

“God Over All”
2 Kings 17:24-41
(Preached at Trinity, August 7, 2022)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Chapter 17** records the account of the fall of Israel and the immediate subsequent years.
 - A. The fall of Israel is recorded in verse 6:
2 Kings 17:6 NAU - "In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and carried Israel away into exile to Assyria, and settled them in Halah and Habor, *on* the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes."
 - B. The reason for their demise is described in the next verse:
2 Kings 17:7 NAU - "Now *this* came about because the sons of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up from the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and they had feared other gods"
2. Israel's problem was a consistent disregard of the 1st Commandment.
"Thou shalt have no other gods before Me."
2 Kings 17:8 NAU – they had feared other gods and "walked in the customs of the nations whom the LORD had driven out before the sons of Israel, and *in the customs* of the kings of Israel which they had introduced."
2 Kings 17:10-12 NAU - "They set for themselves *sacred* pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree, ¹¹ and there they burned incense on all the high places as the nations *did* which the LORD had carried away to exile before them; and they did evil things provoking the LORD. ¹² They served idols, concerning which the LORD had said to them, "You shall not do this thing."
2 Kings 17:15 NAU - "And they followed vanity and became vain, and *went* after the nations which surrounded them, concerning which the LORD had commanded them not to do like them."
2 Kings 17:16-17 NAU - "They forsook all the commandments of the LORD their God and made for themselves molten images, *even* two calves, and made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal. ¹⁷ Then they made their sons and their daughters pass through the fire, and practiced divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him."
3. They were forever cast from the presence of God.
2 Kings 17:20 NAU - "The LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel and afflicted them and gave them into the hand of plunderers, until He had cast them out of His sight."
Although this speaks of a nation of people it applies to all who refuse to bow before God.
4. It isn't that they rejected God outright. They were guilty of adding the gods and practices of the nations around them. They were guilty of syncretism.

5. As we continue in the chapter, **Verses 24-41** cover the years following Israel being removed from the land. **Verse 24** tells us the land was filled with pagans from many lands—from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sephar-vaim. These were the results of several waves of Assyrian resettlements. Each would have had their own gods and their own ways of worship.
6. These foreigners did not know Yahweh and had no interest in His worship.
2 Kings 17:25 NAU - "At the beginning of their living there, they did not fear the LORD"
 A. One might say, well they didn't know God because they weren't God's people. They'd never heard of his Law and His ordinances or how He should be worshipped. God wouldn't hold them accountable for what they didn't know, would He?
 B. The answer is YES! They are without excuse. They DID know God.
Romans 1:19-21 NAU - "because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. ²¹ For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened."
 C. The Law isn't only for the Jewish nation. It is given to all men. All are accountable to the Law and all will be judged by the Law. All men are required to worship God alone. God's wrath was kindled upon their irreverence. God sent lions in judgment.
2 Kings 17:25 NAU - " they did not fear the LORD; therefore the LORD sent lions among them which killed some of them."
7. The people were quickly able to surmise that they had offended the God of the land.
2 Kings 17:26 NAU - "The nations whom you have carried away into exile in the cities of Samaria do not know the custom of the god of the land; so he has sent lions among them, and behold, they kill them because they do not know the custom of the god of the land."
 But they weren't looking to serve God alone. They were looking to add Him to their list of the gods of the nations.
8. This was the corruption of the ancient world. There was the belief that every land and people had their own god. Polytheism was the widespread norm among the pagan nations. This can be seen when the storm arose upon the ship Jonah had boarded.
Jonah 1:5-6 NAU - "Then the sailors became afraid and every man cried to his god, and they threw the cargo which was in the ship into the sea to lighten *it* for them. But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship, lain down and fallen sound asleep. ⁶ So the captain approached him and said, "How is it that you are sleeping? Get up, call on your god. Perhaps *your* god will be concerned about us so that we will not perish."
9. Syncretism was also the norm—the practice of including the practices of many religions. None was seen as the one single religion or the one single God. Sadly, this is still the common view today. Our religion is just one of many. The hyper-tolerance of our day presumes that all religions are equally valid. You have no right for your religion to infringe upon the religion of another. Your faith and your worship must be considered a private thing.

10. Worse, we try to incorporate the practices of many beliefs and philosophies.
syncretism.
- A. Definition – “the attempted reconciliation or union of different or opposing principles, practices, or parties, as in philosophy or religion.”
 - B. Israel practiced syncretism continually throughout their history. They infused the sinful customs and worship of the pagan people that surrounded them with the worship of God.
2 Kings 17:10-11 NAU - "They set for themselves *sacred* pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree, ¹¹ and there they burned incense on all the high places as the nations *did* which the LORD had carried away to exile before them; and they did evil things provoking the LORD."
11. Christianity has often been plagued by Syncretism - the blending Christianity with the customs and practices of the surrounding culture. This is why Easter is tied to the moon phases. In Haiti Roman Catholicism has been combined with Voodoo – Voodoo drums and melodies are incorporated in Catholic church services.
12. The early church was not immune to the effects of culture upon them.
- A. Corinth was a large port city. It was a prosperous city and individuals gave themselves to every sensual fulfillment imaginable knowing no law but self-desire. Every sexual perversion was practiced.
The Church of Corinth was beginning to mirror many of the sins of their culture.
 - B. Laodicea was also a prosperous city. The Church of Laodicea became corrupted by their wealth.
Revelation 3:17 NAU - "Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,"
13. Tonight, I want us to look at syncretism on a much more personal level – not as it affects others but how it is affecting churches and individuals in our own nation. Syncretism is very much a reality in the United States. In this country Christianity has been wed with modern culture to form a new religion – a cultural Christianity. It is a blending of humanistic secularism with Christianity.
- I. What are some of the marks of syncretism in the Church today in the United States?
- A. We can see it in the shift of clarity in the Gospel message. It has been adjusted to better fit the heart of our culture.
 - 1. The nature of saving faith has been blurred. Instead of a vital trusting in the merits of Christ’s life and death upon the cross as full satisfaction for our sin it has been adjusted to deal with meeting felt needs.
 - 2. Repentance is not presented as essential to the Gospel.
 - a. An understanding of one’s sin is essential to saving faith. No one will turn to Christ if they don’t see their guilt.
 - b. People today are often brought to Christianity without being confronted by their sin. We don’t use the word sin today. People don’t want to hear about condemnation and hell.
 - c. Children are often baptized before the perfect work of the Holy Spirit is allowed to work – conviction, sorrow.
And then the live just like their worldly peers. You can’t tell the difference between them.

3. Regeneration has lost all meaning
The miracle of God's transforming grace is lost.
 4. The result is multitudes of people following a religion based on traditions that are void of Christ. Church is all about activities and fellowship. It has little to do with Christ.
- B. We can see it in the absence of theological truth
1. In what has been defined as the "Post Modern" world truth is being seen as something that is relative. There are no more absolutes.
Christianity is a religion that rests upon a Book – the writings of the Apostles and Prophets.
Ephesians 2:19-20 NAU - "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*,"
 2. Few professing Christians know what the Bible teaches, and they will not tolerate someone who tells them the truth. They don't understand the essential doctrines of the faith. And they turn their eyes away from the demands the Bible places upon our lives.
 3. We can often see this cultural shift in Christianity with our political leaders. Many of them profess Christianity and are members of a church and yet they openly promote abortion and gay and transgender agenda. And their churches are not willing to discipline them for these sins.
- C. We can see it in how the modern church operates – pragmatism is the rule
The modern church is undergoing the greatest transformation since the Reformation - But whereas the Reformation was founded upon Biblical truth the modern movement is being founded upon pragmatism
1. Many modern churches are being restructured in order to appeal to the lost man
 - a. Anonymity without accountability.
 - b. Entertaining a congregation is more important than feeding them.
 - c. Tolerance instead of holiness.
 - d. They pride themselves in looking just like the world. Tattoos and piercings are promoted as badges of their liberty.
 - e. Observing the Sabbath is now seen as archaic.
 2. We are seeing a downgrade in Biblical worship.
 - a. It seems that anything is allowed in the worship of God.
 - b. The greatest emphasis is on my preferences and desires.
There is great pride in coming as you are, being what you are, doing what you prefer.
 - b. The Second Commandment is a confirmation that God rules how He will be worshipped.
Spurgeon's Catechism
Question 46: What is forbidden in the second commandment?
Answer: The second commandment forbids the worshipping of God by images, or any other way not appointed in His word.

3. This was the issue with the golden calves of both Aaron and Jeroboam. They used the calf in the worship of God.
Exodus 32:3-5 NAU - "Then all the people tore off the gold rings which were in their ears and brought *them* to Aaron. ⁴ He took *this* from their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool and made it into a molten calf; and they said, "This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt." ⁵ Now when Aaron saw *this*, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow *shall be* a feast to the LORD."
1 Kings 12:28-29 NAU - "So the king consulted, and made two golden calves, and he said to them, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt." ²⁹ He set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan."
4. The problem with the golden calf is Israel failed to see God with a holy reverence. They thought that the worship of God could be combined with the idolatry of Egypt.

II. What is the cure and preventative of Christian Syncretism?

- A. We must be governed by the Word of God – alone
 1. In our Cultural Christian culture beliefs and practices are received from many different sources – most are based on tradition and word of mouth. I call it “hearsay religion.”
 2. Many young people like to feel like they’re cutting edge or trendy. They bring the latest cultural trends into the church. Everything is refashioned to fit their form of Christianity. The church has lost importance. Denominations are looked at with suspicion. Many deny the need for church membership.
 3. Even historic beliefs are refashioned. Reformed theology has taken a new form.
 4. We must be governed by the Bible
- B. We must have a high and holy reverence of God
 1. Israel’s sin was putting other gods alongside the one true God. Cultural Christianity is trying to recreate God after their own image.
 2. We must come before God with holy reverence. He is glorious to behold. He rules and reigns over all. We must bow before His sovereign majesty.

Conclusion:

1. This means God expects His people to trust Him. To love Him. To worship Him -
 ALONE
Deuteronomy 6:4-5 – “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD: ⁵ And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”
2. His church must follow Him alone