

8. Prophecy & Obedience

February 7, 2008

Here are some prophecy goofs:

- King George II said in 1773 that the American colonies had little stomach for revolution.
- An official of the White Star Line, speaking of the company's newly built flagship, the Titanic, launched in 1912, declared that even God could not sink this ship.
- In 1939 The New York Times said the problem of TV was that people had to glue their eyes to a screen, and that the average American wouldn't have time for it.
- An English astronomy professor said in the early 19th century that air travel at high speed would be impossible because passengers would suffocate.
- In 1986 Bill Gates of Microsoft declared that nobody needs more space than a floppy disk that holds 640kb for any computing needs.
- Many people declared that New England Patriots were so hot that they would finish their season in perfection with a Super Bowl victory in 2008.

People like to prophesy the future, people like to listen to prophecies, and people like to follow the prophets – whether they are from God or not. I believe that people, in general, want to know what is going to happen in the future before they get there.

Every single prophecy of God in the Bible was fulfilled and will be fulfilled to the end. He has 100% track record unlike the world famous con-artist Nostradamus, the 16th century French astrologer. All of his prophecies were not only vague, but also they were not even close to coming true.

We must remember the main reason for the biblical prophecies. It is to live holy living for the glory of God, not to satisfy our curiosity.

In chapter 13 of 1 Kings, we have two prophets who each gave prophecies to others, but they themselves didn't obey the Lord and didn't represent Him properly.

A. THE PROPHECY AGAINST JEROBOAM

1 Kings 13:1-10 And behold, a man of God went from Judah to Bethel by the word of the Lord, and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. 2 Then he cried out against the altar by the word of the Lord, and said, "O altar, altar! Thus says the Lord: 'Behold, a child, Josiah by name, shall be born to the house of David; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and men's bones shall be burned on you.' " 3 *And he gave a sign the same day, saying, "This is the sign which the Lord has spoken: Surely the altar shall split apart, and the ashes on it shall be poured out."* 4 *So it came to pass when King Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, who cried out against the altar in Bethel, that he stretched out his hand from the altar, saying, "Arrest him!" Then his hand, which he stretched out toward him, withered, so that he could not pull it back to himself. 5 The altar also was split apart, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the Lord. 6 Then the king answered and said to the man of God, "Please entreat the favor of the Lord your God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored to me." So the man of God entreated the Lord, and the king's hand was restored to him, and became as before. 7 Then the king said to the man of God, "Come home with me and refresh yourself, and I will give you a reward." 8 But the man of God*

said to the king, "If you were to give me half your house, I would not go in with you; nor would I eat bread nor drink water in this place. 9 For so it was commanded me by the word of the Lord, saying, 'You shall not eat bread, nor drink water, nor return by the same way you came.'" 10 So he went another way and did not return by the way he came to Bethel.

When a king makes his own religion, he might as well be a priest too. That was exactly what Jeroboam was doing here. According to the Mosaic Law, a king could not be a priest. It is a biblical church and state separation. Jesus Christ is the only King who is also Priest according to the Book of Hebrews. Actually we who are born-again are "royal priesthood".

The man of God whose name we do not know was sent to Jeroboam to prophecy against him and his sins. The man of God did exactly what the Lord told him to do. During his prophecy, he proclaimed that Josiah, a king from Judah would desecrate their altars and high places where they worshiped their idols.

In v2 we see the name Josiah. It was the godly king Josiah from Judah. Almost three hundred forty years late from this point, Josiah broke down that altar and high places in the Bethel area. It is recorded in 2 Kings 23. It was an exact fulfillment of God's prophecy. It is not unusual for God to name the people's names in His prophecies through many of His prophets.

From Jeroboam's viewpoint this was not good. According to the prophecy that was given, a king from Judah is going to invade his kingdom and destroys his altar. It was no wonder why he was ticked against the prophet. But he wasn't concerned about God's warning. All he cared was his kingdom and reputation.

Jeroboam didn't like the message, so he decided that he would kill the messenger. I am sure that was a great idea, Jeroboam. When people were rebuked by the Word of God, rather than repenting, they tend to get mad at the messenger, like pastor or Bible teacher. They leave church with an intention to bad mouth against the man and the church they leave.

Please note the conversation between king Jeroboam and the man of God in v4-7. The king's hand was withered which meant that it was paralyzed. Jeroboam should had gotten a hint from God that He was not pleased by his idol worship. So what did he do? He asked the man of God to intercede for him to restore his hand. How about he himself falling on his face and repenting before God and ask the Lord to forgive him from his sins? Did you notice what kind of pronoun the king use in v6? "The Lord your God" It was the same Lord who appointed him as the king of Israel. Why couldn't he pray to the Lord? He just wanted to get out of this jam without committing his life to the Lord.

We still have people like this today. When carnal believers or non-believers face difficulties, they call churches and ask pastors or church leaders to pray for them. Of course, we would pray for them and their repentance. But these people don't want to have anything to do with following the Lord with all of their hearts, minds, souls and bodies. They just want to get out of the jams they put themselves in.

The amazing thing is that God is so compassionate that He still helps them. It is a good thing that I am not God.

In v7 we see Jeroboam trying to buy the man of God with his reward like getting a lucky rabbit foot instead of repenting.

B. THE DECEPTION OF THE OLD PROPHET

1 Kings 13:11-22 Now an old prophet dwelt in Bethel, and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Bethel; they also told their father the words which he had spoken to the king. 12 And their father said to them, "Which way did he go?" For his sons had seen which way the man of God went who came from Judah. 13 Then he said to his sons, "Saddle the donkey for me." So they saddled the donkey for him; and he rode on it, 14 and went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak. Then he said to him, "Are you the man of God who came from Judah?" And he said, "I am." 15 Then he said to him, "Come home with me and eat bread." 16 And he said, "I cannot return with you nor go in with you; neither can I eat bread nor drink water with you in this place. 17 For I have been told by the word of the Lord, 'You shall not eat bread nor drink water there, nor return by going the way you came.' " 18 He said to him, "I too am a prophet as you are, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the Lord, saying, 'Bring him back with you to your house, that he may eat bread and drink water.' " (He was lying to him.) 19 So he went back with him, and ate bread in his house, and drank water. 20 Now it happened, as they sat at the table, that the word of the Lord came to the prophet who had brought him back; 21 and he cried out to the man of God who came from Judah, saying, "Thus says the Lord: 'Because you have disobeyed the word of the Lord, and have not kept the commandment which the Lord your God commanded you, 22 but you came back, ate bread, and drank water in the place of which the Lord said to you, "Eat no bread and drink no water," your corpse shall not come to the tomb of your fathers.'"

The man of God did his assignment and headed home. I am sure that he was tired and thirsty and hungry so he sat down under a tree. Here came an old man who told him an angel came told him to take him to his home to refresh him. What's wrong with that? After all, he was a fellow prophet. Yes, here is the first thing missing. The man of God didn't ask God in prayer. God never contradicts His words.

I don't think that the old man meant harm in any way. He wanted to treat this courageous man nicely. So, the old man thought a little white lie that wouldn't hurt anyone. But according to the prophecy from the Lord through this old man, it would cost the young man his life.

When the young prophet heard the prophecy like this, he should have repented and asked God to forgive him. I don't know whether he took it lightly or he thought it was for him no matter what. Our merciful God would have forgiven him from his sin. But he went on.

We need to be careful and keep our guards up all the time, especially after a spiritual victory. Some will come to us in the name of God to mislead us or to deceive us.

2 Corinthians 11:14 And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.

When an emotionally disturbed man told Charles Spurgeon that God had told him to preach for Spurgeon the next Sunday at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, England, Spurgeon replied, "When the Lord tells me, I'll let you know."

Those who know the Scripture are demanded to follow the Lord closely. Otherwise, they would be in stricter judgement than the ones who do not know the Word.

James 3:1 My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.

C. THE DEATH OF THE MAN OF GOD

1 Kings 13:23-34 So it was, after he had eaten bread and after he had drunk, that he saddled the donkey for him, the prophet whom he had brought back. 24 When he was gone, a lion met him on the road and killed him. And his corpse was thrown on the road, and the donkey stood by it. The lion also stood by the corpse. 25 And there, men passed by and saw the corpse thrown on the road, and the lion standing by the corpse. Then they went and told it in the city where the old prophet dwelt. 26 Now when the prophet who had brought him back from the way heard it, he said, "It is the man of God who was disobedient to the word of the Lord. Therefore the Lord has delivered him to the lion, which has torn him and killed him, according to the word of the Lord which He spoke to him." 27 And he spoke to his sons, saying, "Saddle the donkey for me." So they saddled it. 28 Then he went and found his corpse thrown on the road, and the donkey and the lion standing by the corpse. The lion had not eaten the corpse nor torn the donkey. 29 And the prophet took up the corpse of the man of God, laid it on the donkey, and brought it back. So the old prophet came to the city to mourn, and to bury him. 30 Then he laid the corpse in his own tomb; and they mourned over him, saying, "Alas, my brother!" 31 So it was, after he had buried him, that he spoke to his sons, saying, "When I am dead, then bury me in the tomb where the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones. 32 For the saying which he cried out by the word of the Lord against the altar in Bethel, and against all the shrines on the high places which are in the cities of Samaria, will surely come to pass." 33 After this event Jeroboam did not turn from his evil way, but again he made priests from every class of people for the high places; whoever wished, he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places. 34 And this thing was the sin of the house of Jeroboam, so as to exterminate and destroy it from the face of the earth.

This portion of Scripture presents some things to puzzle over, but we must not forget the main message: if the Lord punished a deceived prophet for his disobedience, how much more would He punish a wicked king who was sinning with his eyes wide open? If a true prophet disobeyed and was disciplined, what will happen to the false prophets?

The man of God from Judah didn't compromise in his message, but he did compromise in his conduct, and he paid for his disobedience with his life. The Lord was saying to King Jeroboam,

1 Peter 4:17-18 For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 Now "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

We see another miracle – a lion which attacked the man of God didn't devour him or the donkey, standing next to the dead prophet with the live donkey. This was no mere accident, rather it was from the Lord. This lion was on a special mission of judgment from God, and seems to be more obedient than the man of God from Judah was.

Did you notice that the old man laid the body of the young prophet in his own tomb as the prophecy was given to him in v22. Another prophecy came true.

Why did he ask his sons to bury him next to this young man? I guess the old man wanted to have a "dead prophets' society".

V33 shows the hardened heart of Jeroboam. God gave him the throne and restored his withered hand, yet he continued in his evil ways against the Lord. What does it take for this man to repent? Nothing. Jeroboam did not only disobey God, but also he never fulfilled his potential or promise.

The same principle works in servants of God today. We are not called because of obedience, or used out of merit. But our disobedience hinders our potential for full use.

In Jeroboam's failure, he became the standard of the disobedient kings of Israel. The phrase *"He did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of Jeroboam."* Jeroboam had great opportunity, but instead became a great curse to every generation of the northern kingdom after that. What a horrible legacy to have as the person who had so much potential!

In most cases of prophecies, they are generally warnings for people to repent and obey the Lord. If the people take God's warning and repent like the people of Nineveh after the prophet Jonah preached, God extends His grace and He relents. But when people don't take warnings to their hearts, that is when the problems expedite its magnitude and becomes a consequence.

D. APPLICATIONS

1) God never contradicts Himself in His dealings with His servants.

Let us be true to His commands, refusing to be deflected from the path of obedience, even by an angel from heaven.

2) When we hear from the Lord what need to be done, the best thing for us to do is simply OBEY.

It would save us from a lot of troubles later.