

December 5

Scriptures: Read 1 Kings 13 & 14

Key Verse: “Jeroboam did not turn from his evil way.” (1 Kings 13:33)

Overview

God, in His grace, sent an unnamed prophet to boldly denounce the pagan altar at Bethel, thus warning Jeroboam that he and his kingdom were headed for destruction if he did not repent. The man of God spoke with the authority of God and prophesied that a man from the family of David would come and destroy that very altar upon which Jeroboam had been burning incense. This miraculous prediction specifically named the man as Josiah, about 300 years before the actual event! (13:2; see 2 Kings 23:15- 20). It was clear that the messenger and the message were from God. When Jeroboam tried to quiet him and use his authority to have him arrested, God intervened to protect his servant and used His greater authority over Jeroboam by withering his arm. God also miraculously fulfilled the sign of the cracked altar, serving to authenticate the prediction.

Jeroboam, the proud king with authority to command, was reduced to a man who pleaded before God. This time the Lord showed him mercy and restored his hand when the man of God prayed (13:6). This man was obedient to God’s clear command and refused Jeroboam’s enticing hospitality. He had been sent by God to Israel for one purpose, and once he had fulfilled his task he was to leave the wicked and idolatrous Northern Kingdom and return directly to Judah. However, after he had begun his journey, he was deceived by the old prophet to return and eat with him. The man of God did not enquire of the Lord, nor did he exercise the gift of discernment of spirits. Had he done so, he would have known that the old prophet was lying. He should have known that God would not change His word.

This old prophet from Bethel was likely a false prophet and was used by Satan to tempt the man of God and bring his downfall. It is unlikely that a true prophet of God would remain in sinful Israel and live in one of Jeroboam’s idolatrous centres; yet, while at the dinner table, he truly spoke the words of God in judgment of the disobedient man of God. If God could speak through a donkey and through Balaam, who was certainly not a true prophet of God (Numbers 22:28; 24:1), then He could speak through this man too.

It was no coincidence that the lion attacked him before he reached Judah; this was the direct judgment of God upon him for his disobedience and, just as the old prophet foretold, he would not be buried with his fathers (13:22; 13:30). The old prophet carefully instructed his sons to bury him beside this man’s bones, probably because he did not want his bones to be burned with the false priests when the prophecy came into fulfillment (13:31-32; 2 Kings 23:16-18).

With this warning, God mercifully had given Jeroboam a chance to repent, but he did not change his ways; therefore, as the prophet Ahijah foretold with shocking and descriptive words, his family was doomed for destruction and would never become a lasting dynasty. God had exalted Jeroboam to the position of king over Israel (14:7), yet rather than being grateful to God and leading the people to worship Him, Jeroboam led the people of Israel into the terrible sin of

idolatry (Matthew 18:6). God, in His mercy, allowed Jeroboam's only good son to die and have a decent burial, rather than suffer the terrible judgment that awaited the others (14:11, 13; 15:27-30).

The Southern Kingdom of Judah under Rehoboam's rule was also idolatrous, even more so than ever before (14:22-24). The glory and great wealth of Solomon departed as Shishak, king of Egypt, attacked and confiscated the golden treasures (15:25-26). The peace they once had was also gone, for the land that was once unified and content became torn apart and constantly in a state of war under Rehoboam and Jeroboam (15:30). Neither of them had long and successful reigns and, sadly, both died without having repented. "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Certainly, sin never pays, but righteousness brings eternal rewards.

Prayer

Almighty God, we worship You with all our hearts. We refuse any other pretend god, for You alone are God. We pray for Your grace upon us so we may continue to live carefully, always turning away from anything that would displease You. Amen.