. Help me to express this truth to my students in love this week.

► **Pace your lesson!** Use the clocks to mark the time you want to finish each section. This will help you stay on track and finish on time. You may need to shorten or drop sections as necessary.





## COME ON IN

- Write on the board, “Can we worship God however we want to?”
- Students will work on the Isaiah Memory Verse Review sheet.



## Review

For 250 years, Israel had been distinct from Judah with many kings ruling over the divided Promised Land. From the beginning, the kings of Israel had led the northern tribes in idolatry. God had repeatedly sent messengers to them to call them to repentance, but they would not listen.

- ? Who can describe how some of God’s attributes were put on display as He sent Amos, Hosea, and other prophets with

warnings? *God’s patience, love, justice, holiness, mercy, and sovereignty were displayed in various aspects of these warnings.*

God’s patience had come to an end during the reign of Hoshea, and God was about to demonstrate His justice and wisdom in bringing Israel the judgment they had earned. Let’s open God’s Word and see what happened.



► Write on the board, “Can we worship God however we want to?”



## Studying God’s Word

### READ THE WORD

Let’s read 2 Kings 17:1–23 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

2 Kings 17:1–23

### EXAMINE THE WORD

#### Observe the Text

- ? Was Hoshea a good or bad king? *Verse 2 says he did evil in the sight of the Lord.*
- ? What brought about the war between Assyria and Israel? *Israel had been dominated by Assyria and had paid tribute to Assyria as its subjects. Hoshea rebelled against Shalmaneser and sought an alliance with So of Egypt, so Assyria sought to destroy Israel. Note: The Egyptian king So was most likely Sabako (or Shabako), a famous Ethiopian who, for fifty years, occupied the Egyptian throne.*
- ? Was Hoshea leading the people during the siege of Samaria? *No, he had been captured and put in prison before the siege began.*
- ? How long did it take for Samaria to fall? *Three years.*

This three-year siege might sound a bit odd to us, but the Assyrians basically surrounded the city and starved out the people inside. They

- had already conquered the rest of the country, so the fortified and well-supplied city was all that remained to claim total control over Israel.
- ? **Keep a finger in 2 Kings and turn to Amos 3:11. We read this passage a few weeks ago. How was the prophecy of Amos fulfilled?** *The adversary, Assyria, had surrounded their land and plundered their capital, taking the king prisoner.*
  - ? **What were the conditions probably like in Samaria toward the end of the siege?** *There is no detailed biblical record of this siege, but it was surely a horrific scene likely involving cannibalism (as we see in the accounts of other sieges) and other terrible things.*
  - ? **What happened to the Israelites after Samaria fell?** *The king had them taken to Assyria and settled in various regions to disperse them. These regions would be in modern-day Iraq, Iran, and Syria. It is likely that those of the upper levels of culture and status were the ones deported and that the peasants were left to serve those who were brought in to replenish the land.*
  - ? **Thinking about the context of this passage, how would you describe the section from verses 7–23?** *This is an interlude in the text that recounts the history of Israel and how they came to be taken captive. Verse 24 starts recounting the current events.*
  - ? **Looking at verses 7 and 9, what phrase describing the actions of the Israelites is repeated?** *“Against the Lord” is repeated to describe their actions.*
  - ? **Looking at verses 18, 20, and 23, what common phrase describes how God treated the Israelites?** *He put them “out of His sight.”*
  - ? **What practices are the Israelites condemned for?** *Idolatry, witchcraft, breaking God’s laws, child sacrifice, following the practices of the surrounding nations, and others.*
  - ? **How does verse 23 close?** *“As it is to this day.”*
  - ? **Why is that significant?** *Israel was never repopulated and controlled by the Jews up until the writing of 2 Kings.*

➤ Repeated elements help identify the emphasis of a passage.

## Discover the Truth

God had sent prophets—the kings and people rejected the message. God called for repentance—the kings and people sought their own path away from the Lord. God was patient for 250 years as the people continued to follow in the steps of Jeroboam—steps that led them far from God. So, the final removal of Israel and their deportation to Assyrian lands was accomplished in 721 BC.

- ? **What attribute of God is displayed in delivering the judgment he had promised through the prophets?** *God was faithful to deliver the punishment He had promised unless the people repented. God cannot lie or break His promises, including promises to exercise judgment.*



FAITHFUL

## READ THE WORD

Let’s continue reading and try to understand what happened to Israel in 2 Kings 17:24–41. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

2 Kings 17:24–41

## EXAMINE THE WORD

### Observe the Text

- ? After the Israelites had been taken away, how was the land repopulated? *The Assyrians brought people from other areas they had conquered to the cities of Samaria.*
- ? What was the likely goal of the Assyrians in moving people around their empire? *They were seeking to homogenize the people and install the Assyrian culture in all parts of the empire. This also dispersed the various people groups so they would not be concentrated and rise up in rebellion.*
- ? Did the people who moved into Israel fear God and worship Him? *No.*
- ? How did God respond to the new inhabitants? *He sent lions to kill some of them.*
- ? Why did the foreigners think the lions were attacking? *They believed they had offended the regional deity.*
- ? How did they seek to remedy the situation? *They asked for an Israelite priest to come back and teach them how to worship properly.*

We have discussed the idea of regional deities before. The new inhabitants thought that they just needed the right formula to offer worship to the regional “god” of Israel. They thought they had moved into his turf and upset him. Little did they realize that it was the Creator God they had offended.

- ? Was the arrival of the priest and his instruction the answer to their problems? *No. The text says that they feared the Lord, but they continued to worship other false gods.*
- ? Looking at verse 34, how long did this continue? *The writer uses the phrase, “even to this day.” The next passage talks about King Hezekiah and Judah and the book ends with the captivity of Jerusalem. In this light, the false worship continued in Samaria (the name for the region after the fall of Israel) for generations afterward.*
- ? What shift happens in the text beginning in verse 34? *Again, there is a look back to what God had called the Israelites to do as a nation and their failure to follow His commands.*
- ? What events is the writer looking back to in verses 35 to 41? *The passages quoted are from Exodus and Deuteronomy where God was challenging the Israelites to follow Him alone and not be swept into the worship of the false gods.*

### Discover the Truth

Despite their attempts to appease God with a priest, God did not accept the blended worship of the people who moved into Samaria. We use the word *syncretism* to describe what the Samaritans were doing—blending worship of false gods with the worship of God. They misunderstood God’s character and nature and failed to worship Him alone as He demanded.

Sadly, a portion of the professing church in our culture looks a lot like the Samaritans. Recently, there has been a huge movement of blending religious practices of false religions into the worship of Christ. Our activity today is going to have you think about two practices that are quite common inside some churches and among individuals.



► Syncretism: blending various religious ideas and practices





# Sorting Out Syncretism

## MATERIALS

- Student Guides
- Pencils

## INSTRUCTIONS

*The students will be reading some information about yoga and meditation, attempting to reach a conclusion about whether these practices should be incorporated into the life of worship as a Christian. This topic may be controversial with certain members of your class, so be prepared to offer truth in a gracious way. If time is short, have the students focus on the yoga section of the activity.*

In your Student Guide, you will find the activity, **Sorting Out Syncretism**. Take a few minutes to read over that information and answer the questions there. Do this on your own and we will come back together to discuss the ideas in a few minutes.

## CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

If we stop and think about some of the commands given to the Israelites, we might think they are a little odd. They were told not to sow two types of seeds in the same field and not to wear blended fabrics (Leviticus 19:19). These were most likely practices of the pagan nations that were tied to the worship of fertility gods that God called His children to avoid. He did not want them to imitate these practices that, on the surface, seem unimportant. But that is how serious God is about mixing pagan practices with the lives of worship we live before Him.

? **What conclusions did you come to about yoga?** *Yoga is a practice that cannot be separated from its roots of worshipping gods and nature. It is part of the method of salvation, if you will, in these religious systems.*

*Some may argue that they just do the stretches and postures as exercise or to relax, but this would be similar to saying that you can go to a temple and bow down before an idol while praying to God in your heart.*

? **What conclusions did you come to about meditation?** *Any meditation practice that seeks to do anything other than understand God more fully by looking to the truths He has revealed in His Word is not biblical. We are not called to clear our minds, but to fill them with the truth of God, letting Christ dwell in us richly (Colossians 3:16). Many of these Eastern meditation practices are seeking to worship the creation rather than the Creator. They cross into the worship of demons posing as gods and connecting to those evil powers in very dangerous ways. These are practices Christians should have nothing to do with.*

It is important for us to worship God in truth, as He has prescribed! We don't get to worship God however we want. Many people are introducing various meditation practices into the church that have their roots in pagan and mystical traditions: prayer labyrinths, centering prayer, breath prayer, yoga, *lectio divina* (in certain forms), and other practices are directed toward receiving secret knowledge rather than understanding God's revealed truth.

These practices have more in common with the Gnostic heresies that arose early in the church than they do with biblical Christianity. Biblical meditation is the active process of considering all that God has revealed about Himself in His Word, not seeking mystical feelings and experiences. We must be careful to guard ourselves against any idea that leads us away from simple devotion to Christ, and we must look to Scripture to understand how God calls us to offer Him worship.





# Applying God's Word

## WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

The Israelites brought judgment on themselves because they failed to worship God as He had prescribed. Not only did they look to other gods for help, they thought they could blend God with various idols and offer worship to Him however they pleased. But God is not honored in these adulterous acts and thoughts. While the people of Israel rebelled against God, He was patient with them, sending them many warnings through His prophets. But the time for God to exercise His just judgment finally came.

God chose to use the nation of Assyria to exercise His judgment on the Israelites. It was a severe judgment and God desired to remove them “out of His sight” by sending them into the lands controlled by Assyria. From that point on, the northern kingdom of Israel ceased to exist. *Refer to the History of Israel Poster to show the end of the line of Israel at 721 BC.*

When the Assyrians sent new people to repopulate Israel, these people became known as the Samaritans and the region as Samaria. These foreigners brought with them the worship of false gods and they attempted to blend the worship of the true God with the false. This was an abomination to God and they faced judgment for these wicked acts. Though a remnant of Israelites remained in the area, the true worship of God was lost as it was polluted with idolatry.



## GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

- ? **How can we relate God's patience in bringing judgment to Israel to sharing the gospel with unrepentant people today?** *Just as God was patient in bringing Israel's judgment, sending prophets and trials to warn them, so God's final judgment of people is on hold. We know that there is a day coming when Jesus will judge the earth in righteousness (Acts 17:31). We can call people to repentance of their rebellion against God, warning them that God will bring just judgment to the earth, just as He did to Israel. We can offer them the hope of forgiveness in Christ, calling them to repent and trust in the Savior.*
- ? **Why is syncretism, blending worship practices into Christianity, so dangerous?** *God will not bear with idolatry in any form. To bring the worship practices of false gods into the worship of God is blasphemous and against all that God has commanded us to do in worship to Him. Many of these practices seem like effective ways to listen for God's voice or to be relaxed in prayer, but they do not honor God.*
- ? **Where have you seen God's patience in bringing judgment in your life or others?** *Discuss various answers, and give God thanks for being patient as loved ones or friends have come to faith in Christ when they deserved judgment for their sin.*



### MEMORY VERSE

**Isaiah 42:8** I am the Lord, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor my praise to carved images.



### GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Thank God for His patience in exercising judgment.
- Praise God for His justice and mercy demonstrated in the Cross.
- Ask God for boldness to proclaim the gospel, and that many would be saved from judgment.

