

THE MAN OF GOD: OBEDIENCE IS NOT OPTIONAL

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There's no better way to caption the lesson than the words of inspiration. "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper" (2 Chron. 20:20). Jeroboam, a man of God, and a false prophet; all learned this truth.

At the close of Solomon's decadent reign and extravagant building projects at the expense of heavy taxation on his subjects, the nation was slipping into idolatry (1 Kings 11:33). His son Rehoboam announced the same heavy-handed oppressive policies at his accession to the throne.

God gave Jeroboam a divine mandate to the throne which was delivered by the prophet Ahijah, who rent a new garment into twelve pieces and gave ten pieces to Jeroboam saying, "I . . . will give ten tribes to thee" (1 Kings 11:29-31; cf. 12:15). Thus motivated by the Spirit of prophecy through Ahijah, Jeroboam proceeded to set up his capital city at Shechem (1 Kings 12:25).

In a stunning about face from the worship of Jehovah, Jeroboam set up two golden bulls for places of worship: one in the north at Dan and the other in the south at Bethel. The ostensible reason for this was to make worship more conveniently located to his subjects so that they would not have to make pilgrimages all the way south to Jerusalem. The assimilation of pagan fertility symbols as

representations of Jehovah was a rejection of the second commandment.

Jeroboam began with a motivation of zeal for the Lord, but he "flipped" because of his fear. "Jeroboam's greatest *fear* was that at some future time the hearts of his subjects might be won over by the ruler occupying the throne of David" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 99). He rejected the divine mandate of the Spirit of prophecy through Ahijah.

Jeroboam assembled the people for worship at Bethel, himself officiating at the altar on a self-appointed festival, appointing priests from among the common people (1 Kings 12:31, 32). Again, the Lord sent Jeroboam an inspired "man of God" to directly confront him by cursing the altar (1 Kings 13:1).

The prophet foresees a son of David named Josiah who will desecrate this very altar with the bones of the priests of the high places who now make offerings here (see 2 Kings 23:15-18). "The altar will be split apart and the ashes on it will be poured out" (1 Kings 13:3).

In defiance of the Spirit of prophecy through the man of God, the king stretches out his hand to have the prophet seized. His hand shrivels, and he is not able to pull it back. Then, the altar is split apart, and its ashes pour out according to the sign from the man of God by the word of Jehovah. Jeroboam petitions the prophet to intercede, that his hand be restored, which the man of God does. Demonstrating the power of the prophet, the king's hand is restored and becomes as it was before.

In response, the king invites the man of God to his home for a meal and offers him a gift. The prophet from Judah declines, even for “half thine house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place.” He has “charged me by the word of the LORD, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest.” The Lord sent the man of God with a message to turn the erring king from his evil ways and not to abide with him in confirmation of his wicked idolatry.

An old prophet living in Bethel has sons who attend the dedication and are witnesses to what the man of God from Judah did and what he had said to the king. The prophet asks, “Which way did he go?” They show him the road that he took, and he rides after him finding him sitting under a tree.

The old lying false prophet (PK 106) told the man of God that the word of the Lord was now to return with him and eat bread and drink. So the true prophet from Judah suddenly abandons faith in the original commandment given him by God, and foolishly follows a deceiver home for his hospitality. Whereupon at table the false prophet, on the spur of the moment, delivers a curse, which is soon fulfilled by his falling prey to a lion. He is then picked up by the posing prophet for burial in his family plot.

Thus by his life the true prophet rejected the Spirit of prophecy which was given through him; and by his death fulfilled the Spirit of prophecy which finally spoke through the imposter. It gave grounds for Jeroboam to reason that the curse originally

delivered at the altar was bogus and but confirmed him in his evil course of leading Israel into idolatry and ultimately spiritualism.

We may flatter ourselves today that we would never be so foolish as to slide into idolatrous worship. However, the counterfeit today is extremely subtle. The religion of self is disguised as the worship of Christ. All self-motivated faith has its origins in the worship of a false christ—ego. What Paul calls being “under the law”, is self-centered faith that is motivated by hope of reward (greed) and fear (anxiety) of hell.

That which accompanies the religion of self is a rejection of the Spirit of prophecy, for the true prophet always points to the cross for conviction of sin and the source of true righteousness, accompanied by the discernment of the Holy Spirit. In 1888 God sent two messengers, A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner, supported by E. G. White (the Spirit of prophecy), with a message of Christ their divine-human Lover. God’s purpose was to draw them away from devotion to self in exchange for His cross which revealed the fullness of God’s love for His people.

The profound truth seems to be that this kind of devotion to Christ, this closer intimacy with Him, was unwelcome. “. . . If there is anything in our world that should inspire enthusiasm, it is the cross of Calvary” (*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 80, 81; 1895). Thus we are brought to the foot of Christ’s cross.

Ellen White did not consider Jones’ or Waggoner’s presentations to be either extreme or radical, but

tried to reason with the brethren who thought they were. “The comment . . . passed upon me and the work that God had given me to do was anything but flattering. Willie White’s name was handled freely and he was ridiculed and denounced, also the names of Elders Jones and Waggoner” (*EGW 1888 Materials*, p. 310, 1889).

She says that the Lord wanted the inspired trio to stay together in America and to fight the battle through to victory. Her own writings indicate that the leading brethren wanted both Ellen White and Waggoner out of the way. “The Lord was not in our leaving America. . . . The Lord would have had W. C. White, his mother, and her workers remain in America.” “There we should have stood shoulder to shoulder, creating a healthful atmosphere to be felt in all our conferences. It was not the Lord who devised this matter. I could not get one ray of light to leave America.” (*Ibid.*, p. 1623, Letter to O. A. Olsen, 127, 1896).

E. J. Waggoner suffered a similar exile in being sent to England in the spring of 1892. There is evidence that similar attempts were made in 1890 to send A. T. Jones to Europe for an extended stay.

Unbelief in the Spirit of prophecy has been subtle and yet sustained over the course of our history on many subjects that she addressed, but none more so than the over 1800 pages having to do with the Minneapolis Conference of 1888. Our “reproach among the heathen” (Joel 2:19) will not be healed until we “believe His prophets”.