

The Judgment of Israel

Of the various kings and dynasties of the northern kingdom of Israel, not one was a good king. Some had the potential to do good and help get spiritual matters straightened out in the north, but they all failed to do so.

Recall that when

Jeroboam (the first) became king, he immediately began changing the religion of the people. He set up golden calves at Dan and Bethel, changed the priesthood, and changed the special days. From here, matters only worsened, and the spiral downward would not be stifled enough to ward off the impending judgment that would come.

Prophets were sent to Israel in order to warn the people of the judgment. The people had been guilty of idolatry (religious harlotry), of religious ritualism, and of social injustices. They were giving no indication that they were willing to turn back to Yahweh.

Hosea, using the imagery of the unfaithful wife, warned the people:

“Listen to the word of the Lord, O sons of Israel,
For the Lord has a case against the inhabitants of the land,
Because there is no faithfulness or kindness
Or knowledge of God in the land.
There is swearing, deception, murder,
stealing and adultery.
They employ violence, so that bloodshed follows bloodshed.
Therefore the land mourns...” (4:1-3)



“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.
Because you have rejected knowledge,
I also will reject you from being My priest.
Since you have forgotten the law of your God,

I also will forget your children.

The more they multiplied, the more they sinned against Me;

I will change their glory into shame.” (4:6-7)

Likewise, Amos speaks bluntly of the impending judgment:

Thus says the Lord,

“For three transgressions of Israel and for four

I will not revoke its punishment...” (2:6)

Thus says the Lord,

“Just as the shepherd snatches from the lion’s mouth a couple of legs or a piece of an ear,

So will the sons of Israel dwelling in Samaria be snatched away—

With the corner of a bed and the cover of a couch!

“Hear and testify against the house of Jacob,”

Declares the Lord God, the God of hosts.

“For on the day that I punish Israel’s transgressions,

I will also punish the altars of Bethel;

The horns of the altar will be cut off

And they will fall to the ground.

“I will also smite the winter house together

with the summer house;
The houses of ivory will also perish
And the great houses will come to an end,”
Declares the Lord. (3:12-15)

God gave the people time to repent. They knew better; they had been recipients of God’s covenant. However, they continually failed to listen, and soon their destruction would be complete. Amos describes a series of blessings that God had provided for them, then each time ends with the tragic phrase, “Yet you have not returned to Me,” declares the Lord” (4:6-11). Consequently, this grave message was given: “Therefore thus I will do to you, O Israel; because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel” (4:12).

2 Kings 17:7-19 gives a summary of the reasons why Israel fell (please read it). The passage spells out many of the sins committed against Yahweh. These verses can be summarized to demonstrate what happened:

1. They repeatedly sinned and served idols in spite of God telling and warning them not to.
2. God sent them prophets to tell them to repent of their sins.
3. They refused to listen, but continued to forsake God and His commandments.
4. Therefore, God was angry with them and removed them from His sight.

This is exactly what God warned about from the beginning of His covenant with them. “But it shall come about, if you do not obey the Lord your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you...” (Deut. 28:15). God spelled out exactly what would happen. Nevertheless, they still refused to listen. “Yet you have not returned to Me,”

declares the Lord.”

Jeroboam II was the last of Jehu’s dynasty. Under him, Israel experienced an upturn in military strength, but spiritually remained destitute. Jeroboam died in ca. 753 B.C., and after him a series of week kings reigned until the capital city of Samaria fell to the Assyrians in ca. 722-721 B.C. No matter the strength shown by Jeroboam II, the nation fell in less than 30 years after he died. No amount of strength can ward off judgment when the people are so intent on disobeying God.

The sad legacy of Israel is one of disobedience. It didn’t have to be that way. They could have stayed true to God and His covenant. Now the question is, what will we do with this information? Will we listen to the Lord? Will we stay true to our covenant with God?

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