

## The Man of God and the Old Prophet

**1 Kings 13:1-34 (ESV)** <sup>1</sup>And behold, a man of God came out of Judah by the word of the Lord to Bethel. Jeroboam was standing by the altar to make offerings. <sup>2</sup>And the man cried against the altar by the word of the Lord and said, "O altar, altar, thus says the Lord: 'Behold, a son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name, and he shall sacrifice on you the priests of the high places who make offerings on you, and human bones shall be burned on you.'" <sup>3</sup>And he gave a sign the same day, saying, "This is the sign that the Lord has spoken: 'Behold, the altar shall be torn down, and the ashes that are on it shall be poured out.'" <sup>4</sup>And when the king heard the saying of the man of God, which he cried against the altar at Bethel, Jeroboam stretched out his hand from the altar, saying, "Seize him." And his hand, which he stretched out against him, dried up, so that he could not draw it back to himself. <sup>5</sup>The altar also was torn down, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign that the man of God had given by the word of the Lord. <sup>6</sup>And the king said to the man of God, "Entreat now the favor of the Lord your God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored to me." And the man of God entreated the Lord, and the king's hand was restored to him and became as it was before. <sup>7</sup>And the king said to the man of God, "Come home with me, and refresh yourself, and I will give you a reward." <sup>8</sup>And the man of God said to the king, "If you give me half your house, I will not go in with you. And I will not eat bread or drink water in this place, <sup>9</sup>for so was it commanded me by the word of the Lord, saying, 'You shall neither eat bread nor drink water nor return by the way that you came.'" <sup>10</sup>So he went another way and did not return by the way that he came to Bethel.

<sup>11</sup>Now an old prophet lived in Bethel. And his sons came and told him all that the man of God had done that day in Bethel. They also told to their father the words that he had spoken to the king. <sup>12</sup>And their father said to them, "Which way did he go?" And his sons showed him the way that the man of God who came from Judah had gone. <sup>13</sup>And he said to his sons, "Saddle the donkey for me." So they saddled the donkey for him and he mounted it. <sup>14</sup>And he went after the man of God and found him sitting under an oak. And he said to him, "Are you the man of God who came from Judah?" And he said, "I am." <sup>15</sup>Then he said to him, "Come home with me and eat bread." <sup>16</sup>And he said, "I may not return with you, or go in with you, neither will I eat bread nor drink water with you in this place, <sup>17</sup>for it was said to me by the word of the Lord, 'You shall neither eat bread nor drink water there, nor return by the way that you came.'" <sup>18</sup>And he said to him, "I also am a prophet as you are, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the Lord, saying, 'Bring him back with you into your house that he may eat bread and drink water.'" But he lied to him. <sup>19</sup>So he went back with him and ate bread in his house and drank water.

<sup>20</sup>And as they sat at the table, the word of the Lord came to the prophet who had brought him back. <sup>21</sup>And he cried to the man of God who came from Judah, "Thus says the Lord, 'Because you have disobeyed the word of the Lord and have not kept the command that the Lord your God commanded you, <sup>22</sup>but have come back and have eaten bread and drunk water in the place of which he said to you, 'Eat no bread and drink no water,' your body shall not come to the tomb of your fathers.'" <sup>23</sup>And after he had eaten bread and drunk, he saddled the donkey for the prophet whom he had brought back. <sup>24</sup>And as he went away a lion met him on the road and killed him. And his body was thrown in the road, and the donkey stood beside it; the lion also stood beside the body. <sup>25</sup>And behold, men passed by and saw the body thrown in the road and the lion standing by the body. And they came and told it in the city where the old prophet lived.

<sup>26</sup>And when the prophet who had brought him back from the way heard of it, he said, "It is the man of God who disobeyed the word of the Lord; therefore the Lord has given him to the lion, which has torn him and killed him, according to the word that the Lord spoke to him." <sup>27</sup>And he said to his sons, "Saddle the donkey for me." And they saddled it. <sup>28</sup>And he went and found his body thrown in the road, and the donkey and the lion standing beside the body. The lion had not eaten the body or torn the donkey. <sup>29</sup>And the prophet took up the body of the man of God and laid it on the donkey and brought it back to the city to mourn and to bury him. <sup>30</sup>And he laid the body in his own grave. And they mourned over him, saying, "Alas, my brother!" <sup>31</sup>And after he had buried him, he said to his sons, "When I die, bury me in the grave in which the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones. <sup>32</sup>For the saying that he called out by the word of the Lord against the altar in Bethel and against all the houses of the high places that are in the cities of Samaria shall surely come to pass."

<sup>33</sup>After this thing Jeroboam did not turn from his evil way, but made priests for the high places again from among all the people. Any who would, he ordained to be priests of the high places. <sup>34</sup>And this thing became sin to the house of Jeroboam, so as to cut it off and to destroy it from the face of the earth.

**13:1** The prophet is unnamed and simply called "a man of God".

1. He arrives at the very moment that Jeroboam is arrogantly officiating as high priest of his own man-made religion.

- "God did not permit the inauguration of Jeroboam's first great feast at Bethel to proceed without prophetic protest" (*Smith, p. 473*).
- Note that the prophet had come from Judah. Was this because no prophet or faithful prophet could be found in the Northern Kingdom?

2. The Lord sent prophets to choose and anoint kings; He also sent prophets to declare divine judgment on them.

**13:2** The prophet cries against the altar because it is unauthorized in the sight of God.

(*Winters, p. 105*) "Josiah, a man who would not be born for almost three hundred years, was named as the instrument who would bring God's wrath upon Bethel and its altar. Time means nothing to the One who inhabits eternity. He sees the future as clearly as the present."

- The actual prediction is fulfilled in 2 Kings 23:15-20.

**13:3-5** Instead of listening and repenting, Jeroboam tries to silence this prophet, but God immediately punishes Jeroboam by causing his arm to wither.

(*1 Kings, Davis, p. 149*) "It is as if Yahweh was whispering in the royal ear, 'Keep this up if you like, Jeroboam, but think: How many limbs do you want to keep?'"

**13:6-10** Jeroboam now changes his tactics and pleads for mercy. Yet he continues in disobedience until his death (**13:33**).

1. Jeroboam attempts to win the prophet's favor by offering him food and a gift, but the prophet refused – he had his orders from God.

- Jeroboam thought that food and a reward would honor the young prophet, but ignored what God really wanted -- repentance and obedience.

- First, prophets must not be for sale, and secondly, Jeroboam was an apostate (*1 Corinthians 5:9-11*). Leaving without eating was saying, “I can have nothing to do with this mess.”
- (*Smith, p. 474*) “Sharing in the meal would be a sign of close fellowship. This prophet was to leave no doubt that the God he served had repudiated the northern calf cult”.

2. **Lesson:** If a person will not repent, then there is really nothing else to talk about. Jeroboam tries manipulation, but the way back required repentance.

**13:11-13** Devout worshippers of God had gone to Judah, but at least one old prophet remained in Bethel. But he had compromised himself for God was not using him.

- His sons were present at the false worship and were likely complicit in it. They came back with, “You are not going to believe what happened at services this morning.”

**13:14-19** The old prophet lies to this unnamed prophet, and says that an angel had given him new information. “*An angel spoke to me by the word of the Lord*” (18).

1. Does this sound familiar (*Galatians 1:6-9*)?

- (*Whitcomb, p. 26*) “The unnamed prophet knew God’s command. He also knew that God does not contradict His own Word. So when a prophet said that an angel said that he could eat and drink in Israel, his heart should have detected the hiss of the Serpent (*‘you shall surely not die’ Genesis 3:1ff*) and his lips should have cried out, No!!”
- (*Davis, p. 152*) “At the very least the man of God should have registered suspicion, since the old prophet if only by his residence was associated with the apostatizing Northern Kingdom... Are we not in allegedly Christian circles awash in folks blabbering, ‘The Lord said to me.’”

2. God does not contradict Himself. He expects us to test those whose claim they are speaking for Him (*Acts 17:11; 1 John 4:1,6; Rev 2:2*).

- Sincerely believing a lie does not make up for neglecting the truth.

4. So why did this young prophet trust the word of an old prophet in the Northern Kingdom instead of relying upon what God had originally said?

- Was he naive? Did he assume that someone who professed to be religious always spoke the truth?
- Was he fooled by the age, experience or prestige of the old prophet, thinking “Well, he must be right seeing that he has spent more time studying the Scriptures than I have?”
- Did he think that he could not challenge someone who claimed that God had indeed spoken to them?
- Did he forget that even prophets can lie and fall away?
- Did he forget that the devil can use those who profess to be servants of God?
- Temptation is often most dangerous when it comes from someone who appears to be devoutly religious. The young prophet was not taken in or intimidated by Jeroboam or his offers, but he was completely fooled by an old prophet.

5. Then there is the question of why the old prophet lied.

- He says, *“I also am a prophet just like you” (13:18)*. Is there jealousy here? A desire to be viewed as faithful when one is not faithful?
- How many religious people will often say, *“I am a Christian just like you!”* when their life says the complete opposite.
- *(Davis, pp. 155-156)* *“You should be terrified if you have the truth and yet that truth does not grip, control, and transform you. For the old prophet the truth seemed to be more of a game than a love.”*

**13:20-25** God immediately pronounces judgment against the young prophet.

1. *(Smith, p. 475)* *“That this death was no accident is indicated by the peculiar behavior of the donkey and the lion, both of which simply stood near the corpse of the fallen prophet.”*

2. Many would argue that his disobedience was such a tiny matter. After all, had he not confronted Jeroboam; had he not obeyed 99% of what God had told him?

- Any command that God gives is important, or He would not have given it, and disobedience to any command of God is a sin.

3. Don't let anyone convince you that as long as you have warm feelings for God and *generally* do what is right that you can ignore the commands of God.

- Consider the fact that God did not strike Jeroboam or the old prophet dead – rather He punished the man who had previously been faithful.

**13:26-32** The old prophet who had lied retrieves the body and shows profound respect for the young prophet by placing his body in his own grave.

1. *(Smith, pp. 475-476)*. *“Apparently, the old man was now convinced that the predictions regarding the Bethel altar and other sanctuaries in the north would come to pass.”*

- Yet nothing is said about this old man turning to God, or repenting of his falsehood.
- Often people show some respect for God or His faithful servants, but never truly repent.
- In fact, the desire to be buried with the young prophet smacks of superstition. Maybe he thought that with his bones lying next to the bones of the young prophet that somehow he would be part of the resurrection of the faithful at the last day.

2. Mourning over the death of a righteous man does little good if the one who is mourning never changes.

- It reminds me of relatives of Christians who praise the Christian at their death, but did little to support their efforts to serve God or were actually a temptation to the Christian while he or she was alive.
- The old prophet says, *“Alas, my brother” (13:30)*, when the reality is that these men had very little in common.

## CONCLUSION

*(Winters, p. 109)* *“What an indictment this is against false teachers and their doctrines! ... Despite these warnings, many still contend, ‘It does not matter what one believes, just as long as one is sincere’. But it was a matter of life and death with this young prophet, and the same is true of us (2 John 9-11).”*