

When Samaria Fell

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The Scattering of the Northern Kingdom

Main Text

2 Kings 17:3–6
2 Kings 17:18, 23
Hosea 9:17
Amos 5:27

Sermon Theme

The fall of the Northern Kingdom was not an accident of politics or merely the strength of Assyria. Israel was warned again and again, yet refused to return to the Lord. Therefore God allowed Assyria to carry them away. But their downfall stands as a solemn warning: no people can live long in rebellion against God and still expect covenant blessing.

Introduction

There are some passages in Scripture that are painful to read because they show a people reaching the end of God's patience.

The Northern Kingdom of Israel had known great mercy. They had the name of Israel. They had the history of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They had the testimony of the Exodus. They had been part of the people God brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. They knew of the Red Sea, the wilderness, the covenant, the law, the tabernacle, the prophets, and the promises.

Yet over time, they hardened their hearts.

The Northern Kingdom, often called Israel, Ephraim, or Samaria, turned again and again from the Lord. They followed idols. They trusted kings. They made alliances. They rejected the prophets. They mixed the worship of the Lord with the worship of false gods. They wanted the benefits of being God's people without the obedience of being God's people.

And at last, Assyria came.

2 Kings 17:6 says:

2 Kings 17:6

"In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria..."

That sentence is short, but it carries the weight of national tragedy.

Samaria fell.

Israel was carried away.

The Northern Kingdom was scattered.

The land was emptied.
The people were removed.

And Scripture does not leave us guessing why.

2 Kings 17:18 says:

2 Kings 17:18

“Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only.”

This sermon is about the fall of Samaria and the scattering of the Northern Kingdom. But more than that, it is about the danger of refusing God’s call to return.

1. Judgment Began Before the Final Fall

2 Kings 15:29 says:

2 Kings 15:29

“In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abel-beth-maachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria.”

The fall of the Northern Kingdom did not happen all at once.

Before Samaria finally fell, parts of the land were already being taken. Cities were captured. Regions were stripped away. People were carried captive to Assyria.

This was a warning before the final collapse.

God often sends warnings before full judgment falls. He allows smaller shakings before the great overthrow. He allows losses that should awaken the heart. He allows trouble that should drive people to repentance.

The northern borders were falling. Galilee was being taken. Naphtali was being carried away. Gilead was being shaken. The land was being reduced piece by piece.

The people should have asked, “Why is this happening? Have we turned from the Lord? Are we walking in His covenant? Are we hearing His prophets?”

But Israel did not return.

That is one of the great tragedies of sin. God can send warning after warning, but a hardened heart will explain them away. A nation may lose ground and still not humble itself. A man may feel discipline and still not repent. A family may see cracks forming and still refuse correction.

Partial judgment is often mercy calling before final judgment comes.

When Tiglath-pileser carried away portions of northern Israel, the whole nation should have trembled. They should have remembered the warnings of Moses. They should have sought the Lord with fasting, confession, and repentance.

But they continued.

So what began in pieces would eventually become national disaster.

2. The Tribes East of Jordan Were Also Carried Away

1 Chronicles 5:6 says:

1 Chronicles 5:6

“Beerah his son, whom Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria carried away captive: he was prince of the Reubenites.”

1 Chronicles 5:26 says:

1 Chronicles 5:26

“And the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, and the spirit of Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria, and he carried them away, even the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh...”

These verses remind us that the judgment reached beyond Samaria itself.

The Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh had settled east of Jordan. They had chosen land that looked good for their flocks. But when judgment came, geography did not protect them. Their location did not spare them. Their history did not shield them.

They too were carried away.

1 Chronicles says something very important:

1 Chronicles 5:26

“And the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria...”

Assyria was the visible power, but God was sovereign over the judgment.

That does not mean Assyria was righteous. Assyria was cruel, proud, and violent. But God can use even a pagan empire as an instrument of discipline. Nations may think they are acting by their own strength, but the Lord rules over the movements of history.

The fall of Israel was not merely a military event. It was a spiritual event.

The enemy came with armies, but the deeper cause was sin. The captives went to Assyria, but the judgment came from the Lord. The people lost their land, but the root loss was that they had departed from their God.

This is why outward security is never enough.

A people may have land, tribes, princes, resources, and history, yet if they depart from the Lord, they are not safe.

3. Samaria Fell After Persistent Rebellion

2 Kings 17:3–6 says:

2 Kings 17:3–6

“Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria; and Hoshea became his servant, and gave him presents. And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea... Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria...”

Samaria did not fall in a moment. The siege lasted three years.

Think of that.

Three years of fear.

Three years of shrinking supplies.

Three years of watching the Assyrian army outside the walls.

Three years of hoping help might come.

Three years of seeing the end draw closer.

But walls cannot save a people when God has removed His protection.

The king of Israel had tried politics. He had become servant to Assyria. He had paid tribute. Then he had conspired. He tried to survive by maneuvering between powers.

But no political scheme could heal the spiritual sickness of Israel.

A nation cannot outscheme the consequences of its sin.

Hoshea could bargain with Assyria, but he could not bargain away the word of the Lord. He could send presents, but he could not purchase safety from covenant judgment. He could look for alliances, but he could not replace repentance.

Samaria fell because Israel had long refused the Lord.

2 Kings 17:6 says:

2 Kings 17:6

“In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria...”

The capital fell. The people were carried away. The Northern Kingdom, as a separate kingdom, was broken.

This is what sin does when it is not repented of. It does not stay small. It grows. It hardens. It spreads. It brings consequences. It can bring a person, a family, a church, or a nation to ruin.

The siege of Samaria was the outward picture of a long inward collapse.

4. The LORD Removed Israel Out of His Sight

2 Kings 17:18 says:

2 Kings 17:18

“Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only.”

This is one of the most solemn verses in the Old Testament.

“The LORD was very angry with Israel.”

Modern ears often struggle with the anger of God. But Scripture is clear: God is holy. He is patient, merciful, longsuffering, and gracious, but He is not indifferent to sin.

Israel had not stumbled once and been immediately cast away. They had been warned. Prophets had cried out. Mercy had waited. The Lord had called. But they refused.

So the Lord removed them out of His sight.

That does not mean God could no longer see them in the sense of knowledge. God sees all things. It means they were removed from the place of covenant favor, removed from the land, removed from the visible inheritance He had given them.

They had turned their faces from God, and now they were removed from before His face in judgment.

This should make every heart tremble.

The worst thing that can happen to a people is not economic loss, military defeat, or political humiliation. The worst thing is for God to remove them from the place of His favor.

When God’s hand of protection is withdrawn, the strongest walls are weak.

When God’s favor is removed, the richest land becomes insecure.

When God’s presence is despised, outward religion cannot save.

“There was none left but the tribe of Judah only.”

Judah remained for a time, but the fall of Israel should have been a warning to Judah also. When one house burns because of carelessness, the neighbor should not play with fire.

Israel’s fall was a sermon to Judah.

And it remains a sermon to us.

5. Israel Was Carried Away Because They Would Not Obey

2 Kings 17:23 says:

2 Kings 17:23

“Until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day.”

This verse tells us two important truths.

First, God had warned them by the prophets.

“As he had said by all his servants the prophets.”

Israel could not say, “We did not know.” God had spoken again and again. Prophet after prophet had called them to return. The warnings of Moses had been repeated through the messengers of God.

Second, the word of God came to pass.

“So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria.”

God’s warnings are not empty. His word is not a suggestion. What He says, He is able to perform.

This is one reason we must take Scripture seriously. A generation may laugh at warnings. People may say, “Judgment will not come.” They may say, “God will not really do what He has said.” They may mistake patience for permission.

But God’s word stands.

2 Kings 18:11–12 gives the same explanation:

2 Kings 18:11–12

“And the king of Assyria did carry away Israel unto Assyria... Because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD their God, but transgressed his covenant...”

There is the reason: “Because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD their God.”

Israel did not fall merely because Assyria was strong. Israel fell because they did not obey God.

Assyria was the instrument.

Sin was the cause.

God’s word was fulfilled.

This is the spiritual diagnosis.

We must be careful not to explain spiritual collapse only by outward causes. We may say, “The economy failed.” “The enemy was strong.” “The politics were bad.” “The culture shifted.” Those things may be true in part, but Scripture teaches us to ask a deeper question: Have we obeyed the voice of the Lord?

Israel's captivity was explained by disobedience.

6. Ephraim Would Be Broken as a People

Isaiah 7:8 says:

Isaiah 7:8

"For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people."

Ephraim was often used as a name for the Northern Kingdom. It was one of the dominant tribes of Israel.

Isaiah warned that Ephraim would be broken.

Not merely weakened.

Not merely corrected.

Broken.

"Broken, that it be not a people."

This is the language of national ruin. The kingdom would lose its identity as a united people in the land. Scattering would break its structure. Captivity would dissolve its national strength.

This warning came in a context of political fear and alliances. Kings were making plans. Nations were threatening one another. Human rulers thought they could secure themselves through strategy.

But the Lord saw the end.

No political arrangement could preserve Ephraim from the consequences of sin. No alliance could keep them whole if God had said they would be broken.

The lesson is clear: identity without obedience will not preserve a people.

They may still call themselves Israel.

They may still claim the fathers.

They may still have history.

They may still have territory.

They may still have kings.

But if they reject the Lord, they can be broken.

A name is not enough. A heritage is not enough. A past deliverance is not enough. A people must walk before God in humility and obedience.

7. Assyria's Invasion Was Foretold

Isaiah 8:4 says:

Isaiah 8:4

“For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria.”

Isaiah 8:7–8 says:

Isaiah 8:7–8

“Now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria... And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over...”

Assyria is pictured like a flood.

The waters of the river are “strong and many.” That is a fitting image. Assyria’s armies were like an overflowing river, sweeping through lands, taking cities, carrying away captives, and overwhelming those in their path.

Samaria’s spoil would be taken.

This was foretold before it happened.

Again, God did not leave His people unwarned. He told them what was coming. The invasion of Assyria was not outside the knowledge of God. It had been declared by the prophets.

But Israel did not return.

This teaches us that hearing warning is not the same as heeding warning.

A person can hear a sermon and remain unchanged.

A nation can hear prophets and remain proud.

A church can hear Scripture and remain cold.

A family can hear counsel and remain stubborn.

The question is not only, “Has God spoken?” The question is, “Have we humbled ourselves before what God has spoken?”

Israel heard, but would not return.

So the flood came.

8. Israel Was Swallowed Up Among the Gentiles

Hosea 8:8 says:

Hosea 8:8

“Israel is swallowed up: now shall they be among the Gentiles as a vessel wherein is no pleasure.”

This is a heartbreaking image.

“Israel is swallowed up.”

A people who had been chosen, delivered, planted, and warned were now swallowed among the nations. Their distinct life in the land was collapsing. They would be among the Gentiles like a vessel with no pleasure.

Hosea preached to the Northern Kingdom with deep sorrow. His message was filled with grief over Israel’s unfaithfulness. He saw that Israel’s sin was not only political rebellion. It was spiritual adultery.

They had gone after other gods. They had made idols. They had trusted human strength. They had tried to manage life without returning to the Lord.

Hosea 8:12 says:

Hosea 8:12

“I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing.”

That verse explains much of Israel’s downfall.

God had given them His law, but they treated it as strange. The word that should have been familiar became foreign. The commandments that should have shaped their life became unwanted. The truth that should have guided them became strange to them.

This is a dangerous condition.

When God’s word becomes strange to God’s people, judgment is near.

A people may still have religious language, but if Scripture feels foreign, something is deeply wrong. A person may still claim faith, but if God’s commandments are treated as strange, the heart has drifted.

Israel was swallowed up because they had rejected the word that should have kept them.

Hosea 8:13 says:

Hosea 8:13

“They sacrifice flesh for the sacrifices of mine offerings, and eat it; but the LORD accepteth them not...”

They still had religious activity, but the Lord did not accept it.

Why? Because worship without obedience is not pleasing to God. Sacrifice without repentance is empty. Religious forms cannot cover a rebellious heart.

Israel had rituals, but not true return.

And so they were swallowed up.

9. They Would Not Dwell in the LORD'S Land

Hosea 9:3 says:

Hosea 9:3

"They shall not dwell in the LORD'S land; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean things in Assyria."

This verse is especially powerful because it calls the land "the LORD'S land."

Israel lived there, but the land belonged to God. They inherited it by promise, but they did not own it apart from covenant faithfulness. The land was not theirs to corrupt with idols and rebellion.

"They shall not dwell in the LORD'S land."

This is a severe judgment. They would be removed from the very inheritance God had given.

Sin does not only bring guilt; it brings loss. Israel lost the land because they had rejected the Lord of the land.

Hosea says Ephraim would "eat unclean things in Assyria." That means exile would affect even their daily life, their food, their worship, their purity, and their identity. In a foreign land, they would be surrounded by uncleanness and unable to live freely as they should have lived before God.

This is the cost of rebellion.

Sin promises wider freedom but brings deeper loss.

Israel wanted freedom from God's rule, but they found themselves under Assyria's rule. They wanted the ways of the nations, and God gave them over to life among the nations. They wanted idols, and they were carried into lands full of idols.

The Lord's land was a place of covenant privilege. To be removed from it was a terrible mercy and a terrible judgment. It showed them what they had despised.

10. They Would Be Wanderers Among the Nations

Hosea 9:17 says:

Hosea 9:17

"My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him: and they shall be wanderers among the nations."

This verse gives the reason and the result.

The reason: "because they did not hearken unto him."

The result: "they shall be wanderers among the nations."

They did not listen.

This is one of the simplest and most serious explanations in all Scripture. They did not hearken. They did not obey. They did not receive correction. They did not respond to God's call.

So they became wanderers.

There is a direct line between refusing God's voice and losing stability.

When people stop listening to God, they lose their way. When a nation refuses the word of the Lord, it becomes morally and spiritually unanchored. When the voice of God is ignored, the people wander.

Hosea says they would be wanderers among the nations.

They would no longer be settled in their inheritance. They would be displaced, scattered, unsettled, living among peoples who did not know the Lord.

And again, this was not because God was unjust. Hosea says clearly: "because they did not hearken unto him."

The call to hearken is a call to listen with obedience.

Many hear sound. Few truly hearken. To hearken means the word enters the heart, humbles the will, and changes the path.

Israel heard prophets, but did not hearken.

That is why they wandered.

11. Their King and Their Shame Were Carried to Assyria

Hosea 10:6 says:

Hosea 10:6

"It shall be also carried unto Assyria for a present to king Jareb: Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel."

Hosea speaks of Israel's shame being carried to Assyria.

The thing Israel trusted would become shame. Their counsel, their plans, their political wisdom, their alliances, their idols, and their false confidence would all be exposed.

"Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel."

That is what happens when human wisdom replaces obedience to God. At first, it seems clever. It seems practical. It seems necessary. Israel could say, "We must make alliances. We must manage Assyria. We must handle Egypt. We must do what nations do."

But if counsel leaves God out, it ends in shame.

The king they trusted could not save them.
The alliances they formed could not save them.
The idols they worshiped could not save them.
The political schemes they made could not save them.

Their own counsel became their shame.

This is a warning to every generation. Human counsel without God may appear successful for a season, but it cannot deliver from divine judgment. A people may be strategic and still be sinful. They may be clever and still be rebellious. They may be politically active and spiritually dead.

Israel needed repentance more than strategy.

But they chose counsel over covenant.

So shame came.

12. Assyria Became Their King Because They Refused to Return

Hosea 11:5 says:

Hosea 11:5

“He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return.”

This verse is one of the clearest explanations of Israel’s captivity.

“The Assyrian shall be his king.”

Why?

“Because they refused to return.”

They refused to return to the Lord.

This is the heart of the matter. God had called them back, but they would not come. They were not merely weak. They were stubborn. They refused.

The word “refused” shows willful resistance. Mercy called, but they refused. Prophets warned, but they refused. Judgment began at the borders, but they refused. The Lord exposed their sin, but they refused.

So the Assyrian became their king.

If a people reject the Lord’s rule, they will not become truly free. They will come under another master.

Israel did not want the Lord to rule them, and Assyria ruled them. They rejected the covenant King, and a cruel foreign king took dominion. They would not return to God, so they were carried to Assyria.

This is a spiritual principle.

When we refuse the Lord, we do not gain freedom. We exchange masters. Sin becomes a master. Fear becomes a master. Pride becomes a master. Addiction becomes a master. Bitterness becomes a master. The world becomes a master.

Israel refused to return, and Assyria became king.

What a warning.

13. Amos Warned of Captivity Beyond Damascus

Amos 5:27 says:

Amos 5:27

“Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the LORD, whose name is The God of hosts.”

Amos had preached strongly against Israel’s false worship, injustice, and hypocrisy. The people still had religious feasts, songs, and assemblies, but their hearts were far from righteousness.

In Amos 5, God rejects empty religion that is not joined with justice and obedience.

Then comes the warning:

“Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus.”

Beyond Damascus pointed north and east, toward the route of exile. Israel would be carried far from home.

And notice who speaks:

“Saith the LORD, whose name is The God of hosts.”

This is not Amos’ opinion. This is the word of the Lord. The God of hosts, the commander of heaven’s armies, had spoken.

Israel may have had religious gatherings, but they lacked obedient hearts. They may have sung songs, but God desired righteousness. They may have kept forms, but their lives contradicted their worship.

Amos teaches us that religion cannot substitute for repentance.

A nation can have worship services and still be near judgment if there is no righteousness. A person can sing and still refuse obedience. A church can gather and still be cold to the commands of God.

God is not fooled by religious performance.

Israel's captivity beyond Damascus came because the Lord had seen through their outward forms.

14. Micah Called for Mourning Because Captivity Had Come

Micah 1:16 says:

Micah 1:16

"Make thee bald, and poll thee for thy delicate children; enlarge thy baldness as the eagle; for they are gone into captivity from thee."

Micah speaks with the language of mourning.

"Make thee bald."

"Poll thee."

"Enlarge thy baldness."

These were signs of grief. The prophet calls for lamentation because the children are gone into captivity.

This is not cold theology. This is heartbreak.

When a nation falls, real people suffer. Children are displaced. Families are torn. Homes are emptied. Cities are broken. The land mourns.

The prophets did not speak of judgment lightly. They wept over it. They warned with urgency because they knew what was coming.

Micah's words remind us that sin always has victims. It is not abstract. It brings tears into homes. It takes children into exile. It leaves parents grieving. It turns songs into mourning.

"For they are gone into captivity from thee."

Those words should break the heart.

Israel's sin did not only affect the idol worshiper at the altar. It affected sons and daughters. It affected future generations. It affected the vulnerable.

That is why repentance is urgent. The consequences of rebellion rarely stop with the rebel.

Micah calls for mourning because the captivity was real.

15. The Fall of Israel Was a Warning to Judah

2 Kings 18:9–12 says:

2 Kings 18:9–12

“And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Hezekiah... that Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria, and besieged it. And at the end of three years they took it... Because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD their God...”

These verses appear in the account of Hezekiah, king of Judah.

That placement matters.

Judah could see what happened to Israel. The Southern Kingdom could look north and say, “Samaria fell because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord.” The fall of Israel was not merely history; it was warning.

Judah still had time.

They could humble themselves. They could seek the Lord. They could learn from Israel’s fall. They could understand that covenant privilege without obedience leads to judgment.

This is one purpose of biblical history.

Romans 15:4 says:

Romans 15:4

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning...”

The fall of Samaria was written for our learning.

We are not to read it as distant history only. We are to ask, “What is God saying? What does this teach us about sin, warning, repentance, judgment, mercy, and obedience?”

Israel’s fall warns every heart:

Do not refuse the word of the Lord.

Do not mistake patience for permission.

Do not rely on religious identity while living in disobedience.

Do not think past deliverance cancels present rebellion.

Do not wait until the siege begins to repent.

Do not treat God’s word as a strange thing.

The fall of Samaria is a warning with tears in it.

16. The Root Sin: They Would Not Return

Hosea 11:5 says:

Hosea 11:5

“...the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return.”

This phrase deserves to be repeated: “because they refused to return.”

At the center of Israel's collapse was refusal.

They refused correction.

They refused the prophets.

They refused the law.

They refused covenant faithfulness.

They refused to tear down idols.

They refused to humble themselves.

They refused to return.

God's heart in Hosea is deeply tender. Hosea 11 shows the Lord remembering Israel's early days:

Hosea 11:1

"When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt."

The Lord had loved Israel. He had called Israel out of Egypt. He had taught them, healed them, and drawn them with cords of love.

But they turned away.

This makes the judgment even more sorrowful. Israel was not judged by a God who had never loved them. They were judged by the God who had loved them, called them, delivered them, and pleaded with them.

The tragedy is not that God was unwilling to receive them. The tragedy is that they refused to return.

That is still the dividing line.

The question is not whether God is merciful. He is.

The question is not whether God has spoken. He has.

The question is not whether God can restore. He can.

The question is whether the heart will return.

Israel refused.

And Assyria became their king.

17. The Danger of Treating God's Word as Strange

Hosea 8:12 says:

Hosea 8:12

"I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing."

This may be one of the most important applications for us.

God had written great things to Israel. His law was not small. It was not worthless. It was not outdated. It was not empty. It was great.

But Israel counted it as strange.

When a people begin to feel more at home with the world than with the word, they are in danger.

When Scripture sounds strange, but sin sounds normal, danger is near.

When holiness sounds extreme, but rebellion sounds reasonable, danger is near.

When God's commandments feel foreign, but the customs of the nations feel familiar, danger is near.

When worship continues but obedience disappears, danger is near.

Israel did not lose the word because God stopped speaking. They lost the word because they stopped receiving it.

This can happen slowly.

At first, people neglect the word.

Then they become unfamiliar with it.

Then they become uncomfortable with it.

Then they resist it.

Then they call it strange.

And once God's word becomes strange, falsehood feels natural.

That is why the church, the family, and the individual believer must remain under the authority of Scripture. The word of God must not become a stranger in our homes, our churches, our decisions, our worship, or our hearts.

Israel counted the great things of God's law as strange.

And they were swallowed up.

18. The Danger of Empty Religion

Hosea 8:13 says:

Hosea 8:13

"They sacrifice flesh for the sacrifices of mine offerings, and eat it; but the LORD accepteth them not..."

Amos also warned Israel about religious activity without righteousness.

Amos 5:21 says:

Amos 5:21

"I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies."

Amos 5:24 says:

Amos 5:24

“But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.”

Israel had religion, but they lacked repentance. They had offerings, but not obedience. They had songs, but not righteousness. They had gatherings, but not surrendered hearts.

This is a terrifying possibility: worship that God does not accept.

Not because God despises true worship, but because He despises hypocrisy. He does not accept sacrifices used to cover rebellion. He does not accept songs used to silence conviction. He does not accept ceremonies from people who refuse righteousness.

Israel’s fall teaches that outward religion cannot protect an inwardly rebellious people.

A nation may keep religious language and still fall.
A church may keep services and still lose spiritual life.
A person may keep habits of worship and still refuse the Lord.

God is not calling for performance only. He is calling for the heart.

The Northern Kingdom had altars, but many were false. They had worship, but much of it was corrupted. They had religion, but not faithful obedience.

Therefore the Lord did not accept them.

19. The Danger of Trusting Kings More Than God

Hosea 10:6 says:

Hosea 10:6
“Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel.”

2 Kings 17 shows Hoshea trying to survive through tribute, conspiracy, and political maneuvering. The leaders of Israel tried to manage Assyria through human wisdom.

But the prophets tell us that Israel’s counsel became shame.

This does not mean wise leadership is wrong. It does not mean planning is wrong. It means counsel becomes shame when it replaces obedience to God.

Israel’s problem was not that they had kings. Their problem was that they trusted kings, alliances, idols, and political strategies more than the Lord.

They wanted security without repentance.
They wanted survival without obedience.
They wanted national strength without covenant faithfulness.
They wanted help from nations while refusing help from God.

But no king can save a people from God’s judgment.

When the heart is not right with God, better policies will not cure the deepest problem. When sin is the disease, strategy is not enough. When rebellion has provoked the Lord, diplomacy cannot bring peace.

Israel needed to return.

They refused, and Assyria became their king.

20. The Danger of Not Learning From Partial Judgment

2 Kings 15:29 showed earlier captivity. 1 Chronicles 5:26 showed eastern tribes carried away. Isaiah and Hosea warned. Amos cried out. Micah mourned.

Israel had many signs.

Yet they did not return.

This is a great warning: do not waste the early warnings of God.

When God begins to shake something, listen.

When He exposes sin, repent.

When He sends correction, humble yourself.

When He removes false security, seek Him.

When He lets consequences begin, do not harden your heart.

Partial judgment is often a mercy before fuller judgment.

A wise person hears the first warning. A hardened person waits until the walls fall.

Israel waited too long.

By the time Samaria was under siege, the nation had already ignored generations of warning. By the time Assyria carried them away, the prophets had already spoken. By the time they became wanderers, they had already refused to return.

Do not wait until captivity to take God seriously.

21. What the Fall of Samaria Teaches Us About God

First, God is patient.

The Northern Kingdom did not fall immediately. God sent prophets. He warned them. He allowed time. He gave calls to return.

Second, God is holy.

His patience did not mean He approved of sin. His mercy did not cancel His righteousness.

Third, God is faithful to His word.

What He warned through Moses and the prophets came to pass.

Fourth, God is sovereign over nations.

Assyria acted as an empire, but God ruled over history.

Fifth, God is grieved by rebellion.

Hosea shows the tender heart of God toward Israel, even as judgment comes.

Sixth, God's judgment is righteous.

Israel was carried away "because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD their God."

Seventh, God's warnings are mercy.

If Israel had heeded the warning, they could have returned. The warning came before the fall.

22. What the Fall of Samaria Teaches Us About Sin

First, sin hardens over time.

What begins as compromise can become refusal.

Second, sin makes God's word seem strange.

Hosea 8:12 says they counted the great things of God's law as a strange thing.

Third, sin trusts false security.

Israel trusted kings, idols, alliances, and counsel.

Fourth, sin corrupts worship.

They offered sacrifices, but the Lord accepted them not.

Fifth, sin brings shame.

Israel became ashamed of its own counsel.

Sixth, sin scatters.

They became wanderers among the nations.

Seventh, sin enslaves.

Because they refused the Lord, Assyria became their king.

23. What the Fall of Samaria Teaches Us About Repentance

The tragedy of Israel is that they refused to return.

Therefore, the call of the sermon is simple: return.

Return before the siege.

Return before the walls fall.

Return before the captivity.

Return when the prophet speaks.

Return when conviction comes.

Return when the word exposes you.

Return when God shakes what you trusted.

Return while mercy calls.

True repentance is not merely fear of consequences. It is turning back to the Lord.

It says, "I have sinned."

It says, "God's word is right."

It says, "My counsel has become shame."

It says, "The Lord must rule, not Assyria, not idols, not pride, not sin."

It says, "I will hearken unto Him."

Israel refused.

But the hearer of this sermon does not have to refuse.

Closing Exhortation

Samaria fell.

The Northern Kingdom was carried away.

The tribes were scattered.

The land was emptied.

The people became wanderers among the nations.

Their king and shame went to Assyria.

Their own counsel failed them.

Their religious offerings were not accepted.

Their law had become strange to them.

Their hearts had refused to return.

And Scripture tells us why.

2 Kings 18:12 says:

2 Kings 18:12

“Because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD their God, but transgressed his covenant...”

Hosea 11:5 says:

Hosea 11:5

“...the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return.”

That is the sermon in one sentence: they fell because they refused to return.

So hear the warning.

Do not treat God’s word as strange.

Do not mistake religious activity for obedience.

Do not trust human counsel more than God.

Do not assume past blessings will excuse present rebellion.

Do not wait until the walls are surrounded.

Do not wait until the land is lost.

Do not wait until sin has carried you farther than you meant to go.

Return to the Lord.

If He warns, it is mercy.

If He corrects, it is mercy.

If He exposes sin, it is mercy.

If He calls you back, it is mercy.

The fall of Samaria is dark, but it speaks clearly. God is holy. Sin is serious. Warnings are real.

Judgment comes. But the call to return must be heard while there is time.

Let us not be a people who refuse.

Let us be a people who hearken unto the Lord.