

**Sunday 31-July-22**

**A Tale of Two Prophets**

**1 Kings 13:1-34**

### **The Man of God From Judah**

**13** By the word of the LORD a man of God came from Judah to Bethel, as Jeroboam was standing by the altar to make an offering. **2** By the word of the LORD he cried out against the altar: "Altar, altar! This is what the LORD says: 'A son named Josiah will be born to the house of David. On you he will sacrifice the priests of the high places who make offerings here, and human bones will be burned on you.'" **3** That same day the man of God gave a sign: "This is the sign the LORD has declared: The altar will be split apart and the ashes on it will be poured out."

**4** When King Jeroboam heard what the man of God cried out against the altar at Bethel, he stretched out his hand from the altar and said, "Seize him!" But the hand he stretched out toward the man shrivelled up, so that he could not pull it back. **5** Also, the altar was split apart and its ashes poured out according to the sign given by the man of God by the word of the LORD.

**6** Then the king said to the man of God, "Intercede with the LORD your God and pray for me that my hand may be restored." So, the man of God interceded with the LORD, and the king's hand was restored and became as it was before.

**7** The king said to the man of God, "Come home with me for a meal, and I will give you a gift."

**8** But the man of God answered the king, "Even if you were to give me half your possessions, I would not go with you, nor would I eat bread or drink water here. **9** For I was commanded by the word of the LORD: 'You must not eat bread or drink water or return by the way you came.'" **10** So he took another road and did not return by the way he had come to Bethel.

**11** Now there was a certain old prophet living in Bethel, whose sons came and told him all that the man of God had done there that day. They also told their father what he had said to the king. **12** Their father asked them, "Which way did he go?" And his sons showed him which road the man of God from Judah had

taken. <sup>13</sup> So he said to his sons, "Saddle the donkey for me." And when they had saddled the donkey for him, he mounted it <sup>14</sup> and rode after the man of God. He found him sitting under an oak tree and asked, "Are you the man of God who came from Judah?"

"I am," he replied.

<sup>15</sup> So the prophet said to him, "Come home with me and eat."

<sup>16</sup> The man of God said, "I cannot turn back and go with you, nor can I eat bread or drink water with you in this place. <sup>17</sup> I have been told by the word of the LORD: 'You must not eat bread or drink water there or return by the way you came.'"

<sup>18</sup> The old prophet answered, "I too am a prophet, as you are. And an angel said to me by the word of the LORD: 'Bring him back with you to your house so that he may eat bread and drink water.'" (But he was lying to him.) <sup>19</sup> So the man of God returned with him and ate and drank in his house.

<sup>20</sup> While they were sitting at the table, the word of the LORD came to the old prophet who had brought him back. <sup>21</sup> He cried out to the man of God who had come from Judah, "This is what the LORD says: 'You have defied the word of the LORD and have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you. <sup>22</sup> You came back and ate bread and drank water in the place where he told you not to eat or drink. Therefore, your body will not be buried in the tomb of your ancestors.'"

<sup>23</sup> When the man of God had finished eating and drinking, the prophet who had brought him back saddled his donkey for him. <sup>24</sup> As he went on his way, a lion met him on the road and killed him, and his body was left lying on the road, with both the donkey and the lion standing beside it. <sup>25</sup> Some people who passed by saw the body lying there, with the lion standing beside the body, and they went and reported it in the city where the old prophet lived.

<sup>26</sup> When the prophet who had brought him back from his journey heard of it, he said, "It is the man of God who defied the word of the LORD. The LORD has given him over to the lion, which has mauled him and killed him, as the word of the LORD had warned him."

<sup>27</sup> The prophet said to his sons, "Saddle the donkey for me," and they did so. <sup>28</sup> Then he went out and found the body lying on the road, with the donkey and the lion standing beside it. The lion had neither eaten the body nor mauled the donkey. <sup>29</sup> So the prophet picked up the body of the man of God, laid it on the donkey, and brought it back to his own city to mourn for him and bury him. <sup>30</sup> Then he laid the body in his own tomb, and they mourned over him and said, "Alas, my brother!"

<sup>31</sup> After burying him, he said to his sons, "When I die, bury me in the grave where the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones. <sup>32</sup> For the message he declared by the word of the LORD against the altar in Bethel and against all the shrines on the high places in the towns of Samaria will certainly come true."

<sup>33</sup> Even after this, Jeroboam did not change his evil ways, but once more appointed priests for the high places from all sorts of people. Anyone who wanted to become a priest he consecrated for the high places. <sup>34</sup> This was the sin of the house of Jeroboam that led to its downfall and to its destruction from the face of the earth.

## **Matthew 7:15-20**

### **True and False Prophets**

<sup>15</sup> "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. <sup>16</sup> By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? <sup>17</sup> Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. <sup>18</sup> A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. <sup>19</sup> Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup> Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

## Sermon: A Tale of Two Prophets

### Intro

Please have your **Bibles opened** up at **1 Kings chapter 13**

Let me **pray**, before we **look at this passage...**

Let's pray...

Our story from 1 Kings chapter 13 this morning - is the most **bizarre** story

Before we look at that **bizarre** story

We've had an **equally bizarre** story in the news in the last few days

You may have heard on the news that the **Manly Rugby League Club** made a **very bizarre decision** this week to **force** all their **players** to **wear a pride jersey** with a rainbow on it

The club's **idea** was to make **everyone feel included** – especially those with **alternative sexual and gender preferences**

Unfortunately, the **decision backfired** because the club **did not consult** the **coaching staff** nor the **players** before making the decision

And so, in their attempt to be inclusive – the club actually excluded a bunch of **Christian players** who refused to wear the pride jersey on religious grounds.

This then **exposed** these **Christian players** to abuse and vilification. And it seems yet again, that **one group of people** in this country that **continually seems to never have a voice or their opinion respected** are **Christians!**

We **have to wonder** what a person's sexual and gender preferences has to do with football – and why this has to be even promoted or mentioned?

And I wonder how a parent would explain to a six-year-old Manly supporter – why their **favourite player is not playing this week**.

We can discuss until the cows come home about other advertising on football shirts – like gambling and alcohol – and I guess if some player felt strongly about gambling and alcohol, they **might decide not to play for a club that advertises it.**

Likewise – a player who is a **passionate vegetarian** might choose not to play for the Roosters who advertise chickens?

But the difference I think with the Pride jersey – is that – the Christian players are being asked to be **proud** of something that they don't agree with on religious grounds.

These **players** are not saying they hate gay people – and they are not being homophobic – and they are not saying they won't play footy with gay people – they're **just saying they don't agree with that lifestyle** and so they are not able to be proud of it

Why? Because these **Christian players** have stood up for something that is really really precious to them – and that is **God's Word** – and they **believe God speaks against that lifestyle in His Word.**

Which brings us today's bizarre story – and **it is again God's Word that is paramount in this story too** – as we will see...

### The Story (1 Kings 13)

We left off **last week** in **chapter 12** with **King Jeroboam inventing** his own **false religion** and making **two golden calves** in **Bethel** and **Dan** in the **Northern Kingdom** – and **appointing priests** that were not from God's appointed **tribe of Levi.**

[Slide 1-Map]

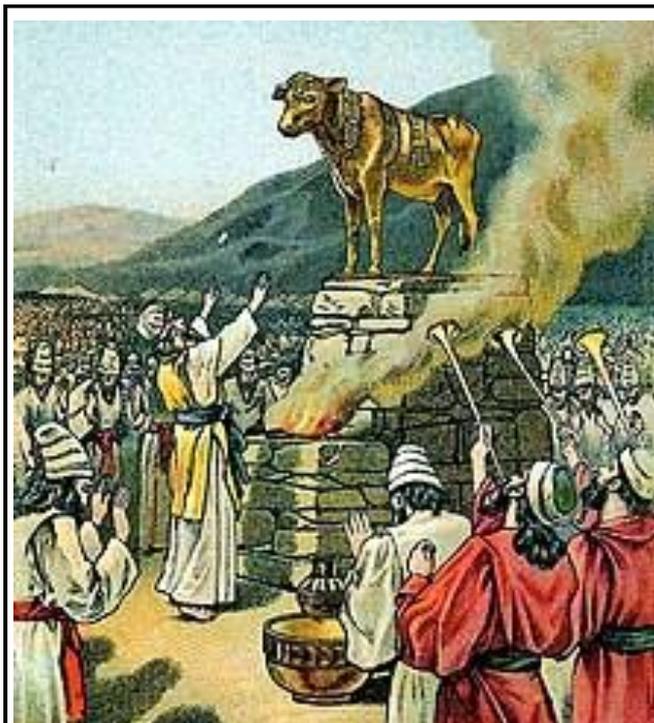


[Explain Divided Kingdom-Kings-Tribes-Dan-Bethel-Jerusalem]

We pick up the story in **v1** where a **man of God from Judah** (Southern Kingdom) **interrupts** King Jeroboam's "**Bull Worship Service**" just as the King is standing at the altar.

Imagine the scene (v2) as this **man of God** pushes his way through the worshippers and **prophesies** that a **coming descendant of David** – named **Josiah**– would one day sacrifice this new breed of priests at this place. [340 years later in 2 Kings 23:15-16, 20]

[Slide 2-Calf and Altar]



### King Jeroboam

At the Altar of Bethel.

When the man of God comes to prophesy against Jeroboam's false worship (1 Kings 13:1-10)

The **man of God** also **gives** a more immediate sign in v3 – that the **altar** which Jeroboam is worshipping at **will be split in two** and the **ashes** on it **will pour out**.

**Jeroboam** isn't going to stand for it and **points** his **royal index finger** and says “**Seize him!**” (v4) only to see his **hand shrivel up** and he is not able to **pull his outstretched arm back!** Simultaneously the **altar splits** and the **ashes pour out** – just as the man of God said they would (v5)

**Jeroboam** is forced to **change his approach** (v6) and **pleads** for the **man of God** to pray to the Lord for his hand to be restored – and **God answers and restores Jeroboam's hand**.

This **changes Jeroboam's tune** and he **invites the man of God to lunch** (v7) perhaps hoping diplomacy might tame the man of God's prophecy. But the **man of God declines** because he's under strict orders from God - not to **fellowship with anyone and return home a different way** (vv8-10)

[Slide 3-Old prophet and man of God]



The **story** then **switches to an old prophet in Bethel** – and his **sons come to him** with a ***“you’ll never guess what happened at church today”*** story.

For some reason the **old prophet** wants to chase down the man of God and his **sons** **happened to have seen which way the man of God went.**

The **whole story hinges on** - the **old prophet catching up with the man of God** which he does – sitting under an oak tree (v14).

Again, the **man of God is invited to lunch** (v15). And again, **he declines** (vv16-17)

But the **old prophet flashes his own clergy credentials** and claims he has received a word from the Lord from an angel commanding him to bring the man of God home for lunch (vv18)

It is a **plain lie** but sadly the **man of God falls for it** (v19)

Then in mid-meal the **old prophet receives a genuine word from God** which **announces judgement on the man of God** because he had disobeyed God’s instructions and ate with the old prophet. Because of this the **man of God** will not be buried in his own land. (vv20-22)

We then **see how this plays out.**

The **man of God sets out on a loaned donkey**, is **met on the road by a lion and killed.**

Then the **lion suddenly loses his appetite** for both the man and the donkey.

Word filters back to town that the **man of God is dead** and the old prophet makes a second trip, **retrieves the body** of the man of God and **gives him a proper burial**. (vv23-30).

The **old prophet announces** to his sons that the message that the man of God had given against the altar of Bethel **will most certainly come to pass** (vv31-32)

Lions may liquidate God’s disobedient prophets but **nothing can derail God’s word.**

And the **chapter concludes** with **Jeroboam continuing on just as before.**

What a **totally bizarre story!**

## Unanswered Questions (1 Kings 13)

If you were following the story in the Bible – you could **easily right “but why?”** in the margin **many many times** – couldn’t you?

### [Slide 4a-Questions]

Here’s some **questions I came up with** as I looked at this passage:

- Why was the man of God to refuse any offer of hospitality and return a different way?
- What were the sons of the old prophet doing at Jeroboam’s church service anyway?
- Why was the man of God sitting under the tree still north of the border, were we wrong to assume that he was to return straightaway?
- Why is the old prophet so strange? Why did he lie to the man of God? What was his motive?
- Why does the man of God go back with the old prophet without questioning the old prophet’s alternative word from the angel?
- How is it that a true word of God comes from an old prophet who also tells a lie?
- Why is there no protest recorded by the man of God regarding his pending doom? Why is he not angry? Why doesn’t he get angry with the old prophet?
- Why was the man of God’s punishment so severe?

### [Slide 4b-Word of the Lord]

We can only conclude that these questions are not important and that God through the writer wants us to focus on something else! Namely, the “**Word of the Lord**” which is mentioned **11 times** in this passage!

So, to figure out what the writer wants us to learn – let’s look at the **three main characters in the story** – and see what God is teaching us.

## The Teaching (1 Kings 13)

### 1. Jeroboam (vv1-10, vv33-34)

[Slide 5a-Heading]

**First – Jeroboam** – vv1-10 and vv33-34

[Slide 5b-Mercy]

What we see is - that **the Word of the Lord is Jeroboam's mercy** – but He rejected it.

Although the man of God's prophecy against Jeroboam's consisted of – two signs of judgement on the false worship – firstly - a sign of a future King Josiah destroying the altar - and secondly - an immediate sign of the altar splitting in two – it was also God's mercy – giving Jeroboam a chance to repent.

Instead, **Jeroboam rejected God's Word and his hand shrivelled up.**

Yet – **God again showed mercy.** When the man of God interceded for Jeroboam and prayed – God restored Jeroboam's hand.

Again – Jeroboam could have repented but instead he tries manipulation and invites the man of God to lunch – perhaps to show everyone watching – ‘hey guys we're really on the same side you know’

But the man of God is not going to be manipulated – and refuses the lunch date.

Whenever someone like Jeroboam commits himself to the path of false worship and God intrudes to stop them – that is God's mercy – and they're meant to do something about it.

Unfortunately – Jeroboam rejects the Word of God

And we see in v33 – he did not change his evil ways – and instead appointed priests for the high places from all sorts of people (non-Levites). In fact, anyone could be a priest

**apparently.** And the conclusion for Jeroboam in v34 – is that **this sin and rebellion led to the downfall of King Jeroboam’s Kingdom.**

Application: For us – it means **God will not hesitate to come barging into the middle of our idolatries.** He’ll throw roadblocks in our path and sometimes send annoying servants to warn us as well. **But it’s good news that He’ll do anything to pry us loose from our golden calves.** **His mercy makes waves before his judgement arrives.**

However – **we have to accept this merciful interruption** – and **not reject it** as Jeroboam did.

## 2. The man of God from Judah (vv11-24)

**Second – the man of God** – in vv11-24

[Slide 5b-Protection]

What we see is: - that **the Word of God is his protection** – **but he abandons it.**

The **man of God** is a **mystery** - isn’t he?

He definitely **knew God’s instructions to not have food or drink with anyone** – He **twice quotes God’s clear instructions** **and** he **twice immediately and decisively rejects invites to lunch** (vv8-9, vv16-17).

Yet when the old prophet identifies himself as a colleague of the cloth – and claims he too has a divine revelation, the **man of God follows the old prophet like a sheep to the slaughter** (v19). **No protest, no debate, no questions, no suspicion?**

Like me – you might be saying – ***“can you believe he fell for that?”***

Why didn’t the man of God at least think ***‘this old prophet lives in the Northern Kingdom which is following all this false worship; would God really give this guy a word that contradicts what He gave me?’***

We can only assume - the man of God – **respected the age and tone of authority the older prophet.**

But the bottom line is the **man of God swallowed a word from the old prophet which contradicted the clear word of God given to the man of God.**

**God never contradicts Himself in His dealings with His servants.**

We can be left asking – this **seems ever so harsh?**

The man of God is punished whereas Jeroboam and the old prophet get off scot-free!

This is an example of an important principle of the way God works. We think that strict judgment should begin among the most ungodly, but often God begins strict judgment among His own people (1 Peter 4:17). Usually this is because God knows that the world will not be reached when His people live in compromise or disobedience!

The **word of God was the man of God's safety and he abandoned it for a false word.**

Application: For us we must be diligent in not knuckling under to the tone of authority without examining the words spoken. As the apostle John reminds us "Test the Spirits!" (1 John 4:1).

**V18 is a dangerous verse and very relevant today.**

Are we not in times where we have people come to us with all sorts of things like "the Lord has told me blah blah" or "Jesus is coming back on this day or that" or even misquoting or misrepresenting the Bible?

Are we to swallow these claims or cling only to the sure and written word of God?

Surely 1 Kings 13 teaches us that the **given Word of God is sufficient for God's servants (that's us) and that it is not safe to receive anything beyond or beside that Word. If it doesn't line up with the Bible – we must reject it.**

Unfortunately, the man of God accepts the false word of the old prophet with fatal consequences. The lifeless form of the man of God lying in the road from Bethel bears silent witness to us - that it is never safe for us to venture outside the shelter of the God's explicit word. There will always be consequences when we disobey God's Word. **God requires unswerving obedience of His Word. We can ignore His Word at our peril!**

One additional point here – Did we notice how steadfast and rock-solid the man of God was in his encounter with King Jeroboam (vv1-10) – but then fell for the poppycock of the old prophet?

Sometimes we have the courage to face major crisis and trust God all the way – but lack wisdom when it comes to the subtle dilemmas. We face the danger of the hour with great resilience - but then - lack discernment in the sneaky play of the moment. **We must all remember God's word is our protection – and never forget that!**

### 3. The old prophet (vv18-32)

**Third** – the old prophet – in vv18-32

[Slide 5c-Protection]

What we see is: - that **the Word of God is the truth – but he abused it.**

What are we to make of this old prophet?

We'll never know why he lied to the man of God?

Although God gave this rascal a true word (vv20-22) that **doesn't excuse the previous lie** (v18)

Yes - the man of God should have discerned and rejected the old prophet's invitation.  
Yet the fact remains that **the lie of the old prophet destroyed a servant of the Lord.**  
Just because the man of God from Judah was foolish does not mean **the old prophet was guiltless**

In our NT passage this morning from **Matthew 7:15-20** – Jesus warns us that there will **be wolves in sheep's clothing** – and the old prophet certainly falls into that category.

Application: Jesus wants to protect us from these wolves – and so He's saying if someone comes to us with a word of prophecy – we put it on the shelf – and see if it happens. **We don't just accept a person's word!**

We have God's word which **is the truth**

God's truth **should grip us, control us and transform us.**

For the old prophet **the word of God seemed to be more of a game - rather than the precious truth of God.**

**God's truth is a matter of life and death** – as we saw for the man of God – **and it's a matter of life and death for us!**

**Conclusion** (Hebrews 4:12)

To finish us then...

[Slide 6a-Heading]

In the Bible – God's Son Jesus **is described as God's Word**

In fact, John 1:14 – says that: *God's Word (Jesus) became flesh and dwelled among the people*

You see

Jesus is God's Word – **used** at creation **to create everything**

Jesus is God's Word – that **changes and transforms people**

Jesus is God's Word – that **saves people for Heaven** [because of Jesus' death and resurrection – for all who believe]

That's why God's Word is so important

**Hebrews 4:12** puts it this way:

[Slide 6-Heb 4:12]

*For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

So, I'd like to leave us with **a challenge this morning**

[Slide 7a-Heading]

We've heard how important God's Word is - in our story from 1 Kings – and we've heard how important God's Word is - to a bunch of Christian footballers

In the **recent data** released from **last year's census**

We find that **the number of people identifying as Christians** has dropped from **61.1% in 2011** - to **52.1% in 2016** - to now **43.9% in 2021**.

That means right now – in Australia – we have 43.9% of the population who are Christians and 49% of the population who have no religion or follow other religions.

Realistically – we have to accept now that - **Christianity is a minority in Australia** – and **that there are more people with no religion or other religions – than there are Christians.**

[Slide 7b-Bold minority]

In his book "***God is good for you***" by **Greg Sheridan** – he concludes that in a nation that is declining in faith in the one true God and His Son Jesus – we are to see ourselves as a

**“bold minority”** (pg. 322) – and **that requires us to be bold and brave** – because God’s Word is the most important thing we have in our possession.

As this bold minority – **we will face opposition** – as Jesus says in Mark 13:9,13: **On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them.**

**Everyone will hate you because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.**

**But we must stand firm and stand up for God’s Word – and go out and share God’s Word!**

Let’s pray

*Heavenly Father, we thank you for your precious word which teaches us, corrects us, transforms us and saves us for Heaven.*

*Help us through your Holy Spirit to treasure your precious word.*

*Help us to see that your Word gives us mercy in the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus.*

*Help us to see that your Word protects us from all sorts of danger.*

*And help us to see that your Word is the absolute truth in a world of fake news, lies and alternative truth.*

*In Jesus name, AMEN.*