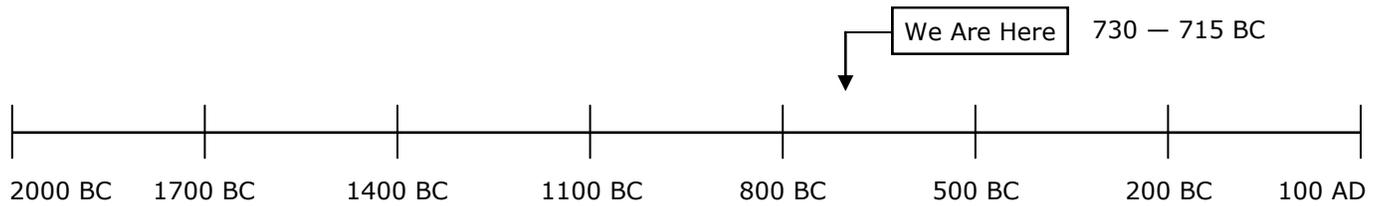


# Terminal Decadence

BiAY.org | Reviews

Week 26: June 25 — July 1 — *2 Kings 16-18; Hosea; Isaiah*

50% Complete — 183 Days to Go



## Helpful Resources

Overview of Bible History (p.37), Kings and Prophets (p.71) Battle of Midway (p.195)

## Making Sense of It All

- The Big Picture  
Start by reading *Isaiah 5:1-7*. The big picture is captured in this parable of the vineyard.

What we have watched for weeks now literally stretched out for two centuries. Since Solomon, Israel's stardom had plummeted. Its 200-year history was plagued with wayward kings, a tragic consequence of their immoral idolatry. While the Lord was patient, His longsuffering gave in to justice. Thus, He brought Israel's existence to a swift end by allowing the Assyrians to conquer the land and take captive the people. In 722 BC, the nation of Israel was consumed; the ten tribes disappeared into the vast regions of the Assyrian Empire. Take a minute to re-read Joshua's warning in his farewell speech (*Joshua 23:1-16*). Were his words fulfilled?

The fate of Israel is the fate of all nations; throughout history, all nations have endured an unavoidable pattern. John MacArthur calls it "Terminal Decadence." Before explaining that cycle, let's first define the terms. If something is decadent, it is decaying; if something is terminal, then it will last until the end (i.e. terminal cancer). Thus, the phrase "terminal decadence" refers to how nations decay until their end. No nation in history has ever become more moral over time; nations always become immoral and, typically, progress through these phases:

**Phase 1 — Peace & Prosperity:** Nations experience a honeymoon phase, while the generation that remembers life before nationhood still exists. If that same generation succeeds in educating its posterity of its heritage, then they will continue the nation's prosperity.

**Phase 2 — Self-Indulgence:** Within a few generations, and especially if the charter group does not succeed in its educational goals, then youngsters tend to believe that prosperity is a result of their own doing. Thus, a humanistic culture surfaces that is ignorant of its origin, neglects its heritage, and loses its national purpose.

**Phase 3 — Idolatry & Immorality:** As the individual turns inward and becomes grossly self-centered, society slowly turns lawless and perverted. Having lost its way, the nation is destined to wander aimlessly and self destruct.

**Phase 4 — Judgment & Destruction:** While God is patient, His longsuffering gives way to His justice; He cannot allow gross immorality, idolatry, perversion of truth, or flagrant evil for long. After sending warnings, He is forced to lay His axe at the base of the tree and begin His divine removal of that sickly nation.

What we have read in the last month has been Israel's experience with Terminal Decadence. The four phases are evident in its history. Once it gained its independence from Egypt and entered into Canaan, Israel experienced *peace and prosperity*. Not long after that generation was gone, the *self-indulgent* period of judges ensued, in which "people did what was right in their own eyes." Then, once Israel asked for a king, each political leader following David was *idolatrous*, rejecting God and inviting *immorality*. Israel imploded and terminal decadence took its life; God passed *judgment* and ordered its *destruction* by the Assyrians.

- Personal Application

1. **A National Note:** America is experiencing Terminal Decadence. From its founding to 1860, the U.S. expanded more quickly than any nation in history in size, population, and wealth; it was a tremendous time of *prosperity* and of relative *peace*. However, following the Civil War (1865 to 1929), Americans became *self-indulgent*; the goal was personal wealth and well-being; however, God pulled the plug with the Stock Market Crash of 1929 and brought on the Great Depression. Also, during the Industrial Revolution, they discovered the genius of man and befriended humanism. From 1930 to 1962, America's humanism bred secularism or godlessness; in the 1960's, America passed laws that removed God from public education and political influence, promoting the perverted version of separation of church and state. Americans have since chosen gross *idolatry* and *immorality*; all that's left is to watch our own *implosion* and the *judgment* of God.
2. **God holds all nations accountable for their sins.** While people are eternal and will be judged in eternity, nations are temporal and must be judged while they exist.
3. **While nations cannot survive Terminal Decadence, they can prolong it.** Now that Israel has been destroyed, our focus will turn to Judah; because of righteous leaders and temporary revivals, it will find mercy from God and prolong its end.
4. **National apostasy is the result of individual spiritual adultery.** Every nation can be redeemed of its curse, but will it? Even the Assyrians repented when God sent Jonah to them. Nations are judged based on their morality and acceptance or rejection of God. Nations are individuals, and individuals must choose to be faithful to Him. The book of *Hosea* testifies, as Israel found other lovers. Because of individual unfaithfulness, God rejected the entire nation. We too are in danger of committing spiritual adultery. Like Gomer, we embrace so many loves that God, our true love, is forgotten.

- Prophetic Passages

1. **Israel's Downfall** (*Isaiah 17:4-11; 28:1-4; Hosea 3:1-5; 9:1-3*)
2. **The Messiah** (*Isaiah 12:1-6*)
3. **Story of Lucifer** (*Isaiah 14:12-22; Ezek. 28*): Rebellion in heaven and casting to earth.

### The Bottom Line

God holds all nations *accountable* for their sins.

### Questions to Consider

1. What are some of the other loves in your life that have become competition for God?
2. What do you expect from your spiritual "spouse"? Do you expect the same of yourself?