

The Old-Time Evangelistic News

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How Will You Be Remembered? (Part 5)

I Kings 14:16; II Kings 12:2; 18:5

As we completed our thoughts for last month, we were focusing on how Jeroboam had equated the gods that he had made for the true God, Jehovah. Men have not changed much in the 3,000 years since Jeroboam made his gods. We may be more sophisticated and may not worship golden idols in our day, but they are idols nevertheless. Men today say that one religion is as good as another. As long as one is “serious” or “devoted,” they will be all right when they die. But that is not what the Bible says. Jesus is the only way of salvation. Man may often say, “I think that is right,” but it does not matter what you think. God will not adjust His way to your opinion. It does matter what God says. You had better adjust your ways to Him, or you will face His judgment.

As is so often the case, Jeroboam’s sin resulted in permanent problems for the Northern Kingdom. I mentioned earlier that the kingdom never recovered from this idolatry and I Kings 12:30 states that clearly. It says, “*And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan.*” This is the same word used in Deuteronomy 9:21 to describe Aaron’s calf. The word is often used to describe not just a simple, one time sin, but habitual sin. To some degree, that is what Aaron’s sin became because the nation would go in and out of idolatry during the time of the judges. They would remain faithful to God during the time of Samuel, Saul, David, and part of Solomon’s reign. However, once Jeroboam instituted these calves, the nation continually worshiped them, often adding other false gods with them. These ten northern tribes never returned to God in spite of the preaching of some great prophets, including Elijah and Elisha. They remained in idolatry because of what Jeroboam started.

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There is much to learn from what Jeroboam did. I cannot help but think how easy it is to follow wrong and how hard it seems to follow righteousness. God had instituted His way of worship at Mount Sinai. Part of Exodus and all of Leviticus deals with how God expected Israel to worship Him. The Ten Commandments and many other laws are repeated to the new generation by Moses in Deuteronomy. But after the generation that conquered Canaan died out, Judges 2 records that the next generation forsook God. There was never any great consistency in worshiping God, but there was great consistency in worshiping these idols that Jeroboam made. How can this be? There can only be one answer—the wickedness of man. Man finds it hard to follow God, but easy to follow the flesh and the ways of man. That is why we can never become complacent. We must continue to strive and labor for Christ because if we ever quit and give in to the flesh, we may never recover from it.

Let me give one other example of how Israel found it hard to serve God, yet easy to serve false gods. In Nehemiah 8:17, we find that the children of Israel who had returned from the captivity dwelt in booths as part of the observance of the feast of tabernacles. The verse goes on to say that the nation had not done that since the time of Joshua. Almost 1,000 years had passed from Joshua to Nehemiah, yet the nation had never completely obeyed God in the observance of this feast of tabernacles. I am sure that many thought it silly to build the booths to dwell in for the feast. But God had commanded it. Was it silly to obey God? Absolutely not! But the nation never did obey God. None of the judges and none of the kings ever completely obeyed God. Yet they easily followed idolatry and did many of the abominable practices associated with it. Again, this shows how easy it is to follow the ways of man and reject the ways of God.

Today, men will follow false religions more easily than they will follow the truths of God’s Word. It boggles my mind, but we find it true time and time again. It is how Titus 3:3 describes the sinner—“*foolish*” and “*deceived.*” A preacher will preach the truth of God’s Word to them, but they will not accept it and often will

argue about it. But when a false teacher on TV, radio, or in person tells them something, they believe it completely. Why do they do that? Because the nature of man is bent to following wrong. Jeroboam did wrong, and they followed hard after him.

We have seen that Jeroboam's reaction was based on insecurity and brought about idolatry, but it also *Birthed an Involvement*. I Kings 12:31 says, "*And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi.*" Jeroboam made places of worship to go along with his idols. God had established one city and one place to worship Him—the temple in Jerusalem. We cannot just do what we want and worship God how we choose. We must do it His way. Jeroboam, as the passage has shown throughout, goes about doing what he chooses, and God will not accept it.

Much more could be said about those places of worship, but I want to focus on the last part of the verse. The phrase "*lowest of the people*" carries the idea "from all of the people." Jeroboam opened up the priesthood to anyone that wanted to practice this religion. Some would say that Jeroboam did a great thing because he allowed everyone to be involved in his religion. But the last clause of the verse shows why it was wrong—they "*were not of the sons of Levi.*" As God had established a particular place to worship Him, so God had given the priesthood to a particular tribe—Levi. Some may say that it was not fair to limit the priesthood to this tribe, but, again, it does not matter what you think. God had said it was to be His way. He did not allow for a "choose your own way" or a "do your own thing" religion. To change what God said to do is wrong. To not obey God completely is to disobey God. All of these things that Jeroboam did follow the same line of thinking. It is this—"I know better than God, so I will do it this way." Some will say, "I do not mean it that way." But your actions speak louder than your words. Your actions do say, "I know better than God." You must change your actions and obey God. If you are not worshiping or serving God the way that he said to do it, then you are not obeying God. Change

your ways! God will not change His.

This involvement that Jeroboam birthed reminds me of what people are saying today. Many will say, "Anyone can preach. After all, 'God is no respecter of persons.'" First, that last statement is in the Bible. Peter says in Acts 10:34, "*Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons.*" Something very similar is found in Romans 2:11. But neither of these verses have anything to do with preaching. They both deal with God's acceptance of Gentiles for salvation. That is wonderful, for it opens the door to just about everyone that I preach to because most of the congregations in churches are made up of Gentiles. God will save anyone, Jew or Gentile, who repents of their sin and trusts in Christ.

But, secondly, God is a respecter of persons concerning who is allowed to preach the Gospel. Everyone is not a possible preacher. In I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, God clearly states who can preach and who cannot preach. I do not have the time in this message to discuss all of these qualifications, but I do want to point out a few of them. The first is that a preacher must be a man. Women are not allowed by God to preach. That is what Scripture teaches in I Corinthians 14:34, I Timothy 2:12 and 3:1. Women have a special place in the home and church, but it is not one of preaching or leadership. That is not popular in the day in which we live, and many try to say that Paul was prejudiced against women. But those are not Paul's words. He was the human instrument that penned them down, but he was led by the Holy Ghost. Those words that Paul wrote are more importantly the words of God. God said that women cannot preach! That settles it! For a woman to preach is to go against the clear commands of God. It is wrong!

The other two qualifications that I will mention concern the family life of the preacher. One is that he is to be "*the husband of one wife.*" Many try to explain what that means, but it means exactly what it says—the husband of one wife, not one at a time. That means that a divorced man, regardless of the reasons, cannot preach. Also,

a preacher must rule “*well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity.*” A man that has rebellious children does not have God’s approval to preach. Men may have changed, but God has not. He is still particular about the person who proclaims His message.

The final truth that makes Jeroboam a man of contempt is His Reputation. Because he rejected God’s Word, God rejected him. Because he turned away from God, he received God’s judgment instead of God’s blessings. God’s judgment was pronounced by both an unnamed man of God in I Kings 13 and Ahijah the prophet in I Kings 14. Ahijah says one clause that sums up Jeroboam’s life. It is this—“*who made Israel to sin.*” It is found the first time in I Kings 14:16 and will be repeated one other time in I Kings and seven times in II Kings. Every time that Jeroboam is mentioned, it is said that he made Israel to sin. He is the one that put them in the snare of idolatry, and they never could break that grip. What a terrible way to be remembered—“*made Israel to sin.*” What about you? Are you a good influence or bad one? Next month, we will continue the message with a look at King Joash.