This is a very difficult and confusing part of the Old Testament. The changing back and forth from the Northern to the Southern Kingdoms makes it very difficult to track the events. The best we can do is to not look more closely but rather to step back and look at the big picture. With the collapsing of Solomon’s lungs and his lifeless body being placed in the tomb, the hope of Israel collapsed. The split into two rival nations was a deathblow that would just take a matter of time to be revealed. The apparent temporary “victory” of both sides was just a piece of historical deception. The nation was done. Our text today describes the destruction of the larger part of the broken people, and that is where we shall spend our time. The first part of their captivity was their own stubborn hearts. Here we have the second part of their captivity as the North falls to the Assyrians. The third part, or completion of their captivity, would happen in 586 B.C. when the Southern Kingdom would fall.

The northern Nation of Israel fell into Assyrian captivity in 722 B.C. The Assyrian empire was very aggressive under the leadership of Tiglath-pileser who is called “Pul” in some places in the Old Testament. They had a very systematic methodology for expanding their empire. First, they would threaten a country until in fear they would guarantee allegiance and pay “fee” for peace. This is what happened under the kingship of Menahem as described in 15:17-22. Once this relationship began, the cancer cell of ultimate defeat was firmly planted in the body of the targeted nation.

One of the problems that ancient nations had was that they had no standing army. When there was an attack, the men would be forced to leave the fields, and the agricultural responsibilities would be left to the women and children. This would create a double threat with a weakened internal work force and an external casualty-producing conflict; things got serious fast. Paying a peacekeeping fee seemed wise, but it only allowed the enemy more economic strength with which to prepare to conquer.

The second stage of the Assyrian plan was to remove the authority structure within the country. This is described in 17:1-6 when King Hoshea was put in prison so that there could be little opposition for the conquest. This process took three years in the case of Israel. The final stage was to eliminate the men of the nation through deportation for slavery or death in battle. This process took sixty-five years in the case of Israel from 734 B.C. to 669. These three stages can be summarized in three words: compromise, consequence and control. They are directly parallel to the way the enemies of God work in all ages and give us reason to sit up and look closely at the way we handle our lives.

The fall of the Northern Kingdom tightened the geographical noose around the neck of the Southern Kingdom. This historical event was so devastating that an explanation is given in chapter seventeen. How or why would God do this or allow this to be done to the chosen people? The multiple reasons for God’s actions are given in some degree of detail.
1. What is your understanding of the phrase, “did right in the sight of the LORD,” according to 15:1-7?

2. List five causes for Israel's fall from 17:7-18:

3. What lessons can we learn from these causes for failure in our lives?

4. What lessons can we learn from these causes for failure in our lives?

5. What was the cause of the lion problem in 17:24-26? [See Lev. 26:21-22]