

Preview of 1 Kings

The Book of 1 Kings continues the account of Israel's history after they rejected God's kingship and insisted on having "a king ... like all the nations." During this period, we see Israel's slow but relentless degeneration resulting from that rejection. This book is not the story of Israel's rise to monarchy but of Israel's descent to monarchy. That truth is summarized in Hosea 13:11: "I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath."

This book covers a period of about one hundred fifteen years. It begins with David's death and Solomon's reign, gives separate accounts of Israel and Judah after the kingdom was divided, describes Elijah's ministry, and ends with the death of Ahab. It is the sobering story of how a nation passed from affluence and influence to poverty and paralysis.

The Book of 1 Kings is not just a history of the Hebrew nation; it is a picture of the contrast between divine government and human government. The Israelites in general forsook divine government in favor of their own government, and the result was defeat and disaster. Yet the picture is not entirely dark. The faithful kings throughout this book show the prosperity and blessing that result when God's people submit themselves to divine government.

Lesson 1 4 August 2013

God's Warning to Jeroboam

Lesson Scope: [I Kings 13 and 14](#)

Lesson Focus

In His love for fallen mankind, God always gives sufficient warning before passing judgment. It is a warped concept of God to think He is like a mean-spirited bully just waiting around the corner to pounce upon us for our misdeeds and shortcomings. "The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether" (Psalm 19:9). Too often in this fallen world, justice is not satisfied as it should be. But God's justice is absolute and right.

God warns us with the intent that we respond to Him in repentance and with a changed life. God's warning to Jeroboam was clear. Jeroboam knew what he should do, but his own will was paramount. At the beginning of his reign, he set a precedent for future generations by his choices. Numerous times it was said of later kings of Israel that they followed "in the way of Jeroboam," were either like or were to be punished like "the house of Jeroboam," or followed the "sins of Jeroboam." Sixteen times it is said that he "made Israel to sin." These words define his legacy. He and his nation paid a terrible price for his wrong choices and for his wrong response to God's warning.

God's reproof to sinful man reveals His mercy. If a man chooses to reject God's warning, he brings divine judgment upon himself.

Both warning and hope ought to be emphasized in this lesson. Had Jeroboam responded rightly to God's warning, there would have been hope for him. "For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee" (Psalm 86:5). God is ready to forgive, but we need to do our part. We all need God's warning. Because we have all "sinned, and come short of the glory of God," we all need God's forgiveness. Whether we receive it hinges on what we do with the warning. It is not so much what we think or say—though thoughts and words are important too—but how we live. True faith must go beyond the abstract. Mere profession of faith is suspect, but a life well lived cannot be argued against.

Lesson Aim: To be instructed by God's word's to the disobedient.

Theme Verse [Proverbs 21:11](#). When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise: and when the wise is instructed, he receiveth knowledge.

Lesson Text:

God's Warning

[1 Kings 13:1-3](#) ¹And, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the LORD unto Bethel: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. ²And 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. ³And 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.

Man's Response

[1 Kings 13:4](#) ⁴And it came to pass, when king Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, which had cried against the altar in Bethel, 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.

[1 Kings 13:33-34](#) ³³After 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. ³⁴And 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.

God's Judgment

[1 Kings 14:1-2](#) ¹ At that time Abijah the son of Jeroboam fell sick. ²And Jeroboam said to his wife, Arise, I pray thee, and disguise thyself, that thou be not known to be the wife of Jeroboam; and get thee to Shiloh: behold, there *is* Ahijah the prophet, which told me that *I should be* king over this people.

[1 Kings 14:6-8](#) ⁶And it was *so*, when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet, as she came in at the door, that he said, Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why feignest thou thyself *to be* another? for I *am* sent to thee *with* heavy *tidings*. ⁷Go, tell Jeroboam, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Forasmuch as I exalted thee from among the people, and made thee prince over my people

Israel, ⁸And rent the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it thee: and *yet* thou hast not been as my servant David, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do *that only which was* right in mine eyes;

1 Kings 14:12-15 ¹²Arise thou therefore, get thee to thine own house: *and* when thy feet enter into the city, the child shall die. ¹³And all Israel shall mourn for him, and bury him: for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him there is found *some* good thing toward the LORD God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam. ¹⁴Moreover the LORD shall raise him up a king over Israel, who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam that day: but what? even now. ¹⁵For the LORD shall smite Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water, and he shall root up Israel out of this good land, which he gave to their fathers, and shall scatter them beyond the river, because they have made their groves, provoking the LORD to anger.

Questions for Study

God's Warning

1. Suggest reasons the prophet addressed the altar.
2. What does God's warning to Jeroboam reveal about Him?
3. What evidences reveal to us the authority of God's Word?

Man's Response

4. What actions of Jeroboam reveal the condition of his heart?
5. What is the significance of Jeroboam's making priests of the lowest of the people?
6. In what ways might we respond as Jeroboam did to God's warnings?

God's Judgment

7. Why might Jeroboam have told his wife to disguise herself when appearing before the prophet Ahijah?
8. What judgments can we expect if we respond in self-will and disobedience as Jeroboam did?

Analyzing the Passage

The prophet Ahijah had informed Jeroboam of God's intention to divide the kingdom because of Solomon's failure. He prophesied that Jeroboam would be king over the ten northern tribes and Solomon's son Rehoboam would be king of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, which included the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin (1 Kings 11:29-39).

First Kings 12 closes with Jeroboam at Bethel, presiding over what was likely the first feast in the worship of the golden calves that he had made. It

is in this setting that the prophet comes to Jeroboam (1 Kings 13:1). He addresses the altar (1 Kings 13:2), the focus of Jeroboam's system of worship. The repeated use of "the word of the LORD" emphasizes the authority behind the message.

More than three hundred years later, the prophecy (1 Kings 13:2) of Josiah's burning the bones of the priests on the altar took place (2 Kings 23:15-16).

"The lowest of the people" (13:33) tells us that character was not an issue in finding leadership (see 2 Chronicles 13:9). Lowest literally means end." Anyone was considered qualified.

The "heavy [or hard] tidings" (1 Kings 14:6) were hard to receive and were likely difficult to give. Nevertheless they were "the word of the LORD" and needed to be given.

Casting God behind one's back is an act of deliberate rejection. No one can do this without serious consequences.

Principles and Applications

God's Warning

1. God challenges disobedience clearly and openly (1 Kings 13:1). This was a public assembly in which the prophet of God spoke. No one before the bench of God's divine judgment will be able to declare innocence because of a lack of evidence for God and His requirements. "The heavens declare the glory of God.... There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard" (Psalm 19:1-3). It is Satan who conceals his aims, but God clearly reveals Himself.

Man's Response

2. The Lord provides sufficient evidence of the authority behind His Word (1 Kings 13:4-5). Jeroboam should have been awakened from his spiritual stupor by the prophet's words. However, in addition to "the word of the LORD," he was given two clear signs—his withered hand and the restoration of it. It seems that he was interested only in his physical soundness. The spiritual side of life was on the back burner. Too often we find this same tendency within our own hearts. Jesus calls us to overcome this natural default—"Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it" (Mark 8:34-35).

3. Disregarding divine warning increases one's accountability (1 Kings

13:33-34). As Jeroboam refused to heed God's warnings, his actions against God became more and more pronounced. Accompanying his spiritual regression was a progression of punishment—it "became sin" to him, it "cut ... off" his house, and finally it "destroy[ed] it from off the face of the earth." He must have felt he could somehow get away with what he was doing. Spiritual blindness, however, in no way mitigates the penalty for sin.

4. The Lord allows people to choose their response to His warnings (1 Kings 13:33). God's warning to Jeroboam was meant to save him. Jeroboam was at a crossroads. He could have chosen to return from his evil way. He chose not to. "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision" (Joel 3:14). Every day, as we make choices between right and wrong, we are a part of that multitude. Which way are we taking? That is the vital question.

God's Judgment

5. Disobedience incurs far-reaching consequences (1 Kings 13:34; 1 Kings 14:12, 14-16). Sin takes people where they never intended to go. Sin affects not only the sinner but also his family, future generations, his neighborhood, his church, and his nation. Only God knows the full impact each soul has in this world. It is likely greater than we think. This thought ought to challenge us to a more careful walk and a greater zeal in warning sinners to repent.

6. God sees through the hypocrisy of the disobedient (1 Kings 14:2, 6). Sooner or later all hypocrisy will be exposed. The facts of our lives will all be laid out in the open. Does it not make sense to admit our failures now, make things right, and get on with life? Jesus says, "I know thy works."

7. A wrong response to great privilege provokes the Lord to anger (1 Kings 14:7-9). "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" (Luke 12:48). Jeroboam had been blessed with much, and he proved to be untrustworthy. In his mind God was a nonentity to be cast behind his back. God is not to be trifled with, and He was justly angry with Jeroboam. "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!" (Isaiah 45:9).

8. The cherished hopes of the disobedient come to nothing (1 Kings 14:1, 12).

There was nothing wrong with Jeroboam's desire that his son be healed. He was wrong in being concerned about his son more than he was concerned about God (Luke 14:26). All humanity longs for hope, meaning, and purpose in life. To try to reach these goals only in this world is to completely

miss the mark and find emptiness. What we all need is a relationship with God. To reject Him is to reject all hope.

9. Disobedience severs people from promised blessings (1 Kings 14:15). At the beginning of Israel's presence in the Promised Land, God had specifically warned, "If thou do at all forget the LORD thy God.... I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish" (Deuteronomy 8:19). Israel was forgetting God, and she would suffer the consequences. The cruel kingdom of Assyria would carry out this destruction in a little more than two hundred years. It is also noteworthy that this nation who would destroy Israel would repent under Jonah's preaching and would receive mercy, whereas the nation of Israel, who should have known better, did not repent and did not receive mercy.

Important Teachings

1. God challenges disobedience clearly and openly (13:1).
2. The Lord provides sufficient evidence of the authority behind His Word (13:4-5).
3. Disregarding divine warning increases one's accountability (13:33-34).
4. The Lord allows people to choose their response to His warnings (13:33).
5. Disobedience incurs far-reaching consequences (13:34; 14:12, 14-16).
6. God sees through the hypocrisy of the disobedient (14:2, 6).
7. A wrong response to great privilege provokes the Lord to anger (14:7-9).
8. The cherished hopes of the disobedient come to nothing (14:1, 12).
9. Disobedience severs people from promised blessings (14:15).

Answers to Questions

1. Suggest reasons the prophet addressed the altar.

The altar represented the whole idolatrous system of worship that Jeroboam had established for Israel in an attempt to keep his people from traveling to Jerusalem to worship. God used this prophet in this way to reveal His contempt for the entire system and His plan to destroy it.

2. What does God's warning to Jeroboam reveal about Him?

God alone is worthy to receive worship. To share His glory with another would be to acknowledge an equal, and God has no equal.

God is merciful in warning the sinner. His warnings are meant to bring restoration. They are meant to bring the sinner to repentance and conversion (2 Peter 3:9).

3. What evidences reveal to us the authority of God's Word?

The limitless expanse of the starry heavens, the minuteness of microscopic life, the complexity of the human genome, and the labyrinthine channels of human intelligence and design all speak of a God with supreme authority to order it all into being and to keep it intact and in working order.

Cataclysmic events such as earthquakes and floods are foretold in Scripture, and they are taking place.

The evidence of the authenticity of Jesus Christ cannot be denied. An honest seeker reading through the Gospel accounts cannot come away thinking Jesus was merely a good man. His miracles, His death with the events surrounding it, the empty tomb, and His being seen by hundreds all give evidence that Jesus is who He claimed to be.

4. What actions of Jeroboam reveal the condition of his heart?

His leading his people into idolatry so soon after his ascension to the throne reveals a very self-centered, ungrateful heart. Seemingly he sensed no accountability to God, who had set him up as king. Stretching out his hand to lay hold on the prophet shows his contempt for sound counsel and advice. His desire to have his hand and his son healed with no regard for changing his ways reveals a heart that was concerned only for this life and the pleasure of the moment.

5. What is the significance of Jeroboam's making priests of the lowest of the people?

Jeroboam's self-will was corrupting, as all sin is. It never satisfies, and if not repented of, it leads only to more and more debauchery. His greatest interest was to keep his people satisfied or even enthusiastic about his program. Allowing anyone who desired priesthood to fulfill the office of priest was likely one way of doing that, as Jeroboam viewed it.

6. In what ways might we respond as Jeroboam did to God's warnings?

We tend to think we are doing things about right. When we are told otherwise, do we become self-defensive and show our self-will too? As Jeroboam did, we desire physical health for our children and ourselves; but if spiritual health becomes only equal to or less important than the physical, our priorities are terribly out of proportion.

7. Why might Jeroboam have told his wife to disguise herself when appearing before the prophet Ahijah?

Jeroboam knew he was not living in obedience to God. Perhaps he thought the prophet would be more considerate in dealing with the mother of a sick child who was not related to him. Whatever the reason may be, it seems to show that Jeroboam's conscience was bothering him.

8. What judgments can we expect if we respond in self-will and dis-

obedience as Jeroboam did?

As Jeroboam did, we and our children will experience spiritual sickness and death with no hope of a cure unless we repent and turn around. Sin is a cancer to the soul that weakens and destroys spiritual vitality. To continue in sin leaves one with no meaning in life, no purpose, and ultimately no hope for the future.

Summarizing the Lesson

Retribution

Though the mills of God grind slowly,
Yet they grind exceeding small;
Though with patience He stands waiting,
With exactness grinds He all.

—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Research Guide

Halley's Bible Handbook summarizes the division of Israel following Solomon's reign, the relationship between the two kingdoms, and the kind of kings who served in each kingdom (pp. 193-196).