

God's Word Gives Guidance

June 30, 2024

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

1 Kings 13

Session Outline

1. God Speaks (1 Kings 13:1-10)
2. Beware of False Prophets (1 Kings 13:11-19)
3. Obey God Over People (1 Kings 13:20-34)

Theological Theme

We have been given the written Word of God to teach, instruct, and guide us in all things. We must trust what God says over anything the world offers.

Call to Action

To whom do we go to when we make decision in life? Last week's emphasis was on prayer as the foundation of everything we do. Today's emphasis is on the Word of God as the foundation of all we do as we trust in and depend on God to guide us.



Leader Guide

God's Word Gives Guidance

Introduction

Have you ever been driving somewhere familiar and felt sure about the directions, but your GPS told you to go a different way? In that moment, you have to decide whether to trust what you have experienced previously or trust the electronic system that is contradicting you.

There will be times that we think we have the right answers only to be presented with a different point of view or way of dealing with that situation. In that moment we have to decide what we will trust and which directions we will follow. One of the tenants of our faith is to trust Scripture above all else. The Word of God is foundational to all we do, and we can trust it for the guidance we desperately need.

- ❓ When have you made the wrong decision about trusting your sense of direction or the GPS?
- ❓ How do you usually decide when faced with these types of choices?

Session Summary

Today's study describes a story of listening to God, trusting His Word, obeying Him, and being tempted three times to disobey. An unnamed prophet of the Lord received a Word from the Lord to give to Jeroboam and this prophet obeyed the Lord initially. Although he resisted invitations to disobey God twice, he ultimately believed a lie and made a grievous mistake that led to severe and fatal consequences.

There are many details in this story that are unknown, but the lesson is clear: We are to trust, believe, and obey the Word of God over the word of man. When you need advice there is no better place to turn than to the Word of God. People, even some who appear to be godly, can steer you wrong, but the Word will always guide you in the right way.

1. God Speaks (1 Kings 13:1-10)

God spoke to one of His prophets, sending him to Jeroboam with a warning. The Lord was not pleased with the high places that Jeroboam had created to worship false gods. The man of God was sent with a prophetic message about a king who would be raised up and destroy those high places when he took over the reign of Israel. Obviously, this was not good news for the current king and, though he had no idea of the timeline, this caused concern for the king that he dealt with until his death.

The fact that the prophet is not named reminds us God can use anyone, even those who are not well-known or unknown, to accomplish His will and do great things for Him. The key is to respond obediently when God gives a direction or assigns us a task. The prophet started well. He traveled to Israel with God's message. If he had stayed obedient to what he knew was true, he would have experienced a different outcome. It is not enough to start strong; we need to continue in obedience and faith throughout our journey.



What's an example from your life of a time you started strong but had trouble completing the task you began? What tempts us to do this as we follow Jesus?

As might be expected, when the king heard the words of the man of God, he resisted because it was not what he wanted to hear. God gave dramatic signs to show what the man said was truly from Him. Jeroboam was so affronted by the prophecy that he called for the man to be arrested to silence him from speaking truth. This word of judgment from the Lord was also an invitation to repentance that Jeroboam could have accepted but chose to ignore.



What are some things related to following Christ that people resist because they aren't easy to hear?

God confirmed His warning of judgment in two ways that were impossible to miss. First, as the king pointed out in anger toward the man of God, the very hand he pointed with was withered to the degree he couldn't even retract it. Second, the altar in question was broken apart. God took seriously the disobedience of this leader who used his power for evil.

These signs from the Lord grabbed Jeroboam's attention and he quickly tried to make amends with the man of God. To some degree he recognized his only hope was from the Lord and God's representative,

Josiah's Reign

An unnamed prophet of the Lord delivered a message of judgment against Jeroboam's royal shrine at Bethel. He predicted that Josiah would destroy the Bethel worship site. This occurred in 621 BC when King Josiah of Judah initiated extensive religious reforms (2 Kings 23:15–17).

so he asked the man to bless him and stay a while. The man of God was gracious yet refused the invitation because it was counter to the previous instructions he had received from the Lord. If he had lingered, he would have been disobedient to God, and he would have been in fellowship with the idolatry of Jeroboam.

- Application: Where do you need to avoid involvement with things that are contrary to the ways of the Lord?

2. Beware of False Prophets (1 Kings 13:11-19)

After the man of God refused Jeroboam's invitation and promise of reward, he was faced with another similar invitation. This time an older prophet who heard what happened came to the man of God and desired to meet and eat with him. The man of God gave the same response to the prophet that he did to Jeroboam for the exact same reason—God had warned against this.

- Why do you think the man of God could have justified accepting the second invitation? How does this illustrate the way temptation to disobey often works?

When a person hears from God and stands firm on His Word, temptations and invitations to go a different direction will come. In the previous section, it was clear the man of God should not have any fellowship with Jeroboam as God had warned, so he declined quickly and with resolution. With the second invitation, the man of God also declined for the same reason and repeated God's instructions about resisting invitations and going a different route home.


But the third invitation took a different turn. The old prophet used a trick to deceive the man of God and lied to him. Though the man of God was firm about what he had heard from the Lord and made the right decisions the first two times, when he was lied to, he gave in. Instead of trusting the Word he received from God, the man of God believed this older prophet's claim that he had received contradictory instruction from the Lord.

- How does this instance remind us of the importance of standing on the Word of God and not only what we are feeling or what others say God told them?

When you hear from the Lord and receive instruction from Him, you must be careful about anyone or anything that guides differently. Think about how the man of God had given Jeroboam a bold warning. Yet even in the face of attack from the king, the man stood firm on what he knew from God. He declined to rest, eat, and be rewarded because it went

against the caution from the Lord. Why then would he give in and doubt what he had already witnessed as true by the withered hand and broken altar? Anyone can be susceptible to sin, and the enemy is the king of lies and deception.


Whether the prophet who deceived the man of God was purposeful about his lie or was deceived himself is not clear. The fact is that a strong man who initially believed God made a crucial error and gave in when he should have remained firm in trust in the word of the Lord. God doesn't contradict Himself with His people. If you hear a word and someone else claims to hear a different Word from God, the answer is to go back to God and His Word for clarification and affirmation. Just because someone claims to have a Word from God for you doesn't mean you should trust that over what you have already heard from God yourself.

 Application: Where do you currently need direction? How can you seek wisdom for that situation from God's Word?


3. Obey God Over People (1 Kings 13:20-34)

Once the man of God from Judah sat and ate with the older prophet, his disobedience was made clear, and he was subjected to dire consequences. The old prophet received a true word from the Lord. He told the man of God he was going to receive harsh judgment for not staying true to God's command.

No matter how subtle, enticing, or seemingly innocent his disobedience was, the man of God should have remained true and trusted God. Since he gave in and allowed himself to be drawn away, he was going to face worse judgment than those he had gone to warn. He would die in a foreign land. The harshness of these consequences further highlights the seriousness with which God views sin.


 How do believers get drawn away by subtle and seemingly innocent things? How can we guard against anything that opposes God's desires and commands for us?

The prophet's words were proven true. After the man of God saddled up to head home, he was attacked and killed by a lion. The details indicate this lion was on a divine mission. It only attacked the man, not the donkey or the other men on the road. The man of God had disobeyed and paid the price.

 What is challenging to you about instances where people receive harsh punishment for sin like this one? How do these accounts reveal God's grace in the warnings they give us?

We must trust and stand firm on God's Word without letting others draw us away or into compromise. There will be plenty of opportunities to take part in what seems insignificant such as rest and a meal. But if those actions are against what God has said, they are wrong. Just because something draws us with comfort and ease, doesn't mean that it is part of God's will for us. Satan will do his best to pull us away from our convictions to live godly lives and often uses what sounds like truth but really isn't.


When the man of God heard something contrary to the word he had already received verbally, he should have gone to God for confirmation. We have been given the Word of God in written form enabling us to always turn to Scripture for the guidance we need to navigate the world. Others will tell us God's Word is not true or that it doesn't really mean what it seems to say. In these moments, we should turn back to Scripture and ask the Holy Spirit to make clear what He wants us to know and do.


 Application: How can you seek to be guided by the Word of God over all else?


Conclusion

We all need advice and guidance at times. The key is finding what you need in the right place and guarding against the deception of the enemy. We have the gift of the written Word of God as well as the indwelling Holy Spirit. When we are faced with difficult choices, we can go straight to the Word and ask for the wisdom God freely gives to His children.

In times when we are faced with seemingly contradictory truths, prayer and Scripture should be the first places we turn. Once you hear from the Lord clearly, stand on that. Trust that His Word is true, inerrant, alive, and powerful. The Lord will strengthen you through His Word, and the Spirit will empower you through His presence as He reminds you of what you have learned from Scripture.

 Where do you currently need advice or guidance? How can you seek wisdom from God's Word and the Holy Spirit?

 How can we as a group encourage one another to continually stand on the truths of God's Word?

 Who can you tell about Jesus by sharing the truth of God's Word with them?

Prayer of Response

Thank God for the gift of His written and completed Word. Ask the Holy Spirit to remind you of the things you need to know and commit to following His guidance over anything the world tells you.

Memory Verse

And the prophet cried out to the man of God who had come from Judah, "This is what the Lord says: 'Because you rebelled against the Lord's command and did not keep the command that the Lord your God commanded you—but you went back and ate food and drank water in the place that he said to you, "Do not eat food and do not drink water"—your corpse will never reach the grave of your ancestors.'" —1 Kings 13:21-22

Additional Resources

- *Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Kings* by Tony Merida
- *Be Responsible* by Warren Wiersbe
- *1 Kings* by John Woodhouse

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



Historical Context of 1 Kings

Purpose

The theological perspective of 1 and 2 Kings is expressed in a number of themes: (1) the sinfulness of the kings and the nation; (2) the conflict between the demands of practical politics and the demands of faith; (3) the glory that God gave to the obedient covenant kings; (4) God's harshness in judgment on some occasions and leniency on others; and (5) the conflict between the worship of the Lord and the worship of other gods.

Author

Scholars cannot identify the authors of any portions of these books. Traditional guesses such as Samuel and Jeremiah lack evidence, although a prominent worshiper of the Lord like Jeremiah would have been influential in the circles that produced these books. Since the books clearly incorporated many earlier documents, the complete authorship would include all writers who contributed to the source documents of this work. At some point, the Holy Spirit worked in the human authors to authenticate the inspired, inerrant books of 1 and 2 Kings. The final stage of composition or compilation had to come after the release of Jehoiachin from Babylonian imprisonment (ca 562 BC). That edition may have added only a postscript to a work completed years earlier, or it may have involved significant additions.

Setting

The history recorded in 1 and 2 Kings covers approximately 410 years. First Kings begins around 970 BC with the death of King David, and 2 Kings ends around 560 BC with the release of King Jehoiachin from prison. During this time, the nation of Israel split into two kingdoms (930 BC), and both kingdoms went into exile (Israel in 722 BC and Judah in 587 BC).

Special Features

The titles of these books are certainly descriptive of their contents: the history of the kings and the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. First and Second Kings are part of the twelve Historical Books (Joshua-Esther) of the Old Testament. Originally, these two books were just one, but were divided by the translators of the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament; aka LXX).

Extended Commentary

1 Kings 13

13:1 The distinctive introductory statement of this account is literally, “And behold, a man of God came/was coming.” This formula, announcing the arrival of a man, can occur at a dramatic new turn within the plot of an episode (Nm 25:6; Jdg 19:16), but it can also open a new story (1Sm 2:27; 2Kg 4:42). Therefore this chapter could be either a dramatic turn in the preceding story or an entirely different event on a later occasion when King Jeroboam officiated at a sacrifice.

13:2–3 The prophet’s curse was especially insulting. Contact with human remains was one of the most powerful ways to pollute or desecrate any sacred object. This prophecy that Josiah, centuries later, would desecrate this altar with the corpses of its priests was a powerful statement of God’s rejection of this disobedient worship. As related in the later story, these were corpses of already dead priests retrieved from a local cemetery (2Kg 23:16). The truth of the prophet’s curse was attested by an immediate sign, the damaging of that altar with the spilling of ashes on the ground. Some suggest that irregular disposal of sacrificial ashes invalidated a sacrifice. If so, the spilling of the ashes here is symbolic of the unacceptability of sacrifices offered on this altar.

13:4–7 God also miraculously punished Jeroboam. The immediate healing of his hand as a result of the prophet’s intercession should have been another witness to direct Jeroboam into faith and obedience. The king’s spiritual shallowness was apparent when he trivialized the miraculous sign into an occasion to beg a personal favor from the prophet. Then Jeroboam offered the prophet a reward and thus treated God like a bargaining partner.

13:8–10 This prophet’s steadfastness in obedience contrasts with Saul’s willingness to give in to people (1Sm 28:23–25) and Gehazi’s eagerness to benefit from Naaman’s generosity (2Kg 5:20–27). To eat food with Jeroboam might be perceived as withdrawing judgment and endorsing his kingdom (1Sm 15:24–31).

13:11–19 Jeroboam’s shallow perception of God’s holiness would be matched by a certain old prophet who lived in Bethel. This prophet lied to the prophet from Judah. Perhaps the prophet of Bethel wanted the prophet of Judah to validate Bethel’s ritual by sharing food with him.

13:20–22 Then ironically, as they ate, God spoke his true judgment through the same prophet who had just moments earlier lied. God’s judgment of the disobedient prophet from Judah is another example of his severe judgment in this book.

13:23–29 This account of the prophet’s death is full of wonders. The lion did not devour the corpse or injure the donkey. The donkey stayed put instead of running away. And the lion did not threaten the old prophet when he came to retrieve the corpse—an act of nobility and bravery in contrast to his earlier deceit. To the ancient Israelites, loss of burial with one’s own clan was a severe judgment.

13:30–32 The prophet from Judah was buried with honor and respect, and the old prophet reaffirmed the truth of the message by sharing his burial place with the dead prophet.

13:33–34 Jeroboam trivialized and profaned sacred ritual by assuming the right to ordain priests, and in doing so, forfeited his covenant with God. This second statement of judgment on Jeroboam (see notes at vv. 2–3; 14:10–11) focuses on this offense (cp. 2Kg 17:7–12).

References

1. Andrew C. Bowling, “1 Kings,” in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 530–532.