The Fall of Israel and the Redemptive Remnant

A Comprehensive Narrative Analysis of 2 Kings 17, Samaritan History, and the New Testament Restoration

Chapter 1: The Tragedy of Samaria

The story of the northern kingdom of Israel is one of the most tragic accounts in all of sacred scripture. It is a narrative that begins with great promise, filled with the memory of deliverance from Egypt, but ends in the desolation of captivity and exile. For over two centuries, the ten northern tribes walked a path of increasing spiritual departure, choosing their own ways over the clear commandments of God. This detailed analysis examines the final collapse of that kingdom under the weight of Assyrian conquest, exploring not only the historical and political factors but the profound theological baseline that directed these events.

As we delve into 2 Kings 17, we uncover a pattern of rebellion that inevitably led to judgment. Yet, this story does not end in the ruins of Samaria. The scriptures reveal that while the political entity of Israel fell, a remnant remained in the land. This remnant, mixed with foreign nations brought in by the conquerors, formed the unique community known in the New Testament as the Samaritans. By tracking this narrative from the fall of Samaria to the well of Jacob in John 4 and the preaching of Philip in Acts 8, we see a beautiful demonstration of how God's redemptive purpose outlasts human failure and brings restoration to that which was broken.

Chapter 2: The Political Trap — Hoshea's Failed Alliances

The final chapter of Israel's national sovereignty opens with the reign of Hoshea, the son of Elah. He ascended to the throne in Samaria during a time of intense geopolitical instability, with the expanding Assyrian Empire casting a long shadow over the entire ancient Near East. The text notes a subtle distinction in Hoshea's character compared to his predecessors: though he did evil, he did not reach the depths of wickedness seen in those who went before him.

> *"In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah began Hoshea the son of Elah to reign in Samaria over Israel nine years. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, but not as the kings of Israel that were before him." (2 Kings 17:1-2)*

Politically, Hoshea found himself caught in a vice between two major global powers: Assyria to the north and Egypt to the south. Initially, Hoshea submitted to Shalmaneser, the king of Assyria, becoming a vassal and paying heavy annual tribute. However, human nature often seeks political solutions to spiritual dilemmas. Rather than turning to the LORD in repentance, Hoshea attempted a high-stakes

diplomatic maneuver. He sent messengers to So, the king of Egypt, hoping to secure a military alliance that would break the Assyrian yoke, and subsequently withheld his annual tribute payments.

> *"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: for he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and brought no present 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." (2 Kings 17:3-4)*

This political compromise proved fatal. Egypt, often a symbol of worldly reliance in scripture, failed to deliver. The king of Assyria discovered the conspiracy, marched against Israel, and imprisoned Hoshea. This sudden decapitation of Israel's leadership left the nation vulnerable, demonstrating the vanity of trusting in horses and chariots rather than the living God. The reliance on worldly alliances cannot substitute for an inward turning toward the Creator.

Chapter 3: The Siege and the Exile — The Fall of the Northern Kingdom

With King Hoshea securely bound in prison, the Assyrian military machine moved to crush the remaining resistance in Israel. The campaign was ruthless and systematic. The Assyrian army invaded the entire land, sweeping through the towns and villages until they reached the capital city of Samaria. For three long years, the city endured a brutal siege, a period marked by starvation, desperation, and the gradual erosion of hope.

> *"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, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes." (2 Kings 17:5-6)*

In the ninth year of Hoshea's reign, the defenses finally collapsed. Samaria fell, and the northern kingdom of Israel was dissolved. The victorious Assyrians implemented their standard imperial policy of mass deportation. To minimize the threat of future rebellions and permanently erase the national identity of conquered peoples, the Assyrians removed the populations from their ancestral lands and scattered them across distant territories.

The elite families, the skilled craftsmen, the military officers, and the ordinary citizens of Israel were marched away into exile. They were resettled in far-off regions under Assyrian dominion: Halah, along the banks of the Habor River in Gozan, and within the isolated cities of the Medes. This massive displacement effectively fractured the social fabric of the ten tribes, creating a historical scattering that became a sobering testimony to the consequences of breaking covenant with God.

Chapter 4: The Spiritual Indictment — A Long History of Rebellion

The biblical narrative pauses at this historical juncture to deliver a profound theological assessment. The writer of Kings makes it abundantly clear that the fall of Samaria was not merely the result of a failed

military alliance or the overwhelming power of the Assyrian army. It was a direct consequence of spiritual treason. The physical captivity was the outward manifestation of a long-standing inward rebellion against the LORD.

> *"For so it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods, And walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made." (2 Kings 17:7-8)*

The indictment spans generations. The LORD had established a unique relationship with Israel, redeeming them from the bondage of Egypt with a mighty hand. Yet, instead of maintaining exclusive devotion, the children of Israel chose to fear other gods and adopt the pagan customs of the surrounding nations. They constructed private high places in all their cities, set up images and groves upon every high hill and under every green tree, and burnt incense to false deities.

> *"And the children of Israel did secretly those things that were not right against the LORD their God, and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city. And they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree: And there they burnt incense in all the high places, as did the heathen whom the LORD carried away before them; and wrought wicked things to provoke the LORD to anger: For they served idols, whereof the LORD had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing." (2 Kings 17:9-12)*

The text emphasizes that this departure was both secret and blatant. They built altars from the smallest watchtower to the largest fortified city, ensuring that no corner of the land was free from syncretism. Idolatry fundamentally reshapes national identity; by following vanity, the nation itself became vain, losing the spiritual clarity that had once set them apart as a holy people.

Chapter 5: Rejected Warnings — The Witness of the Prophets

The judgment that fell upon Israel was not sudden or without warning. God's justice is always preceded by His mercy and His active effort to recall His people to the truth. Throughout the centuries of decline, the LORD persistently sent messengers—prophets and seers—who pleaded with both Israel and Judah to turn from their destructive paths and return to the safety of the covenant law.

> *"Yet the LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye 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. Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the LORD their God." (2 Kings 17:13-14)*

Rather than bowing their hearts in humility, the people hardened their necks. They rejected the statutes, forgot the covenant made with their fathers, and actively pursued the witchcraft and enchantments of the heathen. They went so far as to cause their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, sacrificing their own children to the grim demands of Moloch, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD.

> *"And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and*

> *went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the LORD had charged them, that they should not do like them. And they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger." (2 Kings 17:15-17)*

The tragedy of their rebellion lay in their absolute refusal to listen. They abandoned the foundational commandments, including the avoidance of graven images, and instead set up the golden calves originally introduced by Jeroboam. This persistent rejection of divine warnings left the nation entirely exposed to the spiritual consequences of their choices.

Chapter 6: The Divine Verdict — Anger Against Israel and Warning to Judah

The patience of God, though vast, eventually reaches a point where justice must be executed to preserve the integrity of His holiness. The systemic corruption of Israel brought forth a definitive theological verdict. The LORD removed the northern kingdom from His sight, leaving only the southern kingdom of Judah to carry the torch of the covenant line.

> *"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. Also Judah kept not the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made. And the LORD rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight." (2 Kings 17:18-20)*

This verdict contains an ominous warning for Judah. Even as the northern tribes were being led away in chains, the southern kingdom was already beginning to copy the very same statutes and sinful behaviors that brought about Israel's ruin. The text notes that Judah did not keep the commandments, foreshadowing that they too would eventually face captivity if they refused to repent.

> *"For he rent Israel from the house of David; and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king: and Jeroboam drave Israel from following the LORD, and made them sin a great sin. For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them; 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." (2 Kings 17:21-23)*

The root of the division traced back to the fracture of the Davidic kingdom under Jeroboam, who drove the people away from the temple in Jerusalem and established alternative worship centers. This historic error created an institutionalized departure from the truth that lasted until the day Samaria fell, culminating in the complete removal of the northern tribes from their land.

Chapter 7: The Repopulation of Samaria — Foreign Nations and Lions in the Land

Following the deportation of the major part of the Israeli population, the king of Assyria sought to permanently stabilize the region by repopulating the vacant cities of Samaria. In accordance with imperial strategy, he brought in foreign peoples from various conquered cities across the empire—Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, and Sepharvaim—and settled them in the cities of Samaria to possess the land.

> *"And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof. And so it was at the beginning of their dwelling there, that they feared not the LORD: therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which slew some of them." (2 Kings 17:24-25)*

The new inhabitants did not know the manner of the God of the land, and an unusual judgment befell them: the LORD sent lions among them. Recognizing this as a divine sign, the settlers appealed to the king of Assyria, who commanded that one of the exiled Israelite priests be sent back to Samaria to teach the people how to fear and worship the local God.

> *"Then they spake to the king of Assyria, saying, The nations which thou hast removed, and placed in the cities of Samaria, know not the manner of the God of the land: therefore he hath sent lions among them, and, behold, they slay them, because they know not the manner of the God of the land. Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, Carry thither one of the priests whom ye brought from thence; and let them go and dwell there, and let him teach them the manner 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." (2 Kings 17:26-28)*

The returning priest settled in Bethel—one of the original locations of Jeroboam's golden calves—and began instructing the foreign settlers. This intervention set the stage for a unique, complex religious environment in Samaria, where elements of the true faith were introduced to a population already steeped in ancestral paganism.

Chapter 8: Syncretism and Compromise — Fearing the Lord and Serving Idols

The religious system that developed in Samaria after the return of the priest was a textbook definition of syncretism. The foreign nations accepted the instruction regarding the LORD, but they refused to surrender their traditional idols. Every nation made gods of their own, placing them in the high places that the Israelites had previously constructed.

> *"Howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt. And the men of Babylon made Succoth-benoth, and the men of Cuth, made Nergal, and the men of Hamath made Ashima, And the Avites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burnt their children in fire*

to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim. So they feared the LORD, and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places, which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places." (2 Kings 17:29-32)

This created a bizarre spiritual compromise where a veneer of true worship coexisted with deep pagan idolatry. The core dilemma of this population is captured in a single, devastating summary sentence that echoes throughout biblical history.

"They feared the LORD, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence." (2 Kings 17:33)

The narrative stresses that this divided allegiance was a direct violation of the original covenant guidelines given to the children of Jacob. God had commanded absolute exclusivity, warning them never to fear other gods, bow to them, or serve them. Yet, the new population—alongside the remnant of Israelites who remained and intermarried with them—continued in their mixed practices, establishing a long-standing religious identity separate from Jerusalem.

"Unto this day they do after the former manners: they fear not the LORD, neither do they after their statutes, or after their ordinances, or after the law and commandment which the LORD commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel; With whom the LORD had made a covenant, and charged them, saying, Ye shall not fear other gods, nor bow yourselves to them, nor serve them, nor sacrifice to them... Howbeit they did not hearken, but they did after their former manner. So these nations feared the LORD, and served their graven images, both their children, and their children's children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day." (2 Kings 17:34-41)

Chapter 9: The New Testament Redemption — Jacob's Well and the Messiah

Centuries passed, and the historical scars of 2 Kings 17 remained deeply visible in the geography and culture of the New Testament. The mixed population of Samaria had evolved into the Samaritan community. They were neither fully Gentile nor fully Israelite; they preserved the memory of Israel's patriarchs, honored Jacob's well, and kept the Samaritan Pentateuch, yet their worship was centered on Mount Gerizim rather than Jerusalem. The deep-seated animosity between Jews and Samaritans was a direct inheritance of this ancient fracture.

When Jesus Christ began His earthly ministry, He did not avoid this disputed territory. In a historic encounter recorded in John 4, Jesus traveled through Samaria and paused at the very parcel of land associated with the northern kingdom's patriarchal heritage.

"Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." (John 4:5-9)

In the conversation that followed, the Samaritan woman raised the precise theological controversy that had divided the region since the days of Jeroboam and the Assyrian captivity: the proper location for covenant worship.

> *"Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he." (John 4:20-26)*

Jesus' response was revolutionary. He affirmed that salvation was structurally of the Jews, tracking through the line of Judah and the promises given to David. However, He announced an hour where true worship would transcend physical mountains and corporate divisions, requiring instead a baseline of spirit and truth. By revealing His messianic identity to a Samaritan woman, Jesus signaled that the fractured, judged remnant of the northern kingdom was being actively sought by the Father for restoration.

Chapter 10: The Gospel Reaches Samaria — The Broken Restored

The redemptive pattern initiated by Jesus at Jacob's well reached its full apostolic expression after the resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In the book of Acts, as the early church faced intense persecution in Jerusalem, the believers were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. Far from extinguishing the faith, this scattering fulfilled the prophetic mandate to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Philip the evangelist traveled down to the capital city of Samaria—the very location that had fallen to the Assyrians centuries earlier—and began boldly proclaiming Jesus Christ. The response from the population was immediate and overwhelming.

> *"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city." (Acts 8:5-8)*

The restoration of Samaria provides a profound theological bookend to the tragedy of 2 Kings 17. The land that had once been cast out of God's sight due to persistent sin, idolatry, and syncretism was now brought back into covenant fellowship through the blood of Jesus Christ. The long historical exile ended not with a political return to an earthly kingdom, but with a spiritual integration into the Body of Christ, bringing great joy to a city that had known centuries of spiritual isolation.

Chapter 11: Theological Reflections and Practical Lessons

The narrative trajectory from 2 Kings 17 to the New Testament provides several timeless principles for the modern believer who seeks to understand the ways of God. These themes challenge us to examine our own hearts and ensure our commitment to the truth remains absolute.

First, sin carries inevitable covenant consequences. Israel's captivity was not a random geopolitical misfortune; it was the direct, predictable outcome of an intentional departure from God's statutes. Second, God always provides warnings before executing judgment, demonstrating His long-suffering mercy. Third, political alliances and worldly solutions can never serve as a substitute for genuine, inward repentance. Hoshea's secret diplomatic deals with Egypt brought swift ruin rather than safety.

Finally, we see that God's redemptive framework is incredibly resilient. Human failure can delay blessings and bring severe correction, but it cannot permanently derail the ultimate purposes of God. The inclusion of Samaria in the New Testament church stands as an enduring proof that what man breaks through rebellion, God can beautifully restore through His sovereign grace.