

The Disobedient Prophet

1 Kings 13

Introduction

1. In addition to being a record of an historical event, this is a story that God wants us to read and learn from, as a people of God and those desiring to serve Him (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11).
2. This reflects our Lord's own view of scripture and of events recorded therein as historically accurate and instructive:
 - a. The recorded history of Moses calling used to demonstrate a future physical resurrection (Mk. 13:26-27).
 - b. The final days of the Jewish state compared to the days of Noah and Lot (Lk. 17:26, 28).
 - c. The disciples were to take the action of Lot's wife as instructive (Lk. 17:32).
3. Therefore, we cannot dismiss these narratives as not adding any value to our knowledge of God and what is expected of us, His people (cp. 2 Tim. 3:16-17).
4. I believe that this story of the prophet sent by God to warn Israel and its king about their actions is preserved in scripture for us to understand what it means to obey all that and only what God says.
 - a. Also, that we can be sure about our relationship with God and to give us confidence as we follow in the apostles' teaching (cp. Acts 2:42).
 - b. This is the attitude with which we study God's word, to have that assurance that true faith brings (cp. Col. 2:2; Heb. 6:11; 10:22).

I. Background + Story

- A. The background to chapter 13 is found in chapter 12 with the break up of the kingdom of Israel and the subsequent institution of false worship.
 1. Because of Solomon's unfaithfulness God promised to give half of his kingdom to Jeroboam, his servant, and the other half to his son, Rehoboam (1 Kg. 11; 12:1-24).
 2. Jeroboam had two graven images made and set up at Dan and Bethel, as places of worship despite temple at Jerusalem, principally to safeguard his life and secure his throne (1 Kg. 12: 28-30).
 3. These innovations also included a feast in place of the one commanded by God in the Law of Moses, the feast of tabernacles (1 Kg. 12: 32-33; cp. Lev. 23:34-44).
- B. It was while Jeroboam stood before the altar at Bethel that the young prophet approached and confronted the king as God had commanded him.
 1. He spoke and performed all that he was commanded by God to speak and perform – words and signs of God (vs. 2-3, 5).
 2. He rejected the offer of the king on the grounds that to have accepted it would transgress what God had specifically commanded (vs. 7-10).
 3. But while returning home he was met by an old prophet who lied to the young prophet, who then believed the lie, disobeyed God, and, consequently is killed; **condemned because he had not done all that God had commanded him to do** (vs. 18-24).

II. Observation

- A. Firstly, the young prophet was deceived having seemingly been beguiled by the credentials of the old prophet and his claim to be speaking by the divine authority – an angel of the Lord (1 Kg. 13:18).
 1. Many since New Testament times have claimed to be prophets of God and have seduced many into adopting false ideas and practices (cp. 1 Jn. 4:1-3).
 - a. The Catholic Church teaches that in his proclamations the pope speaks with the authority of Christ yet over the years various popes have pronounced teachings that contradict the Bible.
 - b. The leading founders of various religious organisations such as Jehovah's Witnesses, the Mormon Church and the Christian Science movement all claimed divine inspiration while denying such fundamental teachings as the deity of Christ, His physical resurrection, and the establishment of the kingdom.
 - c. Many sincere religious people have taken these and other such leaders then and today at their word!

2. Our faith is to be built on nothing other than what is taught in the apostolic gospel, even if taught by an angel of God (Phil. 1:27; Gal. 1:6-10).
 - a. The “if” in this passage denotes a ‘real hypothetical’, something that could possibly occur, since angels exist and have been used in such a way by God.
 - b. Yet if we were to be visited by an angel and taught something contrary to the apostolic gospel, then in such a possible and real situation, we must even refuse to listen to an angel of God!
 3. The young prophet should have been alarmed by the fact that he was being asked to do the opposite of what God had commanded – contradicting a revealed will of God (cp. Gal. 2:18).
 - a. To rebuild what one once destroyed was to go back to the law as a means of justification after dying to the Law through faith in Christ – the two are mutual exclusive.
 - b. Much of the false teaching today includes things that directly contradict the teachings of the Bible:
 - 1) Mark 16:16 – he that believes and *is saved* shall be baptized
 - 2) Acts 2:38 – baptism is *not* for the remission of sins
 - 3) Rom. 5:1 – Justified by faith *only*
 4. The young prophet was beguiled by and reliant on the status of the old prophet in determining the will of God, which he discovered was the wrong approach.
 - a. An equivalent circumstance today would be to believe what a preacher says simply on the grounds of his being a preacher; maybe he is one that is ‘well connected’.
 - b. Whatever their social or academic background, we need to adopt the spirit of the Bereans (Acts 17:11).
- B. Secondly, many today would describe the young prophet as religious and sincere, yet that is no substitute for faithful obedience (‘man of God’ cp. 1 Kg. 13:1a).
1. Many today view themselves sincere and point to religious sincerity as a defense for their indifference establishing scriptural authority in a scripturally authoritative way.
 - a. Religious fervor and sincerity, as commendable as they are, are no substitute for faithful obedience (cp. Rom. 10:1-3).
 - b. It is not enough today to claim sincerity while at the same time ignoring the clear and revealed will of God, contrary to the example set by Cornelius (Acts 10:33; cp. 10:1-2).
 - c. “Sincerity is sufficient. Many think that it doesn't make any difference which church one is a member of so long as he is honest and sincere. However, ‘There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death’ (Prov. 16:25). It would be very convenient indeed if only honesty and sincerity were required, but needless to say, men can be sincerely wrong and honestly mistaken. If one church is as good as another as some claim, why not join a church which caters to one's own sinful desires? If one church is as good as another, it would mean that the ‘Church of the Devil’ in California is as good as the Lord's church!” (from an article by David Riggs).

II. Application

- A. First, as Christians, we too can be deceived, and so we must be constantly vigilant against false teaching (Eph. 4:14-15; Rom. 16:17-18; Matt. 7:15-20, reason 21-23).
 1. We must have a love for the truth and a desire to study for ourselves (2 Thess. 2:10-15).
 2. We must test all things purported as religious truth against the light of God's word (1 Thess. 5:21; 1 Jn. 4:1).
- B. Second, if we fail to comply with all that God says in His word, we too can expect His condemnation (1 Cor. 10:11-12).
 1. The fact that these narratives were written for our admonition and that we see God's view and response to disobedience is a warning to us today.
 2. This principle of scriptural authority, of not going beyond Scripture, is consistently taught throughout the Bible (Dt. 4:2; Jos. 1:9; Prov. 30:5-6; Jn. 12:48; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Conclusion

1. The overall lesson here is that assurance of salvation, of a faithful and fruitful relationship with God is only attained by adhering to all and to only what we find written and taught in the word of God (2 Pt. 1:10; 1 Jn. 3:19).