

LifeWay Explore the Bible Series for Aug. 1_72604

July 23, 2004

Posted: 7/23/04

LifeWay Explore the Bible Series for Aug. 1

Conforming to the world's values will cost dearly

2 Kings 16-17

By David Morgan

Trinity Baptist Church, Harker Heights

People are seeking meaning in life. They pursue life's purpose in various ways. Many of the values and priorities which determine their actions are inconsistent with being committed to God. Folks mistakenly assume that power, popularity, possessions or pleasure are the keys that open the door to joy in living. They turn down dead-end paths. False gods reach out and snare them.

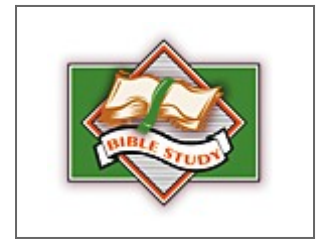
The one true God gives life-meaningful life to those who worship and serve him. Israel's history shows that worshipping false gods while rejecting the one true God leads to destruction.

Folks may not intentionally set out to reject God, but worldly values so entice them they gradually accept society's standards. Resisting those values becomes more difficult with each compromise. Reject sin when first

tempted, or become entrapped by it.

The downfall: Bondage (17:5-6)

I suspect the kings of Judah and Israel had the best of intentions. I feel certain they were seeking to rule effectively and provide security for their kingdoms. The wide range of alternatives and options available to them certainly included Yahweh, the God who had delivered them from Egypt. Another option to unite the people was the pagan worship found among the people living in the land when the Israelites conquered Canaan.



The kings of Israel appear particularly susceptible to the temptation to water down worship of Yahweh by mixing it with worship of local deities. God's prophets repeatedly warned against worship of other gods, but it continued. During this time, the nation faced numerous foreign enemies. Each attack further weakened the bonds that held the nation together. 2 Kings never lets the reader forget this decline resulted more from disobedience to Yahweh than from military strength of the enemies. The nation forgot that God had promised to bless the people in their new land when they obeyed and worshipped the Lord (Deuteronomy 30:15-20).

Some of Judah's kings were godly, but the majority were only marginally better than those of Israel. Ahaz reigned 16 years, during which he failed to follow King David's example. Instead of relying upon God to deliver Judah, Ahaz pilfered the gold and silver from the temple to pay tribute money to Assyria. Ahaz actually commanded the priest to build an altar in the temple, modeled after one he saw while visiting Damascus. While the southern

kingdom would survive longer than Israel, kings such as Ahaz were leading it toward destruction.

Israel fell in 722 B.C., about a century and a half before Jerusalem was captured. A series of wicked and ineffective kings ruled during the last decades of Israel's existence. None could stem the descent in sin toward destruction. The nation had rejected Yahweh for so long that the kings no longer sought the Lord's deliverance.

Assyria invaded the land and sacked the city of Samaria after a three-year siege. They exiled 27,000 survivors and resettled them in foreign lands. Forced deportation would have been especially harsh on a people who felt God had given them their land.

The reason: Disobedience (17:7-12; 16-20)

The narrator constantly reminded the reader the nation would fall “because the Israelites had sinned against the Lord their God.” They failed to honor the Lord God who had delivered them from Egypt. They worshipped the idols of Canaan. They followed the religious practices of the nations among whom they settled and with whom they had contact.

They knew what they were doing was wrong and “secretly” disobeyed by worshiping idols. They pretended to worship Yahweh publicly while offering real loyalty to other gods. They constructed altars to pagan gods and fashioned Asherah poles to whom they burned incense. And, among other things, they continued to worship the golden calves set up by their first king, Jeroboam. Without pure worship, the people could not resist the inroads of paganism and idolatry.

Their moral conduct mirrored their worship. The words “against the Lord their God” (v. 7) imply a covenant relationship between the people and God. This covenant included the responsibility of the nation to care for

others. One prophet, Amos, railed against the rich and wealthy who exploited the poor. Israel failed to heed the message. Failing to care for the oppressed certainly contributed to the nation's fall. Obeying God in ethical concern for others and pure worship are necessary to experience moral and spiritual freedom.

The writer continued to catalog reasons for Israel's destruction. God had continued to reach out to them, but they rejected God's ways and crafted idols. Some sacrificed their children. Because they were not devoted exclusively to God and worshipped the Lord alone, Yahweh removed them from his presence. They had rejected the Lord who removed them from the land which they had been promised. They lost everything because of sinful disobedience to God. May we learn the lesson well—sin brings destruction. Worship God exclusively.

Question for discussion

- ♦ What price do you see being paid for disobedience by individuals and nations?

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.