

FIRST KINGS

Chapter 13

The Man of God From Judah

By the word of the LORD a man of God came from Judah to Bethel, as Jeroboam was standing by the altar to make an offering. ² He cried out against the altar by the word of the LORD: "O altar, altar! This is what the LORD says: 'A son named Josiah will be born to the house of David. On you he will sacrifice the priests of the high places who now make offerings here, and human bones will be burned on you.' " ³ That same day the man of God gave a sign: "This is the sign the LORD has declared: The altar will be split apart and the ashes on it will be poured out." ⁴ When King Jeroboam heard what the man of God cried out against the altar at Bethel, he stretched out his hand from the altar and said, "Seize him!" But the hand he stretched out toward the man shriveled up, so that he could not pull it back. ⁵ Also, the altar was split apart and its ashes poured out according to the sign given by the man of God by the word of the LORD. ⁶ Then the king said to the man of God, "Intercede with the LORD your God and pray for me that my hand may be restored." So the man of God interceded with the LORD, and the king's hand was restored and became as it was before. ⁷ The king said to the man of God, "Come home with me and have something to eat, and I will give you a gift." ⁸ But the man of God answered the king, "Even if you were to give me half your possessions, I would not go with you, nor would I eat bread or drink water here. ⁹ For I was commanded by the word of the LORD: 'You must not eat bread or drink water or return by the way you came.' " ¹⁰ So he took another road and did not return by the way he had come to Bethel. ¹¹ Now there was a certain old prophet living in Bethel, whose sons came and told him all that the man of God had done there that day. They also told their father what he had said to the king. ¹² Their father asked them, "Which way did he go?" And his sons showed him which road the man of God from Judah had taken. ¹³ So he said to his sons, "Saddle the donkey for me." And when they had saddled the donkey for him, he mounted it ¹⁴ and rode after the man of God. He found him sitting under an oak tree and asked, "Are you the man of God who came from Judah?" "I am," he replied. ¹⁵ So the prophet said to him, "Come home with me and eat." ¹⁶ The man of God said, "I cannot turn back and go with you, nor can I eat bread or drink water with you in this place. ¹⁷ I have been told by the word of the LORD: 'You must not eat bread or drink water there or return by the way you came.' " ¹⁸ The old prophet answered, "I too am a prophet, as you are. And an angel said to me by the word of the LORD: 'Bring him back with you to your house so that he may eat bread and drink water.' " (But he was lying to him.) ¹⁹ So the man of God returned with him and ate and drank in his house. ²⁰ While they were sitting at the table, the word of the LORD came to the old prophet who had brought him back. ²¹ He cried out to the man of God who had come from Judah, "This is what the LORD says: 'You have defied the word of the LORD and have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you. ²² You came back and ate bread and drank water in the place where he told you not to eat or drink. Therefore your body will not be buried in the tomb of your fathers.'

” ²³ When the man of God had finished eating and drinking, the prophet who had brought him back saddled his donkey for him. ²⁴ As he went on his way, a lion met him on the road and killed him, and his body was thrown down on the road, with both the donkey and the lion standing beside it. ²⁵ Some people who passed by saw the body thrown down there, with the lion standing beside the body, and they went and reported it in the city where the old prophet lived. ²⁶ When the prophet who had brought him back from his journey heard of it, he said, “It is the man of God who defied the word of the LORD. The LORD has given him over to the lion, which has mauled him and killed him, as the word of the LORD had warned him.” ²⁷ The prophet said to his sons, “Saddle the donkey for me,” and they did so. ²⁸ Then he went out and found the body thrown down on the road, with the donkey and the lion standing beside it. The lion had neither eaten the body nor mauled the donkey. ²⁹ So the prophet picked up the body of the man of God, laid it on the donkey, and brought it back to his own city to mourn for him and bury him. ³⁰ Then he laid the body in his own tomb, and they mourned over him and said, “Oh, my brother!” ³¹ After burying him, he said to his sons, “When I die, bury me in the grave where the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones. ³² For the message he declared by the word of the LORD against the altar in Bethel and against all the shrines on the high places in the towns of Samaria will certainly come true.” ³³ Even after this, Jeroboam did not change his evil ways, but once more appointed priests for the high places from all sorts of people. Anyone who wanted to become a priest he consecrated for the high places. ³⁴ This was the sin of the house of Jeroboam that led to its downfall and to its destruction from the face of the earth.

13:1 *man of God.* See note on 12:22. (CSB)

Unnamed prophet from Judah. Prophets might come from any tribe and could act independently of the priests and Levites. (TLSB)

from Judah to Bethel. God sent a prophet from the southern kingdom to Bethel in the northern kingdom. Possibly he did this to emphasize that the divinely appointed political division (11:11, 29–39; 12:15, 24) was not intended to establish rival religious systems in the two kingdoms. Two centuries later the prophet Amos from Tekoa in Judah also went to Bethel in the northern kingdom to pronounce God’s judgment on Jeroboam II (Am 7:10–17). (CSB)

Prominent tribe and central territory of Solomon’s kingdom. (TLSB)

13:2 Repetition signifies pity. Cf 2Sm 19:4. *Josiah.* Fulfillment of the prophecy 300 years later (2Ki 23:16) was a matter of record when 1 and 2Ki were written. (TLSB)

Josiah. A prophetic announcement of the rule of King Josiah, who came to the throne in Judah nearly 300 years after the division of the kingdom. (CSB)

will sacrifice the priests of the high places. Fulfilled in 2Ki 23:15–20. (CSB)

human bones. Irony. Worship of some pagan gods (e.g., Molech) involved child sacrifice. (TLSB)

13:3 *sign.* The immediate fulfillment of a short-term prediction would serve to authenticate the reliability of the longer-term prediction (see Dt 18:21–22). (CSB)

13:4 *dried up.* Shriveled up in atrophy, becoming useless. (TLSB)

13:5 *torn down.* Perhaps ordered by Jeroboam himself after the miraculous loss of his hand. (TLSB)

its ashes poured out. Visibly demonstrating God's power to fulfill the words of the prophet (see note on v. 3) and providing a clear sign that Jeroboam's offering was unacceptable to the Lord (see Lev 6:10–11). (CSB)

13:6 *your God.* Should not be taken as implying that Jeroboam no longer considered the Lord as his own God (cf. 2:3; Ge 27:20), but as suggesting that he recognized the prophet as his superior in the theocratic order. (CSB)

Not necessarily sincere repentance. (TLSB)

king's hand was restored. The Lord's gracious response to Jeroboam's request is to be seen as an additional sign (see v. 3) given to confirm the word of the prophet and to move Jeroboam to repentance. (CSB)

13:7 *Come home with me.* Jeroboam attempted to renew his prestige in the eyes of the people by creating the impression that there was no fundamental break between himself and the prophetic order (see 1Sa 15:30 for a similar situation). (CSB)

a reward. Gift that may have served as a bribe. Realizing the man was undeniably a true prophet, Jeroboam hoped to deal with him through kindness rather than force. (TLSB)

13:8–9 *commanded.* No specific reason is given for the prohibition. Perhaps he was to avoid familiarity with idolatrous people. (TLSB)

13:9 *You must not.* The prophet's refusal of Jeroboam's invitation rested on a previously given divine command. It underscored God's extreme displeasure with the apostate worship at Bethel. (CSB)

13:1–10 A man of God from Judah confronts King Jeroboam. Following the example of the bold men and women of God in ancient times, we can proclaim God's Law as we speak out against sin. He gives us the healing Gospel of forgiveness in Jesus, which we share with all who are weighed down by sin and guilt. • Father in heaven, convicted of sin by Your Holy Law, I come to You for the sweet forgiveness promised in the Gospel of Jesus, Your Son, my Savior. Amen. (TLSB)

13:11 *old prophet*. Residing in the city where a golden calf stood, but not raising his voice in protest against it, this old man might have been a prophet of Baal (18:40). We are not told why he tricked the man of God into disobedience (vv 11–19). (TLSB)

13:18 *I too am a prophet, as you are*. A half-truth. It is likely that the old prophet in Bethel had faithfully proclaimed the word of the Lord in former days, but those days had long since passed. (CSB)

13:19 *the man of God returned with him*. Neither the old prophet's lie nor his own need justified disobedience to the direct and explicit command of the Lord. His public action in this matter undermined respect for the divine authority of all he had said at Bethel. (CSB)

13:20 *the word of the LORD came to the old prophet*. The fundamental distinction between a true and a false prophecy here becomes apparent. The false prophecy arises from one's own imagination (Jer 23:16; Eze 13:2, 7) while the true prophecy is from God (Ex 4:16; Dt 18:18; Jer 1:9; 2Pe 1:21). (CSB)

The Lord spoke His judgment through the false prophet. (TLSB)

13:21 *disobeyed*. The fate of the man of God serves as a warning not to be misled by those claiming divine inspiration of a message that clearly contradicts God's revealed Word. Cf 1Sm 6:19; 2Sm 6:6–7 for the severity of the punishment. (TLSB)

13:22 *Eat no bread*. Avoid fellowship and association with idolaters. Cf 1Co 10:14. (TLSB)

your body will not be buried in the tomb of your fathers. The man of God from Judah will die far from his own home and family burial plot. (CSB)

The man of God would die far from his family's burial place, a great shame. (TLSB)

13:23 *after*. The prophet apparently still ate after he heard the warning, when he might have called on the Lord in repentance. When you realize your sins, stop then and there! (TLSB)

donkey. Possibly a generous gesture, if the prophet had been walking. (TLSB)

13:24–25 Odd scene caused people to talk. (TLSB)

13:24 *killed him*. A stern warning to Jeroboam that God takes his word very seriously. (CSB)

the donkey and the lion standing beside it. The remarkable fact that the donkey did not run and the lion did not attack the donkey or disturb the man's body (v. 28) clearly stamped the incident as a divine judgment. This additional miracle was reported in Bethel (v. 25) and provided yet another sign authenticating the message that the man of God from Judah had delivered at Jeroboam's altar. But Jeroboam was still not moved to repentance (v. 33). (CSB)

13:28 *had not eaten.* Confirmation that this was God’s doing, not just a lion hunting. (TLSB)

13:30 *Alas, my brother!* Lying prophet expresses care for, respect of, and kinship with the disobedient prophet. Both were used by God, but both were unsuited to their calling. (TLSB)

laid the body in his own tomb. See v. 22. The old prophet did the only thing left for him to do in order to make amends for his deliberate and fatal deception. (CSB)

13:31 *grave where the man of God is buried.* The old prophet chose in this way to identify himself with the message that the man of God from Judah had given at Bethel. (CSB)

The old prophet sought to assure himself that his own corpse would not be desecrated (v 2; 2Ki 23:16). Humans bent on gaining some advantage do not hesitate to pursue their selfish course, even over the dead bodies of others. (TLSB)

13:32 *Samaria.* As the capital of the northern kingdom, Samaria is used to designate the entire territory of the northern ten tribes (see note on 16:24). However, Samaria was not established until about 50 years after this (16:23–24). The use of the name here reflects the perspective of the author of Kings (see note on Ge 14:14 for a similar instance of the use of a place-name—Dan—of later origin than the historical incident with which it is connected). (CSB)

By the time the prophecy against Bethel was fulfilled, Samaria, not Shechem (12:25), was the Northern Kingdom’s capital. (TLSB)

13:33 *not turn.* Unrepentant. (TLSB)

appointed priests ... from all sorts of people. See 12:31 and note. (CSB)

Appointed, as though he were high priest. (TLSB)

13:34 *sin.* The sin in 12:30 was the establishment of a paganized worship; here it is persistence in this worship with all its attendant evils. (CSB)

13:11–34 An old prophet leads a man of God into sin. Meanwhile, King Jeroboam “did not turn from his evil way” (v 33). The history of God’s chosen people gives numerous examples of people hardening their hearts against the truth of God’s Word. The Lord who calls us to faith must likewise keep us in the faith, which He does through daily repentance and His means of grace. • Omniscient God, You know my heart. Cleanse me from all deceit and self-righteousness. Fill me with faith and the righteousness that is mine in Jesus Christ. Amen. (TLSB)