

**1 Kings 13**  
**January 12, 2025**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

Q: Let me offer a hypothetical, and maybe you've even experienced this: Suppose someone approached you and said, "I have a word from the Lord I need to share with you." How would you handle that? More importantly, how would you discern if you're really hearing a word from the Lord from this individual? [Let people engage]

**Transition:** I think it's healthy to feel some tension with this! On one hand, we probably need to be open to how the Lord is moving in our lives, and sometimes He shows us that through other people in our circles of influence. On the other hand, I would be cautious and even guarded because if I don't have a sense of this person's spiritual walk with the Lord, I don't want to readily accept it without praying through it. There's a verse in 1 John 4:1 where we are warned, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." We are called to test the spirits. Not all of them are from the Lord!

In today's storyline, we have a man of God who is legitimately from God. He shares a word from the Lord to King Jeroboam. We also have an old prophet in this story, who appears to be a true prophet, but uses deception by claiming he had "heard a word from the Lord through an angel." That was NOT true, and the man of God was duped into disobeying God's instruction to not eat or drink with anyone in the Northern kingdom. Buckle up! It's time to read the passage.

**BOOK:**

***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. <sup>2</sup> He cried out against the altar by the word of the LORD: "O 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 now make offerings here, and human bones will be burned on you.'" <sup>3</sup> 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."

<sup>4</sup> 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 shriveled up, so that he could not pull it back. <sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> The king said to the man of God, "Come home with me and have something to eat, and I will give you a gift."

<sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> 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.’ ” <sup>10</sup> So he took another road and did not return by the way he had come to Bethel.

<sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> 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 fathers.’ ”

<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 thrown down on the road, with both the donkey and the lion standing beside it. <sup>25</sup> Some people who passed by saw the body thrown down 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 thrown down 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, “Oh, 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.

**Process Observations/Questions:**

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

**LOOK:**

In 1 John 4:1 we are warned, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." The prophet from Judah should have known of the possibility of false prophets and should not have been so gullible. In our day there are those who would mislead us into going contrary to the will of God. We must obey God rather than men.

**Close in Prayer**

### **Commentaries for Today's Lesson:**

**Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (1 Kings 12:16-13:34)*. Victor Books.**

#### *B. Jeroboam's rebellion (12:16–13:34).*

God had already chosen Jeroboam to be the king of the ten tribes (11:26–40) because of Solomon's sins (11:9–13). Sin is a great divider and destroyer. Only Judah and Benjamin were left to Rehoboam, and God did this for David's sake. Alas, Jeroboam failed to live up to his opportunities, for he led the ten tribes into idolatry. He was afraid that the people of his kingdom would go up to Jerusalem for the annual feasts, and there revolt against him, so he made it "convenient" for them to worship in their own territory. He repeated Aaron's sin (Ex. 32:1–6) and made calves of gold, putting one in Dan and the other in Bethel. He also consecrated places of worship and organized his own priesthood. It was a man-made religion, designed for the convenience of the people; therefore, it had nothing of the power of God or the blessing of God. Of course, God could not permit such apostasy to continue, so He sent a message of warning and judgment to the king (chap. 13). Note that the king was burning incense at the altar, acting like a priest. The mysterious man of God announced the birth of the future king Josiah (13:2, see 2 Kings 23:15–18), and also warned that the king's man-made religion would be judged and destroyed. When Jeroboam tried to arrest the prophet, the king's extended hand was dried up and the altar broke open, just as the prophet had predicted. The king begged to be healed, and the man prayed for him. The king then tried to trap the prophet by inviting him to the palace, but the man of God refused to fall for the trick. It is unfortunate that the man of God listened to the lies of a fellow prophet and lost his life. If there is one lesson to be learned from 13:11–34, it is this: don't let other people determine the will of God for your life. Obey what God's Word says to you, regardless of the cost.

**Constable, C.L. (1985). *1 Kings*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 513-516) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books**

#### 2. THE MAN OF GOD FROM JUDAH (13:1–32)

Jeroboam's idolatrous system of worship (12:28–33) was soon condemned by a prophet of the Lord. This man's experiences point out the evil of what Jeroboam did and how deceptive it was. Then the prophet himself fell into a trap.

##### *a. His prophecy (13:1–10)*

13:1–3. The mission of this anonymous **man of God** had its origin in **the word of the LORD** (vv. 1–2, 9); this was a prophecy of judgment fully authorized by God. The prophet was sent **from** the Southern Kingdom of **Judah to Bethel**; he lived under the authority of God's Davidic ruler rather than under the influence of the apostate Jeroboam. He uttered his prophecy publicly at the altar **as Jeroboam was standing** near it **offering** a sacrifice.

This man's prophecy is one of the most remarkable in Scripture because it predicted the name and actions of a king who would not appear on the scene for 290 years. **Josiah**, who reigned from 640 to 609 B.C., fulfilled this prophecy just as the man of God predicted (2 Kings 23:15–20). Josiah demolished the Bethel **altar** built by Jeroboam and slaughtered the false **priests** there. A **sign** was often given in prophecies of this kind when the fulfillment would take place many years later. The man of God predicted that **the sign**, a miracle to verify the prophecy, would be performed then. The sign, he said, was that **the altar** would **split apart** that very **day** (cf. 1 Kings 13:5).

13:4–6. Jeroboam's reaction to the prophecy was to order the arrest of the prophet. When the king's outstretched **hand**, symbolizing his authority, withered, this illustrated that God's authority was greater than Jeroboam's. **God** could paralyze Jeroboam's might and render it completely useless. The sign (**the altar** splitting **apart**; cf. v. 3) also left no doubt in the minds of those present that the prophecy came from the **God** who controlled Jeroboam and who would judge his wickedness.

**The king** acknowledged God's power and asked **the man of God** to ask **God** to restore his **hand**, which God graciously did. Jeroboam referred to Yahweh as **your God**, not "my God," thereby testifying to his own idolatry.

13:7–10. Receiving an immediate cure for his hand's paralysis (cf. v. 6), **the king** extended a great favor and privilege to the prophet. He offered the shelter of his royal palace, a meal, and a **gift**. In the ancient Near East hospitality was a sacred custom. **To eat** a meal with an invited guest under one's roof was to give him a promise of continuing personal protection. **But the man of God** wanted no treaty with wicked Jeroboam. He had been instructed by God not to accept even a meal, which would have placed him in Jeroboam's debt.

Returning home by a different route would have further illustrated the official nature of the prophet's visit; this was not a pleasure trip, but he was in **Bethel** on business for God. The prophet had obeyed God faithfully up to this point.

#### *b. His seduction (13:11–19)*

This somewhat confusing story may appear at first to contribute nothing to the advancement of the narrative or the writer's purpose. But careful study clarifies its value.

13:11–14. A second **prophet** was **living in Bethel** and was **old**. These are important clues. Old age sometimes tends to make one lazy and complacent. This man's complacency is further suggested by his willingness not only to live in the territory of the apostate king but at the very center of the king's false system of worship.

Why the old prophet **rode after** the prophet **from Judah** is not stated. Perhaps he simply wanted to visit with a younger, more faithful servant of the Lord. Or his motive from the beginning could have been jealousy and his intent could have been to destroy the younger prophet's ministry.

13:15–19. In response to the faithful prophet's refusal, **the old** man claimed direct revelation from God through **an angel** who had told him, he said, that the young man should forget his former instructions from **the LORD**. So the prophet of Judah, not suspecting that the old prophet **was lying to him ... returned** to Bethel and ate **with him**. The apostasy of Jeroboam had infected even a prophet who seems to have had the same selfish motives and practiced the same brazen disobedience as the king. The spirit of apostasy was spreading quickly and was already reaping a grim harvest in Israel.

c. *His death and burial (13:20–32)*

13:20–22. Even though **the old prophet** had sinned, **the word of the LORD came to him** again, as it did to many other prophets of the Lord who sinned (e.g., Jonah, Elijah). The old man announced the fate of his brother prophet then and there. The younger prophet, because he had disobeyed the Lord's **command**, would not be given an honorable burial. The severity of God's judgment on this man, compared with His dealings with the older prophet who was also disobedient, seems unfair. But the severity of God's judgment was proportionate to the importance of the younger man's mission. All Israel would have heard about his prophecy of God's judgment on Jeroboam for his disobedience to the word of the Lord through Moses. If God had not judged His own prophet for *his* disobedience to the word given him by God and which he had announced publicly, doubt would have been cast on his prophecy and on God's credibility. By comparison the older prophet's sins were private and were judged privately by God.

13:23–32. Lions **on the road** were not common in Israel, but neither were they unknown. Wild animals roamed the land (cf. Jud. 14:5) and occasionally **killed** people. That this beast was divinely sent to judge the younger prophet is clear in that after the **lion** killed the man he stood **beside the body** and **neither** ate the corpse nor **mauled the donkey** (1 Kings 13:28). The death of the prophet became public knowledge (v. 25). Out of reverence for **the man of God the old prophet ... picked up his body**, mourned **for him**, and buried **him** (v. 29) **in his own tomb** (v. 30). The old prophet undoubtedly suffered the pains of a guilty conscience for having had a part in the man of God's death. He was convinced the prophecy about Josiah would come to pass (v. 32; cf. v. 2).

This story clarifies the importance of consistent and complete obedience to the Word of God, the lesson God was seeking to impress on Jeroboam and His people at that time. It also illustrates that added privilege brings increased responsibility; God dealt with the prophet who had the greater responsibility more severely than he did with the man who had less. The effects of spiritual apostasy even on God's servants can be seen too, especially in the behavior of the older prophet.

3. JEROBOAM'S PERSISTENT APOSTASY (13:33–34)

13:33–34. That the preceding incident was intended to teach Jeroboam and the Israelites the danger of disregarding the word of the Lord seems clear from this brief passage. The king's sins had been recounted (12:25–33), then he was warned (13:1–32), but still **Jeroboam did not change his evil ways**. Though the appointing of just **anyone** to the priestly office is singled out (v. 33; cf. 12:31) and was perhaps the most serious aspect of his apostasy, it was his total disregard for the will of God as expressed in the Law of Moses that resulted in Jeroboam's **downfall** and **destruction**. **This was the sin** (i.e., apostasy) from which many others grew. Though God used political situations and social conditions to bring about His ends, this sin by **Jeroboam** was the root cause of Israel's fall.

***Mathews, K. A. (1998). The Historical Books. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), Holman Concise Bible Commentary (pp. 139-141). Broadman & Holman Publishers.***

**Man of God (13:1–34).** An unnamed prophet of the Lord delivered a message of judgment against Jeroboam’s royal shrine at Bethel. He predicted that Josiah would destroy the Bethel worship site. This occurred in 621 B.C. when King Josiah of Judah initiated extensive religious reforms (2 Kgs. 23:15–17). When Jeroboam saw that he could not harm the prophet, he enticed him to stay. But the Lord had forbidden the prophet to eat or drink in the Northern Kingdom.

As the man of God left Bethel, an old prophet hoping to fellowship with him met the prophet and, using deceit, persuaded him to stay. The man of God foolishly agreed to dine with him. After the man of God left his host, a lion on the road killed him. When the old prophet discovered the body, he exclaimed, “It is the man of God who defied the word of the LORD.” Ironically, the death of the man of God proved that his predictions about Bethel would “certainly come true.” Jeroboam’s sinful altar was the reason for his downfall and ultimately the demise of Israel (see 14:16; 15:29; 2 Kgs. 17).

**Tatum, S. L. (1972). 1 Kings. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), The Teacher’s Bible Commentary (pp. 200-201). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.**

### **The Testing of the Prophet of God (1 Kings 13:1–34)**

*The passage*—An unnamed prophet of God came to Bethel from Judah. He saw Jeroboam in his heathen worship and cried out against the idolatry. When Jeroboam reached out to say, “Lay hold of him,” his hand miraculously withered away. He asked the man of God to pray for him. He was healed. When he invited the prophet to go home with him he declined, because God had warned him not to do so. He was told to deliver his message and return home immediately.

An old prophet who lived at Bethel went to find the prophet from Judah. He insisted that God had told him to bring him back to Israel. He was lying, but the man of God made the mistake of believing him. He returned with him. While they were eating, the old prophet of Bethel received word from God that the younger would die for his disobedience. As he was returning home, a lion killed him. The older prophet realized that he had indeed been a man of God and brought his body back for decent burial. Read 2 Kings 23:15–20 for a reference to this story.

*Special points*—Why would God place so severe a test on one of his servants? God had made clear his word. There was no question about the directions. The young prophet should have listened to his own conscience. His mistake was not an innocent one. He knew better.

*Truth for today*—In 1 John 4:1 we are warned, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” The prophet from Judah should have known of the possibility of false prophets and should not have been so gullible. In our day there are those who would mislead us into going contrary to the will of God. We must obey God rather than men.

**The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (1 Kings 13). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.**