

# When God Speaks - 1 Kings 13-1-34

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Date: 25 November 2018

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[ 0 : 00 ] 1 Kings chapter 13, which is page 352 in the Church Bible. Reading from verses 1 to 10.

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. By the word of the Lord, he cried out against the altar.

Altar, altar! This is what the Lord says. A son named Josiah will be born to the house of David. On you he will sacrifice the priests of the high places who make offerings here, and human bones will be burned on you.

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.

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 towards the man shriveled up, so that he could not pull it back.

[ 1 : 14 ] 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. 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. The king said to the man of God, Come home with me for a meal, and I will give you a gift.

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. 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.

So he took another road, and did not return by the way he had come to Bethel. And if you look down further in verses 33 and 34, 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. This was the sin of the house of Jeroboam that led to its downfall and to its destruction from the face of the earth.

[ 2 : 36 ] So, 1 Kings 13, we're actually going to look at the whole chapter.

I don't know if anybody's read it, but it's a fascinating account, and I'm sure raises all kinds of questions which we hope we will work our way through.

So let's pray as we look at his word. Father, would you give us humble hearts and listening ears so that we might not only hear your word, but accept it and apply it to our lives, trusting that your word is powerful, powerful to change, powerful to do work that nothing and no one else can do.

So, Father, please, through your word, would you make us more like Christ. We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Growing up with two older siblings was mostly a good experience.

[ 4 : 16 ] But from time to time, like I'm sure if you have siblings, we would fight. Sometimes it was two on one, and occasionally all against each other.

I remember one Sunday afternoon, we'd all been told to go into the kitchen after Sunday lunch to wash up. Now that seems quite straightforward, one to wash, one to dry, one to put away.

But somehow, between the three of us, we couldn't come to a consensus. So warfare erupted. And the squabbling hadn't gone on very long when we heard this booming voice, if I hear any more, there's going to be trouble.

Well, we didn't listen. Or at least we reasoned that those warning words were not that serious. Well, they were serious.

And what was threatened came to pass. With three warmed bums, we quickly got on with the wash up. We quickly came to realise that there was only one ruling word.

[ 5 : 21 ] And that's the message of chapter 13. There is only one ruling word. Have a look with me at verse 32, which in some ways is a great summary of this whole chapter.

Verse 32. For the message, he, that's the prophet, declared by the word of the Lord against the altar in Bethel and against all the shrines and the high places in the towns of Samaria, will certainly come true.

When God speaks, his words always come to pass. They come true. And to make sure we don't miss this, the author keeps repeating throughout the whole chapter by the word of the Lord. Everything happens by the word of the Lord. God rules by his word and what he says always comes to pass.

Of course, God continues to speak and he continues to rule through his written word. So what we find in chapter 13 is not just history, but it is God's word for us today.

[ 6 : 41 ] So what is God speaking to us about from chapter 13? Well, first, we want to see the power of God's word.

The power of God's word. A little context will help as we jump into chapter 13. The kingdom that was under David and then passed to Solomon, his son, has now been divided.

And Jeroboam is ruling in the northern part of the kingdom over the majority of the tribes. But the division of the kingdom has led to great disobedience.

Have a look back at chapter 12, verse 28. After seeking advice, the king, that's King Jeroboam, made two golden calves.

He said to the people, it is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.

[ 7 : 49 ] It's almost identical to what Aaron said to the people when Moses went up to the mountain and when they were delivered from Egypt. Verse 29.

One he set up in Bethel in the south and the other god he set up in Dan in the north. And this thing became a sin. The people came to worship the one at Bethel and went afar as Dan to worship the other.

So Jeroboam has removed the one true God and has replaced him with his own gods. Essentially, he's breaking the first commandments.

You shall have no other god before me. You shall not bow down to them or worship them. So what does God have to say about this? Well, here's where we jump into chapter 13 and verse 1.

By the word of the Lord, a man of God, a prophet, came from Judah to Bethel as Jeroboam was standing by the altar to make an offering.

[ 8 : 55 ] Now, we don't know what the prophet's name is. But that's not important. It's what he has to say. That's what should concern us.

We need to see the power of God's word. First, God's word determines the future. It determines the future.

Look at verse 2. By the word of the Lord, he cried out against the altar. So here's the prophet speaking against the altar. Altar, altar.

This is what the Lord says. A son named Josiah, we're going to come back to him in a minute, will be born to the house of David. On you, he will sacrifice the priests of the high places who make offerings here and human bones will be burned on you.

Quite straightforward. God says he's going to raise up a king who's called Josiah, who's going to bring about a reformation of the whole people. He's going to punish the priests and he's going to break down the false altars.

[ 10 : 03 ] Don't believe that God will do it? Well, have a look at 2 Kings 23 sometime. Because there, not surprisingly, we meet a king named Josiah who does what God said would happen.

But Jeroboam and the prophet, well, obviously, they don't have 2 Kings 23 to turn to. For them, what the prophet has said is still a word about the future.

It is yet to happen. So how are we and how are they ever going to trust that God's word determines the future? Well, second, God acts in the present.

Verse 3. That same day, the man of God gave a sign. This is the sign the Lord has declared. The altar will be split apart and the ashes on it will be poured out.

So that you may know that God determines the future. That his word controls what is going to happen. Let me show you the power of God's word now.

[11:13] Verse 4. So when King Jeroboam heard that 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 towards the man shriveled up so that he couldn't pull it back. It's like a kind of paralysis or a weakness has come over the king.

Jeroboam's power has been removed. All he can do is watch the power of God's word take action. And so, verse 5, the altar was split apart and the ashes poured out according to the sign given by the man of God by the word of the Lord.

He says, if he's saying, do you believe me now, Jeroboam? My word determines the future and it acts in the present so therefore listen to my word and deal with your sinful hearts.

Now, let's not do ourselves out of a favour and resign this account chapter 13 to some event that took past in the history. Because God's word continues to speak to us today and confronts our sin.

[12:39] You see, we do what Jeroboam has done all the time. We break the creator's commands. You shall have no other god before me. You shall not bow down to them and worship them.

Now, okay, we mightn't go out and be building shrines and sacrificing at altars or have golden calves in our garden, but we do turn to our work and to our children and to our hobbies and we make them little gods.

They become our god substitutes. We worship them. We give our life to them in the hope that somehow they're going to give us joy and happiness. We remove God from the centre of our lives and we replace him with our own made-up gods which have no power to change us or forgive us. God's word has something to say about that. You might remember the account in Acts where the apostle Paul is wandering around the city of Athens and as he wandered around he saw all these idols, objects of worship, God substitutes, dotted all around the city.

Well, listen to God's word through Paul. He, that is God, commands all people everywhere to repent for he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man, that is Christ, he has appointed.

[14:13] So it's a word about the future. It's a judgment that he says is going to come. Well, how are we to believe that? Are we meant to trust this word?

How do we know or how can we trust that God determines the future and that a judgment is to come? Well, listen to the rest of what Paul said.

For he, that is God, has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead. Do you see the connections there?

God has acted in the present by raising his son, Jesus Christ from the dead by his powerful word to prove that we can trust his word about a future judgment to come.

So first, we need to see the power of God's word and that when he speaks, it always comes true.

[15:18] Second, we need to hear the clarity of God's word. The focus now takes a dramatic shift away from King Jeroboam to the prophet himself because he too needs to hear God's word.

First, the command. Look at verse 11. Now, there was a certain old prophet, so we've got to keep right here, so this is an old prophet prophet, and there's the prophet who spoke earlier.

So 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.

Now, this has intrigued the old prophet. He's heard about these events where the altar has crashed apart and split open and everything that had gone on there, and he wants to have a meeting with this particular prophet.

So, verse 15, the prophet said to him, that's the old prophet says to the younger prophet, come home with me and eat. 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.

[16:37] 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. Now, we might begin to question the commands of God.

We might not understand why the young prophet must turn down such a generous invitation and such great hospitality. It might be that the old prophet wants to use him for his good.

We don't know. We're not told what the reason is. But whatever the reason, God's command remains crystal clear. Don't go back to his house.

Verse 18. The old prophet answered, Ah, 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. So the man of God returned with him and ate and drank in his house. Now, we might have a bit of sympathy here with this young prophet.

[ 17 : 54 ] After all, this new word that has come to him, so it was claimed, came from an angel. Now, you can't argue with that kind of authority, can you?

I mean, he has to go along with it. After all, an angel has spoken, so we must do what the angel has said, right? No.

God's command was crystal clear. Don't go back to his house. You see, God's word is full of commands that we might question and that we might deem to be unfair or that perhaps we don't even understand.

But that doesn't mean to say we have the right to disobey it. Oh, we can claim that it was some new revelation. Oh, God told me. Or we can come up with a new interpretation.

You know what? That was then, this is now. Times have changed. We do things differently. Or we might even say, an angel told me.

[ 19 : 01 ] Well, at the very least, such claims of so-called new revelation need to be checked out with God's word itself. Better still, somebody come along and they tell you, I've got a new revelation for you.

It should be ignored completely. Sadly, this young prophet never bothered to check it out. So, there was the command, don't go back to the house.

Second, the confrontation, verse 20. So, while they were sitting down at the table, the word of the Lord, the true word of the Lord, came to the old prophet who had brought him back.

I mean, what a scenario. What's going on here? All this talk of angels and new revelation is all of a sudden slapped on the head, verse 21. 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. You have not kept the command the Lord your God gave you.

[ 20 : 08 ] The clarity of God's word confronts all their speculations, verse 22. You came back and ate bread and drank water in the place where he told you not to eat or drink.

Therefore your body will not be buried in the tomb of your ancestors. In other words, this ain't going to end well. You're not even going to make it home alive.

It seems to be that this young prophet is suffering with what Paul had warned Timothy about. Have a look on the screen. God for the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine.

They're not going to put up with what God's word has to say. Instead, to suit their own desires, they're going to gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.

Itchy ears. Instead of obedience to God's clear word, there is a desire for a new revelation, a new word that fits in with what I want to hear and what I want for my life.

[ 21 : 22 ] Well, let's not fool ourselves. God's word is crystal clear. We do not need to add to it. We do not need to change it because there is no revelation other than what God has spoken and what we have now written in God's word to us today.

So there was a very clear command and there was a very clear confrontation and then third the clear consequences because distorting or defying God's word has terrible consequences.

Verse 23 When the man of God had finished eating and drinking the prophet who had brought him back saddled his donkey for him.

As he went on his way a lion met him on the road and killed him and his body was left lying on the road with both the donkey and the lion standing beside it.

Some people who passed by saw the body lying there with the lion standing beside the the city where the old prophet lived.

[ 22 : 41 ] You see God had spoken clearly and once again God's word came to pass. It always does. Now I'm quite sure it's confusing you and it's raising lots of questions.

Just like we can sometimes question God's commands we can also start questioning the consequences of disobedience and we could look at this and go it's not fair.

The old prophet lied to him and tricked him. He told him it was an angel and it wasn't. It's not fair. Or we could say it's too severe to have a lion kill you.

The punishment is too severe. He should have been warned or just been told off. And so we have all these questions going on in our minds. Well isn't that exactly what we see happening in the Garden of Eden?

God's command was crystal clear. Do not eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil for when you eat of it you will certainly die.

[ 23 : 55 ] I mean what's difficult about understanding that? Don't eat it and if you do you will die. Understood? Crystal clear. Of course soon after came a new revelation didn't it?

A new temptation undermining God's clear word. Did God really say? Did God really say that? I mean let me tell you something else.

You won't really die if you eat it. And then the blame game starts. It's not fair. The woman said I could eat it. The devil deceived me.

You see the problem is it's not God's word. That's not the problem. The problem is our questioning and twisting of the very clear truth of God's word.

Verse 26 When the prophet who had brought him back from his journey heard of what had happened he said it is the man of God who defied the word of the Lord.

[ 25 : 02 ] 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. You see how we respond to God's word is deeply serious.

To defy God's word is to defy God himself. And if we continue to persist in defiance against God's word judgment will come.

We might not face a lion but one day we will all die and we will all stand before God and have to give an account.

So hear the clarity of God's word. Third experience the grace of God's word.

Let's look at how God's grace comes to the old prophet. So the word had come to Jeroboam at the beginning. The word comes to the young prophet and now God's grace comes to the old prophet.

[ 26 : 20 ] Three things we see here. First look at the mercy. The old prophet decides to go out to see what has happened. He's heard about the young prophet who's been attacked by the lion.

And so verse 28 then he went out and found the body lying on the road with the donkey and the lion standing beside it. The lion had neither eaten the body nor mauled the donkey.

Now you've watched David Attenborough haven't you? I mean this is extraordinary. Lions don't stand still and look at their dinner when it's ready to be eaten do they?

They get stuck in. But not this lion. He just kills the man leaves the body and doesn't even go near the donkey who's prey.

This lion is under the authority of God's word. God's doing. But perhaps it's what does not happen that should take us by most surprise.

[ 27 : 32 ] It's what doesn't happen that is a shock. Remember this old prophet, he's the one who lied. He said, an angel told me.

He defied God's word. We could even make a claim and say he was worse than the younger prophet. I mean what should we expect to happen next but for the lion to pounce and jump on him. But the lion does nothing. By a word of mercy, God keeps his judgment in check.

Nothing happens to him. Verse 29, 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.

Are you shocked at the mercy of God? But there's not just mercy. Look at the evidence.

[ 28 : 34 ] It seems that this old prophet has begun to have a new appreciation for God's word. The evidence of God's powerful word was clear and it has now given him a new understanding.

So he now confidently declares in verse 32, For the message he that is the prophet 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.

He now believes that when God says something it's going to happen and you don't defy God's word you obey God's word. And so he declares the message declared by the word of the Lord will certainly come true.

What God says will happen does happen. Now we only need to read 2 Kings 23 and we see that it does come true.

Keep your finger there in 1 Kings and just jump ahead to 2 Kings chapter 23. Remember what the prophet had initially said back in verse 2 he said one will be raised up his name would be Josiah.

[ 29 : 57 ] Well look at 2 Kings chapter 23 verse 14. Who do we meet?

Josiah smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles and covered the sites with human bones. Even the altar at Bethel the high place made by Jeroboam son of Nebat who had caused Israel to sin even that altar and high place he demolished.

And why did he do all of that? Well look at the end of verse 16. In accordance with the word of the Lord proclaimed by the man of God who foretold these things.

Now that's evidence for us. God's powerful word clearly spoken can be trusted.

When God speaks his word always comes true. You see God not only in his mercy rescues this old prophet but he's given him clear evidence that his word can be trusted.

[ 31 : 17 ] But not only that look at the patience go back to 1 Kings chapter 13 to the end of the chapter verse 33 look how it concludes even after this Jeroboam didn't change his evil ways after all that Jeroboam had seen and heard and everything that the prophets had spoken and his hand shriveling up and being made right and the altar splitting apart even after all of this he didn't change his evil ways but once more appointed priest for the high places from all sorts of people anyone who wanted to become a priest he consecrated for the high places this was the sin of the house of Jeroboam that led to its downfall and to its destruction from the face of the earth now not surprisingly judgment did come to the house of

Jeroboam but here's the point it didn't happen for another 300 years now how patient is that the patience of God as people defy God's word year after year after year doing what they want ignoring God turning their back on him so God is showing great patience and delays his judgment what patience is that you see all of this is a display of God's grace the mercy the evidence the patience it's God's grace to the world because that's what God's word is it's a word of grace hold your Bibles in your hands it's a word of grace to you a word that doesn't treat us as our sins deserve a word that shows us great patience longing that all would turn in repentance to him a word that offers forgiveness and mercy and new life and a word that will keep us and will be faithful to us all of our days here is a word that speaks of the future that for all those who trust him are guaranteed and assured an eternal destiny with him forever and forever this is a word of grace to you and to me don't do a Jeroboam and give up on the mercy and the evidence and the patience for it is true one day a day of judgment will come and mercy will be over and grace will be gone do not defy God's word hear his grace to us today let me close where we started this morning by just reading 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 23 for you have been born again not of perishable seed but of imperishable through the living and enduring word of God for all people are like grass and all their glory is like the flowers of the field the grass withers and the flowers fall just as the leaves are fallen off the trees right now so our end will come but the word of the Lord endures forever let's pray together when we have a time and good good when we and we are right