

## 1 Kings 13

Written by K B Napier  
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This text should frighten all the false prophets and those who let their guard down in the world today! It should also make all believers feel uneasy if they claim to be holy and secretly are not. Another issue raises its head in this chapter... do Christians really believe what happened, and if so, that it was a judgment of God? Most are willing to read any part of scripture, but when it comes to divine actions that defy the natural world, they are shy to accept them as real. Some read the text and their minds classify them as fairy stories. The matter is simple – what happened in this text is real. The incidents happened. They are not myths. Not to accept this is to be faithless and even godless.

### Verses 1-3

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.

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.

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.

Jeroboam usurped the place of the High Priest by offering sacrifices (incense) himself, and though he offered them to God, it was before the cultic statue of a golden calf at Bethel. Furthermore, he was never anointed as High Priest. As he was playing at being a priest, a prophet came to him from Judah (which was just across the border).

The prophet, in true Old Testament style, spoke out loudly, a word from God to the king. He told Jeroboam that a male would be born to the house of David, named Josiah (*Yo'shiyah*). The same would use the altar to burn men's bones and idolatrous priests. A sign was given – the

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altar built by Jeroboam would be broken apart and the ashes upon it would be spilled on the ground. This sign occurred immediately, proving the prophet to be telling the truth.

Josiah was the son of Amon and Jedidah, born 300 years after this prophecy. He inherited the throne of Judah and reigned 31 years, bringing the people back to the true worship of Jehovah. Though some judgments of God take time, they will invariably come about. And though some continue to live as if God did not exist, their lives WILL bear the marks of God's judgment, even before the foretold penalty falls like a sword.

### Verses 4-7

1.

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.

2.

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.

3.

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.

4.

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

Jeroboam, no doubt furious that an ordinary man should shout out a warning to him, the king, pointed to the prophet and called his servants to "*Lay hold on him!*" As he pointed, the hand used to point immediately withered and could not be put back down again, staying in its accusatory position. No physical illness could have done this. The immediacy of it proved the

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harm came from God.

At the same time the altar was broken apart and the ashes from sacrifices spilled to the ground. In itself this was a judgment, for ashes on the true altar in Jerusalem had to be carefully scooped up and taken to a holy place dedicated to the purpose outside the city. If it was dumped inside the Temple complex it would make the ground unholy. So, this altar was unholy on two counts – it was built outside Jerusalem, without God’s consent, and, it was used in a ceremony mixing pagan and godly activity. Therefore, the altar itself was condemned, along with its use.

Jeroboam was halted in his paganism by these two signs, and even as his arm and withered hand remained outstretched against the prophet, he begged the prophet to seek God’s forgiveness and to restore his hand. The prophet did this and the hand was immediately healed. The king was grateful and asked the prophet to go back with him to his house, for washing and a meal, together with an ample reward. And this is the start of the prophet’s demise, though he did not take up the offer.

Very often in our lives we can fail to note the beginning of our woes on this earth, thinking they started when we first observed or practiced them. It is sadly a fact that many of our troubles arise not at the time of our sin, but *before* they arise, usually in a subtle change of our loyalties and faithfulness. This is why, amongst the Hebrews, a man who experienced troubles offered a sacrifice for a sin he did not know he had committed! In this way, the Hebrews were always vigilant about their sins.

### Verses 8-10

1.

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:

2.

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.

3.

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So he went another way, and returned not by the way that he came to Bethel.

The prophet was told by God not to accept anything from the king or to take reward of any kind. He told the king this – he would not go, nor eat and drink at his house, even if the king gave him half his home. In addition to this command from God, he was told not to return home by the same route. (God is always specific). And so the prophet obeyed God and began his journey back home by a different route. The vital point was that the man should obey the specific commands of God, 'to the letter'. Thus far he did well – but he was soon to lose his life for disobeying.

### Verses 11-17

1.

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.

2.

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.

3.

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

4.

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.

5.

Then he said unto him, Come home with me, and eat bread.

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6.

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:

7.

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.

An older prophet lived in Bethel. His sons had witnessed what the other prophet had told the king, and what had happened. The older prophet asked which way the now famed prophet had gone: the sons saw which way the prophet went.

The older prophet had his sons to saddle an ass and he went off to find the famed prophet, which he did – the man was sitting under an oak tree in the shade. The older prophet asked if he was indeed the prophet from Judah who spoke to the king. The man acknowledged that he was the same man.

The older prophet asked the man to return with him for some food. The man repeated what God had told him about refusing food and drink or any other reward. Thus far he obeyed the Lord, but dramatic failure was soon to enter his heart. We see this kind of failure today, in pastors and preachers who begin well, but end miserably. Sadly, it is in us all – but it is spiritual teachers who are specially attacked by Satan. Get them out of the way and you weaken the local churches.

### Verses 18-22

1.

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.

2.

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So he went back with him, and did eat bread in his house, and drank water.

3.

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:

4.

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,

5.

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 carcase shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers.

The older prophet told the man that he, too, was a prophet, but he then deliberately lied as he again made the offer of refreshments, saying that God gave him a message by an angel. The reason for the lie is not given, but it is a very strange thing to do. We do know that God could not give him a lie.

Whatever the reason for the lie, it certainly put the man to the test – and a severe one at that. Persuaded by the claim that God had changed His command, the famed prophet went to the older prophet's house and received refreshments. It seems to me that the lesson is that we should not accept a change of God's word to us from another human being. The prophecy to the king was specific and serious. Therefore, we should expect that if God wanted something different, He would have again approached the famed prophet himself.

But, this poses the question – would God change His mind? The answer is 'No', because such a change would have cancelled His previous command to the man. And, such a change would have caused the man to do something denied to him earlier. Also, if God gave a different command, He would have said so in the text. Would YOU be fooled by this subtle deception?

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As the hapless famed prophet sat at the table, God spoke genuinely to the older prophet, who was to deliver awful news to the other man: "Thus saith the Lord"... 'you have disobeyed me by not keeping to my command (not to accept refreshment). Therefore, you will die quickly and not be buried with your forefathers.' Though God cannot pass on a lie, or cause a man to do so, He certainly used this incident to test the prophet, and, when he failed, God put him to death.

The famed prophet was, then, faithful at first, but then seriously lost God's blessing. It is a lesson we must all learn, and must be very aware of the need for discernment at all times, for Satan, or our own sins, can lead us astray, sometimes to loss or troubles, or even to death. In the current dark days we cannot for a moment let up our holy intent and observation of God's commands.

### Verses 23-25

1.

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.

2.

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.

3.

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.

The famed prophet was loaned the ass to return home, but he never reached it. A lion attacked him and he died. Strangely – but obviously because God gave the command – the ass stood by the body alongside the lion. Witnesses saw this unusual sight, and told the story when they got to Bethel. No doubt the old prophet felt terrible about what had happened, and that he had been a part of the demise. On the other hand, he was used of God to deliver a vital lesson to all, that no man can deviate from His commands, once given.

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In a very similar way, no man can leave the ministry given to him by God, for the hand cannot leave the plough. If, then, you have a ministry from God, do not treat it lightly, but treat it with all holiness and care; do not take your hand off the plough, for the only result will be woes and perils.

### Verses 26-32

1.

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.

2.

And he spake to his sons, saying, Saddle me the ass. And they saddled him.

3.

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.

4.

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.

5.

And he laid his carcase in his own grave; and they mourned over him, saying, Alas, my brother!

6.

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:



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7.

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.

The news reached the older prophet, who immediately knew whose body it was, and why he had died... he disobeyed God and so was killed by the lion. He told his sons to saddle an ass, so that he could go to the scene of death. When he got there he found that the lion and ass were still standing by the body, the ass unharmed and the body uneaten. To further show that this was God's doing, the older prophet was able to pick up the man's body and put it over the back of the ass, the lion not attacking him for doing so. Though he was instrumental in the man's death, the older prophet wanted to mourn and bury the dead prophet.

This is a very different attitude to what is found today... Christians are only too willing to shun fellow Christians they *think* are unbiblical, even though such men and women have been faithful all their Christian lives. Such critics will even shun fellow believers if they do not conform to what THEY believe or do! They will not allow that God has saved *both* groups! So, they have no right to dishonour those who are different. (I refer to those Christians who are thought to be unbiblical, but without proof. Such repugnant prejudices are found throughout the supposed 'Christian' world).

In stark contrast the older prophet buried the man in his own grave, mourning him as his "brother". The prophet told his sons that when he himself died, he was to be buried alongside the famed prophet in the same sepulchre. His reasoning was that though disobedient in one matter, the famed prophet told the truth about the altar at Bethel... his prophecy would come about. Therefore, he was to be honoured for the truth he told and not dishonoured for his one error. We can all fall to sin.

### Verses 33&34

1.

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.

2.

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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.

After all that had happened, Jeroboam refused to change his ways and remained wicked. The pagan altars stayed put, as did the uncalled priests. Like men who can nowadays buy fake 'reverend' credentials and theological degrees, so these men merely applied to become priests, with no calling from God and no heritage in the tribe of Levi. For this reason the house of Jeroboam was known to God for its sinfulness. The sin would cause God to destroy Jeroboam's family name and lineage, removing it forever from the earth.

It is evident that though God caused the death of the famed prophet, He did not thereby cut him off from Israel nor from his family name. Nor did He cast him off for what was one sin. Rather, He punished the man severely, and that was the end of the matter... the man would see Heaven for his prior faithfulness. It is my opinion (not proven fact) that the famed prophet repented to the Lord in his heart for his error. Even so, when God speaks and judges, His judgment WILL follow, regardless of repentance. The reason? In this case because God gave no assurance that repentance would stay the execution.

In a similar way, those who commit first-degree murder MUST be put to death, even if they repent before the penalty is brought about. This is because, in the case of first-degree murder God gives no alternative to death. Context matters! Even so, it is far better for believers to obey God faithfully at all times, rather than run the risk of earthly judgment and possibly death.

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