

1Kings 13:1 ¶ And, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the LORD unto Bethel: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense.
1Kings 13:2 And he cried against the altar in the word of the LORD, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the LORD; 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.
1Kings 13:3 And he gave a sign the same day, saying, This is the sign which the LORD hath spoken; Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out.

This chapter relates another one of those odd stories in scripture, but it does reveal some important spiritual truths. I will give my understanding of the facts, then make closing comments.

A man of God, a prophet, from Judah went to Bethel to deliver a message from the LORD. We know that there were no true prophets of God in Israel since we learned in the previous chapter that all those that wanted to be obedient to the LORD migrated to Judah.

When the prophet arrived in Bethel, Jeroboam was burning incense at the altar he had built there. The prophet addressed the following message to the altar, not to Jeroboam: A child will be born to the house of David that will be named Josiah. He will one day sacrifice on this very altar the bones of the priests that presided over pagan high places and then came here to burn incense. It would one day be the place upon which human bones would burn.

This prophecy clearly declared that the LORD did not approve of the idolatrous changes that Jeroboam had enacted in Israel that disregarded His commands regarding sacrifices and offerings.

The prophet then declared a sign that would signify the truth of what he had prophesied. The sign: The altar would be broken and the ashes on it spilled on the ground.

JFB provides this insight: "This is one of the most remarkable prophecies recorded in the Scriptures; and, in its clearness, circumstantial minuteness, and exact prediction of an event that took place three hundred sixty years later, it stands in striking contrast to the obscure and ambiguous oracles of the heathen. Being publicly uttered, it must have been well known to the people; and every Jew who lived at the accomplishment of the event must have been convinced of the truth of a religion connected with such a prophecy as this."

The fulfillment of this prophecy is recorded in 2Kings.

2 Kings 23:15–16 "Moreover the altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he brake down, and burned the high place, and stamped it small to powder, and burned the grove. And as Josiah turned himself, he spied the sepulchres that were there in

the mount, and sent, and took the bones out of the sepulchres, and burned them upon the altar, and polluted it, according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words."

1Kings 13:4 And it came to pass, when king Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, which had cried against the altar in Bethel, that he put forth his hand from the altar, saying, Lay hold on him. And his hand, which he put forth against him, dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him.
1Kings 13:5 The altar also was rent, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD.

When Jeroboam heard the prophecy that the man of God made to the altar, he pulled his hand away from the altar and ordered his men to take hold of the prophet. He evidently stretched out that hand and pointed toward the prophet as he gave the order. When he tried to pull his hand back, it had withered or dried up, and he could not pull it back in. The altar broke, and its ashes spilled on the ground, fulfilling the sign declared by the prophet.

1Kings 13:6 And the king answered and said unto the man of God, Intreat now the face of the LORD thy God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored me again. And the man of God besought the LORD, and the king's hand was restored him again, and became as *it was* before.

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

1Kings 13:8 And 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:

1Kings 13:9 For so was it charged me by the word of the LORD, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest.

1Kings 13:10 So he went another way, and returned not by the way that he came to Bethel.

The king then told the man of God to ask the LORD "thy" God to heal his hand. Notice that he did not reference the LORD as "his" God. The prophet did not hesitate; he prayed and the king's hand was restored. Jeroboam then invited the prophet to go home with him to refresh himself and accept a reward for healing him.

The prophet refused the invitation. He declared that he would not go home with the king even if he offered to give him half of what he possessed. He would not even eat bread or drink water in that place because the LORD had told him not to. He was not even to go home by the same way in which he had come. The prophet then headed out in a different direction as he left Bethel.

1Kings 13:11 ¶ Now there dwelt an old prophet in Bethel; and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Bethel: the words which he had spoken unto the king, them they told also to their father.

1Kings 13:12 And their father said unto them, What way went he? For his sons had seen what way the man of God went, which came from Judah.

1Kings 13:13 And he said unto his sons, Saddle me the ass. So they saddled him the ass: and he rode thereon,

1Kings 13:14 And went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak: and he said unto him, *Art* thou the man of God that camest from Judah? And he said, I *am*.

1Kings 13:15 Then he said unto him, Come home with me, and eat bread.

1Kings 13:16 And he said, I may not return with thee, nor go in with thee: neither will I eat bread nor drink water with thee in this place:

1Kings 13:17 For it was said to me by the word of the LORD, Thou shalt eat no bread nor drink water there, nor turn again to go by the way that thou camest.

Enter on the scene an old prophet that lived in Bethel. His sons came and told him all about what the man of God had said and done in Bethel that day. After hearing their report, the father asked his sons if they had seen in what direction the prophet had departed; they had. The father directed his sons to saddle the ass for him, and he headed out to try and intercept the departing prophet. He caught up with the prophet as he rested under an oak tree and soon confirmed that it was the man of God he sought.

The old prophet then invited the man to go home with him for dinner. As he had told Jeroboam, the prophet said that he could not because the LORD had commanded him not to eat bread or even drink water while in Bethel. He was not even to return home by the same way he had come.

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

1Kings 13:19 So he went back with him, and did eat bread in his house, and drank water.

1Kings 13:20 And it came to pass, as they sat at the table, that the word of the LORD came unto the prophet that brought him back:

1Kings 13:21 And he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the LORD, and hast not kept the commandment which the LORD thy God commanded thee,

1Kings 13:22 But camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place, of the which *the LORD* did say to thee, Eat no bread, and drink no water; thy carcass shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers.

The old prophet then revealed to the man of God that he, too, was a prophet. He declared that an angel had brought him a message from the LORD telling him to bring the man of God home with him to eat and drink. BUT—he lied.

This was all it took for the man of God to disobey God's command to him. As they sat at the table, the old prophet began to deliver his own message from the LORD. He told the man of God that since he had disobeyed God's command, he would die before getting back home.

1Kings 13:23 ¶ And it came to pass, after he had eaten bread, and after he had drunk, that he saddled for him the ass, *to wit*, for the prophet whom he had brought back.

1Kings 13:24 And when he was gone, a lion met him by the way, and slew him: and his carcase was cast in the way, and the ass stood by it, the lion also stood by the carcase.

1Kings 13:25 And, behold, men passed by, and saw the carcase cast in the way, and the lion standing by the carcase: and they came and told *it* in the city where the old prophet dwelt.

1Kings 13:26 And when the prophet that brought him back from the way heard *thereof*, he said, *It is the man of God, who was disobedient unto the word of the LORD: therefore the LORD hath delivered him unto the lion, which hath torn him, and slain him, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake unto him.*

After finishing his meal, the old prophet saddled the ass for the man of God he had deceived. The young prophet was attacked by a lion and killed, and his body was left lying in the road. Both the lion and the ass remained by the dead body.

Other men passed by the dead prophet and the animals standing beside him, but they the lion did not threaten them. When they got to Bethel, they quickly spread the news of what they had seen.

When the old prophet heard the news, he knew that the dead man was the man of God that had disobeyed the LORD's command. He knew that the man's death was God's judgment against the disobedient prophet in fulfillment of his own message from the LORD.

1Kings 13:27 And he spake to his sons, saying, Saddle me the ass. And they saddled *him*.

1Kings 13:28 And he went and found his carcase cast in the way, and the ass and the lion standing by the carcase: the lion had not eaten the carcase, nor torn the ass.

1Kings 13:29 And the prophet took up the carcase of the man of God, and laid it upon the ass, and brought it back: and the old prophet came to the city, to mourn and to bury him.

1Kings 13:30 And he laid his carcase in his own grave; and they mourned over him, *saying, Alas, my brother!*

Once again the old prophet told his sons to saddle the ass for him. He went and found the body of the dead prophet with the lion and ass both still standing beside it. The lion had not eaten the carcass or attacked the ass—obviously acting contrary to natural instinct.

The prophet took the body of the dead prophet and brought it back to the city where he mourned and buried it. He buried the body in his own grave and appeared to experience sincere grief over the death of the younger prophet.

1Kings 13:31 And it came to pass, after he had buried him, that he spake to his sons, saying, When I am dead, then bury me in the sepulchre wherein the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones:

1Kings 13:32 For the saying which he cried by the word of the LORD against the altar in Bethel, and against all the houses of the high places which *are* in the cities of Samaria, shall surely come to pass.

After burying the disobedient prophet's body, the old prophet instructed his sons that when the time came, they were to bury him in the same grave with the dead prophet. He then affirmed that the prophecy declared by the prophet at the altar in Bethel would certainly be fulfilled.

1Kings 13:33 After this thing Jeroboam returned not from his evil way, but made again of the lowest of the people priests of the high places: whosoever would, he consecrated him, and he became *one* of the priests of the high places.

1Kings 13:34 And this thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut *it* off, and to destroy *it* from off the face of the earth.

These events in no way caused Jeroboam to repent of his evil ways. He continued to appoint priests of his own choosing and even served as a priest himself. His sin of disobedience eventually resulted in the destruction of the house of Jeroboam; no descendants would be left.

So what can we learn from this sad story?

- God's word is truth; His word never fails.
Isaiah 55:11 "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."
- God is omniscient; He can foretell the future.
Isaiah 46:9–10 "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:"
- God is a worker of miracles.
Jeremiah 32:27 "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?"

Matthew 19:26 "...with God all things are possible."
- God answers the prayers of the righteous.
John 15:7 "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

1 Peter 3:12 "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers..."

- One should never disregard the commands of God at the word of another person—even if he/she identifies as one speaking for God and appears to be trustworthy.
- The word of an angel is not to be trusted over the word of God.

Galatians 1:8–9 “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 than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”

Acts 5:29 “We ought to obey God rather than men.”

Matthew 4:10 “Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”

- God exercises authority over His creation—even to the point of causing animals to act contrary to natural instinct.
Psalms 135:6 “Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.”

Deuteronomy 10:14 “Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD’S thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is.”

- The LORD does not want His people to enjoy intimate fellowship with those who knowingly and purposely reject Him and His word.
2 Corinthians 6:14–17 “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate....”

The most confusing part of this story to me is why the old prophet determined to get the younger prophet to disobey God’s command. He seemed to be genuinely sorry that the man was dead. It’s possible that his actions were allowed as a time of testing for the younger prophet. The younger prophet failed the test, but the whole story provides multiple affirmations to the truth of God’s word.