

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 8

THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS

CHAPTER 13

INTRODUCTION

Jeroboam established himself as king of the northern tribes, which would be known from then as Israel (the south was Judah). In the previous chapter, he had made two golden calves for the people to worship as “the LORD who had brought them out of the land of Egypt”. He placed one in Bethel and the other in Dan. This was an abomination to the LORD. He even instituted a new religious festival to be celebrated on the 15th day of the eighth month, which was not sanctioned by the LORD. His worldly method of securing his nation would have grave consequences for Israel. God cared enough for His people and Jeroboam to send a prophet to rebuke him for his own good.

Chapter 13 opens with Jeroboam appointing himself as the high priest standing alongside the altar in Bethel leading the people to worship the calf-idol. This chapter records the LORD’s displeasure and judgement upon him. When the LORD chose him to be king over the northern tribes, he was given the opportunity to truly

serve God and be bountifully blessed. But Jeroboam had his own ideas. This chapter continues to show how the LORD in His mercy tried to get him to repent and turn once again to God. But Jeroboam is foolhardy and chose to continue in his sins.

OUTLINE

1. The LORD’S judgement was upon Jeroboam because of his idolatrous worship of God (vv. 1-10);
- 2) The prophet from Judah was killed because he disobeyed God (vv. 11- 32);
- 3) Jeroboam persisted in his evil ways (vv. 33-34).

COMMENTARY

**The LORD’S Judgment upon
Jeroboam –13:1-10**

Jeroboam was standing beside the raised altar, which he had built in Bethel – the day: the 15th of the Eighth Month (12:32). He was burning incense to the golden calf-idol. Then suddenly a loud voice cried out amidst the assembly, which was gathered before the altar saying: “Thus saith the LORD” and prophesying against the altar. The voice was that of the “man of God” who came from the South, Judah. The title “man of God” is a servant of God who is wholly devoted to God’s service. This “man of God” spoke against the altar instead of Jeroboam. The explanation we can think of is that Jeroboam was worshipping the idol on the altar as his

god instead of the LORD his God. Therefore, the pronouncement of the judgement against the altar hopefully would shake Jeroboam to his senses.

The “man of God” prophesied that a coming descendant of the house of David by the name of Josiah would slaughter the false priests whom Jeroboam had appointed, and he would offer their bones on it. He then proclaimed that he would give a sign on that very day, that the altar would split in two and the ashes that were on it would spill out (vv.2, 3). This prophecy of the “man of God” is amazing and accurate. Josiah had not come into the historical scene yet. King Josiah would come onto the scene about three hundred years later!¹ This is one of the most remarkable prophecies of the Scriptures. It predicted the name and the actions of a king who would appear about three hundred years later (640-609 B.C.). Here again is a testimony of God’s omnipresence and omniscience. He knows the end from the beginning!

Jeroboam had thus far seemed successful and in control. Now, when he heard the saying by the “man of God”, he stretched his hand pointing to

the “man of God” from where he stood beside the altar commanding that the “man of God” be arrested. At that instant, his hand stiffened, withered and he could not withdraw it. Simultaneously, the altar split in two and ashes poured out from within it according to the prediction of the “man of God” (v.5). There is no doubt that these miracles were wrought by God, with Whom nothing is impossible. Any attempt to deny the supernatural element and to rationalise it to suit the human mind is preposterous and nonsensical. It would create more problems and tantamount to calling God a liar.

This was the first time that Jeroboam was publicly condemned for his sins. The judgement from the LORD was clear: the altar and the unlawful priests were doomed. Immediately after, Jeroboam seemed to humble himself and asked the “man of God” to “entreat” (the Hebrew is very expressive: *to flatter, or stroke the face*) on his behalf by praying to “thy God” on his behalf for his hand to be fully restored (v.6). Observe that Jeroboam addressed the God of the “man of God” as his God and not “our God”. This exhibits the extent of the spiritual depth and darkness into which Jeroboam had fallen. He did not seem to care for the message from the “man of God”; but was rather, more concerned in the healing of his hand. He perhaps did not expect the judgement to be meted out during his reign and life time. The “man of God” prayed for him and his hand was fully restored. Yet, there was not a trace of repentance. God was good to him

¹ 2 Kings 23:15 Moreover the altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he brake down, and burned the high place, and stamped it small to powder, and burned the grove. 16 And as Josiah turned himself, he spied the sepulchres that were there in the mount, and sent, and took the bones out of the sepulchres, and burned them upon the altar, and polluted it, according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words.

hoping that he would repent of his evil ways. And if he did not repent, he would have no excuse whatsoever because of the signs that had been given to him.

Jeroboam next invited the “man of God” to have a fellowship meal with him in his palace. He could then refresh himself and he would reward him (v.7). But the “man of God” answered that even if the king would give him half of his house, he would reject his invitation and would not even eat or drink water in that place. He practised biblical separation correctly. He explained that the LORD had charged him not to eat or drink water, and not to return to Judah by the same way that he came to Bethel (v.9). Jeroboam’s invitation to the “man of God” was quite understandable. However if the “man of God” were to be seen with him eating and drinking, it would send a wrong signal to the people. The significance of his message of judgement would be weakened. But the fact is that the LORD forbade him to do so. That was a clear command from God. The “man of God” is commendable for remaining obedient to God. The king’s palace, his sumptuous food and his reward could not entice him. In this respect, he feared God more than man, the king.

**Keep God’s Word and Deviate Not –
13:11-32**

So the “man of God” took another way to return to Judah. As he did not take any food in Bethel, he might have been hungry. In Bethel, there was an old prophet. His sons had returned from the religious

ceremony where they had observed what had happened. They related what they witnessed to their father who immediately asked his sons which way the “man of God” took on his return journey. They informed their father who called his sons to saddle an ass for him. He managed to catch up with the “man of God” who was sitting under an oak tree. The “man of God” was probably taking a rest being tired from lack of food. Having ascertained the identity of the “man of God”, the old prophet invited him to go to his home to have a meal with him (v.15). The “man of God” repeated the charge that the LORD had imposed on him. However, the old prophet presented his credentials that he too was a prophet. The LORD had spoken to him through an angel to bring the “man of God” to his home for food and refreshment. The divinely inspired writer commented that “he lied unto him” (v.18). So the “man of God” was deceived and went with him to his house and they ate and drank.

It is sad that the “man of God” was deceived by the old prophet. The old prophet was an evil old man. His standing as a faithful servant of the LORD is questionable. Just because he was old and perhaps had white hair does not mean that he cannot be evil. He lived in Bethel and if he had been a good prophet, why would God have to send this man of God from Judah to travel all the way north to rebuke Jeroboam instead of this old prophet? The old man did nothing to warn Jeroboam of his idolatrous practices which were abominable to the LORD. He could not have been a prophet of

God. The man of God should have arrived at this conclusion and not listened to him and deviate from God's original command to him.

He managed to persuade the "man of God" to disobey the LORD. The LORD had not spoken to him through an angel. He deliberately lied to cheat the "man of God". On the other hand, the "man of God" must be fully responsible for his disobedience. He knew without a shadow of a doubt the clear commandment of God to him. God would not change His mind. If He wanted the "man of God" to eat with the old prophet, He would have told him in some clear way and released him from the first injunction. He had no excuse.

We do not know the motive of the old prophet for inviting the "man of God" to his house. Some believed that the old prophet desired very much to have the fellowship of the "man of God". He wanted to know first hand what happened at the worship place. He might have been jealous of the "man of God" having been convicted of his own dereliction of duty to warn Jeroboam. The "man of God" had to come all the way from Judah to do his duty. Whatever the reason for what he did, after being told by the "man of God" of the charge of God to him, his actions were vicious and inexcusable. It would result in the death of the man of God.

While they were eating, the word of the LORD came to the "man of God" through the old prophet. The LORD pronounced a judgement of death upon him because he had

disobeyed the LORD. His body would not be buried in the tomb of his "fathers" (in Judah). We are not told of the reaction of the "man of God". The narrator continues to relate that after the meal, the old prophet saddled an ass for the "man of God". On the way a lion attacked and killed him. His corpse was lying in the way. The ass was standing by the corpse. The lion also was standing by the dead body. This is strange indeed. Firstly, the lion after mauling the man did not tear and mutilate the body. It stood tamely beside the corpse. Secondly, the ass was not attacked. Nor did the ass run away from the lion. This is unnatural. It is supernatural. This is to prove that God's judgement upon the "man of God" came true.

Passers-by saw the corpse, the ass and the lion, and were obviously surprised at the sight of the strange phenomenon. When they were in Bethel, they told the people. The old prophet came to hear of it. He went to the site. He identified the corpse as that of the "man of God", who had disobeyed the LORD. All that happened was according to the Word of the LORD. The old prophet carried the corpse of the "man of God" on an ass, brought it to Bethel and gave him a proper burial. He and his sons mourned for the "man of God". He then spoke to his sons that when he died, he wanted to be buried beside the "man of God" in the same tomb. He also remarked that all that the "man of God" had predicted concerning the altar in Bethel and all the high places, which were in the cities of Samaria, would surely be fulfilled.

Does it not seem strange that the “man of God” who was commissioned to take a message of judgement to Jeroboam met with a violent death, and the old prophet who lied to him lived? It is not strange if we understand the intent of the writer, and it is the writer who wants to impress upon his readers that what really matters in this episode is that the Word of the LORD cannot be derailed. What the LORD has declared will come to pass. The “man of God” met his death because he disobeyed God and judgement was pronounced upon him. Yet in this judgement on him, God is using it as an object lesson for Jeroboam and the old prophet that God’s judgement would surely come to pass. Jeroboam could be certain that the prophecy proclaimed by the “man of God” concerning the altars and the coming of King Josiah and his deeds would be realised. The old prophet himself testified affirmatively to this prophecy. The fact that the LORD used the lying old prophet to declare His judgement on the “man of God” does not in the least mean God approved of the old prophet’s character and conduct. He was a liar, vicious and wicked. The LORD is not pleased with such people.

Jeroboam Unrepentant –13:33-34

“After this thing” means all the events that had taken place were intended to convict Jeroboam of his sin of idolatry. But Jeroboam remained unrepentant. God had delivered His message of judgement to him through His prophet from Judah. It was authenticated immediately by a sign to

show that the judgement would come to pass if he did not repent. His hand was stiffened, the altar was split into two and the ashes poured out.

Even the judgement of death on the “man of God” for disobeying the LORD should serve as an object lesson that disobedience to God would result in death. Jeroboam must have known and heard all that had happened. In spite of the judgement which was pronounced on his priests, he carried on with his evil deeds with renewed vigour. He appointed more such priests and made himself a priest too. This was a flagrant act of disobedience and rebellion against God. The wages of sin is death. His defiance would lead to his eventual downfall and that of his house. God will not be mocked and His Word is true. Jeroboam would be cut off.

PRACTICAL VALUE

We can learn quite a number of truths about the LORD our God in this chapter. The prediction concerning the coming of King Josiah and his specific deeds, which were fulfilled some three hundred years later, teaches us that God is omnipresent and omniscient. This is an actual illustration testifying to the truth of God’s immutable character. This is a comforting truth that sets us free from all worries and anxieties about tomorrow. God has clearly revealed in Scriptures all that will happen to this world and its inhabitants. If we would be diligent and conscientious in our study of the Word of God, we would know the future and be assured that His Word cannot be

broken. All things that He has revealed and predicted will come to pass! This truth should also help us to rearrange our present lifestyle in this world.

We also learn that miracles do not convict a person of his sins and his need of God and the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour. Jeroboam was more interested in his immediate physical needs. That is very true today. People can be astounded by miracles. They will only look with wonder and amazement but not necessarily believe, whilst some might be sceptical. Only the Word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit will lead men to be convicted of their sins and be converted. Men have been given the free will to choose to believe or to reject God.

When the Word of God is plain and clear, seek no other word. The “man of God” knew the Word from the LORD. There was no doubt in his mind. He repeated God’s charge to him twice. Yet he was fooled by the old prophet. He did not even show a trace of suspicion when the old prophet lied to him, nor did he ask any questions.

Today, we must test the spirits whether they are of God, of men or of the devil. We must know the Word of God and test every teaching and preaching of men in the light of the Scriptures. There is no excuse for blaming others who lie and cheat to cause us harm. We have the responsibility to search the Scriptures to seek to know the truth. AMEN

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: 1 Kings 13:1-6; John 2:23-25; 11:45-54.

TUESDAY: 1 Kings 13:7-10; Proverbs 25:26; 1 Peter 5:8.

WEDNESDAY: 1 Kings 13:11-19; James 1:14.

THURSDAY: 1 Kings 13:20-27; 1 John 4:1-3.

FRIDAY: 1 Kings 13:28-34; Micah 3:5-7.

Discussion Questions

1. Why could Jeroboam not be both king and priest? Are Christians today not both priests and kings? If so, how could this be possible?

2. How should the believer relate to the prophecies in the Bible i.e. allow the future prophecies impact his present life if at all? How should the prophecy of “a future King Josiah destroying the altar and the

priests” suppose to impact Jeroboam then?

3. Was the man of God consistent in his dealing with both the old prophet and Jeroboam?

4. What do you think was the reason that God killed the man of God?

5. What kind of person was ‘the old prophet in Bethel’ and how can we protect ourselves from being similarly deceived and judged?
