

1 Kings Chapter 13

Verses 1-3: The prophecy of the anonymous “man of God” was remarkable because it accurately foretold the name and actions of a king who would appear on the scene 290 years hence: “Josiah,” who reigned from 640 to 609 B.C. (2 Kings 23:15-20).

1 Kings 13:1 "And, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the LORD unto Beth-el: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense."

“Man of God” is one of several terms for prophet (see the note on 12:22 and 1 Sam. 9:6-11).

The worship in the land of Israel had deteriorated to the worship of calves. The man of God out of Judah was very similar to the man of God in the last lesson, who told Rehoboam not to war with Israel. The message the man brings is from the LORD. Jeroboam was standing by the altar. Everything about this worship was wrong.

1 Kings 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."

“Josiah”: He ruled Judah about 300 years later 640-609 B.C. (2 Kings 22:1-23:30).

“Of the priests of the high places”: The prophet predicted that Josiah would slaughter the illegitimate priests of the high places of his day who made offerings on the altar at Beth-el. This prophecy was realized (in 2 Kings 23:15-20), executing the divine judgment on the non-Levitical priesthood established by Jeroboam (12:31-32).

This prophecy, which specifically predicts both an event and a distinct “name” centuries before it comes to pass (2 Kings 23:15-20), is paralleled by Isaiah’s prophecy of Cyrus (Isa. 44:28; 45:1), and by Micah’s prophecy of Bethlehem as the Messiah’s birthplace (Micah 5:2). Only the living, sovereign God can give such information (Isa. 42:9).

In the following Scripture, we see the first fulfillment of this prophecy.

2 Kings 23:20 "And he slew all the priests of the high places that [were] there upon the altars, and burned men's bones upon them, and returned to Jerusalem."

I believe this is speaking prophetically of these priests at judgment day as well.

1 Kings 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."

An immediate “wonder” that served to authenticate the reliability of the long-term prediction (Deut. 18:21:22), this sign came to pass (in verse 5).

“The ashes ... shall be poured out”: Proper ritual required the disposal of sacrificial ashes in a special “clean” place (Lev. 4:12; 6:10-11). Contact with the ground would render the ashes “unclean” and nullify the procedure.

This man of God brought a message that Jeroboam did not want to hear. The sign that God was displeased with this worship will be the destruction of the altar, and the ashes will spill out on the ground.

Verses 4-6: When the king’s outstretched “hand ... withered” and the “altar ... split apart”, everyone knew that the prophecy came from “God”, who controlled Jeroboam and would judge him. Jeroboam said, “your God,” not “my God,” indicating his idolatry. “Entreat the favor of the Lord” means literally “appease the face of Yahweh,” a conventional yet striking expression for easing the Lord’s angry countenance through prayer.

1 Kings 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 Beth-el, 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."

He was highly provoked: so that he put forth his hand from the altar; on which he was burning incense.

"Saying, lay hold on him": He put forth his hand, and either shook it at the prophet, threatening what he would do to him; or as beckoning to the people to seize him, and which he also expressed.

"And his hand, which he put forth against him, dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him": He could not move it one way or another, but it remained in the same position, the nerves and muscles being shrunk. This was a further confirmation of the prophet's mission from God, being one of those concerning whom he says, "do my prophets no harm", and a fresh token of the certain performance of what he had said.

This was instant punishment from God upon Jeroboam, when he tried to take the man of God. He was going to destroy the man of God and instead, had his hand dry up before him. This is like the withered hand in the New Testament.

1 Kings 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."

Split into two parts perhaps, and one fell one way, and the other another.

"And the ashes poured out from the altar": The ashes of the burnt offering, these were spilled on the ground; all which was done without any outward force, or any visible means thereof.

"According to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the Lord": By his direction and order.

God wasted no time with the sign either. The altar was rent, and the ashes poured out, just as he had said.

1 Kings 13:6 "And the king answered and said unto the man of God, Entreat 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."

In another tone than when he bid the people lay hold on him. Not in a haughty, but humble manner; not as threatening, but supplicating.

"Entreat now the face of the Lord thy God": He does not say "my God", for he had apostatized from him, and served other gods, but "thy" God, whose prophet he was, and who had an interest in him, as clearly appeared by what he had said and done by him.

"And pray for me, that my hand may be restored me again": Not that the anger of God might be turned away from him, and he enjoy the divine favor, and have an application of pardoning grace made to him. Only to have this outward mercy, this temporal favor restored to him, the use of his hand.

"And the man of God besought the Lord": Not rendering evil for evil; but being of a forgiving spirit, though the king had stretched out his hand against him, he lifted up his hands to heaven for him.

"And the king's hand was restored again, and became as it was before": Which was another instance of divine power, and a further proof of the prophet's divine mission. From whence it might be concluded, that what he had prophesied would be fulfilled, and was an instance also of divine goodness to the king, which should have led him to repentance, but did not.

Jeroboam realizes quickly that this man is truly from God. He knows that the only help he has in getting his hand restored is if the man of God will pray to God for him. The man prays, and God restores Jeroboam's hand.

1 Kings 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."

By eating a meal with him, after such a journey he had taken, and delivered his prophecies, and put up his prayers for the king.

"And I will give thee a reward": For his prayers, by means of which his hand was restored to him. But takes no notice of the Lord, the author of this miraculous cure, nor expresses the least degree of thankfulness and gratitude to him.

Jeroboam wants to do something for the man who prayed to God for him. It was probably, through gratitude for what he had done, that Jeroboam asked him to go home with him so he could give him a present.

1 Kings 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:"

In answer to his civility to him, to assure him it was not out of contempt to him, or ill will to him, or slight of his favor, but in obedience to the will of God.

"If thou wilt give half of thine house": Of the riches in it, and even of his kingdom.

"I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place": This idolatrous place; the reason follows (in verse 9).

The man of God would not be taken in by the bribes of Jeroboam. He would not eat from his table or take his gifts. He wanted to be under no obligation to Jeroboam. He had completed what God sent him to do, and he wanted to go home.

1 Kings 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."

"Charged me by the word of the Lord": The prophet's divine commission expressly forbade receiving any hospitality at Beth-el. It even required him to return home by a different route from the one by which he came, lest he should be recognized. The prophet's own conduct was to symbolize the Lord's total rejection of Israel's false worship and recognition that all the people had become apostates.

God told the man of God not to "eat" or "drink" in anyone's house so that he would not be hindered in his mission or influenced by corruption. Disobedience to this command proved to be his undoing (13:19-25).

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

Neither ate nor drank with the king, though that is not expressed. Or did he go back the same way he came; but in each instance observed the divine command, and was obedient to it.

He did not want to partake of their evil. He must not fellowship with Jeroboam, because it would appear to those looking on, that he approved of him. He had bravely come into Rehoboam's territory, and told him exactly what God wanted him to say. He wants to follow God's instructions to the letter. He does just that.

Verses 11-19: By choosing to live in the territory of the apostate king, at the center of the false system of worship (“Beth-el”), the “old prophet” revealed his complacency concerning idolatry. His motive for riding “after” the prophet from Judah may have been jealousy, signaling intent to destroy the younger prophet. The decision to listen to lying voices leads people away from God’s word (1 John 4:1-6), and God’s will.

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

“An old prophet”: Here was a spokesman for the Lord who had compromised his ministry by his willingness to live at the very center of the false system of worship without speaking out against it.

The “old prophet” probably belonged to a school of the prophets at “Beth-el” that had earlier been true to the Lord, but under the influence of Jeroboam’s new state religion had compromised its faith. Although he may have longed for old-time fellowship with the “man of God,” he plainly lied to him. God’s prophet was too easily taken in (1 John 4:1).

1 Kings 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."

Having a strong inclination to see him, and converse with him.

"For his sons had seen what way the man of God went which came from Judah": They took notice of it; and, as the Targum, they showed it to their father.

Why this old prophet is living in this sinful place is difficult to understand. He had undoubtedly even allowed his sons to attend the feast, where the sacrifice was made to the calf. They run to tell their father of what went on at the feast. We do not know why the father was interested. Had he been a prophet in good standing with the LORD, he would have been protesting the sacrifice to the golden calf himself.

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

Which he used to ride on; intimating he had a mind to ride after him, and overtake him, as he might reasonably think he might, since the man of God was on foot.

"So they saddled him the ass, and he rode thereon": After the man of God, taking the way his sons directed.

1 Kings 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]."

To shelter him from the heat and being faint, hungry, and thirsty; so the ancients of old made use of oaks for a covering, before houses were invented. Thus, Abraham pitched his tent in the plain, or under the oak, of Mamre (Gen. 13:18).

"And he said unto him, art thou the man of God that camest from Judah?" Which he might guess at from his habit, and from the description his sons had given of him.

"And he said, I am": Acknowledged himself to be the person he inquired after.

Why the man of God had stopped here to rest, we do not know. He should have been in a hurry to get away from this evil city. The old prophet rode the ass out to where the man of God was, and asked if he was the man who had brought the message at the altar?

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

In which invitation no doubt he was hearty, and might have no ill design in it, only to have some conversation with him, as being a good man, and a prophet of the Lord. Especially upon the subject of his prophecies at Beth-el.

This is the same thing Jeroboam had asked him that he turned down. It was not just Jeroboam that he must not tarry with. Even this old prophet had a certain amount of sin, in standing by idly and allowing this to happen.

1 Kings 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:"

Into the city, and into his house in it, being such an idolatrous place, and especially being forbidden of God.

"Neither will I eat bread nor drink water with thee in this place": He was resolute and determined to abide by the commandment of the Lord, though there is reason to believe that he was now both hungry and thirsty.

1 Kings 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."

By the angel that was sent to him, who gave him his message and instructions; which he was persuaded came from the Lord himself, and therefore looked upon himself under obligation to regard them as such.

"Thou shalt eat no bread": The same that he observed to the king (1 Kings 13:9).

His instructions had been clear. He knew he was not to go home and eat or drink with anyone here.

1 Kings 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."

“He lied unto him”: Why the old prophet deceived the man of God the text does not state. It may be that his own sons were worshipers at Beth-el; or perhaps priests, and this man wanted to gain favor with the king by showing up the man of God as an imposter who acted contrary to his own claim to have heard from God. Accustomed to receiving direct revelations, the Judean prophet should have regarded the supposed angelic message with suspicion and sought divine verification of this revised order.

We see very quickly that this old prophet was not in good graces with the LORD. He lies to the man of God. The man of God should not have listened to the prophet, since it did not line up with what the LORD had told him. We are responsible for what we believe, just as this man of God was. We must make sure what someone is telling us is truly the Word of God before we believe him.

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

In which he sinned. As he had most certainly disobeyed the command of God not to eat and drink in that place, he ought to have had the countermand from the Lord, and not trusted another person. There are some things indeed which may be said in his favor, and be an apology for him, as that this man was an ancient prophet of the Lord, as he appeared to him. And that though he was forbidden to eat and drink with idolaters, yet he thought he might with a prophet of the Lord, and especially as he affirmed he had the direction of an angel of the Lord for it. Or could he conceive that the prophet had any interest to serve by it, but rather it might be chargeable and burdensome to him. And he might think the Lord, out of compassion on him, had countermanded his former orders, and the circumstances he was in might the more incline him to listen to these plausible pretenses. But, after all, he ought to have taken no directions but from the Lord himself; and in this he failed.

"And did eat bread in his house, and drink water": Contrary to the express command of God.

He was deceived. It is almost as if he wanted to be deceived. He waited under the tree, when he should have been going home. He did just what the LORD told him not to do.

1 Kings 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:"

“The word of the Lord”: The lie arose from his own imagination (Jer. 23:16; Ezek. 13:2, 7), but the true prophecy came from the Lord (Exodus 4:16; Deut. 18:18; Jer. 1:9).

1 Kings 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,"

His mind being greatly affected with the word brought to him, partly on his own account, who, by a lie his conscience must accuse him of, had been the means of seducing the man of God, and partly on his account, who was threatened with death for complying with him.

"Saying, thus saith the Lord": Being obliged to deliver, in the name of the Lord, what was said unto him.

"Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the Lord": The order that came out of his mouth, as follows.

"And hast not kept the commandment which the Lord thy God commanded thee": Not to eat nor drink in Beth-el.

1 Kings 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 sepulcher of thy fathers."

"Thy carcass shall not come unto the sepulcher of thy fathers": Israelites buried their dead with the bones of ancestors in a common grave (Judges 8:32; 2 Sam. 2:32). The lack of such a burial was considered in Israel a severe punishment and disgrace (see note of Eccl. 6:3-6).

The man of God has disobeyed God. He denounced Jeroboam and now he is denounced. The prophet is used of God to tell the man that he will be killed, before he gets home. He brought this upon himself by disobeying God.

1 Kings 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."

That is, had finished the meal. For he had begun to eat and drink before the word came, which came while they were eating and drinking. And it seems this did not hinder their proceeding to make an end of their meal, which one would have thought would have spoiled their appetite.

"That he saddled for him the ass, to wit, for the prophet whom he had brought back": He ordered his sons to get it ready for him, that he might not walk on foot as he had. Though it does not appear that either he or any of his servants accompanied him, but the contrary.

The prophet saddled his ass for the man of God to ride. This is one time that a man's stomach got him into a lot of trouble. He did what his flesh wanted to do, and now he is condemned of God.

Verses 24-28: The fact that the “lion” did not eat the body or tear the donkey, as lions normally would, was evidence of the Lord’s doing.

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

“Ass ... lion”: Both the donkey and the lion acted unnaturally: the donkey did not run and the lion did not attack the donkey or disturb the man’s body. Unlike the disobedient prophet, the beasts bent their wills to God’s sovereignty.

The LORD had sent the lion to carry out his purposes. If it were not so, he would have killed the ass also. The lion, which seemed to be plentiful in this area, killed the man of God and left him on the side of the road. The ass and the lion stood where the man died, watching over the body. The man of God was killed for disobeying the LORD. Truly, he was tricked into going back, but he should not have taken the word of man over the Word of God.

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

The travelers on the road; nor did the lion offer to seize on them, nor desert the carcass upon their approach.

"And saw the carcass cast in the way, and the lion standing by the carcass": As before described.

"And they came and told it in the city where the old prophet dwelt": Which was Beth-el, by which means he came to have knowledge of it.

1 Kings 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."

It had been the old prophet that had deceived him, by telling him a lie.

"He said, it is the man of God, who was disobedient unto the word of the Lord": But not a syllable does he say of his own sin in deceiving him; though one would think his own conscience must bother him for it.

"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": And that by himself (1 Kings 13:21).

It was obvious that the man was killed by the LORD. He used the lion to carry it out. This should also be a warning to this old prophet. If God would have the man killed for this, what would he

do to those who sacrifice to these golden calves? The prophet should fear for himself as well. He is allowing this to happen.

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

For it seems he had more than one, for he had sent away the man of God with one before: and they saddled him; the ass that he commonly rode on.

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

As before described.

"The lion had not eaten the carcass, nor torn the ass": both which were very marvelous; as also that the ass should stand so quietly, and without fear, by the carcass along with the lion and not run away. But here both stayed till the prophet came to take care of the carcass, which shows the singular providence of God in this affair. And that though he chastised the man of God with a temporal judgment for his offence, yet he was dear to him, and even his carcass precious in his sight.

The old prophet had to see for himself. He rides an ass out to where the body is. Notice, the lion had not eaten the man, nor attacked the ass. This tells you this is no normal lion. The lion is obeying the LORD.

1 Kings 13:29 "And the prophet took up the carcass 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."

The lion perhaps made off as soon as he came, or, if he stayed, the prophet was not afraid of him, seeing he did not attempt to devour the carcass, nor touch the ass, nor do any hurt to those that passed by.

"And laid it upon the ass, and brought it back": To his own city.

"And the old prophet came to the city to mourn, and to bury him": To perform the funeral rites, according to the custom of the place.

A normal lion would never have let him take up the body of this man of God. He would have been guarding him to eat later. The prophet would give him a decent burial.

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

Which he had prepared for himself; for, as he came from Samaria, it could not be the sepulcher of his fathers; and this was showing all the respect, and doing all the honor to him, he well could.

"And they mourned over him": The prophet and his sons: saying.

"Alas, my brother": Which was a usual form of lamentation at funerals in later times (see Jer. 22:18).

In a sense, the old prophet cost the man of God his life. He would bury him, because he had respect for him as a man of God. He truly was sorry that he had caused his death.

1 Kings 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 sepulcher wherein the man of God [is] buried; lay my bones beside his bones:"

He gave them the following charge.

"When I am dead, then bury me in the sepulcher wherein the man of God is buried": As it was his own, it might be reasonably thought they would bury him in it without such a charge; but, lest they should not, he gives it.

"Lay my bones beside his bones": His view in this was, that when Josiah came to burn the bones of the priests, he would spare the bones of this man of God": And so his, lying by them, and mingled with them, would be spared also, and so it proved (2 Kings 23:18).

He felt that this man of God was more honorable than he had been. He was honored to be buried beside him for his bravery in coming against Jeroboam.

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

The mention of the "cities of Samaria" before Samaria had political ramifications in the period of Omri (16:24), is probably an editorial updating by the author of Kings.

It is very obvious that the old prophet knew what Jeroboam was doing was wrong. It is as if he is asking himself, why he had not spoken out against this evil in their land. He greatly admired the man of God.

1 Kings 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."

From the idolatrous practices he had started, and was establishing. Though he had seen his altar rent, and the ashes poured out as the man of God predicted, his own hand withered, and that restored again upon the prayer of the prophet. And though he had heard of the death he died for his disobedience to the command of God, and the several marvelous things that attended it. These were so far from reforming him, that he seemed to be the more hardened thereby.

"But made again of the lowest of the people priests of the high places": And officiated there and indeed those of the tribe of Levi would not serve there, and therefore were expelled from their cities (see 2 Chron. 11:14).

The message the man of God brought was believed for a short while, because of the withered hand. Jeroboam quickly forgot, and went right back to sacrificing to the golden calf abominations. He still made priests of everyone he desired to, disregarding the fact that the priests must be of the Levitical tribe.

1 Kings 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."

All the above things were sins in themselves, as building high places, and putting priests in them, whoever would. But the sense is, that these were the causes of punishment, or of evil things being inflicted on Jeroboam's family; sin is put for the punishment of sin, as it often is.

"Even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth": So that it become utterly extinct; and the next thing we hear of is the sickness and death of his son.

This sin was so great, that God decides to cut the house of Jeroboam off from the earth. He was in total rebellion against God. God took the throne and cut them off forever.

1 Kings Chapter 13 Questions

1. The man of God came from _____.
2. Where did he come to bring his message?
3. What did the man of God say?
4. Where is this Scripture fulfilled?
5. What does the author think it to be speaking of prophetically?
6. What was the sign the LORD would send?
7. What did Jeroboam attempt to do to him?
8. What happened to Jeroboam?
9. This was instant _____ from God upon Jeroboam?
10. What happened to the altar and the ashes?
11. What did Jeroboam ask the man of God to do for him?

12. After God healed Jeroboam, what did he ask the man of God to do?
13. What answer did he give Jeroboam?
14. Why would the man not go with Jeroboam?
15. Who came and told the old prophet about the man of God?
16. What did the prophet ask them of him?
17. How did the old man get to the place, where the man of God was?
18. What did the old prophet ask the man of God to do?
19. How did the man of God answer the prophet?
20. How did he trick the man of God into coming home with him?
21. What happened, as they sat at the table?
22. What punishment will be on the man of God for not obeying the LORD?
23. How did the man of God travel on his way home?
24. What happened to him?
25. What happened to the ass?
26. What unusual thing did the ass and the lion do?
27. When the prophet heard what happened, what did he do?
28. What is unusual about this?
29. Where did the prophet take the man?
30. Why did the prophet want to be buried by the man?
31. Did Jeroboam learn his lesson?
32. The sin of Jeroboam was so bad; God did what to him and his house?