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## THE FALL OF SAMARIA

– JUNE 18. – II KINGS 17:1-18. –

**"He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." – Proverbs 29:1.**

HOSHEA, King of Israel, the central personage of this study, is paid the rather doubtful compliment of being less evil in the Lord's sight than some of his predecessors. Gradually the Assyrian kingdom had extended its control to Israel, and Hoshea maintained his throne by paying tribute. This continued for several years until the King of Israel thought himself sufficiently in league with the Egyptians on the south to refuse further tribute money. In consequence, the Assyrian army advanced and laid siege to the capital city, Samaria. It seems astounding, indeed, to learn that the city withstood the siege for three years. The end came in the ninth year of Hoshea, and signified the end of the ten-tribe kingdom, the people being transported by their captors several hundred miles to another portion of the Assyrian empire.

The decline of Israel as a nation, from the time of Solomon, had been a gradual one. The most religiously inclined had been attracted to the southern division called Judah. The latter, with the smaller tribe of Benjamin, not only had the Holy City and the temple, but gradually gained all the holy people of Israel, attracted by the worship [R4819 : page 153] of Jehovah and repelled from their own tribal homes by the prevalent idolatry.

The ten tribes must have wasted away considerably before this final removal of Hoshea and the remnant left in Samaria – in all less than twenty-eight thousand, whereas the nation had previously numbered millions.

The fact is that in previous wars captives were taken, who, having lost their religion, were Israelites in name only; and having no Father

in God, nor interest in the Abrahamic promise, nor in the land of Israel, were just as much at home and just as much in fellowship with surrounding conditions and as well suited in religion in their new homes as they had been in the old. In a word, only twenty-eight thousand remained in the northern kingdom who even took pride in the name of Israel; and they, as we have seen, were in great part idolaters and out of relationship with God. When thinking of the ten tribes of Israel "scattered abroad," we should remember how few there were of them when the ten-tribe kingdom finally died. Whoever of them maintained his religious faith in God and observed circumcision in his family, thus maintained his membership as an Israelite. Others ceased entirely to be Israelites.

### **THE OVERTHROW OF ISRAEL A JUDGMENT OF THE LORD**

Later on, when the two-tribe kingdom of Judah was also carried captive into Babylonia, the division lines were lost and the name Jews became dominant and synonymous with Israelites. Thus in our Lord's day he declared that his mission was to "the lost sheep of the House of Israel." So also the Apostle James later wrote respecting "the twelve tribes scattered abroad." Some of all the tribes were to be found loyal to God, in the surrounding nations and in the land of Israel. Those in foreign lands, we remember, came up to Jerusalem yearly to keep the feast of the Passover, and again to keep the Atonement Day celebration. These were not in any sense of the word *lost*, but merely scattered, as the Jews of today are scattered, in all parts of the world.

The overthrow of Israel, recounted in this study, we are directly told, was a judgment from the Lord. "Therefore **[R4820 : page 153]** the Lord was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight; there were none left but the tribe of Judah only. – 2 Kings 17:18.

Sin tends to national destruction in a very natural way – by sapping the vitals of the people of the nation. But in Israel's case there was something more than this. God entered into a special Covenant with

that nation by which he bound himself and they bound themselves. Israel agreed to be God's people, to serve and obey him faithfully; and God agreed that, if they would do so, he would specially favor them and look out for their interests, their flocks, their herds, their health, their prosperity; all were to be blessed so long as they were loyal and true. On the contrary, God specially pledged himself that if they as a people proved unfaithful to the Covenant, he would specially chastise them, punish them, deliver them to their enemies, etc. Thus Israel's prosperity or defeat indicated surely the Lord's favor or disfavor, in a manner not applicable to other nations.

Our lesson recounts the Lord's testimony against his people in which he points out wherein they had failed in their part of the Covenant. They had done things which they should not have done and had left undone things which they should have done. Nevertheless, the Lord testifies unto Israel and unto Judah through the prophets sent to them, "Turn ye from your evil way and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to the Law which I commanded your fathers and which I sent to you by my servants, the Prophets." God did his part, and more. Then we read, "Notwithstanding, they would not hear, but hardened their necks like the neck of their fathers, who believed not in the Lord their God." "A stiff neck" is used symbolically to represent a self-willed and rebellious attitude of heart.

### **DESTROYED WITHOUT REMEDY**

Our text, taken from Proverbs, tells what will be the final outcome of any conflict between God and the sinner. If reproofs are not rightly received, if they do not have a corrective influence, they will have the opposite effect – the sinner will be the more obstinate and self-willed and opposed to God. The result of such a contest with the Almighty must mean their overthrow, their destruction – a destruction from which there is no recovery – no remedy. Whoever shall be remanded to the Second Death, there will be no hope for him.

But, thank God, this irremediable destruction of the Second Death will come only upon wilful evil-doers of the class mentioned in this text – often reprov'd and yet stiff-necked. Some of the Church might be classed in this category because of previous enlightenment, etc., enjoyed, but surely the world in general has not had such reproofs and such an intelligent understanding of the Lord as would make them properly amenable to the Second Death. And God purposes that every member of Adam's race must have this one full, complete privilege and opportunity for eternal life before he can be sentenced to the Second Death.

The philosophy of this is plain: Adamic death, which comes to all men as a result of Adam's sin and his condemnation as a sinner, is to be entirely wiped out, and Adam and all of his race are to be fully released from it. The right to set men free from that sentence was secured by the great Redeemer, Jesus, who offered up himself a corresponding price for all, to be testified in due time. This great fact has been testified to a comparatively small number during this Gospel Age – to such only as have an ear to hear and the seeing eye of faith. These only are set free from Adamic death now – and that not actually, but by faith, in order to permit them to become sanctified followers of Jesus.

An important fact, heretofore very generally overlooked, is that God's provision through the death of Jesus embraces every member of Adam's family as well as himself, and is the guarantee, to each and every member, of another chance or opportunity for harmony with God, aside from the one which Adam had and lost. Those of us who, as the Spirit-begotten Church, enjoy this favor in the present time, must not expect any further favor along this line in the future, for Christ dieth no more; and only one share in his redemptive work is provided for every member of the race. But so many as do not now hear and see and understand the grace of God, must be brought to a knowledge of this great truth. This includes the heathen as well as many residing in civilized lands, the eyes and ears of whose hearts have not seen nor

heard the true message of Divine grace in Christ Jesus, and who, therefore, could not refuse him nor be refused by him thus far.

## **ISRAEL'S PROMISED RESTITUTION**

When in the future all these people are brought to a knowledge of the Truth, the grace of God will be to them "a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death," as it is now to the Church.

The Israelites suffered the penalty for their failure as a nation; they were destroyed, but not without remedy. **[R4820 : page 154]** Indeed, the Bible tells us that in the end of this Age, as soon as the election of the Church shall have been completed and the First Resurrection accomplished, God's favor will return to Israel, the twelve tribes, and their regathering will be the first blessing to humanity under Messiah's glorious reign. The Lord's special promise is that he will gather them from the North Country, and from all the lands whithersoever he has scattered them, and that he will bring them into their own land.

St. Paul brings this matter to our attention very explicitly in his letter to the Romans. (11:25-32.) The logic of his argument should be carefully noted, including the fact that Natural Israel will receive mercy at the hands of Spiritual Israel – in the Kingdom. – Vs. 32.

The nation of Israel transgressed Divine commands, and was therefore worthy of punishment – but this did not signify that that nation would become alienated from the Divine mercy which God had already intended and had already promised through Abraham. The time for the beginning of that mercy did not arrive until seven centuries after the narrative of this lesson – not until Jesus came to die, the Just for the unjust, to bring us back to God as a race – to open up "a new and living way." Thus we read, "Christ brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel."

Neither Israel, in the days of Hoshea nor at any other time, nor any other nation, knew anything about the life and immortality which God

purposed to proffer to mankind through the Redeemer in due time. As the Apostle again says, "This great salvation began to be spoken by our Lord and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him." – Heb. 2:3.

It is well for us to keep in memory that God's punishment for sin is death; that this punishment came upon Father Adam and his entire family because of sin; and that thus far all mankind have died because of Adam's sin. It is well for us to remember that it is because we were all thus dead in trespasses and in sins through Adam's disobedience that God provided the Savior and his redemptive work. It is well for us to remember that this work must be efficacious for every member of our race; and that only by having enjoyed his share in the Redeemer's sacrificial merit could anybody be consigned to the Second Death; and then it will be only on account of wilful, deliberate, intentional wrong doing. It is well for us to remember that the Second Death is the extreme penalty of the Divine Law, and not eternal torment, as many of us were mistaught to believe. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." – Rom. 6:23.

