

Sunday 7th August

The beginning is the beginning of the end

1 Kings 14:1-20

Ahijah's Prophecy Against Jeroboam

14 At that time Abijah son of Jeroboam became ill, ² and Jeroboam said to his wife, "Go, disguise yourself, so you won't be recognized as the wife of Jeroboam. Then go to Shiloh. Ahijah the prophet is there—the one who told me I would be king over this people. ³ Take ten loaves of bread with you, some cakes and a jar of honey, and go to him. He will tell you what will happen to the boy." ⁴ So Jeroboam's wife did what he said and went to Ahijah's house in Shiloh.

Now Ahijah could not see; his sight was gone because of his age. ⁵ But the LORD had told Ahijah, "Jeroboam's wife is coming to ask you about her son, for he is ill, and you are to give her such and such an answer. When she arrives, she will pretend to be someone else."

⁶ So when Ahijah heard the sound of her footsteps at the door, he said, "Come in, wife of Jeroboam. Why this pretense? I have been sent to you with bad news. ⁷ Go, tell Jeroboam that this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I raised you up from among the people and appointed you ruler over my people Israel. ⁸ I tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you, but you have not been like my servant David, who kept my commands and followed me with all his heart, doing only what was right in my eyes. ⁹ You have done more evil than all who lived before you. You have made for yourself other gods, idols made of metal; you have aroused my anger and turned your back on me.

¹⁰ "'Because of this, I am going to bring disaster on the house of Jeroboam. I will cut off from Jeroboam every last male in Israel—slave or free. I will burn up the house of Jeroboam as one burns dung, until it is all gone. ¹¹ Dogs will eat those belonging to Jeroboam who die in the city, and the birds will feed on those who die in the country. The LORD has spoken!'

¹² "As for you, go back home. When you set foot in your city, the boy will die. ¹³ All Israel will mourn for him and bury him. He is the only one belonging to Jeroboam who will be buried, because he is the only one in the house of Jeroboam in whom the LORD, the God of Israel, has found anything good.

¹⁴ “The LORD will raise up for himself a king over Israel who will cut off the family of Jeroboam. Even now this is beginning to happen. ¹⁵ And the LORD will strike Israel, so that it will be like a reed swaying in the water. He will uproot Israel from this good land that he gave to their ancestors and scatter them beyond the Euphrates River, because they aroused the LORD’s anger by making Asherah poles. ¹⁶ And he will give Israel up because of the sins Jeroboam has committed and has caused Israel to commit.”

¹⁷ Then Jeroboam’s wife got up and left and went to Tirzah. As soon as she stepped over the threshold of the house, the boy died. ¹⁸ They buried him, and all Israel mourned for him, as the LORD had said through his servant the prophet Ahijah.

¹⁹ The other events of Jeroboam’s reign, his wars and how he ruled, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel. ²⁰ He reigned for twenty-two years and then rested with his ancestors. And Nadab his son succeeded him as king.

Acts 5:1-11

Ananias and Sapphira

5 Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. ² With his wife’s full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles’ feet.

³ Then Peter said, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? ⁴ Didn’t it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn’t the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God.”

⁵ When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. ⁶ Then some young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

⁷ About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸ Peter asked her, “Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?”

“Yes,” she said, “that is the price.”

⁹ Peter said to her, “How could you conspire to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also.”

¹⁰ At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. ¹¹ Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.

Sermon: The Beginning is the Beginning of the End

Intro

Question to begin with.

What can we **hide** from God?

(pause)

Answer: Nothing!

Ever since humans existed – they have **tried to hide things from God!** [e.g., Adam and Eve, Jonah]

But we can't hide anything from God – because He knows every detail of our lives.

As well as knowing everything, being everywhere and being all-powerful.

God has **something else** at His disposal which we mentioned last week – **which penetrates our thoughts and sees what's deep in our hearts.**

God has His **powerful Word** – which is **sharper than a doubled edged sword** (Hebrews 4:12)

In our stories from 1 Kings 14 and Acts 5 this morning – **God speaks to His servants** – and **exposes the sin of the main characters in the stories.**

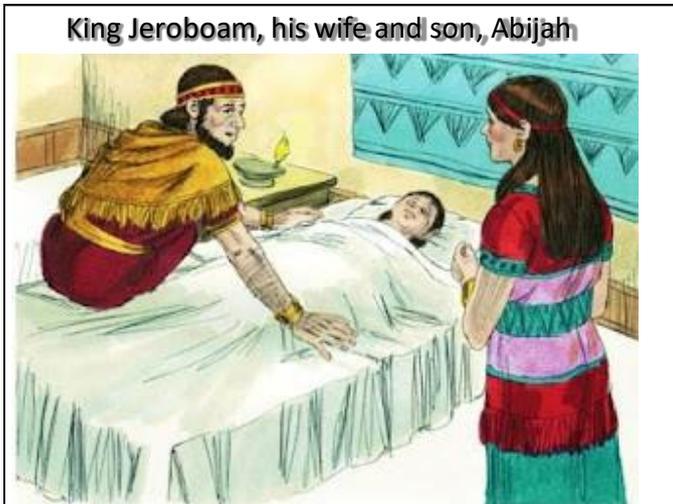
God's Word exposes deceit (1 Kings 14:1-6)

First - we see how **God's word exposes deceit** – that's in 1 Kings 14:1-6

We pick up the story in v1 with King Jeroboam –

Remember Jeroboam is the **King of the Northern Kingdom of Israel** (10 tribes) – the one who **worships golden calves instead of God!**

[Slide 1-Jeroboam & family]



Jeroboam's son, Abijah, is ill – seriously ill it seems.

This was a **double difficulty** for Jeroboam – as a parent his **child is sick and the hopes of his dynasty rest on having a male heir** to succeed him.

Even calf-worshippers care about their kids

Jeroboam did what many still do today – in times of trouble – they **seek out a clergyman** they've met some time in their lives

In Jeroboam case he seeks out the **prophet Ahijah** – the prophet from chapter 11 who told Jeroboam – **God was going to give him 10 tribes to rule over.**

In doing so – Jeroboam **meets the Word of God head on** and it **exposes him.**

Jeroboam **wants to know what will happen to his son**

So, he **says to his wife, Mrs Jeroboam, that she should disguise herself** before going to see the prophet, Ahijah.

Why the disguise?

The passage doesn't tell us.

But if we **glance back to chapter 11:37-38**

Here's what **God said to Jeroboam** through the prophet Ahijah

I will take you, and you will rule over all that your heart desires; you will be king over Israel. ³⁸ If you do whatever I command you and walk in obedience to me and do what is right in my eyes by obeying my decrees and commands, as David my servant did, I will be with you. I will build you a dynasty as enduring as the one I built for David and will give Israel to you.

So, **God's promise to Jeroboam was conditional** upon Jeroboam walking in obedience to God – like King David had. But **Jeroboam hasn't done that.**

So, Jeroboam's not confident **Ahijah will give him a favourable word about his son's health crisis** – if the prophet knows it's Mrs Jeroboam asking – **hence the disguise.**

Have you noticed when we lie and deceive, we can sometimes **suck others into the web of deceit too?**

(pause)

Jeroboam also thinks – sending Mrs Jeroboam with some gifts for the prophet won't hurt either – v3.

It turns out **Jeroboam is not up to date on the prophet's eyesight** – as we find out that **Ahijah the prophet** – needs an urgent appointment at Specsavers – v4.

But even though Ahijah's sight is failing – **He has something better – he has God's insight.**

(pause)

Did you notice too that **Jeroboam doesn't pray or ask the prophet to pray for his son** – but **just treats the prophet like a fortune teller** – to find out what will happen to his sick son!

God speaks to Ahijah and exposes the deceit of Mr and Mrs Jeroboam – v5 - and **forewarns that Mrs Jeroboam is coming to ask about her sick son** – and God even gives Ahijah the words he is to say!

Mr and Mrs Jeroboam's tactic is a bit like the Peanuts cartoon strip – where Lucy and Linus appear before Charlie Brown – announcing ***“we're brother and sister and we love each other”***. Charlie Brown is incensed at their hypocrisy and asked them a telling question ***“Do you really think you can fool Santa Claus this way?”***. Lucy replies ***“Why not? We're a couple of sharp kids, and he's just an old man!”***

That's Jeroboam's problem, he thinks he's a “sharp” king dealing with “old man” Ahijah the prophet!

He forgot that whenever we're dealing with the Word of God, we're dealing with the God whose word it is!

Remember every time we hear or read God's Word it's alive and active!

Look at v6 – When Ahijah heard footsteps approaching, he said *“Come in, wife of Jeroboam. Why the pretence? I have been sent to you with bad news!”*

I came across a **funny true story** from the **biography** of the great Baptist preacher, **Charles Spurgeon**. *He told the story of a man who became a Christian after hearing one of Spurgeon's sermons. The man began attending Spurgeon's church (The Tabernacle in London) each week, much to his wife's great horror. But curiosity got the better of his wife one Sunday and she followed her husband to church, in disguise (a bit like Mrs Jeroboam). She was late entering the church and came in just as Spurgeon was preaching on this same passage from 1 Kings 14 - and as Spurgeon said the words “Come in, wife of Jeroboam, why this pretence?” The woman took the words as being addressed to her!*

God's word does that to us – through His Spirit – **God's Word will expose our deceit** – **it will expose and identify our lies** – as it did with Ananias and Sapphira in our NT reading!

And **it will expose our hypocrisy too!** Jeroboam wasn't interested in God's Word last week when the man of God came to tell him how wrong he was in worshipping golden calves! But Jeroboam is happy to be interested in God -this week - when He is in trouble and his golden calves can't help him. **He craves the light of God's word when He is in trouble – but doesn't want the light of God's word to guide his path in life.**

Perhaps we might be like that – especially if we only come to God when we're in trouble – but ignore Him the rest of the time?

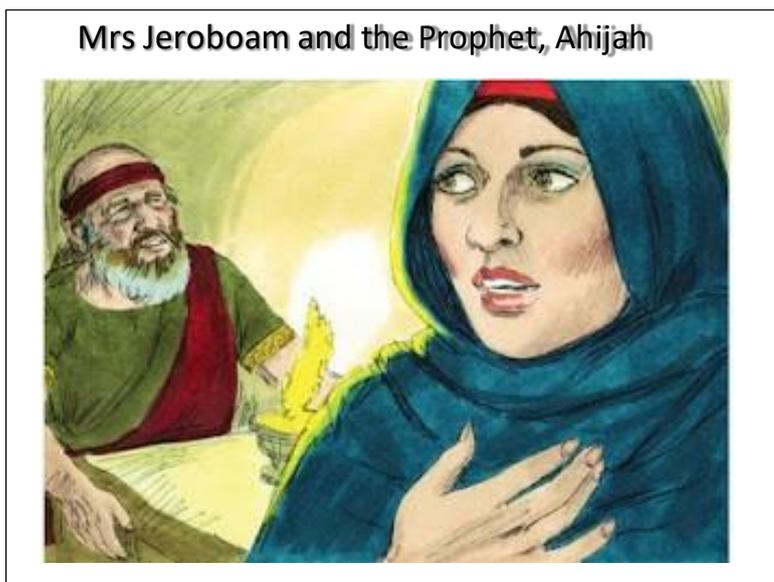
So, the first point is – **God's Word exposes our deceit!**

God's Word condemns idolatry (1 Kings 14:7-11)

Second – we see how **God's Word condemns idolatry** – that's verses 7 to 11.

Look at v7 – **Ahijah** the prophet – speaks God's word to Mrs Jeroboam

[Slide 2]



The prophet **starts off by saying how God showed Jeroboam grace:**

V7 – **God raised up Jeroboam to rule over God's people Israel.**

V8 – **God tore the kingdom away from the house of King David** and gave it to Jeroboam

But – how did Jeroboam respond to this grace – the prophet says:

V8 – **Jeroboam was not like King David – Jeroboam did not follow God’s commands and did not follow God with all his heart – and did not do what was right in God’s eyes!**

V9 – Instead Jeroboam has **done more evil than all who lived before him** – that’s a very telling statement

Still v9 – Jeroboam **made for himself other gods, idols made of metal** – and he **aroused God’s anger** – and turned his back on God.

Basically – Jeroboam has done **exactly the opposite of what God told him to do!**

Because of this idolatry – the prophet says – **God will pass judgment on Jeroboam**.

See v10 – God says he will **bring disaster on the house of Jeroboam**. His **dynasty will be cut off** – by no male descendants surviving. **All belonging to Jeroboam will die!**

But why does Jeroboam’s idolatry **push God to the brink of His patience?**

V9 explains it – the worship of these other gods has **meant Jeroboam has put the one true God behind his back – out of sight – out of mind!**

But still why is God so angry about this?

None of the gods or goddesses in any of the surrounding nations **demand or expect exclusive worship from their worshippers**.

But the God of Israel **is no run of the mill god**.

YHWH the God of Israel **does what no other god does** and **enters into a covenant agreement with His people** – like a marriage relationship – in which He **demands exclusive devotion**.

If you think about a loving marriage – if one of the spouses is unfaithful – understandably the other spouse is devastated, crushed – even furious. Why? Because in a proper loving marriage relationship – there is an expectation of lifelong faithfulness.

If a spouse reacted to an unfaithful partner with apathy or indifference, we would question whether there was any love in the marriage – wouldn't we?

In the same way, God expects a loving faithful exclusive relationship with His people – and He is jealous and angry when we cheat with other idols.

We can't escape God's exclusive requirement by running to the New Testament – Jesus says a similar thing in Luke 14:26:

If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple.

Jesus requires the same exclusivity in our relationship with Him – He must be first in our lives – before anything!

In our NT reading – As well as Ananias and Sapphira's lies and deceit – they also practiced idolatry – they loved themselves more than God.

They desired to get glory, praise and honour from the people in church for giving all the money from their property sale - without actually giving all the money – and keeping some for themselves. Their pride and love of themselves more than God - was their downfall.

You see our idolatry doesn't have to be other people or possessions or activities – our idolatry can be ourselves!

So, the second point is – God's Word condemns idolatry.

God's Word controls history (1 Kings 14:12-18)

Third – we see how **God's Word controls history** – that's verses 12 to 18.

So far, the prophet Ahijah still hasn't addressed Mrs Jeroboam's concern for her son Abijah (from v1)

[Slide 3-Judgment]

God speaks through the **prophet Ahijah and spells out God's judgment** – and it's in three parts:

- a. Mrs Jeroboam's **son will die** – vv12-13
- b. Jeroboam's **dynasty will be overthrown** – v14
- c. And the **Northern Kingdom** (10 tribes) **will be exiled from the land** – vv15-16

You see **God's Word controls history**.

Some things happen immediately – other things happen in God's good time.

In **v17-18** – when Mrs Jeroboam returns home – as soon as she steps through the door – **her son Abijah dies** – he is given a proper burial (important in Jewish custom) and all Israel mourns for the boy.

We have to wait until chapter 15 (vv25-30) for **the destruction of Jeroboam's dynasty**.

And we have to wait 200 years or so from Jeroboam's reign (931-911BC) to 722-720BC **for the Northern Kingdom to get exiled to Assyria** (2 Kings 17:21-23).

The bottom line is **God's Word controls history** – and **controls our history**.

What will happen - if - in our family – **we model** - the worship of other people – other things – other pastimes – **as a priority over the worship of God and His Son Jesus**.

What will happen – if - in our family – we model putting God and His Son Jesus on the shelf – and follow after other things. Is there a danger - our family descendants will follow suit? God showed Jeroboam grace and he rejected it. We must not reject God's grace in sending Jesus – if we do - aren't we then in Jeroboam territory?

The World will tell us: our God is intolerant and too obsessed with the 1st commandment (no other gods) – and the world will tell us: we can do what we want and needn't stay obligated to the exclusive worship of God. Please DON'T believe the lies of this World!

(pause)

In amongst this judgment – there is a measure of grace and mercy in v13 - Jeroboam's son, Abijah, although he is to die – we read he is the only one in whom, the Lord God of Israel, has found any good.

It's like God took Abijah out of this world – so he didn't have to face the terrible demise of his father's kingdom – Abijah was spared that – because there was some good in him.

How God treated Abijah – prompted me to think about our dear sister Corinne – who went to be with the Lord on Thursday. For some time – Corinne had been wrestling with the decision of packing up her home and moving to Aged Care. It was a dilemma in which she could not see a clear road ahead – she dreaded the thought of packing everything in her home and moving. In His grace and mercy – God controlled Corinne's history – and took her out of that dilemma. Praise God – He knows what's best!

Back to Jeroboam.

His Kingdom had only just begun – but the beginning of Jeroboam's kingdom proved to be the beginning of the end of the Northern Kingdom! God will not stand for a corrupt Kingdom!

In our NT reading – the new Christian Church has only just begun – and in Acts 4:32 it says: *All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had.*

God wants this to be the way the new church moves forward – and so he deals very severely with Ananias and Sapphira – so that corruption does not creep into the new church. **God will not stand for a corrupt church!**

So, the third point is – **God’s Word controls history.**

God’s Word emphasises priorities (1 Kings 14:19-20)

We finish Jeroboam’s story with a **very brief summary** in vv19-20

We are given **no more details of Jeroboam’s reign** – apparently, they are written elsewhere – but the **writer of 1 Kings is not interested in these details.**

We are simply told **Jeroboam reigned 22 years** and his **son Nadab succeeded him.**

[Slide 4-priorities]

The final point I’d like to make is that - **God’s word emphasises priorities.**

The reason the writer does not give any more details of Jeroboam’s reign is because **the priority for the writer is the proper worship of the Lord God.**

*I came across **a cartoon** recently - of a dog standing on firm ground and a man sinking in quicksand. The man calls out “Lassie, go and get help, Lassie!”*

The dog takes off - running past trees, jumping over rocks, wading through rivers – then suddenly the dog stops and thinks “Hang on a minute – my name’s not Lassie”. But the dog’s objection is irrelevant – why quibble about the wrong name – when the man is sinking in quicksand.

That’s the writer’s point – why mention Jeroboam’s army and military prowess **when covenant disaster looms ahead?**

Applying that to us this morning.

Imagine this was our obituary – does it really matter – what education we had – what Uni we went to – how successful our career or business was – whether we played football for the state – or cricket for Australia? Does **any of that really matter – if we don't worship and believe in God the Father and His Son Jesus – and if we don't believe Jesus died for our sins to be forgiven – and if we don't believe Jesus rose again so we can have eternal life.**

God's word emphasises what our priority in life must be!

Let's pray.

Father God,

Thank you for the lessons we learn from Jeroboam, Ananias and Sapphira.

Help us to ditch any idols that we love ahead of our Lord God.

Help us to remove the love of ourselves ahead of loving Jesus.

Help us to leave a legacy to our descendants – so that they see our love for Jesus – is the number one treasure in our lives.

Thank you for Your Word – which is alive and active -and which exposes lies and deceit – which condemns idolatry – which controls history – and emphasises our priority – which is our Lord Jesus.

In His name, we pray. Amen.