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²⁴Then the king of Assyria brought *people* from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed *them* in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel; and they took possession of Samaria and dwelt in its cities. ²⁵And it was so, at the beginning of their dwelling there, *that* they did not fear the LORD; therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which killed *some* of them. ²⁶So they spoke to the king of Assyria, saying, "The nations whom you have removed and placed in the cities of Samaria do not know the rituals of the God of the land; therefore He has sent lions among them, and indeed, they are killing them because they do not know the rituals of the God of the land." ²⁷Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, "Send there one of the priests whom you brought from there; let him go and dwell there, and let him teach them the rituals of the God of the land." ²⁸Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the LORD.
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1. Samaritan soup

- a. Assyria removed a large portion of the Israelites from the northern kingdom
 - a1. From this point forward, the Scriptures deal mainly with Judah (the Jews)
 - a2. The dispersed Israelites end up in Syria, Mesopotamia, and Persia
- b. The books of Ezekiel, Daniel, Nehemiah, Esther, Ezra, & Nahum deal with the part of the world of the dispersal
- c. Assyria then moved large numbers of people from Mesopotamia, Persia, & Syria into Israel
 - a1. Unlike the dispersed Israelites, who remained a people apart from the Gentiles, the Israelites intermixed with the immigrants to form a new people group, the Samaritans
 - a2. God had ordered the Israelites to stay apart as His unique people, but they did not do so
- d. God sent lions to devour the pagan worshippers
 - a1. The Samaritans begged the king to send a priest back to them to teach them how to worship the God of the land (belief that every land had a god)
 - a2. A priest was sent to Bethel (place of the Golden Calf) to teach them the rituals of Leviticus

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²⁹However every nation continued to make gods of its own, and put *them* in the shrines on the high places which the Samaritans had made, *every* nation in the cities where they dwelt... ³²So they feared the LORD, and from every class they appointed for themselves priests of the high places, who sacrificed for them in the shrines of the high places. ³³They feared the LORD, yet served their own gods—according to the rituals of the nations from among whom they were carried away.
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2. Syncretism on steroids

- a. The priest taught the people how to worship God
 - a1. They feared God, but not to fully worship Him, but to appease Him to protect themselves
 - a2. Since Israel worshipped idols, God placed idol worshippers in the land in place of Israel
- b. Each people group brought their own gods & rituals
 - a1. Now, instead of just Canaanite idolatry, idol worship of Babylon, Persia, Syria, & Assyria were mixed into the Samaritan religious life
 - a2. The high places were now used by a plethora of people worshipping different deities
- c. They worshipped the "God of the land" along with their own gods, which included child sacrifice
- d. The priest apparently did not teach the exclusivity of God or the futility of idol worship

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³⁴To this day they continue practicing the former rituals; they do not fear the LORD, nor do they follow their statutes or their ordinances, or the law and commandment which the LORD had commanded the children of Jacob, whom He named Israel, ³⁵with whom the LORD had made a covenant and charged them, saying: "You shall not fear other gods, nor bow down to them nor serve them nor sacrifice to them; ³⁶but the LORD, who brought you up from the land of Egypt with great power and an outstretched arm, Him you shall fear, Him you shall worship, and to Him you shall offer sacrifice.
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3. Turned over to vanity

- a. When God removed Israel from the land, He turned the land over to their own devices
 - a1. Their worship was futile & self-destructive
 - a2. God would not receive their worship, but He left a remnant in the land to be a witness
- b. God had warned Israel against idolatry
 - a1. Now He removed idol-worshipping Israel & replaced them with Gentile idolaters
 - a2. Israel received what they sought
- c. Rom. 1 once God turns a people over to a reprobate mind judgment is not far behind
 - a1. Is. 57:1 once God no longer calls a people or a person, all hope is lost
 - a2. Jn. 6:44 only those called by the Lord can come
- d. God still dealt with Israel in the lands where they were sent, but they had lost the blessing of His land
- e. We can sin to the point of being turned over to own devices (Gal. 6:7-10, 1 Cor. 5, Lk. 15, Ps. 106:15)