

Sunday, May 7, 2023

Lessons From An Unnamed Prophet 1 Kings 13

1 Kings 13 is a tragic chapter in Bible history. It comes on the heels of Israel dividing as a kingdom. Solomon had died and because of his unfaithfulness to God, he was told the kingdom would be divided (the only reason Judah would remain was because of the faithfulness of David). Jeroboam leads the rebellion that results in Israel and Judah being 2 kingdoms. 1 Kings 12 records the beginning of the reign of Jeroboam (first king of Israel) and notes that he fails to trust YHWH, but instead establishes a substitute religion, complete with his own priesthood, 2 locations to worship for convenience, golden calves in place of God's altar, etc. That brings us to chapter 13 where we are introduced to "a man of God" who is never named. 1 Kings 13:1ff notes that he is sent from Judah to Bethel where Jeroboam has set up his southern idol. As Jeroboam is "worshipping", the man of God cries out and the altar is split apart and its ashes pour out. Jeroboam orders the prophet seized, but as he stretches out his arm, it withered and he could not pull it back. Jeroboam asks the prophet to entreat the favor of God to restore his arm. The man of God complies and Jeroboam's arm is restored (13:6). Jeroboam then invites the man of God to his home but he refuses because the LORD had given him very specific instructions – do not eat bread, nor drink water, nor return by the same way he had come (13:9). So the man of God left for his home.

1 Kings 13:11ff records that in Bethel there is an old prophet, whose sons told him what the man of God had done (NOTE: Why did YHWH not use this prophet since he was right there? Could have been that there was an integrity issue?). The old prophet inquires which way the man of God went and goes and finds him. He then invites him to come home and dine with him. But the man of God refused because of the instructions of the LORD. 13:8, the old prophet LIED and told him an angel spoke to him by the LORD and told him to get the young prophet and bring to his house. The man of God listened and went home with the older prophet. As they were eating, the old prophet cried out, "*Thus says the Lord: 'Because you have disobeyed the word of the Lord, and have not kept the commandment which the Lord your God commanded you, but you came back, ate bread, and drank water in the place of which the Lord said to you, 'Eat no bread and drink no water,' your corpse shall not come to the tomb of your fathers.'*" (1 Kings 13:21-22). After the man of God had eaten he left and while on his way back to Judah, a lion met him and killed him. (13:24) The lion stood by the body and did not harm the donkey the man of God was on. This event was reported to the older prophet, who saddled his donkey, went and retrieved the body of the man of God (the lion was standing next to the corpse and did not maul it or the donkey). The old prophet brought back the dead man and gave instructions, "When I am dead, then bury me in the tomb where the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones. For the sayings which he cried out by the word of the LORD against the altar in Bethel, and against all the shrines on the high places which are in the cities of Samaria, will surely come to pass." (13:31-32) After this, we read that sadly, Jeroboam did not repent, but his idolatry became a continuous snare to Israel until they were removed from the land by God about 200 years later.

Having discussed this account, we want to address some fundamental lessons concerning God's word. There are many lessons and observations to be made from this account. Let us notice a few of them.

I. **Beware of temptations –**

- a. Satan keeps trying. 1 Peter 5:8 warns us that he is seeking to devour you. 2 Corinthians 2:11 warns us to beware of his devices.
- b. In trying to tempt Jesus, Satan tried 3 times (and failed), but the point is he kept trying.
- c. In the case of the man of God, he eventually found something that worked. Understand that the man of God had more than once declared he would not stop following the LORD's strict instructions. When he stood before the king, who had power to arrest him and even take his life, he spoke boldly the truth (13:3-5). He even left following God's instructions. But he let down his guard. Trusting an older man who professed to be a truthful prophet of God worked.
- d. Today, Satan knows what your weakness are and he will seek to exploit them. That is the nature of temptation (James 1:12-16) The thing to understand about temptation is that if we resist Him, He will

flee (1 Peter 5:9, James 4:7). BUT it will not be forever. (cf. Luke 4:13 – after tempting Jesus, He departed from Him until an opportune time.

- e. It has been said that when dealing with a strong temptation, such as an addiction, if you will endure for about 20 minutes, the desire will subside.
- f. Therefore, we must continually be alert and humble. 1 Corinthians 10:12.

II. **God does not contradict Himself**

- a. God had given specific instructions to the man of God. What the old prophet told him contradicted what God said. While God at times has changed His mind, when He gives instructions, they are to be followed. WHEN He changes, it is always for a good reason, and it was always clearly declared. Furthermore, He would not give one set of instructions to someone and then contradictory instructions to someone else. He has not given contradictory statements.
- b. 1 Corinthians 14:33 – He is not the author of confusion.
- c. Critics like to point out contradictions as reason to reject the Bible as the word of God, but where there are supposed contradictions, there are ALWAYS answers. The number one rule is to look at the context of each statement, but beyond that, if there is a plausible answer to 2 differing passages, then it is not a contradiction.
- d. Many today, act as if God contradicts Himself:
 - i. “All you need is love” – but consider John 14:15 – If you love Me...
 - ii. “The local church is not necessary” – Ephesians 5:23-27 – then why did He die for her? Acts 20:28 – why did He purchase her with His own blood? Why is it described as demonstrating “the manifold wisdom of God”? (Ephesians 3:10-11) Why are the majority of NT letters written to churches (congregations) if that is unimportant?
 - iii. “Faith is all you need” – While Ephesians 2:8-9 manifests our need for faith, consider James 2:24 – which says we are justified by works, “not by faith only”. If there is no contradiction, then our salvation MUST involve grace, faith AND works – they complement each other.
 - iv. “I do not need to be baptized to be saved” – what about Acts 2:38, 22:16, 1 Peter 3:21, etc.?

III. **Religious leaders do not always tell the truth**

- a. The old prophet lied, as the text said. He even said he had an angel speak to him (implying authority). Why? We are not told. It could have been loneliness, or a desire to be around a prophet who was in God’s favor, or some other reason. Sadly, the man of God, believed him without further investigation.
- b. Today is no different as there are many professed religious leaders that contradict each other AND God. Some may be sincere (more in a moment), but others may be outright dishonest.
 - i. 2 Corinthians 4:2 speaks of those in craftiness, handling the word of God deceitfully.
 - ii. 2 Peter 2:1-3 also notes this and gives the motive of covetousness (greed). Matthew 4:5-6 – Satan used scripture (out of context) as he tempted Jesus.
 - iii. Some twist the scriptures for personal advantage – 2 Peter 3:16, cf. Matthew 15:3-9 – where the Jews manipulated the LOM with loopholes.
 - iv. Some claim that God is giving them revelation beyond His word, contrary to John 16:13 (He will guide you into all truth), 2 Peter 1:3, etc.
 - v. NOTE: This is especially true among televangelists who make millions for themselves while bilking the poor. They proclaim a message of compromise and false promises. Consider Paul’s note in 2 Corinthians 2:17 – they were NOT peddling the word of God.
- c. What is the answer to determine if one is false or true?
 - i. What the man of God should have done was inquire of the LORD before going with the old prophet. What he said contradicted what the man of God KNEW was from God.
 - ii. 1 John 4:1 – test the spirits whether they are of God.
 - iii. How? By studying the word of God. The more you know about His word, the less likely you are to be “tossed to and from and carried about by every wind of doctrine” (Ephesians 4:11-

15). Godly leaders will also help with this by teaching you and dealing with false teachers (cf. Titus 1:10-13).

IV. Sincerity does not excuse disobedience

- a. There is nothing to indicate that the man of God had reason to disbelieve the old prophet. We can safely assume the man of God was sincere. If not, he was rebellious against God. His history showed his boldness and faith in God.
- b. BUT he still died, as the old prophet stated.
- c. Sincerity is no guarantee that you are right, NOR does it excuse disobedience. Wrong is still wrong as we see in our society. You can sincerely believe the scammer on the phone or computer, but if you reply, you will be exploited to the greatest degree he can manage; Whether you taste something poisonous or not – it will still make you ill or even kill you; Whether you thought you were obeying the law or not, if you violate a statute – you are guilty and subject to the fines. Proverbs 14:12 – *There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.*
- d. Religiously, many sincerely believe they are doing the right thing, but they are NOT obeying God.
 - i. OFTEN it is the result of listening to someone lie or mislead them (again, regardless of sincerity of the source).
 - ii. Other times it is upbringing, etc. That explains Paul's sincerity as he persecuted Christians – Acts 23:1, 1 Timothy 1:12-13ff – his persecutions were in ignorance, but he was still wrong (though God did show him mercy).
 - iii. Other times, it is an assumption, even though one knows he is doing wrong – e.g., Uzzah steadying the ark – 2 Samuel 6:3-7.
 - iv. That is why we must continually study God's word to ensure we are not deceived – 2 Timothy 2:15
- e. Contrary to the popular saying, Ignorance is NOT bliss - especially when it comes to your faith and serving God. Keep studying – 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

V. Partial obedience is not complete obedience.

- a. The man of God did most of what God said. He obeyed God even to the point of heading home without eating, drinking or going the same way. But in the end, regardless of sincerity or ignorance, he failed to complete God's instructions, and it cost him his life.
- b. Another example – when King Saul was told to destroy the Amalekites, he did most of what was commanded, but in the end he spared King Agag and the choicest animals. When he met Samuel, he was told he had not obeyed God. 1 Samuel 15:22-23 notes that God demands COMPLETE obedience, or it is not obedience at all.
- c. Consider James 2:10 – if you stumble in one point, you are guilty of all.
- d. Today, many fail to complete God's plan of salvation – they believe, confess Him, resolve to live serving him, but they refused to be baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 22:16, 1 Peter 3:21, etc.). They have done so many things right, but they failed to complete the plan.
- e. Today, many are willing to do MOST of what God tells them about how they live, but they selectively choose to not obey in certain matters. In God's eyes, that is NOT obedience – cf. Matthew 7:21-23.

VI. The latter end is what matters

- a. Consider all that the man of God did that was right. But in the end, he dies and it is a result of his latter actions. All the prior good did not counteract or balance his sinful disobedience at the end.
- b. UNDERSTAND, because of God's mercy you CAN be forgiven no matter what is in your past. But you have to act to take care of it – 1 John 1:9, Acts 8:22, etc.
- c. BUT that does not mean that we can rely on past good deeds to offset sinful behaviors now. There are many who live their lives thinking that is how God will judge (weighing the good vs. the bad). That is NOT taught in scripture.
 - i. Ezekiel 18:19-24ff explains this.
 - ii. Solomon's sinful latter life was not offset by his earlier godliness.

- iii. 2 Peter 2:20-22 warns us that we can fall away and the latter end is worse than the beginning.
- iv. Both Galatians and Hebrews are being written to brethren considering walking away from Christ to something different, whether a “different gospel” (Galatians 1:6-9) or returning to Judaism. Both were detrimental and would result in condemnation.
- v. Galatians 6:9 challenges us to not grow weary in doing good, “*for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.*”

VII. You cannot change the past –

- a. 1 Kings 13:30, the old prophet when he heard of the death of the man of God said, “Alas my brother”. While not stated, I wonder if the old prophet regretted his lies and what it resulted in. But all the grieving in the world would not change the consequence.
- b. We recently heard a lesson (by JR) that notes you cannot change the past, but you can learn from it and make better choices now. He even cited the example of David’s sin and the child dying because of their adultery. When the child had died, David knew he could not bring him back (2 Samuel 12:16-23).
- c. There are consequences to our actions that you cannot change.
- d. BUT, you can always learn from the past and resolve to do better in the future.

These are some lessons we can learn from this unnamed man of God. Let us consider these things and if we find here a lesson that applies to us, let us take action to repent and restore ourselves to God’s graces. If there is any way we can help you we stand ready. Think about it!