

Beware of the Old Prophet

Text: 1 Kings 13:1-19

Introduction:

1. Context: There are two things we need to understand in relation to the context
 - The context *nationally* - Israel has just been divided in two (1 Kings 12:1-25)
 - The context *spiritually* – Jeroboam sets up a new religious system (1 Kings 12:26-33)
 - God had promised Jeroboam a sure kingdom if he would follow the Lord in obedience (1 Kings 11:38) However, Jeroboam acts in unbelief, believing his throne will come under threat if he allows his subjects to maintain the worship of Jehovah (Vs. 26-27)
 - Jeroboam offers the people a religion of convenience and pleasure (Vs. 28) and erects two golden calves; one in the north of the kingdom (Dan) and one in the south (Bethel). Bethel was approx. 19 km (12 miles) from Jerusalem. He reinstates the idolatry that had been practiced by the Israelites at the foot of Sinai after their departure from Egypt. Read Exodus 32 – their worship changed, their music changed, their dress code changed and their morals changed (1 Cor. 10:6-8). Idolatry comes with a package!
 - Jeroboam dismisses the godly priests (2 Chr. 11:13-17), appoints his own pagan priesthood (Vs 32) and starts his own feast day to substitute the feast of tabernacles which would be held in Judah (Vs. 32)
2. Most of chapter 13 focuses upon an unnamed “man of God” who was such a powerful example of godliness and faithfulness to the truth but who was seduced into destructive compromise by an “old prophet”. There are some powerful challenges for us to learn from this account. Note 4 lessons about this man of God:

I. The Character of the Man of God (Vs. 1)

This man was...

A. A Sanctified Man – “a man of God”

1. At least 15 times, he is called “a man of God” in this chapter, more than any other servant of God in the Bible. He was obviously a man of exceptional godliness and devotion to God.
2. H.L. Rossier “A man of God is a servant who represents God before men and upon whom God has impressed his own character.”
3. This was a high and holy title to bear and is frequently used of God’s men throughout Scripture. For example, Moses (Deut. 33:1);

Samuel (1 Sam. 9:6); Elijah (1 Kings 17:24); Elisha (2 Kings. 5:8); David (Neh. 12:24) and Timothy (1 Tim. 6:11 & 2. Tim. 3:17).

B. A Separated Man – “out of Judah”

1. 2 Chronicles 11:13-17 reveals that the godly people of the Northern kingdom left when Jeroboam instituted his new religion. Instead of strengthening his kingdom through compromise, Jeroboam actually weakened it! He lost the best people. The throne is “established by righteousness” (Prov. 16:12) not by wickedness.
2. The man God uses to confront error is the man who is separated unto Himself. A man who sees sin with clarity because of his closeness to God.

C. A Submitted Man – “by the word of the LORD”

1. He was obedient to the Divine Commission (Vs. 2) He had a clear message.
2. He was obedient to the Divine Instructions (Vs. 9) He had a clear mandate. He was a man of God because he both declared AND obeyed the Word of God. The Word of God set the boundaries for his service and ministry.

II. The Confrontation by the Man of God (Vs. 2-3)

A. The Courage of His Preaching (Vs. 1b)

1. Imagine the scene. Jeroboam stands offering incense at the pagan altar in the presence of the children of Israel. The young prophet disrupts the worship service with a searing denunciation from God Almighty.
2. It takes genuine boldness and courage from God to issue a challenge to the strong holds of sin and error in a life, family, church or nation. It does not take courage to sit neutral to error. It does not take courage to pull up anchor and let the boat drift down stream. But it does take courage to stand up and speak and to row against the tide.

B. The Character of His Preaching (Vs. 2)

1. The Focus of it (Vs. 2a)
 - a. He cries “against the altar”. He issues a direct challenge to the symbol of idolatry. This altar had been erected in rebellion and defiance against the one True God of Israel. By thus challenging the altar, its devotees would clearly get the message implied for them as plainly illustrated by the actions of the king that follow.
 - b. Illustrations: In a similar fashion, David issued a challenge to the giant in his day (1 Sam. 17) and Elijah issued a challenge to Baal worship in 1 Kings 18
 - c. Altars of falsehood are being erected all around us. We are to take God’s Word and declare God’s mind on these altars. Most

choose to sit in silence rather than raise a voice of protest against evil and error. What altars of iniquity are we leaving unchallenged?

2. The Forecast in it (Vs. 2b)
 - a. This is an incredible prophecy that predicted an event that would take place some 300 or so years in the future. The name of the king God would use was even revealed. This prophecy was literally fulfilled in 2 Kings 23:15-20
 - b. The judgment pronounced reveals just how detestable and abominable idolatry is to God. The bones of the pagan priests would be burnt upon this altar to desecrate it!

C. The Confirmation of his Preaching (Vs. 3)

1. God gave a supernatural sign that would impress upon the king and the people the gravity and the truthfulness of the prophet's declaration.
2. The sign is literally given in Vs. 5. The altar is rent in two by the hands of God, signifying His disapproval and displeasure of it.

III. The Challenge to the Man of God (Vs. 4-10)

We learn something of the sort of tactics the enemy employs against a man of God to get him to back down from his stand for the truth. There is...

A. The Challenge of Intimidation (Vs. 4-6)

1. The king's initial response was one of anger and hostility. To be challenged by a prophet from the Southern Kingdom and hear a prophecy that predicted the demise of his idolatrous system at the hands of a Judean King from the Southern Kingdom was humiliating in the extreme.
2. The king issues an order for the young prophet's arrest but God intervenes in a unique way, paralysing the king's outstretched hand. The king then requests prayer of the young prophet for the restoration of his hand. The prophet's willingness to pray for this wicked king says a lot about his godly character!
3. Satan and the world use this tactic against the people of God in an attempt to cower them into backing down from the truth. Satan, through Jeroboam, roared against the man of God like a lion (1 Peter 5:8).

B. The Challenge of Invitation (temptation) (Vs. 7-10)

1. The deceitfulness of the temptation (Vs. 7a) The king quickly changes tactics on account of the frightening experience of his hand. His heart has not changed, only his tactics (See Vs. 33-34). The enemy can change faces very quickly in an attempt to lure us into compromise but underneath, his intentions have not changed. When approaching us as a roaring lion doesn't work, Satan switches to coming as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). When presenting himself as our enemy doesn't work, he presents as our friend. "Let us beware of the favours of the world even more than of its threats." (H.L. Rossier)

2. The enticements of the temptation (Vs. 7b) He is offered three things by the king:
 - a. He offers *Fame* – “come home with me” This was a prestigious opportunity to dine with royalty.
 - b. He offers *Refreshment* – “refresh thyself” Beware when you are tired and weary you don’t start looking to the world to help you be refreshed. The place of refreshment is back in Judah with the Word of God, the house of God and the people of God.
 - c. He offers *Reward* – “and I will give thee a reward” Before you get too starry eyed about the reward, consider the source! Just a minute ago the same man wanted to destroy you! Beware of Satan’s sales pitch. He offers much but it comes with a heavy price tag. Read the fine print on the contract! Look at the Ts & Cs! The enemy gives nothing for free! All the devil’s apples have worms! Matt. 4:8-9 *“Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, **All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.**”*
3. The victory over the temptation (Vs. 8-10)
 - a. He boldly rejects the kings offers – “I will not go in with thee”
 - b. The reason for his refusal (Vs. 9) God’s instructions to him had been crystal clear. Don’t eat, don’t drink and don’t stay! To dine with the king would have the effect of undoing the sobering message he had just preached. His separated message was to be coupled with separated actions. Both must go together.
 - c. The prophet “understood that eating with the king would have been a sign of close fellowship with him and tantamount to supporting the evil system that he represented. All the ground that he had won in the confrontation at Bethel would have been lost in a moment.” (C.T. Lacey) (See 2 Cor. 6:16-18)
 - d. He then follows through in obedience to God’s instructions (Vs. 10). If this is where the story ended, all would have been well!

IV. The Compromise of the man of God (Vs. 11-19)

The old prophet succeeded where Jeroboam failed. Between the separated, consecrated believer (the man of God) and the world (Jeroboam) stands the compromised believer (the old prophet). The old prophet is often used of the devil as a bridge to lure us out of obedience to the plain instructions of Scripture to compromise with the world. Therefore, we need to be able to identify the characteristics of an old prophet.

A. The Neutrality of the Old Prophet (Vs. 11)

1. There’s a problem with his separation – He did not openly join in with the pagan worship, neither did he raise a voice against it. He took a centrist, middle of the road position. He had obviously seen better days in the past but had allowed himself to be moved with the currents of ungodliness. Note: Often we are charged with “going in a particular direction” but often the reality is we are endeavouring to simply stand firm while others are shifting! His continued presence

at Bethel when the other godly remnant had left, gave a measure of sanction to what was taking place.

2. There's problem with his silence –It took a young, godly man from Judah to come and preach against the evil. This is the classic position of an old prophet. Their silence on the altars of iniquity allows them to be erected with ease. Their silence ends up contributing in an indirect way to the spiritual decline around them. When you do nothing, you end up contributing something even if you think you aren't! This is illustrated by the fact his children got caught up in the idolatry.

B. The Activity of the Old Prophet (Vs. 12-17)

1. The pursuit of the man of God (Vs. 12-14) The man who has sat neutral and unmoved for so long suddenly springs into action. He won't take a stand against evil but will be motivated to go to great lengths to neutralize a fiery, godly young man!
2. The proposal to the man of God (Vs. 15) The invitation was similar to the kings and would require the man of God to compromise on God's clear instructions.
3. The principle of the man of God (Vs. 16-17) He initially discerns the problem and maintains his separatist stance – *“neither will I...in this place”*

C. The Subtlety of the Old Prophet (Vs. 18-19)

1. A Subtle Claim to Position (Vs. 18a)
 - a. “I am a prophet also as thou art” = he was a prophet of the Lord but he wasn't the same as this young man! If he was, why the silence and the compromise? Where was his stand against evil?
 - b. He had an air of authority and seniority. Its hard when a young man of God comes under pressure from “senior” men of God who are claiming to be on the same page but saying something different to what the Word of God says. Older men are exhorted in Titus 2:2 *“That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience.”* (See also Prov. 16:31)
2. **A Subtle Claim to Revelation (Vs. 18b)**
 - a. He has a new way of interpreting God's commands. Truth isn't absolute, it's open to interpretation and manipulation. The old prophet says things like, “I used to believe like that too when I was young until I gained a deeper understanding of God's grace” or “be careful about taking the Bible too literally.”
 - b. Warning! When you've read God's instructions in plain English, you better be careful when someone comes to you telling you they got a new, updated instruction from an angel!
 - c. What should have alerted the man of God to the deception? What the old prophet presented as truth was actually the complete opposite to what God had said! God said, don't eat, don't drink, don't stay. He claimed God said eat, drink and hang around!
 - d. The Word of God says “be not drunk with wine” and “look not upon the wine”; the old prophet says you can drink in moderation. The Word of God says the woman is not to wear that which pertains to a man; the old prophet says because of

grace and love you can wear a pair of trousers. The Word of God says have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness and to reprove them, the old prophet says have fellowship with darkness and don't reprove them so you can reach them. The Word of God says we are to use Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, the old prophet says why should the devil have all the good music? The Word of God says to come out from among them and be separate, the old prophet says stay amongst them and be flexible and accommodating. The Word of God says its evil to look with lust, the old prophet says you can watch that filthy movie. The Word of God says godly women need to be modest, the old prophet says you can wear that mini skirt. The Word of God says not to be among wine bibbers, the old prophet says there's an exception for family functions. The Word of God says we are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together; the old prophet says you can have home church or attend that sports event or family function. Learn to cut through the deceptive wrapping (e.g. I am as thou art) and discern what the compromiser is trying to tell you. Does it line up with the Word of God!

Conclusion: Are you invited to the world and its sin by a Jeroboam? Are you considering the devils deceptive offers? Are you being lured to cross a bridge of compromise by a compromised believer? Stay within the safe boundaries of God's instructions!