

The Old-Time Evangelistic News

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How Will You Be Remembered? (Part 2)

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

We concluded last month with the thought that Jeroboam is a Man of Contempt. I mentioned that this is not based upon his success or failure as a king in his leadership capability or even upon his military ability. In many of those ways, Jeroboam could be considered a success. But God is not interested in Jeroboam's worldly knowledge, nor in his achievements. Those do not impress God at all. God is concerned with man's spiritual condition and spiritual achievements. Let us consider why Jeroboam is a Man of Contempt.

Jeroboam is first mentioned in I Kings 11:26 when Solomon is at the end of his reign. Seeing that Jeroboam is *"a mighty man of valour,"* Solomon *"made him ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph"* (I Kings 11:28). Some time after this, a prophet named Ahijah confronts Jeroboam and tells him that because of Solomon's sin in worshiping false gods, the kingdom will be divided. Solomon's descendants will be given two tribes and Jeroboam will become king over ten tribes. When Solomon hears about this, he tries to kill Jeroboam and Jeroboam flees into Egypt.

It is part of the message that Ahijah gives to Jeroboam that I want to focus on for a little bit. Because we know how Jeroboam ended up, many of us may think that he never had a chance to do right. Perhaps we think that God chose Jeroboam because He knew that Jeroboam would do wrong, and God wanted to have a continual changeover in the kings that ruled over Israel. Now, of course, God knows everything. He knew that Jeroboam would make the choices that he would make, but that did not precondition Jeroboam to take the path that he chose. I believe very strongly that God is sovereign.

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Simply stated, sovereignty means that God is in control of everything. But God's sovereignty does not negate man's will. Man is responsible for what he does. He cannot blame God because he chooses the wrong way. We can see this in the life of Jeroboam. He was warned by God, but chose the opposite of what God warned him about. Sadly, many are doing today what Jeroboam did in his day.

In I Kings 11:38, we can see Jeroboam's Reminder. It is interesting to note that the language here is similar to what God told Solomon in I Kings 3:14. God, through His prophet Ahijah, says, *"And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do that is right in my sight, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did; that I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee."* Jeroboam had a great opportunity here, but would utterly waste it.

There is nothing to indicate that Jeroboam tried to usurp Solomon in any way. He seems to be an honorable and hardworking servant for the king. It was only after God had announced to Jeroboam that he would receive the ten tribes that Solomon tried to kill him. Even after Solomon dies, it is only after Rehoboam makes his foolish decision to follow the counsel of the young advisers that Jeroboam leads the division of the kingdom. At this point in his life, Jeroboam has much going for him. He has been chosen by God out of all of the men of Israel to be the king over the ten northern tribes. This should have caused him to be humble as David and Solomon were when they were made the king over the entire nation. However, Jeroboam does not respond to the message, nor to his accession, with a reverence to God. He rejects the truth of God—this message from Ahijah—and begins his journey toward a life of rebellion and becomes a Man of Contempt.

God tells Jeroboam, *"If thou wilt hearken."* The word hearken means to hear; to listen to; and to obey. The basic idea is of perceiving a message. As is so often the case, God simply tells

Jeroboam to listen to the message that He is giving through Ahijah. It is an important message, but it also a very simple message. God is always that way. People often complain that it is hard to follow God. That has never been the case, nor is it now. It is easy to follow God. We must do what He says. We must “hearken.” We must hear and listen to what God is saying. When we have heard what God says, then we must obey what God says. The problem is not with the message or the messenger. The problem is that we do not want to obey what God says. We will make excuses and say that it is too hard or complicated when that is a complete lie. We just do not want to obey. God says to listen and then do it. Jeroboam, like many others today, did not listen, and because he did not listen, he did not obey.

Now notice what Jeroboam was to hearken unto. The verse continues with the phrase “*unto all that I command thee.*” Two words stand out as I read that phrase. The first one is the word all. God is not giving Jeroboam the option of partial obedience. He will not be allowed to pick and choose what he wants to obey and then reject the rest of it. People have not changed much in the last 3,000 years since Jeroboam lived. Of course, they were just the same in the 3,000 years before Jeroboam lived. Many would follow God, or so they say, if they did not have to obey completely, or all the time. Many will say, “Just let me serve God when it is convenient for me.” Others will ask, “What is the problem with half-hearted devotion to God?” The answer to that question is easy. The problem is that God does not accept half-hearted service, nor is He satisfied with our picking out what we like to obey and discarding the rest of what He says.

To give a modern example, we can talk about how we act at church and how we act in other places. Many will say that it is wrong to do use bad language at church, but they will use bad language at home or on the job. We should respect the church building, but it is just as wrong to use bad language at home and on the job as it is to use bad language at the church. Remember God said, “*Thou shalt*

not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain” (Exodus 20:7). Jesus also said, “*But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment*” (Matthew 12:36). There is no stipulation given in either of these verses that our talk should be different on the church grounds than anywhere else. Even in something as seemingly simple as what we say, God tells us how our lives should be lived.

Another example that we can mention is music. Some will say that they can listen to rock or country music at home, but they will sing and listen to “church” music at church. (Of course, in contemporary churches, there is no distinction. They accept everything. But we are focusing on the thought of what some in Fundamental churches are saying.) But they fail to remember God’s command in I Peter 1:15, “*But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.*” The word conversation in this verse is talking about our whole manner of life. God expects us to be holy in everything and in every place.

I mention these two examples out of many to give us an idea of what God expects of us today. He told Jeroboam that he was to hearken to all that was commanded. As Jeroboam did in his day, many are doing today. They neglect the little word all and decide what they want to obey. God did not accept partial obedience from Jeroboam then, and He will not accept it from us today.

The word command in I Kings 11:38 is used elsewhere in Scripture in reference to Creation. The thought is that because God created everything, He can expect what He created to obey Him. God is telling Jeroboam that because He put him on the throne, Jeroboam is under obligation to obey Him. Likewise, because God has created us, we are under obligation to obey Him. But for the believer, it goes beyond creation to redemption. God has redeemed us, so He can expect our complete obedience. It is not too great a sacrifice for God to ask for our complete submission. If we think about who God is and what He has done for us, our desire should be to obey Him

completely.

As we continue examining I Kings 11:38, think about the words statutes and commandments. God could have stopped with the general statement of hearkening to all that He commanded, but He further develops His thoughts and gives some particular ideas about what He expected of Jeroboam. He mentions about walking in His sight and doing what is right, and then tells Jeroboam “*to keep my statutes and my commandments.*” If we do not pay close attention to these two words, we will miss what God is telling Jeroboam.

Statutes were often used in reference to the Feast Days. God is telling Jeroboam that just because the kingdom is divided does not mean that the Feast Days given to the nation in Leviticus would be cancelled. They would not be voided, but should be kept. God, with this word, plainly told Jeroboam to keep the Feast Days, but he would not.

The word commandments is the noun form of the word used earlier for command. It is the same word for the Ten Commandments. God is specifically reminding Jeroboam of the first two commandments—no other gods and no graven images. We will understand this more when we see what Jeroboam does in the next chapter. We will pick up with this thought next month.