

# RETRIBUTION

CORE PASSAGE: 2 KINGS 17:6-15,18-20

## CONTEXT

The books of 1 and 2 Kings record the history of the kings of Israel over approximately four hundred years. Beginning with the death of King David and the start of Solomon's reign, through the split of the kingdom into Israel and Judah, and ending with the destruction of Jerusalem, the author documented each king in both the north and the south in light of their faithfulness to the Lord. While Judah enjoyed a few faithful kings, Israel's kings consistently followed a path away from the Lord, in spite of the warnings from the Lord's prophets. This led to their destruction and exile at the hands of the Assyrians.

## KEY CONCEPT

**Though God is merciful, sin has dreadful consequences.**

As you examine 2 Kings 17:6-15,18-20:

- Recognize that Israel sinned against God, and God allowed them to be conquered by Assyria.
- Recall how God used prophets to warn the people, but they still disobeyed.



## TIMELINE

Elijah and Elisha Perform Miracles and Prophecy to Israel (1 Kings 17–2 Kings 13)

Hosea Prophecies to Israel and Judah (Hosea 1–14)

**SESSION STUDY:** Assyria Besieges and Conquers Israel, Deporting the People (2 Kings 17)

Jonah Prophecies to Israel and Nineveh (2 Kings 14; Jonah 1–4)

Israel's Kings Persist in Doing Evil in the Lord's Sight (2 Kings 14–17)

Assyria Threatens Judah, but Hezekiah Relies on the Lord (2 Kings 18–20)

## Daily Readings

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|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 1:</b> 2 Kings 15–17      | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 4:</b> Isaiah 13–24 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 2:</b> 2 Chronicles 26–28 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 5:</b> Isaiah 25–35 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 3:</b> Isaiah 1–12        | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 6:</b> Psalm 12     |



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

## WHEN WE WORSHIP OTHER GODS, DISASTER HAPPENS (2 KINGS 17:6-12).

**Underline what the Israelites did to deserve judgment.**

**6** In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria. He deported the Israelites to Assyria and settled them in Halah, along the Habor (Gozan's river), and in the cities of the Medes. **7** This disaster happened because the people of Israel sinned against the LORD their God who had brought them out of the land of Egypt from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt and because they worshiped other gods. **8** They lived according to the customs of the nations that the LORD had dispossessed before the Israelites and according to what the kings of Israel did. **9** The Israelites secretly did things against the LORD their God that were not right. They built high places in all their towns from watchtower to fortified city. **10** They set up for themselves sacred pillars and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every green tree. **11** They burned incense there on all the high places just like the nations that the LORD had driven out before them had done. They did evil things, angering the LORD. **12** They served idols, although the LORD had told them, "You must not do this."

Hoshea was the last king over the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Though not as bad as the kings before him, Hoshea still did what was evil in God's sight (v. 2). God disciplined the Northern Kingdom by allowing Assyria to attack and force them to pay tribute. But after Hoshea rebelled against that arrangement, God's judgment finally came due as Assyria invaded, besieged, conquered, and deported the Israelites, spreading them anywhere from 400 to 1,000 miles from home.

Reading only verses 3-6 would make it seem Hoshea's poor political maneuverings cost Israel their freedom and land. But the Lord made it clear the reason the Israelites suffered—they sinned against God (v. 7). The Israelites were exiled because they were rebellious and disobedient. Though God had brought their ancestors out of the land of Egypt, they were unfaithful to Him. Though God had conquered and given them the promised land, they worshiped other gods. Though God sees and knows all, His people thought their secret wickedness and idolatry went unnoticed. But they were wrong.

**LEADER NOTE:** Sin always ends in destruction. Since the garden of Eden, sin has wrought painful and deadly consequences upon humankind. Sin brought pain, strife, toil, separation from God, and death into the world (Gen. 3:16-23). Sin not only results in pain, but it requires God's discipline. Sin is the core problem of all humanity, residing in our very hearts, and apart from the intervention of the Lord, we can do nothing about it on our own.

**Why do we sometimes think and act as though the Lord cannot see us?**

The Lord had promised to provide for every need of His people, but Israel habitually sinned against Him. They were continually wicked, rebellious, and disobedient despite God's gifts and His warnings (2 Kings 17:12). Because of this, God allowed them to be captured and exiled by Assyria. The Lord had repeatedly shown that He is merciful, but sin has consequences. Israel's unfaithfulness to God resulted in the disaster they now experienced.

Similarly, people today are responsible for their actions, and sin is rebellion against God. In Galatians 6:7-8, Paul warned Christians to walk in obedience to God: "Don't be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a person sows he will also reap, because the one who sows to his flesh will reap destruction from the flesh." When we worship other gods, even ourselves, disaster happens.

**LEADER NOTE:** When discussing sin in the believer, it is important to remember that those who are in Christ are a new creation; the old has passed away and the new has come (2 Cor. 5:17). Through Jesus, our sins are washed as white as snow (Isa. 1:18) and have been removed from us as far as the east is from the west (Ps. 103:12). Because we are in Christ by faith and have been given the Holy Spirit, sin no longer rules over those who have been born again. Yet because we are still in the flesh, we will still struggle and succumb to sin, leading to consequences and discipline. But the Lord promises that His grace is greater than all our sins (Rom. 5:20-21).

**How would you explain sin to someone who has no Bible background?**

**THEOLOGY CONNECTION**

**SIN AS REBELLION:** Because the Bible portrays people as responsible beings, called to respond in faith and obedience to God's revelation, the Bible often portrays sin in terms of defiance and rebellion toward God the King. Isaiah 1:2 is one of many passages that describes sin in terms of rebellion against God: "I have raised children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me." Seen in this light, sin is personal and willful disobedience, the raising of a clenched fist toward the One who made us.

## GOD WARNS OF THE DANGER OF DISOBEDIENCE, ALLOWING US TO CHOOSE (2 KINGS 17:13-15,18-20).

**Underline the phrases that express how God responded to His people's sin.**

**13** Still, the LORD warned Israel and Judah through every prophet and every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways and keep my commands and statutes according to the whole law I commanded your ancestors and sent to you through my servants the prophets." **14** But they would not listen. Instead they became obstinate like their ancestors who did not believe the LORD their God. **15** They rejected his statutes and his covenant he had made with their ancestors and the warnings he had given them. They followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves, following the surrounding nations the LORD had commanded them not to imitate. . . .

**18** Therefore, the LORD was very angry with Israel, and he removed them from his presence. Only the tribe of Judah remained. **19** Even Judah did not keep the commands of the LORD their God but lived according to the customs Israel had practiced. **20** So the LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel, punished them, and handed them over to plunderers until he had banished them from his presence.

God had chosen the Israelites as His people, had rescued them from slavery in Egypt, had given them His law, and had given them the promised land. But from Exodus to Judges to 1–2 Kings, a pattern developed that described hundreds of years of the history of God's people: The people sinned and rebelled, turning from God to wickedness. Next, God warned them through His prophets. Then the people were faced with a decision: turn from their wickedness and back to God or continue in their sin and rebellion.

Though the Lord had sent them Elijah, Elisha, and Hosea, among other prophets, unfortunately the Israelites had a problem with stubbornness and pride like their ancestors (v. 14). Their false worship of false gods had so marked them that they became worthless like the idols they worshiped. God's intended purpose for Israel had been rejected, and now they were good for nothing more than to be cast out and trampled (Matt. 5:13). So this time, the discipline for their rebellion would be the most severe.

**LEADER NOTE:** The discipline and retribution of God are closely related. God disciplines and rebukes those He loves (Prov. 3:12; Rev. 3:19). He is patient, but He will not allow sin to go unpunished (Ex. 34:6-7). Hebrews 12:3-11 teaches that God, as a loving father, disciplines us, His children, through the suffering of this life, yielding righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Discipline, while painful in the moment, is a tool God uses to produce righteousness in us and turn our wayward hearts back to Him.

**Key Concept:** Though God is merciful, sin has dreadful consequences.

**What are some ways the Lord warns His children today to turn from evil and to keep His commands?**

Notes

#### VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

“The sinner mocks and scorns, When offered the love of God.  
This will be his undoing, For God will not be deceived.”<sup>1</sup>

—George Blaurock (c. 1492–1529)

As the Lord had foretold in His law, He would keep His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and lead the Israelites into the promised land, but if they rebelled, He would send them away from it and from His presence (Deut. 28:58–68). Israel did rebel, they did reject God’s covenant, they did resist God’s prophets, so “the LORD was very angry with Israel” (2 Kings 17:18), and He “banished them from his presence” (v. 20). Israel had already cut themselves off from the temple of God through their counterfeit idolatry, but now they were cut off from their land and from the patient grace of the Lord. They chose their idols, so they also chose disaster, exile, and death.

**LEADER NOTE:** Israel and Judah were largely guilty of the same sins for most of their existence as independent nations. Here, Israel paid the price for their rebellion—exile at the hands of the Assyrians. Yet Judah was just as guilty as Israel. Why weren’t they swept away by the Assyrians? Because when the Assyrians invaded and threatened Judah, good King Hezekiah listened to the prophet Isaiah and relied on the Lord for Judah’s rescue (2 Kings 18–19).

**What idols might you be choosing today instead of listening to the Lord?**

#### GOSPEL CONNECTION

Sin leads to disaster and death. Trusting and following God is necessary for life. Trusting and following Him leads to a fulfilled life here and in eternity.

## Notes

## ARRIVAL

**INTERACT:** As people arrive for the group experience, begin by inviting them to share memories of the first time they experienced consequences for their actions, but don't pressure anyone. Ask: "What led to the consequence? What was the consequence? What did you learn from the consequence?"

**TRANSITION:** Life is full of consequences. If we eat too much, we will get a stomachache. If we leave home without an umbrella during a storm, we will get soaked. The cause and effect of our actions applies to everyone universally. We also see consistent patterns of cause and effect in Scripture.

## CONTEXT

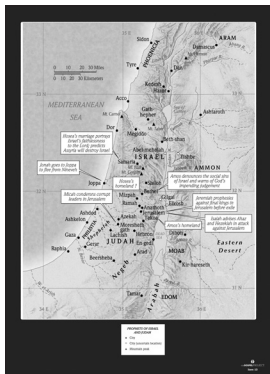
**REVIEW:** God is merciful, as we have seen repeatedly throughout the history of the Israelites, from the first golden calf to the cycle of the judges to King David's sin to practically all of the events in 1–2 Kings. The Lord's response to Ahab's humble repentance is among the more shocking displays of God's mercy. Yet God is also holy and just. Ahab was shown mercy, but he and his family also experienced God's judgment. To understand and fully worship the Lord as we were created to do, we must understand that God's mercy does not negate His holiness and justice, and vice versa. Rather, they complement each other, helping us to see the fullness of God's glory in both His holiness and mercy.

## RECAP

**SAY:** In last week's study of Hosea, we discussed the pattern in Scripture of the Lord giving a command, the people breaking said command, suffering the consequences of that broken command, and the Lord restoring the Israelites. Here we see God's holiness and mercy at work, and so often that was centered on the ministry of the Lord's prophets.

**ASK:** Display **Pack Item 10: Prophets of Israel and Judah Map** to show their birthplace or ministry. Pass out copies of **Pack Item 11: God's Prophets** and discuss what the prophets tried to teach the people. Then ask: "From your study this week, how did the prophets exemplify God's holiness and mercy?"

**TRANSITION:** For God to stand in opposition to the strongholds of sin in our lives is not hatred but rather an act of great love and mercy. Let's take a closer look at how the Lord's holiness and mercy are on full display in His warnings to the Northern Kingdom and their fall.



NORTHERN KINGDOM OF ISRAEL			SOUTHERN KINGDOM OF JUDAH		
PROPHET	BIRTH PLACE	CENTRAL MESSAGE	PROPHET	BIRTH PLACE	CENTRAL MESSAGE
ISAIAH	Jerusalem	God is holy and just, but also merciful. He will punish the wicked, but also restore the righteous.	ISAIAH	Jerusalem	God is holy and just, but also merciful. He will punish the wicked, but also restore the righteous.
JEREMIAH	Bethlehem	God is holy and just, but also merciful. He will punish the wicked, but also restore the righteous.	JEREMIAH	Bethlehem	God is holy and just, but also merciful. He will punish the wicked, but also restore the righteous.
EZEKIEL	Bethlehem	God is holy and just, but also merciful. He will punish the wicked, but also restore the righteous.	EZEKIEL	Bethlehem	God is holy and just, but also merciful. He will punish the wicked, but also restore the righteous.
HOSEA	Beulah	God is holy and just, but also merciful. He will punish the wicked, but also restore the righteous.	HOSEA	Beulah	God is holy and just, but also merciful. He will punish the wicked, but also restore the righteous.
AMOS	Bezer	God is holy and just, but also merciful. He will punish the wicked, but also restore the righteous.	AMOS	Bezer	God is holy and just, but also merciful. He will punish the wicked, but also restore the righteous.
JOEL	Bezer	God is holy and just, but also merciful. He will punish the wicked, but also restore the righteous.	JOEL	Bezer	God is holy and just, but also merciful. He will punish the wicked, but also restore the righteous.
OBADIAH	Bezer	God is holy and just, but also merciful. He will punish the wicked, but also restore the righteous.	OBADIAH	Bezer	God is holy and just, but also merciful. He will punish the wicked, but also restore the righteous.
JONAH	Gath-hepher	God is holy and just, but also merciful. He will punish the wicked, but also restore the righteous.	JONAH	Gath-hepher	God is holy and just, but also merciful. He will punish the wicked, but also restore the righteous.
MICHAH	Moresheth	God is holy and just, but also merciful. He will punish the wicked, but also restore the righteous.	MICHAH	Moresheth	God is holy and just, but also merciful. He will punish the wicked, but also restore the righteous.
NAHUM	Calcol	God is holy and just, but also merciful. He will punish the wicked, but also restore the righteous.	NAHUM	Calcol	God is holy and just, but also merciful. He will punish the wicked, but also restore the righteous.
ABDIAH	Jerusalem	God is holy and just, but also merciful. He will punish the wicked, but also restore the righteous.	ABDIAH	Jerusalem	God is holy and just, but also merciful. He will punish the wicked, but also restore the righteous.
YEREMIAH	Jerusalem	God is holy and just, but also merciful. He will punish the wicked, but also restore the righteous.	YEREMIAH	Jerusalem	God is holy and just, but also merciful. He will punish the wicked, but also restore the righteous.
EZEKIEL	Bethlehem	God is holy and just, but also merciful. He will punish the wicked, but also restore the righteous.	EZEKIEL	Bethlehem	God is holy and just, but also merciful. He will punish the wicked, but also restore the righteous.
DANIEL	Bethlehem	God is holy and just, but also merciful. He will punish the wicked, but also restore the righteous.	DANIEL	Bethlehem	God is holy and just, but also merciful. He will punish the wicked, but also restore the righteous.

\*These prophets are mentioned only in the Bible and are not mentioned in the Bible.

**STUDY 13**  
**THE PROPHETS**  
 The prophets of the Old Testament

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**Key Concept:** Though God is merciful, sin has dreadful consequences.

**GROUP ACTIVITY**

Notes

**CHART:** Direct your group to page 82 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a chart titled “Mercy and Holiness.” Recreate this table on a board so you can record the group’s responses as they interact with Scripture.

Mercy and Holiness		
Read the following passages from 2 Kings 17. Summarize the problem the Israelites faced, the warning, and the consequence of their actions.		
THE PROBLEM (17:7-12)	THE WARNING (17:13-15)	THE RESULT (17:18-20)

**READ:** Invite a volunteer to read aloud 2 Kings 17:6-12.

**ANALYZE:** Lead the group to identify the problem(s) the Israelites faced. Record the group’s conclusions with appropriate verse numbers, and then help the group to summarize the problem in one statement.

**READ:** Invite a volunteer to read aloud 2 Kings 17:13-15.

**ANALYZE:** Lead the group to describe the Lord’s warning(s) to His people and to summarize the warning in one statement.

**READ:** Invite a volunteer to read aloud 2 Kings 17:18-20.

**ANALYZE:** Lead the group to identify the consequences of the Israelites’ sins and to craft a summary statement for this section.

**DISCUSS:** Why do you think God appoints consequences for sin? How can we see both God’s holiness and His mercy in the consequences He brings?



## Notes

**SAY:** We are designed to listen to and obey our Creator. His commands are boundaries not only to protect His creation and image-bearers from harm but also to reveal His character for us to reflect Him in the world. When the Israelites broke His commands, He mercifully sent prophets to call them back to Him. But when they rejected His mercy, He justly gave them the consequences of their actions. God's mercy cannot be taken as a license to ignore God's holiness.

## DEBRIEF

**What does this passage have to say to those who do not believe in Jesus Christ? To those who do believe in Jesus?**

## SUMMARIZE

Lead the group to review the key concept, inviting them to share ways today's group experience helped them better understand God's holiness and mercy. Read aloud Romans 3:23-26. Say: "The consequences of our sin results in spiritual death. We deserve God's wrath. But by God's grace, through faith in Jesus, we are forgiven and freed from those eternal consequences. Instead of death, we receive life. Instead of wrath, we receive mercy and relationship. Sin still has consequences for the believer, but even these are merciful and disciplinary in nature to call us to the better life of holiness and obedience."

## HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 83). If running short on time, specifically highlight the **Heart** section in this week's study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



**HEAD:** Generation after generation, the Israelites were unfaithful to God's covenant, perpetuating a cycle of sin that invited God's retribution. They became obstinate, or stiff-necked (2 Kings 17:14), refusing to turn from their sin and back to God. Recognizing sin patterns in our own lives provides us an opportunity to refuse stubbornness and to ask the Lord for strength to do His will.

**What "sin cycles" have you seen emerge in your own life?**



**HEART:** In Scripture, God's ascribed different durations to His mercy and retribution. God's mercy is described as new every morning and having no end (Lam. 3:22-23), and that from one who was suffering during the exile. God's discipline or retribution lasts for a specific time and purpose: "only a moment (Ps. 30:5). Consequences for His people's sin may be severe and lasting from our perspective, but they are temporary and outshined by the glorious purpose of His grace, mercy, and faithful love (Ex. 20:5-6).

**How do you need to reevaluate your perspective and feelings toward God's holiness and discipline?**



**HANDS:** Understanding God's just retribution for sin leads us to fear Him, but this should not prompt us to enact retribution or vengeance in our own lives. The Bible is clear that vengeance belongs to God (Deut. 32:35). His perfect holiness and mercy means He can and will make all things right in His perfect timing. We, on the other hand, are to focus on mercy and to pray for and seek God's justice (Rom. 12:17-21).

**How will you reflect God's holiness and mercy in your interactions with others this week?**

### NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this session.

- Read Colossians 3:1-15, noticing how the Lord's mercy is a call to holiness.
- Ask yourself what qualities in Colossians 3:12-15 are on display in your life? Pray about the qualities you need the Lord to develop in you.
- Sin damages our relationships with God and others. Confess your own offenses to God, and ask God for wisdom to take the next steps toward forgiveness and reconciliation with others.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 83 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

**CLOSE:** Pray through Psalm 12:1-5 with your group. Acknowledge the need for God's justice and vengeance on account of the evils in this world, and pray for sinners, whether believers or unbelievers, to long for and find the safety of God's mercy available through faith in Jesus Christ.

#### References

1. George Blaurock, "Anabaptist hymn," in *Early Anabaptist Spirituality: Selected Writings*, ed. Daniel Liechty (New York: Paulist Press, 1994), 47.

Notes

