

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

1 KINGS 11-13

Question: *What do Solomon, baseball, and bowling have in common?*

Answer: *Three strikes.*

In baseball, 3 strikes make an out. In bowling 3 consecutive strikes are called a turkey. With Solomon, he disobeyed all 3 commandments God gave to the kings of Israel. *Solomon struck out. He was a turkey. Three times he disobeyed God.*

In Deuteronomy 17:16-17 God commanded the kings of Israel, “He shall not multiply horses for himself... Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself...”

The kings of Israel should avoid accumulating horses, wives, and wealth...

Too many horses cause the king to trust in his cavalry rather than God.

Too many wives turn the king’s affection and loyalty away from God.

Too much money makes the king proud and hardens his heart.

Solomon struck out on all three. He was a turkey. And he disobeyed God.

In 1 Kings 11 we witness the fall of a once smart and skilled ruler. The wisest man in all the earth plays the fool. Verse 1 says the *heresy* began in his *harem*...

“But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as

the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites - from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, "You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love. And he had 700 wives, princesses, and 300 concubines; and his wives turned away his heart."

In the ancient orient peace treaties were ratified when the lesser king gave his daughter in marriage to the greater king. This gave both kings a common interest - and supposedly, the mightier king would be less likely to attack his in-laws.

This is probably how Solomon accumulated such a large harem. But his motive was not just political and diplomatic. Notice again the last line in verse 2, "Solomon clung to these in love." He liked pretty princesses and exotic, forbidden women.

Today, we might call Solomon a sex-addict.

The king had placed no reins on his sexual appetite. *Depth and meaning with one woman* had been replaced with the variety and superficiality of many women.

With 1000 partners Solomon had long stopped carrying for these women as people – they were just objects. Toys he used to satisfy his sexual fantasies.

And in order to keep his harem happy he compromised his loyalty to God.

When these foreign women moved into his court they brought with them their foreign gods and pagan religions. Their idolatry became a spider that weaved a web around

Solomon's heart - trapped his appetites - and injected its poison.

To *appease his wives* Solomon *betrayed his God*. He made ever-increasing concessions to pacify the pagan tastes of his wives. His indulgent lifestyle broke his will to say no. Before long he had introduced full-fledged idolatry into Israel.

A little concession here and there – small accommodations begin to add up. Compromise tends to snowball. Once it starts, it's very difficult to stop.

And this is the one component of pornography most men underestimate.

Guys, start out thinking of pornography as a purely physical experience. But the compromises you make and the weakness you indulge take a spiritual toll.

Compromise erodes your ability to make commitments to God and to a spouse. It's no accident the internet is called the web. Beware the spider is still at work...

Solomon should've listened to his own proverb. In Proverbs 27:20 he writes, "Hell and Destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied."

Verse 4, "For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David." Solomon wakes up one day in a place he never thought possible... He's bowing before hideous, lewd, pagan gods...

"For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians (a Canaanite fertility goddess – worshipped with de-

praved sex acts), and after Milcom (or Molech) the abomination of the Ammonites.” (this was the god who required child sacrifice.)

Solomon, how did you sink so low? This is the question the sex-addict – the man who gets hooked on pornography - eventually asks... One day he wakes up in some disgusting place he never thought he would visit – he wakes up after a lewd act he never thought he’d do... and he can’t believe how low he’s sunk.

Verse 6 provides both the cause and cure for sexual sin, “Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not fully follow the LORD, as did his father David.”

Here’s the reason Solomon slid... he “did not fully follow the LORD”.

Oh, he followed God partially... went to church, read his Bible occasionally, made an offering now and then... but radical obedience was never an option. Solomon loved his sin more than he loved God – so he made exceptions...

He built into his life little concessions that allowed him to feed his urges.

Yet herein lies a cure... to break free from sexual sin you need to “fully follow the LORD.” With your free time, with your eyes, with every waking second – even when it cries out to be fed don’t give yourself any opportunity to indulge your flesh.

Burn the bridges – make no room for retreat – and God will win the victory.

Yet Solomon did just the opposite. He built places of com-

promise throughout the city. “Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon. And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.” Solomon loved his wives more than he loved God.

“So the LORD became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the LORD God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what the LORD had commanded. Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, “Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant.” At this point in history, Solomon was the most powerful ruler on earth. He seems unconquerable. Yet the King of Israel had forgotten that his security lied not in his horses or wealth - but in his loyalty to God.

Now in his rebellion, God promises to tear away his kingdom.

Verse 12 “Nevertheless I will not do it in your days, for the sake of your father David; I will tear it out of the hand of your son. However I will not tear away the whole kingdom; I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of my servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen.”

A Civil War will tear away the kingdom in the days of Rehoboam - Solomon’s son. The Davidic dynasty still retains a tribe to rule – the southern tribe of Judah. The northern 10

tribes will become their own nation, and serve their own king.

Solomon is a pathetic figure. He had so much going for him, but he blew it. It's no accident his spiritual bankruptcy is recorded in 1 Kings... *Chapter 11...*

Solomon's troubles begin when God raises up *new enemies with old grudges*.

Let me summarize verses 14-25... During the days of David, General Joab waged war on Edom. He slaughtered all the men - except for one little boy.

The child named, Hadad, escaped to Egypt, and grew to be a man. He won the Pharaoh's favor and married his sister-in-law. When David died - Hadad returned home, and opposed Solomon. He became a pebble in the king's shoe.

God also raised up an enemy on Solomon's northern border – a man named Rezon. Verse 25 sums him up, **“he abhorred Israel, and reigned over Syria.”**

But the real threat to Solomon's throne comes from a former ally named *“Jeroboam”*. Verse 26 **“Then Solomon's servant, Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite from Zereda, whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow, also rebelled against the king.”** Solomon's personal assistant turned traitor.

What could've caused such a strong and loyal friendship to turn sour?

Verse 27 **“And this is what caused him to rebel against the king: Solomon had built the Millo and repaired the damages to the City of David his father.**

The man Jeroboam was a mighty man of valor; and Solomon, seeing that the young man was industrious, made

him the officer over all the labor force of the house of Joseph.” Solomon saw such promise in Jeroboam. He promoted him.

“Now it happened at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite met him on the way; and he had clothed himself with a new garment, and the two were alone in the field.” And of course, everyone knows how the prophet Ahijah greeted Jeroboam. He said, “A, Hi Ya doing?”

“Then Ahijah took hold of the new garment that was on him, and tore it into twelve pieces.” A common practice for Hebrew prophets was to use visual aids.

“He said to Jeroboam, "Take for yourself 10 pieces, for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: 'Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and will give 10 tribes to you (but he shall have one tribe for the sake of My servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel), because they have forsaken Me, and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the people of Ammon, and have not walked in My ways to do what is right in My eyes and keep My statutes and My judgments, as did his father David.

However I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand, because I have made him ruler all the days of his life for the sake of My servant David, whom I chose because he kept My commandments and My statutes. But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand and give it to you - 10 tribes. And to his son I will give one tribe, that My servant David may always

have a lamp before Me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen for Myself, to put My name there.

So I will take you, and you shall reign over all your heart desires, and you shall be king over Israel.” God will punish Solomon for his idolatry by tearing away ten tribes and giving them to Jeroboam. But just because God uses Jeroboam as His instrument of judgment it doesn’t mean the same rules don’t apply to him...

Verse 38 “Then it shall be, if you heed all that I command you, walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build for you an enduring house, as I built for David, and will give Israel to you. And I will afflict the descendants of David because of this, but not forever.” The implication is the house of Jeroboam will enjoy a fruitful reign if they obey the Lord. If they don’t, they too will be judged.

Apparently word of Jeroboam’s encounter with the prophet made its way back to the king. Thus, verse 40, “Solomon therefore sought to kill Jeroboam.

But Jeroboam arose and fled to Egypt, to Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon.” As he was packing his bags Jeroboam did an Arnold impersonation. He says, “I’ll be back.” He buys a roundtrip ticket to Egypt.

“Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, all that he did, and his wisdom, are they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon?” A book we no longer possess.

“And the period that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years.” It’s interesting all three kings of the

United Monarchy – who ruled over all 12 tribes of Israel – Saul, David, and Solomon – each reined a total of 40 years.

“Then Solomon rested with his fathers, and was buried in the City of David his father.” It’s nice to think Solomon repented of his idolatry and ended up in heaven.

But there’s no evidence of it here – in the history of Israel.

Some folks believe Solomon did repent in his later life - then wrote the book of Ecclesiastes as a testimony of his search for meaning in the midst of vanity.

I’m not sure we’ll really know if Solomon made it to heaven until we get there.

Verse 43 “And Rehoboam his son reigned in his place.” What a sad line.

Rehoboam is suddenly given the *authority to rule*, but as we’ll soon see he lacks the *wisdom to rule*. In his arrogance he causes 500 years of damage.

Chapter 12 “And Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had gone to Shechem to make him king. So it happened, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard it (he was still in Egypt, for he had fled from the presence of King Solomon and had been dwelling in Egypt), that they sent and called him.” Jeroboam arrives just in time for the new king’s inauguration. It’s a *confrontation* at the *coronation*.

By the way, the name “Jeroboam” means “*may the people be great*”.

Perhaps he was a populist leader. His campaign slogan was “give the government back to the people.” Jeroboam champi-

oned democracy.

Verse 3 “Then Jeroboam and the whole assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam, saying, "Your father made our yoke heavy; now therefore, lighten the burdensome service of your father, and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you." So he said to them, "Depart for three days, then come back to me." And the people departed.” Jeroboam was a Republican. He calls for tax cuts.

Solomon had raised taxes to fund his massive building projects. Now Israel is looking for some relief... The new king needs a weekend to mull it over.

Isn't it amazing how life has changed since 960 BC - yet stays the same? The political issues today aren't much different than they were in Rehoboam's day.

It's been said, “A man pays a luxury tax on his billfold - an income tax on the stuff he puts in it - a sales tax on whatever he takes out - and an inheritance tax if there's anything left in it when he dies.” We're taxed on all fronts.

One man commented on the taxes we pay in today's America, “Patrick Henry should come back and see what taxation *with* representation looks like.”

Hey, in Romans 13:6-7 we're commanded as believers in Jesus to pay our taxes. *It's our duty to pay the duty.* But as is true in this passage, whenever the government chooses to *relax the tax* it usually turns out to be a good strategy.

Verse 6 “Then King Rehoboam consulted the elders who stood before his father Solomon while he still lived (these were

the old guys – the advisors with experience - these were the men who'd been around the block a time or two), and he said, "How do you advise me to answer these people?"

They tell him, "If you will be a servant to these people today, and serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever." Obviously, some of Solomon's wisdom had rubbed off on his officials.

This is a great lesson for all leaders – pastors, foremen, office managers, CEOs. If you'll be a servant to people they'll support you with their service.

But that's not the answer Rehoboam wants to hear. Verse 8 "But he rejected the advice which the elders had given him, and consulted the young men who had grown up with him, who stood before him." These are Rehoboam's homies – home boys with whom he's grown up. These are his peers - young men – foolish men.

These guys don't have a lick of wisdom. They're just drunk on power.

He asks them in verse 9 "And he said to them, "What advice do you give? How should we answer this people who have spoken to me, saying, 'Lighten the yoke which your father put on us'?" Here's their response, "Then the young men who had grown up with him spoke to him, saying, "Thus you should speak to this people who have spoken to you, saying, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, but you make it lighter on us' - thus you shall say to them: 'My little finger shall be thicker than my father's waist!' *I'm more of a man than my dad ever was.*

"And now, whereas my father put a heavy yoke on you, I will

add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scourges!" *Hey, you think the ole man was a tough guy - I plan to get even tougher.* The young guys want Rehoboam to flex his muscle – play rough – show no mercy.

This story is chalked full of a couple of important lessons for leaders...

First, more often than not, people are more responsive to *love* than *lashes*. They're more inclined to follow the person who feeds them - than beats them.

Second, be careful whose advice you take. Don't just listen to your peers – people who'll tell you what you want to hear. Listen to the older person who speaks with the voice of experience – who's gleaned some wisdom.

Sadly, Rehoboam learns neither of these lessons.

Verse 12 **"So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had directed, saying, "Come back to me the third day."**

Then the king answered the people roughly, and rejected the advice which the elders had given him; and he spoke to them according to the advice of the young men, saying, "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scourges!"

At least he leaves out the really arrogant line, **"My little finger shall be thicker than my father's waist!"** He doesn't claim to be more of a man than Solomon.

Verse 15 **"So the king did not listen to the people; for the turn**

of events was from the LORD, that He might fulfill His word, which the LORD had spoken by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.” As always God was behind the scenes working His will. Civil War was His judgment on Solomon’s idolatry.

The rebel yell is heard in verse 16, “Now when all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, saying: “What share have we in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel!

Now, see to your own house, O David!” So Israel departed to their tents.”

In the American Civil War the southerners were the rebels - but it was the opposite in the Hebrew Civil War. The northerners were the rebels, and the southern-most tribe of Judah stayed faithful to David and his descendants.

David was from Bethlehem in Judah. His descendants ruled over Judah.

The southern kingdom was named after the tribe of “*Judah*”. Her citizens were called “*Jews*”. The northern ten tribes broke away from the kings of David, and formed a new nation they named after the father of all 12 tribes, “*Israel*”.

“But Rehoboam reigned over the children of Israel who dwelt in the cities of Judah.” There were members of the ten tribes living in the cities of Judah.

Rehoboam makes boneheaded mistake in verse 18. “Then King Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was in charge of the revenue; but all Israel stoned him with stones, and he died.” He sends out the head of the IRS to talk some sense into the

rebels. Apparently, he doesn't understand the extent of the rebellion. They filled out their version of the short form – and send back Adoram's dead body.

“Therefore King Rehoboam mounted his chariot in haste to flee to Jerusalem.” He was afraid for his life. We're told in verse 19, “So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.” This incident created a permanent rift.

For the next two centuries the Hebrews will exist as two different nations.

Verse 20 “Now it came to pass when all Israel heard that Jeroboam had come back, they sent for him and called him to the congregation, and made him king over all Israel. There was none who followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only. And when Rehoboam came to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah with the tribe of Benjamin, 180,000 chosen men who were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, that he might restore the kingdom to Rehoboam the son of Solomon.” When Rehoboam returns home he readies his army.

And this is where it gets a little confusing... Rehoboam's 180,000 troops are made up from two tribes, Judah and Benjamin – whereas, verse 20 tells us only one tribe remained loyal to the house of David, and that was the tribe of Judah.

What's the deal with the tiny tribe of Benjamin?

Originally, the borders of Benjamin were just north of Judah. Yet over the years the Benjamites spent so much time worshipping, visiting, and trading in Jerusalem they lost much of their tribal identity. They became assimilated into the tribe of Judah. Sometimes they're distinguished – but most of the time

they were not.

Verse 22 “But the word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying, "Speak to Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, to all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the rest of the people, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: "You shall not go up nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel. Let every man return to his house, for this thing is from Me." Therefore they obeyed the word of the LORD, and turned back, according to the word of the LORD.” War is averted by a word from God. Shemaiah speaks up and says this break-up is God’s will.

God is sovereign over life - even over negative circumstances. In verse 24 the Lord makes it very clear to Rehoboam, “this thing is from Me.” All that occurred was done to fulfill the punishment God pronounced on Solomon’s idolatry.

And here’s a lesson for you and me. If a thing is from God, don’t fight it. When Rehoboam heard the division in the kingdom was God’s will he turned back.

Hey, we all experience painful break-ups in life. Romantic break-ups - business break-ups – ministry break-ups (*remember Paul and Barnabas*) – even friendship break-ups. These break-ups hurt - we ache and bleed and want to hold on. We’re tempted to fight to keep it together – but when it’s of God, it’s best to let it go...

Fight against the will of God, and you end up on the losing end of the battle.

Verse 25 “Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the mountains of

Ephraim, and dwelt there.” Shechem was the geographic center of the northern tribes – it also had a rich history. In Genesis 12 Abraham worshipped God in Shechem. In Genesis 33 Jacob built an altar there. Joseph was buried in Shechem.

It was a perfect location for Jeroboam to establish his capital. **“Also he went out from there and built Penuel.”**

Verse 26 **“And Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom may return to the house of David: If these people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn back to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and go back to Rehoboam king of Judah.”**

Remember, the only place a Hebrew could offer a sanctioned sacrifice was on the altar in the Temple in Jerusalem. Judaism was a highly centralized religion.

The Law required all Hebrews to come to the Temple three times annually. But Jerusalem was not just home to the Temple - it was also Rehoboam’s capital.

Jeroboam rightly reasoned that under Judaism his subjects - the ten northern tribes - would be visiting Jerusalem every year - three times a year... He worried about the political implications. Would the frequency of their pilgrimages provide an opportunity for his people to reattach themselves to the king of Judah?

To keep from losing influence over his people, Jeroboam concocts a plan.

Verse 28 **“Therefore the king asked advice, made two calves of gold, and said to the people, "It is too much for you to go up**

to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!" And he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan." Jeroboam develops an alternative religion.

You would think - that of all people - Jeroboam would guard against repeating the sin of Solomon... but he doesn't. He too succumbs to idolatry. He sets up idols in Bethel, the southern end of his kingdom – and Dan, the northern end.

On our trips to Israel, we visit the very spot where Jeroboam set up his calf.

I'm sure in Jeroboam's mind his plan had nothing to do with idolatry – *though that's where it led*. He wanted to worship God, but in a manner God had outlawed.

Jeroboam did what Aaron did in the wilderness. Exodus 32:4 tells us when Aaron fashioned a golden calf, he “made a proclamation... Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD.” Notice the word LORD is capitalized which means in the Hebrew it's the word “Yahweh” – the sacred name for the one, true, God of the Hebrews.

Aaron's calf - and Jeroboam's two calves - weren't representations of a false god, but the true God. Revelation 4 sheds light on what they probably had in mind. There we discover the cherubim around God's throne have the face of a calf.

Jeroboam's golden bovines were not a violation of the first commandment, “You shall have no other gods before Me.”, but the second commandment, “You shall not make for yourself a carved image - any likeness of anything that is in heaven above... you shall not bow down to them to serve them.” God

forbids the employment of any physical likenesses or representations of Himself in worship.

There's nothing wrong with a crucifix – it's a depiction of Jesus - until it's used in prayer and worship. There's a fine line between using a tangible object to focus my attention on God - and allowing my attention to focus on that tangible object. God knows this, and that's why he forbids the use of a graven image in worship.

Jeroboam did not intend to introduce idolatry in Israel, but that was the net effect of his actions. His golden calves conditioned the people to embrace the blatant idolatry that was introduced by King Ahab about 60 years later.

Verse 30 tells us “Now this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one as far as Dan. He made shrines on the high places, and made priests from every class of people, who were not of the sons of Levi.

Jeroboam ordained a feast on the 15th day of the 8th month, like the feast that was in Judah, and offered sacrifices on the altar. So he did at Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made. And at Bethel he installed the priests of the high places which he had made.” In essence, King Jeroboam establishes his own illegitimate religion – complete with his own altars, his own priesthood, even his own feast days. It was a *cult of convenience*. It served his own interests.

“So he made offerings on the altar which he had made at Bethel on the 15th day of the 8th month, in the month which he had devised in his own heart. And he ordained a feast for the children of Israel, and offered sacrifices on the altar and

burned incense.” Seldom does Satan tempt us with *no religion*. He knows we’re worshippers at heart. Every person has an innate desire to worship God.

The temptation though is to set up a religion that *suits my own tastes*, rather than *stays true to God*. The enemy waters down the truth to make it palatable.

Supposedly, Jeroboam worshipped God, but not in the way God wanted to be worshipped. He worshipped God in a way that was convenient for Jeroboam.

Sadly, Christians today are repeating his mistake. Plenty of preachers have diluted the doctrines of Christianity – watered down the demands of discipleship. Let’s stay faithful to Jesus, even when we have to go out of our way to do so.

In chapter 13 the Lord let’s Jeroboam know what He thinks of his religion. An unnamed prophet - he’s simply called **“a man of God”** pays Jeroboam a visit.

And hey, that’s what I want to be... *“a man of God”*. It doesn’t matter if my name ever gets mentioned, just as long as I’m identified as *“a man of God”*.

Verse 1 **“And behold, a man of God went from Judah to Bethel by the word of the LORD, and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense.”**

This *man of God* had some nerve. He approaches the king at the altar in the middle of a worship service. He could’ve been arrested and executed. This is like barging into the Oval Office – or into the Rose Garden – in the middle of an official state function, and pronouncing judgment on the President of the United States.

“Then he cried out against the altar by the word of the LORD, and said, "O altar, altar! Thus says the LORD: 'Behold, a child, Josiah by name, shall be born to the house of David; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and men's bones shall be burned on you.'" This would be the ultimate desecration – the carcasses of their priests burned on the altar.

Verse 2 is an amazing prediction. A future Judean king, a descendant of David, named “*Josiah*” - who won't be born for another 300 years - will bring judgment on the religion of Jeroboam. He'll defile the altar, and slaughter the priests Jeroboam had appointed. 2 Kings 23:15, documents this prophecy's incredible fulfillment.

But what guts it took for the man of God to walk onto the king's own turf, and utter these words of judgment. This was a *man of God with nerves of steel*.

And along with the prophecy comes a sign. “And he gave a sign the same day, saying, "This is the sign which the LORD has spoken: Surely the altar shall split apart, and the ashes on it shall be poured out." Expect an immediate sign...

“So it came to pass when King Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, who cried out against the altar in Bethel, that he stretched out his hand from the altar, saying, "Arrest him!" The king calls for the Secret Service to pounce, but...

“Then his hand, which he stretched out toward him, withered, so that he could not pull it back to himself.” God strikes him with an instant, crippling arthritis.

“The altar also was split apart, 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.”

Needless to say, all this gets the king’s attention. Jeroboam goes from ordering his arrest to pleading for his prayers. Verse 6 “Then the king answered and said to the man of God, “Please entreat the favor of the LORD your God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored to me.” So the man of God entreated the LORD, and the king’s hand was restored to him, and became as before.”

“Then the king said to the man of God, “Come home with me and refresh yourself, and I will give you a reward.” A few minutes earlier the king wanted to kill him – now he offers him a reward. The king is trying to appease the man of God.

“But the man of God said to the king, “If you were to give me half your house, I would not go in with you; nor would I eat bread nor drink water in this place.” The king invites him to dinner at the White House and a night in the Lincoln bedroom. He’s trying to prove he’s not a bad guy. He wants to win over the man of God.

But the guy stands his ground. God’s act of mercy toward Jeroboam didn’t change his verdict on the king’s sin. The king won’t have to swap his hand for a hook - but neither was he off the hook. He needs to repent and end his sin.

The man of God says in verse 9 “For so it was commanded me by the word of the LORD, saying, ‘You shall not eat bread, nor drink water, nor return by the same way you came.’ So he went another way and did not return by the way he came to

Bethel.” But an interesting situation occurs on the guys’ way home...

“Now an old prophet dwelt in Bethel, and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Bethel; they also told their father the words which he had spoken to the king. And their father said to them, "Which way did he go?" For his sons had seen which way the man of God went who came from Judah. Then he said to his sons, "Saddle the donkey for me."

So they saddled the donkey for him; and he rode on it, and went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak. Then he said to him, "Are you the man of God who came from Judah?" And he said, "I am." Then he said to him, "Come home with me and eat bread." And he said, "I cannot return with you nor go in with you; neither can I eat bread nor drink water with you in this place. For I have been told by the word of the LORD, 'You shall not eat bread nor drink water there, nor return by going the way you came.'" This is why he rejected the king’s invitation.

God forbid him from eating in Bethel - lest the man of God give the people the impression God was pleased with what’s going on in the land of Jeroboam.

But the older guy “said to him, "I too am a prophet as you are, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the LORD, saying, 'Bring him back with you to your house, that he may eat bread and drink water.'" But notice this, (He was lying to him.) The old prophet cons the young man with the ole “*God told me so routine.*”

Over the years I’ve had folks try to tell me... what God told

them I should do.

I've always taken the approach if God spoke to them, He can just as easily speak to me. Nobody wants God's will for my life more than I do. I make it a point to listen. Hey, I've learned just because a comment gets prefaced "*God told me*" or "*an angel told me*" doesn't mean it's necessarily so... God still makes direct calls.

This is what the man of God learns...

This older man is a strong personality. He claims to be a prophet. The man of God gets intimidated – he trusts in what the prophet says rather than in what God has already said to him. He forgets that God will never contradict Himself.

There are times when God uses other people to speak to us - through a sermon or a prophecy... But God always confirms His Word personally.

And any message that comes from God to you will always be in harmony with what God has already said - in His Word. The still, small voice of the Holy Spirit – or the word of the prophet – will never, ever contradict God's written Word.

Paul's words in Galatians 1:8 would've saved this man of God. He writes, "**even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.**" Even if an angel appears, and contradicts the Scripture, know that despite what he says, he's not an angel from God.

1 John 4:1 is applicable here, "**Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God...**" This is what the man of God should've done.

Verse 19 tells us, “So he went back with him, and ate bread in his house, and drank water. Now it happened, as they sat at the table, that the word of the LORD came to the prophet who had brought him back; and he cried out to the man of God who came from Judah, saying, "Thus says the LORD: 'Because you have disobeyed the word of the LORD, and have not kept the commandment which the LORD your God commanded you, but you came back, ate bread, and drank water in the place of which the LORD said to you, "Eat no bread and drink no water," your corpse shall not come to the tomb of your fathers.'" What a strange after dinner conversation with your host. The older guy’s lie had been God’s test...

“So it was, after he had eaten bread and after he had drunk, that he saddled the donkey for him, the prophet whom he had brought back.” The older guy saddles the man of God’s donkey for what he knows will be his last ride.

“When he was gone, a lion met him on the road and killed him. And his corpse was thrown on the road, and the donkey stood by it. The lion also stood by the corpse. And there, men passed by and saw the corpse thrown on the road, and the lion standing by the corpse. Then they went and told it in the city where the old prophet dwelt.” This is tragic. The man of God believed *a lying prophet* and got eaten by *a lion*. Guys, make sure you measure every so-called word from God against what the Bible says. The Bible will protect you from danger... *no lying!*

Verse 26 “Now when the prophet who had brought him back

from the way heard it, he said, "It is the man of God who was disobedient to the word of the LORD. Therefore the LORD has delivered him to the lion, which has torn him and killed him, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke to him."

And he spoke to his sons, saying, "Saddle the donkey for me." So they saddled it. Then he went and found his corpse thrown on the road, and the donkey and the lion standing by the corpse. The lion had not eaten the corpse nor torn the donkey." It's as if the lion had been following instructions from God.

"And the prophet took up the corpse of the man of God, laid it on the donkey, and brought it back. So the old prophet came to the city to mourn, and to bury him.

Then he laid the corpse in his own tomb; and they mourned over him, saying, "Alas, my brother!" So it was, after he had buried him, that he spoke to his sons, saying, "When I am dead, then bury me in the tomb where the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones. For the saying which he cried out by the word of the LORD against the altar in Bethel, and against all the shrines on the high places which are in the cities of Samaria, will surely come to pass..."

What a strange story... The man of God is nobler than the lying prophet. But rather than punish the liar, God punishes the young man who falls for his lie.

Yet as strange as it seems, this same scenario gets repeated every day.

Mormon elders preach a false Gospel. They put words in the mouth of God – and tell lies in the name of God - yet tragically,

those who are deceived die and go to hell, while the same false prophets continue to foster their deceptive doctrines.

God has given us His Word. There's no excuse not to know the truth. This is why God holds the person who believes a lie as responsible as the liar himself.

Verse 33 tells us, “After this event Jeroboam did not turn from his evil way, but again he made priests from every class of people for the high places; whoever wished, he consecrated him...” God appointed the tribe of Levi to be priests. Jeroboam didn't care what tribe you were from – he made anybody a priest.

In fact, “he became one of the priests of the high places.” Jeroboam was so wedded to this religion of his own imagination he became a priest himself. He propagated his false religion so effectively Israel never overcame its grip.

Every northern king who followed fostered this sin. Over and over we read, “(he) walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin by which he made Israel sin.”

Verse 34 concludes “This thing was the sin of the house of Jeroboam, so as to exterminate and destroy it from the face of the earth.” God will judge Jeroboam.