

CAPTIVITY OF THE TEN TRIBES

December 11, 1904

2 Kings 17: 6-18—Memory Verses, 16-18.

Golden Text—The face of the Lord is against them that do evil.—1 Peter 3: 12.

6 In the ninth year of B. she'a the king of Assy'ria took Sama'ria, and carried Is'rael away into Assy'ria, and placed them in Ha'lah and in Ha'bor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

7 For so it was, that the children of Is'rael had sinned against the LORD their God, which had brought them up out of the land of E'gypt, from under the hand of Pha'rah king of E'gypt, and had feared other gods,

8 And walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Is'rael, and of the kings of Is'rael, which they had made.

9 And the children of Is'rael 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.

10 And they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree:

11 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:

12 For they served idols, whereof the LORD had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing.

13 Yet the LORD testified against Is'rael, and against Ju'dah, 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.

14 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.

15 And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant 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.

16 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 Ba'al.

17 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.

18 Therefore the LORD was very angry with Is'rael, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Ju'dah only.

THE LESSON RETOLD

In spite of the good example of King Hezekiah and the warnings of Isaiah, the people of Israel still copied and followed the worship of their heathen neighbors. So wicked had they at last become, that it was not uncommon for mothers and fathers to throw their children into the fire, as an offering to the heathen god Moloch. The idols which had been torn down by Hezekiah, were now carefully mended and put back in the temple. Heathen images and pillars carved in honor of the gods were set up upon the roads, and every hill-top had its temple or shrine for heathen worship, where the people burned incense before the idols, and held heathen feasts and festivals.

Having broken the first of God's Commandments, the people of Israel made no pretence of obeying the other laws of the Lord, and behaved themselves after the wicked manner of the heathen around them,

teaching their children to worship the sun, moon, and stars, and to bow themselves before golden calves, and the images of the wicked god Baal and the goddess Asherah.

All this time God was sending loving messages and warnings to His people by the prophets, begging and beseeching that they would turn from their evil ways and seek forgiveness for their sins. But the nation was so taken up with the sinful pleasures of their new worship, that they mocked at God's prophets and would listen to none of their reproofs. Instead of trusting to the voice of the Lord, they now resorted for advice and help to fortune-tellers and magicians, a class of persons with whom God had strictly commanded they should have no dealings.

So determined were the Israelites to disobey God and to follow their own ways, that God compared His people to stubborn