



# Sin

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Scripture: [2 Kings 17](#)

Series: [Open \(17/50\)](#)

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## 2 Kings 17

Please open your Bible at 2 Kings 17 as we continue our yearlong journey through the Bible. Today we are going to cover a broad sweep of more than 200 years.

I find it helpful to keep a rough timeline in mind: Abraham was about 2000 years before the birth of Jesus; Moses (the Exodus) was about 1500 years before Jesus; David was 1000 years before Jesus.

Today we are looking at the time after David and after his son Solomon who built the temple. We are talking about the years from 931BC to 722 BC. And what happened during these years is full of significance for our lives and for our culture today.

After the reign of Solomon, God's people were divided in two. Ten tribes in the north broke away from the line of David. They declared independence, and appointed their own king, a military leader by the name of Jeroboam. These ten tribes are usually referred to in the book of Kings as Israel.

Remember God had that He would raise up an offspring of David and that His throne and His kingdom would be established forever (2 Sam 7:12-16). So, in cutting themselves off from the line of David. They were separating themselves from the promise of God.

That leaves just two tribes in the south continued under line of David. They are usually referred to in the Bible as Judah.

So now there are two stories to follow, Israel in the north and Judah in the south. Today we will follow the story of the 10 tribes in the north. And next week we will follow the story of the two tribes in the south.

### Jeroboam

The story of the North begins with Jeroboam. If you have been following the story, you will recall that God said his people were not to worship Him at a place of their own choosing but at the place where God would put His name (Deut 12:4-5). David discerned that Jerusalem was the place. That is why he established the center of government there, why he brought the ark there, and why Solomon built the temple there.

Jerusalem is in the south. And Jeroboam realized that if people from the 10 tribes in the north kept going worship in Jerusalem, they would be reminded of the deep unity they shared with their brothers and sisters in the south. That was the last thing that Jeroboam wanted

So, Jeroboam decided to establish his own centers of worship for the northern tribes. We read:

*So the king took counsel and made two calves of gold. And he said to the people, "You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt." (1 Kings 12:28)*

Anyone feel like they have heard that line before? These were the exact words of Aaron when he made the golden calf in the desert about 500 years before.

After Jeroboam, there were 18 other kings, and none of them were good. Jeroboam handed over to his son Nadab who followed in his ways. Then there was Baasha – who murdered Nadab. Then Elah – a drunkard and murderer. Then Zimri who was guilty of treason and only lasted 7 days. Then Omri who is described as worse than all who were before him.

And then there was Ahab, of whom we read,

*And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him. (1 Kings 16:30)*

We looked last week at the great confrontation between Elijah and the prophets of Baal that took place on Mount Carmel at that time.

Ahab was the seventh king to rule over the 10 tribes in the north. There were nineteen all together, and it is painful to read what went on in these tribes during that time. Today we take up the story with the last of the nineteen northern kings, a man by the name of Hoshea.

*In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria, and he carried the Israelites away to Assyria... (2 Kings 17:6)*

This happened 722 years before the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. This was the end of the northern kingdom, and the passage that we read tells us why:

*And this occurred because the people of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God. (2 Kings 17:7)*

That's where our title 'Sin' comes from today. I want to make five observations about sin from this story and to apply each of them to our battles with sin and its destructive power today.

## 1. God Defines Sin

*Hoshea, the son of Elah began to reign in Samaria over Israel and he reigned for nine years. And he did what was evil **in the sight of the LORD**, yet not as the kings of Israel who were before him. (2 Kings 17:1-2)*

Two observations:

First, without question, Hosea would have seen himself as a good person. As people today, he did what was right in his own eyes. If you had met him, he would have given you a good reason for everything he ever did.

But sin and righteousness are not defined by what is right or wrong in our eyes. “He did what was evil **in the sight of the Lord**,” (2 Kings 17:2).

**God defines sin.** The God who made us tells us what is right and what is wrong. We live in a world that battles over who gets to define what is right and wrong. What matters is not what we say is right or wrong, but what is evil in the sight of the Lord.

So, the great priority for the Christian is not, ‘what do I think is good and right?’ But, ‘what does God say is good and right?’

“Walk as children of light... and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord” (Eph 5:8, 10). The way you do that is by listening to what God has said in His Word.

If you define what is good and right as you see it, it won’t be hard to live comfortably and to regard yourself as a good and upright person. Anyone can hit a bull’s eye if you shoot an arrow and then paint the target round it. But that’s not how it works.

We can look at our lives and come up with a definition of right and wrong that fits the way that we live. But if you let God define sin for you, it will not be long before you are convinced that you are a sinner in need of a Savior.

Then notice that **God holds us accountable even if our sins are less than others:**

*He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, **yet not as the kings of Israel who were before him.** (2 Kings 16:2)*

Hoshea could have pointed out that he did not indulge in the excesses of the kings who went before him.

It is very easy to look at people around you and say, ‘Well, I am not as bad as him or her.’ But this verse reminds us that while others may be worse, the truth remains that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” (Romans 3:23).

## 2. God Identifies Resistance to Himself as the Root of all Sin

*And this occurred because the people of Israel had sinned **against the LORD their God... and had feared other gods.** (2 Kings 17:7)*

If you want to know what life was like during the later years of the northern kingdom, read the book of Amos. It will make you hair stand on end. Amos described in vivid detail the opulence of the rich, and disregard for the poor; corruption in business and politics, and violence in the streets. This society became sick to the core.

God's people indulged in some horrific evils. Just look at the passage before us today where we read in verse 17 that "they burned their sons and daughters as offerings," (2 Kings 17:17).

And yet the first charge God brought against His people was not the violence, the murder, the greed, or even the cruelty to children. It was that God's people had worshiped, served (v 12), or feared (v 7) other gods.

Why? Because resistance to God is the root of all sin.

Have you ever noticed that the first four commandments are all about God Himself? "You shall have no other gods before me..." "You shall not make for yourself an idol..." "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God..." "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy" (Exodus 20:3-4, 7-8).

The first four commandments are all about our relationship with God. Our first calling is to honor God; to worship and serve Him. The Bible calls this "godliness": To be God's woman or God's man.

This priority is clear in the teaching of Jesus. When asked about the greatest commandment, Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:36-38).

Then, after God calls us to godliness in the first four commandments, He calls us to righteousness in the last six: "Honor your father and your mother..." "You shall not murder." "You shall not commit adultery." "You shall not steal." "You shall not bear false witness..." "You shall not covet..." (Exodus 20:12-17).

These last six commandments are all about our relationships with others. Loving God comes first, and loving others flows from it. And again, this is clear in the teaching of Jesus. He said, the first and great commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart..."And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39).

Righteousness in our relationships with each other is built on the foundation of godliness, - our relationship with God. So, when people turn away from God, righteousness slips beyond their grasp.

Sin took root in the northern kingdom when people turned away from God. It started with these two wretched golden calves. It ended up with them putting children in the fire. You cannot have righteousness without godliness.

Across our city and its suburbs, there are millions of people who want to be good without God. We all know people like this. You have a friend or neighbor down the street. He has no interest in coming to church and no place for God in his life. But He wants his marriage to succeed. He wants the people he does business with to keep their word. He expects public officials to tell the truth, and he wants his children to be safe when they go out.

He wants all the benefits of righteousness, but he does not want God. And that is his first and greatest sin. However moral a life he may think he is living, he is godless. He has no love for the God who made him and sustains him.

God identifies this resistance to H=himself as the root of all sin. Without godliness, we won't have righteousness for long. Morality is not a self-sustaining light. It comes from somewhere. So, if you want the good fruit of righteousness, you have to pursue godliness.

*God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. (James 4:6-7)*

### **3. God Holds the World Accountable for Sin**

Look particularly at verses 15-17. God lists specific indictments for which He holds His people accountable.

There are 12 indictments in verses 15-17. Notice the word 'and' as the indictments pile up:

1. *They despised his statutes and his covenant*
2. *And the warnings that he gave them, (v15).*
3. *They went after false idols and became false,*
4. *And they followed the nations that were around them, concerning whom the LORD had commanded them that they should not do like them.*
5. *And they abandoned all the commandments of the LORD their God, (v16)*
6. *And made for themselves metal images of two calves; (v16)*
7. *And they made an Asherah*
8. *And worshiped all the host of heaven*
9. *And served Baal.*
10. *And they burned their sons and their daughters as offerings (v17)*
11. *And used divination and omens*
12. *And sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger.*

*(2 Kings 17:15-17)*

### **a. The Justice of God**

Every sin is recorded by God. No act of evil has ever escaped His attention. All that we have ever thought or said or done is known entirely to God. “Even before a word is on my tongue, behold you, O Lord, know altogether,” (Psalm 139:4).

As our Lord Jesus Christ says, “nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light,” (Luke 8:17). There is no evil that will not be brought to justice. What is not brought to justice in this world will be in the next.

When the Bible describes the last day – the Day of Judgment, it says:

*And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened...And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. (Revelation 20:12)*

Sinners are judged on the basis of all that they have done. God will judge in absolute justice. Nobody in hell will be saying, ‘I don’t deserve to be here.’ The verdict of God in regard to every person will be beyond dispute because of his perfect knowledge.

### **b. The Patience of God**

God restrained judgment for two hundred years. Throughout that time, he sent prophets to call his people back to godliness and righteousness. So, these people heard the Word of God but it made no impact on their lives. “But they would not listen” (2 Kings 17:14).

Why? Because they were “as their fathers had been, who did not believe in the Lord their God (2 Kings 17:14). Instead “they sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord **provoking Him** to anger,” (2 Kings 7:17).

It is not God’s nature to be angry, but He can be provoked to anger, and for this we should be thankful. How could we worship a god who stands idly by while others are being abused? That is not the God of the Bible. The God of the Bible will bring every evil to justice.

And notice what this looks like:

*Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight. None was left but the tribe of Judah only (2 Kings 7:18)*

They were removed from the Promised Land. At the end of the Bible story we are told that the ungodly and the unrighteous will be ‘outside’ (Revelation 22:15). That is hell – eternity outside the blessing of God.

#### 4. God's Work Continues Despite Sin

If there are times when you get discouraged by the sins of leaders today, imagine what it must have been like for godly people in the northern kingdom. Nineteen kings over a period of 200 years and not one of them was godly.

In the end the judgment of God came, and the entire northern kingdom was swept away.

But here's the encouragement that we need to hear: God's work continues despite sin!

We see this truth in a fascinating story in 2 Kings 17:24-41. The land God had promised to bless lay desolate and uninhabited. The king of Assyria decided that he couldn't leave it like that, so he repopulated the area by bringing people from all over his empire and settling them there:

*And the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah.... and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the people of Israel. (2 Kings 17:24)*

When these people arrived, they faced an unexpected problem. Several of them were attacked by lions. When word about this problem got back to the king of Assyria, he thought the best way to deal with the situation would be to find a priest from among the people who used to live there. He would have thought that since various gods exercise authority over certain areas, we must have angered some local deity.

He assumed that a local priest would know what to do to placate whatever "god" was causing this problem. So, he gave orders for one of God's people to be sent back to Israel, and "one of the priests whom they had carried away to Samaria came and lived in Bethel and taught them how they should fear the Lord," (2 Kings 17:28).

In his sovereignty, God brought people from the north, south, east, and west into the land he had promised to bless and sent one of his priests so that these people could come to know him!

So, people from many nations were brought to a knowledge of the truth, but over time, these people became confused because they continued to worship their own gods as well (2 Kings 17:33, 41). These confused people came to be known as the Samaritans.

700 years later, Jesus went through Samaria (John 4:4). He met a woman there who had some knowledge of the truth, but it was mixed with a great deal of error. And she was hung up on the question of what the right place to worship was (John 4:20).

This woman did not know God and her personal life had been chaotic. But Jesus does not begin by telling her that she must pursue a moral life. He tells her that God is seeking "worshippers who will worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:23). He begins by guiding her

toward a right relationship with God, because she will not be able to change her moral life until she gets that straight.

The message is not, ‘change and then you can come to God’ but ‘come to God and then you can change.’

Godliness is the foundation of righteousness, and there is little point in talking about righteousness to people who do not yet know and love God. Jesus began by speaking to the Samaritan woman about knowing God, because she could only change by coming to know the presence of God in her life.

## 5. God Sent His Son to Save Us from Sin

This is a dark chapter, but we do see a shimmer of light toward the end of this sacrifice.

*The LORD made a covenant with them and commanded them, “You shall not fear other gods or bow yourselves to them or serve them or sacrifice to them. (2 Kings 17:35)*

Clearly, God’s people were not faithful to the covenant. But here is the good news: God always keeps His promise. He sent His Son to save us from sin.

*You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21)*

### Conclusion

This has come home with great force as I’ve meditated on this passage this past week. Remember the list of indictments in verses 15-17 (And... And... And...). Can you imagine the record of all your sin—thought, word and deed—in every decade of your life, being read out? ‘You did this, and this, and this, and you thought this and said this.’ And an hour into it, you would say, ‘We haven’t gotten to when I was 14 yet.’

That is why David says in Psalm 130, “If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?” (Psalm 130:4). But then he says this: “But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared,” (Psalm 130:5).

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul deploys a glorious picture. In Colossians 2:14, he pictures the writing that he says was against us. The list, the indictment, of everything that you have done wrong in your life, what does God do with it? “This He set aside, nailing it to the cross,” (Col 2:14).

He set it aside by nailing it to the cross of Jesus Christ. That is why there is forgiveness. We come to the Lord’s table today, and we become aware in our consciences that when it’s God who defines sin we really are a sinner. But I want you to see this: that when you are in Jesus Christ he has taken what is against you, every line and indictment, and nailed it to the cross.



I want to end by speaking to the person who feels weighed down and defeated. You know only too well the power of sin in your own life. You feel trapped by it, and you don't know how to get out of it.

Let me give you this encouragement: It is your resistance to God that gives sin power in your life. So, submit yourself to God today, and you will begin to move forward. The fruit of righteousness comes from the root of godliness.

So, tell the Lord you are done resisting Him. Give yourself to Him today. Tell him that you are done pursuing your own way and crown Him as your Lord. Then believe with us today that God has sent His Son, not only to forgive your sin by nailing it to the cross, but also to deliver you from its power.

Jesus died so that you could be forgiven, and He rose so that you could live a new life. He is our living Savior. You can ask him to give you his power and his strength, in your battle against the sin that prevails in your life.

A day is coming when our faith will be turned to sight. We will see the Lord Jesus Christ in His glory. On that day there will be no sin on us and no sin around us.

*"...We know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure." (1 John 3:2-3)*

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