

Jeroboam and the Man of God

Our reading in 1 Kings 13 brings us to consider the circumstances of a prophecy given against Jeroboam, the king of Israel, and the demise of a man of God. Jeroboam had already received a promise from the Lord, that he could have a prosperous and successful kingship, like that of king David:

“... and it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do that is right in my sight, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did, that I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee” (1 Kings 11:38).

But rather than to trust in the promise of God, Jeroboam sought to use his own ingenuity to establish the kingdom by his own hand. He was concerned that if the people continued to worship in Jerusalem in Judah, his own kingdom in Israel would be under threat, and the kingdom would return to the house of David (1 Kings. 12:26-27). Therefore, he appointed an alternative system of worship, which removed the need to attend at Jerusalem:

“whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Beth-el, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan” (1 Kings 12:28-30).

The reference to Dan is interesting, for the book of Judges shows that there was already an alternative system of religion set up there. Against the background of apostasy and corruption, we read that the children of Dan set up an idolatrous system: “the children of Dan set up the graven image: and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land” (Jud. 18:30).

Notice, that the validity of the Temple worship at Jerusalem was not expressly denied. They did not deny the Truth explicitly, but rather taught another way, which was easier to attend to. Just like the apostasy of today, a new false system of worship was established as an alternative to what God had commanded. And that system extended from the day of the judges, until the nation was carried into captivity for their sinful excesses.

Returning to Jeroboam, through the means just considered, he reinforced apostasy in Israel, enhancing the idolatry that already existed in Dan. So the Scriptures describe “... Jeroboam, who did sin, and who ***made Israel to sin***” (1 Kings 14:16). And many times later, the Scripture show that the nation never ceased from Jeroboam’s idolatry, until they were brought into captivity. Accordingly, it was prophesied of the king, that he himself would be taken away, that God would “take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam, as a man taketh away dung, till it be all gone” (1 Kings 14:10).

Following the setting up of his two idolatrous systems in Dan and Beth-el, we find that Jeroboam sought to burn incense at the altar in Beth-el. But as he did so, a certain unnamed “man of God” was sent to him, “and he cried against the altar in the word of Yahweh, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith Yahweh; behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men’s bones shall be burnt upon thee” (1 Kings 13:2).

Strangely enough, when the words of the Man of God were verified by the signs of the Altar being rent, and the king's hand being dried up, then subsequently restored, the king offered him a reward!

"And the king said unto the man of God, Come home with me, and refresh thyself, and I will give thee a reward" (1 Kings 13:7).

But it is a Divine Principle that the servants of God do not seek after temporal advantage as a consequence of their work. Later, Naaman offered a reward to Elisha, after he was cleansed from his leprosy:

"he said, Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant. But he said, as Yahweh liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it; but he refused" (2 Kings 5:15-16).

Unfortunately, his servant Gehazi was desirous of present-day advantage, and did pursue Naaman for a reward – and he received the consequences of such a disposition, by being smitten with Naaman's leprosy. The teaching of Messiah is also that those who preach the word of God do not do so for rewards: "freely ye have received, freely give," he said as he cleansed the lepers (Mat. 10:8). The blessings of the Lord cannot be purchased, and His servants cannot receive payment for doing their duty in proclaiming the Word. As Daniel said: "... let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet will I read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation" (Dan. 5:17). There is no paid ministry in the true ecclesia of Christ, all members operate out of a love of Truth, and an earnest desire to share it with others, who may yet heed the Word preached.

The man of God who spoke to Jeroboam similarly refused the king's reward:

"the man of God said unto the king, If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee, **neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place:** for so it was charged me by the word of Yahweh, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest" (1 King. 13:8-9).

Notice that the prophet's rejection of Beth-El was absolute. He would not stay there for long, only long enough to deliver his message. And he refused to partake of the king's food, again, like Daniel (see also Psa. 141:4). He was "not desirous of his dainties" (Prov. 23:3, 6) and declined the opportunity to dine with the king.

Eating in Scripture, is associated with fellowship. Hence Paul wrote:

"... if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, **with such an one not to eat**" (1 Cor. 5:11).

So the man of God would not eat with the idolatrous king. Again, it is written: "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11). He would have no fellowship by way of eating with Jeroboam, but instead reproved him for his rebellion against Yahweh.

Returning to 1 Kings 13, we find that there was another prophet, an old man, who dwelt at Beth-el. For some undisclosed reason, he had not been sent to Jeroboam: perhaps it was that he was not honest enough. Despite being a prophet, he lied, and became a snare to the man of God:

“He said unto him, I am a prophet also as thou art; and **an angel spake unto me** by the word of Yahweh, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water. But **he lied** unto him.” (1 Kings 13:18).

The principles of what took place as recorded here, compares with the events that took place in the garden of Eden. There was a command not to eat, yet the serpent reasoned that it would be a good thing to eat, and induced Eve to partake of the forbidden fruit - and she in turn gave to her husband. The serpent's reassurance was “ye shall not surely die” (Gen. 3:4), in direct contradiction to what the first human pair were taught. So they did eat, and dying they did surely die.

These events in Eden's garden are used by the inspired Apostle to illustrate the way in which the ecclesia would be corrupted:

“... I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, **or another gospel**, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him” (2 Cor. 11:3-4).

Again, he speaks to the Galatians about the preaching of “another gospel” in terms which bring our minds back to the circumstances of 1 Kings 13:

“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, **or an angel from heaven**, preach **any other gospel** unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you that that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:6-9).

Notice that the lying prophet claimed to have received this alternative message from an Angel, and so induced the man of God to fellowship with him, in eating and drinking – which was to his own destruction. As they ate and drank together, the word of Yahweh came to the old man:

“... Thus saith Yahweh, Forasmuch as thou has disobeyed the mouth of Yahweh, and hast not kept the commandment which Yahweh thy God commanded thee ... thy carcase shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers ...” (1 Kings 13:21-22).

So it was, that after they finished their meal, the man of God went his way, and was confronted by a lion, which slew him. Thus, he was destroyed for eating and drinking with those whom Yahweh had forbidden him.

In the example of Jeroboam, we see how an alternative place and system of worship was established, to draw Israel away from Jerusalem. And in the example of the Man of God, and the deceitful old prophet, we also see how there was an alternative option presented, that contradicted what the Lord had already decreed. Both falsities ended up with rejection and death. There is a powerful lesson for ourselves in these things: having established an acceptance

of the Truth as revealed in the Word of God, we must be wary of those who would preach an alternative “point of view”. We must “hold fast the form of sound words” (2 Tim. 1:13). And we must “hold fast the profession of our faith” as taught by the Apostles, “without wavering” (Heb. 10:23), eschewing all other competing teachings. Only then will we, by God’s grace, be saved from death, and be part of the reestablishment of the kingdom of Israel, when all the world shall go to Jerusalem to be taught the Truth, and the only acceptable form and system of worship.

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