

## Masquerade

I Kings 13

### Introduction

I remember touring, for my Christian college one year, in a singing group. We traveled through approximately thirty states. It was quite an education, as we sang in nearly two hundred churches and schools. Eventually, we made our way from the east coast all the way to the west coast. Now that really was an education! While we were there, we decided to see one of the major Hollywood film studios. If you knew anything about my Christian college, you would know why we did not ask for permission.

We went on a tour of one of studios. The tour was Disney-like, with exhibitions, stunt shows, animal tricks, and a behind-the-scenes look at how movies are made. I will never forget the way my mouth just seemed to stay in a dropped open position, primarily out of shock. No, not because I was thrilled and amazed, but because of the way they had so cleverly fooled the American public; the way they had made something inanimate, come alive.

This will date me, but they showed how the *Six Million Dollar Man* jumped from the ground to the top of a building. Even though that actor was somewhat lousy, it looked like he actually jumped. They took us to the water where much of the movie *Jaws* was filmed. *Jaws* was simply a big shark's head that was made of various materials and then, painted with water resistant paint. I will never forget walking down a small street and being shown *Leave it to Beaver's* home. You may remember the front lawn and the big two-story house. That house and the houses next to it, were nothing more than sheets of plywood that were nailed together, propped up, and painted to look like the fronts of houses. When you

looked behind them, however, you saw nothing other than wooden braces holding the façade upright. It all looked so real, but in reality, it was all make believe.

We approach a chapter or two in I Kings that remind me a little of Hollywood. There are no cameras or props, but there are some rather good actors. They deserve an Oscar award for the way they acted the part; the way they fooled everyone. Everyone except one, that is; they never “pulled the wool” over the eyes of God. And God, so to speak, was running the tape. Thus, today, centuries later, we can see it for ourselves. He even lets us in on some things that happen behind the scenes.

I Kings, chapter 13, is a drama about two prophets and a king. Supporting actors include a son who is very ill, some young prophets, a crowd of people, a lion, and a donkey. If you have ever read I Kings, chapter 13, as if it included separate events, then you have missed the overall plot; the theme; the moral. You need to see it all in one sweeping motion picture; simply as one scene connected to another scene.

### Scene 1: A King Who Pretends to Worship God

The first scene displays a king who pretends to worship God. Let us begin reading in chapter 13, as scene one opens. Look at verses 1 through 3.

*Now behold, there came a man of God from Judah to Bethel by the word of the Lord, while Jeroboam was standing by the altar to burn incense. He cried against the altar by the word of the Lord, and said, “O altar, altar, thus says the Lord, ‘Behold, a son*

*shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and human bones shall be burned on you.” Then he gave a sign the same day, saying, “This is the sign which the Lord has spoken, ‘Behold the altar shall be split apart and the ashes which are on it shall be poured out.’”*

Let me set this scene for you. King Jeroboam was the creator of that man-made religion that we studied in our last discussion. He is inaugurating his high altar at Bethel.

He seems to be imitating his predecessor Solomon, who dedicated the temple at Jerusalem. Like Solomon, he chose the feast of tabernacles as the time for this ceremony, although he boldly altered the date of the feast so that it occurred one month later.

Imagine the throng of people arriving from all around this new northern kingdom of Israel, with its ten tribes. Imagine all of the dignified, newly elected priests, the gorgeous shrine that Jeroboam constructed, the garments and the ceremony related to this great day of offering. Then, imagine this new, proud king, the head of the nation, dressed in his finest royal robes, ascending the stairs of that massive altar in order to burn incense before the gods.

At that moment, the Bible tells us, in verse 1, that just as Jeroboam was standing by the altar, perhaps even with his hand outstretched to toss the powdery incense into the flame, when the crowd would have been quiet with expectation and anticipation for this awesome sacrificial act, an unnamed, unknown man shouts the words that we just read. He is simply referred to as “a man of God”.

He shouts, in effect, “Jeroboam, you up there, your altar is a sham; your religion, with all its outward appearances and priestly offices and shrines, is a phony religion, and you are masquerading as a man of God to perform such a sacrifice. But God knows you’re a hypocrite. And that fake altar is going to split open in just a few moments, to prove my words are from the true God of Israel, and to prove, Jeroboam, that you’re masquerading as a high priest.”

Can you imagine that moment? Continue to verse 4.

*Now when the king heard the saying of the man of God, which he cried against the altar in Bethel, Jeroboam stretched out his hand*

*from the altar, saying, “Seize him.” But his hand which he stretched out against him dried up, so that he could not draw it back to himself.*

The Hebrew words are difficult to translate in this context. Whatever happened, Jeroboam’s arm froze or became rigid, as it says in verse 4b,

*. . . so that he could not draw it back to himself.*

Imagine this scene! This verse also indicates that the same hand that Jeroboam was using toward the altar was the hand that pointed at the prophet of God. Now, the king is unable to control that hand. It is frozen in midair, before all the people. This frustrated, probably very frightened king is trying to get his arm to go down, move, bend, or do anything. Then, there is more to this scene, in verse 5.

*The altar also was split apart and the ashes were poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the Lord.*

Before the soldiers could even move to arrest this “man of God,” the altar began to rumble and crack apart. God is providing special effects, but there are no trick camera shots in this. That magnificent altar and the proud, robed king are revealed as powerless!

Jeroboam changes his tone of voice now! Continue to verse 6a.

*The king said to the man of God, “Please entreat the Lord your God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored to me.” . . .*

A key insight into Jeroboam is in his use of the word, “your”. Did you notice that word? Look again,

*“Please entreat the Lord your God, and pray for me . . .”*

So, in front of everyone, verse 6b tells us,

*. . . So the man of God entreated the Lord, and the king’s hand was restored to him, and it became as it was before.*

Let us stop for a moment. Slip into the royal sandals of Jeroboam and imagine all of this has just happened to you. You have been rebellious against God; you have formed a false religion; you are the chief “kahuna” in your world and are answerable to no one. Then, God really gets your attention. Your hand is disfigured and, when you plead for healing, it is healed. In that moment, the reality of your false religion collapses around you. The altar, where you

have been worshipping, comes crashing to the ground. You suddenly see your life as it really is – nothing more than stage props and costumes; it is a masquerade.

What would you do next? Skip to verses 33 and 34 and read Jeroboam's reaction.

*After this event Jeroboam did not return from his evil way, but again he made priests of the high places from among all the people; any who would, he ordained, to be priests of the high places. This event became sin to the house of Jeroboam, even to blot it out and destroy it from off the face of the earth.*

Now, back to you and me. May I ask a question, the answer to which only you know? Is God trying to get your attention? Some of you have had a stint in the hospital. Some of you have had a brush with death. Some of you have gone through earth shattering experiences. And, while God brought you through it, you knew He wanted your attention. What will verse 33 of your biography read? "After this event, you ???? Repented? Obeyed? Trusted? Believed?"

Verse 33 for Jeroboam, reads, and I will amplify it, "After this event, Jeroboam went back to his old ways, unmoved and unchanged!"

Now, the initial reaction of Jeroboam is to save face by, perhaps, manipulating this godly man's allegiance. Jeroboam will try to buy this man's loyalty. Look at verses 7 and 8.

*Then the king said to the man of God, "Come home with me and refresh yourself, and I will give you a reward." But the man of God said to the king, "If you were to give me half your house I would not go with you, nor would I eat bread or drink water in this place."*

If you would like to know how to refuse an invitation from someone to come to their house to eat, this is not necessarily the way to do it!

Actually, there is a bigger issue at stake here, the man of God will not fellowship with an idolatrous king. Why?! Look at verses 9 and 10.

*For so it was commanded me by the word of the Lord, saying, "You shall eat no bread, nor drink water, nor return by the way which you came." So he went another way,*

*and did not return by the way which he came to Bethel.*

## **Scene Two: A Prophet Who Claims to Hear Angels**

The second scene now begins. At first, I did not understand why this scene was included in the text. This man of God will be deceived by a prophet who had long ago compromised his role and position. This courageous prophet, who stood up to Jeroboam, will soon die from a lion attack as an act of God's judgment. It seemed cruel, until I understood it as another scene of the same drama. Let us begin reading at verse 11.

*Now an old prophet was living in Bethel; and his sons came and told him all the deeds which the man of God had done that day in Bethel; the words which he had spoken to the king, these also they related to their father.*

Now, stop a moment. This verse tells us a lot about this old prophet.

### **He ignored his position as a true prophet**

1. First, he ignored his position as a true prophet.

The text tells us that he was a prophet. Later, he will speak for God. He is also referred to as old, so undoubtedly then, the man had lived and ministered before the apostasy of Jeroboam; before the division of the kingdom; before the false religion was instigated by Jeroboam. Yet, according to this verse, we find that he has chosen to live in Bethel, the very town of this great false altar, and his voice was silent!

### **He neglected his role as a godly father**

2. He also neglected his role as a godly father.

Verse 11 informs us that his sons were at the altar dedication, by telling us that they had observed the godly man speak out against the king. The question is, "Where were you Dad?! You should have seen the man of God speak with the signs of God's power. And, more importantly, why haven't *you* spoken to the king?"

Where are men today, who gain the respect of their children by being the voice of righteousness in their homes and in their worlds?

You might say, “Well, Stephen, he was an old prophet, so perhaps he couldn’t move around easily or maybe he was even bedridden.”

Let me show you how slow and incapacitated he was. Look at verses 12 and 13.

***Their father said to them, “Which way did he go?” Now his sons had seen the way which the man of God who came from Judah had gone. Then he said to his sons, “Saddle the donkey for me.” So they saddled the donkey for him and he rode away on it.***

These verses do not portray a picture of an old man who can hardly move. I have had my share of riding horses and, if horses are automobiles, then donkeys are go-carts. They do not come with shock absorbers and they are stubborn. It takes a strong hand to control them.

This old prophet, before you know it, is saddled up and headin’ out.

### **He disregarded true revelation from God**

3. Finally, he disregarded true revelation from God and invented his own.

Notice verses 14 through 17.

***So he went after the man of God and found him sitting under an oak; and he said to him, “Are you the man of God who came from Judah?” And he said, “I am.” Then he said to him, “Come home with me and eat bread.” He said, “I cannot return with you, nor go with you, nor will I eat bread or drink water with you in this place. For a command came to me by the word of the Lord, ‘You shall eat no bread, nor drink water there; do not return by going the way which you came.’”***

He repeats the same words that he said to Jeroboam, as if to say, “God said it; I’ll obey it; period!”

It was that obedience to the word of God that kept this man of God faithful. It will be that very thing that Satan now twists into a potential snare. Continue to verses 18 and 19.

***He said to him, “I also am a prophet like you, 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.’” But he lied to him. So he***

***went back with him, and ate bread in his house and drank water.***

This passage serves as a warning. We should avoid and disregard the advice of others when it directly conflicts with what we already know to be God’s will. It should be disregarded, even when it is from a gray headed prophet, who bears dignity and reverence in his walk and speech. Satan is called the angel of light!

Bette Eadies book, *Embraced by the Light*, is simply one more book that was written to teach a different gospel than that of the Word of God. She supposedly had a near death experience where she, among other things, was embraced by “the light”. That light was supposedly Jesus Himself, who taught her, among other things, that all roads are leading to heaven; we are all becoming divine; all religions are pleasing to God. Her book is being read and quoted by the religious community and “Christians”.

I recently read most of the book, entitled, *Embraced by the Light and the Bible*. It provides an answer to her “visions,” in the light of Scripture. It is an exposé that basically reveals the way she has repackaged traditional Mormon doctrine in New Age terminology.

Think, for a moment, how you would react if an angel were to come into your bedroom around two o’clock in the morning? You are fast asleep and, suddenly, your room is filled with light. You are overwhelmed with feelings of love and acceptance. The light is dazzling, beautiful, and warm. Then, the angel, with an incredible voice that moves you to tears, explains that the world, though divided by many religions, is entirely acceptable to God. He will allow all people to enjoy divine status one day; everyone will enjoy their own paradise. No one will be judged by God the Father; all are accepted and loved.

You lose all track of time. It seems like only a moment before the angel disappears. You notice the clock, however, and realize that it is four o’clock in the morning. For two hours you have been mesmerized by this incredible visitor. Then, suddenly, he leaves.

What would you do? At four o’clock in the morning, calling your pastor is not one of the answers! You can call me, by the way, but that is not really the answer.

Everything the angel told you sounded like the Bible, yet it contradicted the Bible’s themes of sin and

redemption, heaven and hell, faith in Christ alone, etc. Let us look at what the Bible says.

Turn to Galatians, chapter 1, and look at verses 6 and 7.

*I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.*

In other words, people are using the same terminology, they are talking about the same thing, except they are twisting it and turning it and rewriting it. Now notice verse 8.

*But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!*

Accursed! In other words, tell him to go on to hell ahead of schedule. The angel who delivered the message, was from hell, although he seemed to be from heaven. The preacher who preached another gospel, Paul wrote, is going to hell, although he is clergy. Paul “pulls no punches”. In fact, just to make certain the reader understood, he repeated it in verse 9.

*As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be . . .*

(a best selling author; a well-received speaker in churches),

*. . . accursed!*

Do you think Paul did not know how this sounded? Do you think Paul did not know the division he created between theological truth and theological error? Do you think he did not understand the enemies he would make? Look at verse 10.

*For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.*

In other words, Paul is admitting that these were hard words to write. He reminds the Galatian believers, however, that he is not writing to please them; he is writing to protect them.

Paul is writing to protect believers from falling into the trap that this faithful man of God fell into. Return, please, to I Kings, chapter 13. Look at verses 20 through 25.

*Now it came about, as they were sitting down at the table, that the word of the Lord came to the prophet who had brought him back.*

*and he cried to the man of God who came from Judah, saying, “Thus says the Lord, ‘Because you have disobeyed the command of the Lord, and have not observed the commandment which the Lord your God commanded you,*

*but have returned and eaten bread and drunk water in the place of which He said to you, ‘Eat no bread and drink no water’; your body shall not come to the grave of your fathers.’”*

*It came about after he had eaten bread and after he had drunk, that he saddled the donkey for him, for the prophet whom he had brought back.*

*Now when he had gone, a lion met him on the way and killed him, and his body was thrown on the road, with the donkey standing beside it; the lion also was standing beside the body.*

*And behold, men passed by and saw the body thrown on the road, and the lion standing beside the body; so they came and told it in the city where the old prophet lived.*

## **A Man of God Who Disobeyed God**

Now, in order to understand the object lesson that this man’s disobedience will teach to the nation, let us ask the questions that everyone was probably asking that day.

### **Who is this man?**

1. The first question is, “Who is this man?”

The answer would soon follow that this man is the prophet of God who prophesied boldly before King Jeroboam.

Now, since the lion stands like a sentinel over the body, harming neither the body nor the donkey, and the donkey is not running away, God must be behind this.

### **What did this man of God do to bring about judgment and death from God?**

2. The second question then, would be, “What did this man of God do, between this morning and this evening, to bring about judgment and death from God?”

The answer would soon be provided by the aged prophet, who came to bury him, that the man disobeyed God’s commands.

They would then think, “Oh! If he disobeyed God and God took him, and we are disobeying God in our idolatry, we have no hope of living!”

### **What would cause this man of God to disobey the command of God?**

3. The third question, and this contains the impact, “What would cause this man of God to disobey the command of God?”

The answer is that he was deceived by a false prophet, with false visions and false spirituality; a phony who was masquerading as a prophet.

One of my commentator friends, who wrote nearly two hundred years ago, said it this way,

*And so, the men of Bethel and the strangers among them – and thousands of strangers who would be present in Bethel at this special time of sacrificing on this new altar – would understand that this man of God, although a prophet, had paid the penalty of his disobedience with his life. They would perceive that their new teacher, who had appeared among them, in the presence of their new king, had also presumed to countermand the Law of the Almighty. Jeroboam was acting the part of a priest, sacrificing to a new god, deceiving the people with a new worship. The people would understand that, as God had not spared his own messenger, He would not spare them as well.*

## **Christian – Be Alert!**

Now, in the New Testament believer’s life, there are no kings with golden calves and great altars, but there are deceivers. Did you know that the New Testament warns the believer, on several occasions, to be alert? The Greek verb, “be alert,” appears in some interesting contexts. Let us look at ways to avoid the snare that this man of God fell into, along with other potential pitfalls. We only have the time to jot down a challenge or two as we read several verses.

In I Corinthians, chapter 16, verse 13a, we are told to,

***Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith . . .***

The context of the verses prior to this reveal that these believers have an open door for effective service.

### **Be alert to emerging ministry and its potential**

1. Challenge number one is to be alert to emerging ministry and its potential.

Howard Hendricks, whom you may have heard of and who was one of my professors in seminary, once said, “In every generation, the church of Jesus Christ has missed the mark somewhere. Do you know where it is missing the mark today?”

What potential ministry is being overlooked and passed by due to sleepy believers not being alert? In our church there is a current potential in the area of a sports ministry. Be on the alert for ministry potential!

Now look at Colossians, chapter 4, verse 2.

***Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving***

### **Be alert to prayer and its priority**

2. Challenge number two is to be alert to prayer and its priority.

Communication for spiritual direction outside the bounds of prayer, Scripture, and godly counsel are strictly forbidden! It is no wonder that prayer is so emphasized in Scripture. That is the connection!

Did you know that spiritism has gone online? The New Age Forum on CompuServe has drawn 45,000 participants worldwide. The three year old network includes information about astrology, tarot cards, mysticism, electronic conferences, and a library. A growing number of online services cater to spiritual seekers. Users say the discussions have changed their lives.

I was in the grocery store last night. It was a quick run to the store for necessities; such as, milk for the baby, a dozen doughnuts for . . . as a reward! As I stood in the check-out line, I read the headlines on all the magazines. The headline on this month’s *Life* magazine caught my eye.

In big letters, across the front cover of the magazine, was the word, “DREAMS”. The bylines read, “Detect illnesses before doctors can”; “Overcome depression”; “Unlock the mysteries of the

brain”. My brain has no mystery, I just need a glazed doughnut every so often. Everything seems to work after that!

The lengthy article basically exposed the age old theory that we have all of the answers within us, we just need to tap into them. Dreams are becoming a popular way to see into ourselves and our future.

By the way, I could not help but feel badly for women in our society. There is terrific pressure, overt and subtle, to look perfect. I noticed a woman’s picture in the magazine. She was supposedly fast asleep, yet her hair was brushed perfectly to one shoulder, her mascara and eye liner were just right, and she was wearing lipstick. I hope none of the ladies look at subliminal messages like that and think, “Well, I’m not even measuring up when I’m asleep!”

No! I hope you ladies look at that type of stuff and say, “Give me a break.”

In reality, when that lady, who is a professional model, is really sleeping, she, like every other human being, looks like she has been run over by a truck. That is why we got up early this morning to repair the damage!

Well, as I expected, the article ended by saying,

*The chasm is being straddled between scientists and New Agers, for whom dreams are as vital a tool for self-realization as crystals or yoga. They title their dreams, conferring on them the status of fine art. They hang Native American dream catchers or shells by their beds, along with cloth and feather webs designed to snare bad dreams. Some even drink water before going to bed in hopes that they will have to awaken, thus having a better chance to remember their dreams! Listening to the most zealous of them, one might believe that if we could spend twenty-four hours a day dreaming, we could cure cancer, end pollution, and achieve world peace.*

Now look at Ephesians, chapter 6, verses 10 through 18, which talk about putting on the armor of God. Verse 18 tells us,

***With all prayer and petition, pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance . . .***

**Be alert to spiritual enemies and their purpose**

3. Challenge number three is to be alert to spiritual enemies and their purpose.

Someone once asked tongue-in-cheek, “Why is it that opportunity knocks only once, yet temptation bangs on the door constantly?”

John Bunyan, the author of *Pilgrims Progress*, wrote a lesser known allegory entitled, *The Holy War*. In it, he wrote about Mansoul, a city that the enemy was trying to overthrow.

Mansoul had five city gates: the ear gate, the eye gate, the nose gate, the feel gate, and the mouth gate. The enemy of Mansoul would attack at one of the gates daily. He would speak through the ear gate, or paint vivid and alluring pictures to the eye gate. The interesting thing is that Mansoul, in Bunyan’s allegory, could never be toppled by the attacks. The only way the enemy could conquer the city was by someone opening one of the gates.

Paul said to be on the alert with all perseverance! One of our greatest struggles is endurance. We are, by nature, sprinters, not long distance runners. I think it is interesting that, if this man of God had kept riding until he returned home, rather than stop and sit under an oak tree in Bethel, he would have avoided disaster.

Turn to Acts and look at chapter 20, verses 28 through 31. Verses 30 through 31a tell us,

***and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert . . .***

**Be alert to false teachers and their plans**

4. Challenge number four is to be alert to false teachers and their plans.

Did it ever occur to you that your enemy has enough information about you to know when, where, how much, and how often to fire the darts? It is no wonder that the Bible says, in Proverbs, chapter 4, verse 23,

***Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.***

Christian, *be alert!*

## **Conclusion**

I want to mention one more thing about the drama that occurred in I Kings, chapter 13, in addition to the king masquerading as a priest and the old prophet masquerading as a recipient of fresh visions. The

godly man, who disobeyed the Lord's direct command and as a result, became an illustration of what God would do to Jeroboam and the idolatrous Israelites, even in his death, spoke.

Just as the man prophesied, a king came, and his name was Josiah. Three hundred years later, King Josiah came to Bethel. Let me point out what happened three hundred years after the lion took the godly man's life. Turn to II Kings, chapter 23, and look at verses 15 through 17.

***Furthermore, the altar that was at Bethel and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin, had made, even that altar and the high place he broke down. Then he demolished its stones, ground them to dust, and burned the Asherah. Now when Josiah turned, he saw the graves that were there on the mountain, and he sent and took the bones from the graves and burned them on the altar and defiled it according to word of the Lord which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these things. Then he said, "What is this monument that I see?" And***

***the men of the city told him, "It is the grave of the man of God who came from Judah and proclaimed these things which you have done against the altar of Bethel.***

Imagine, three hundred years later, the people of Bethel still repeat that man's prophecy. And, notice that he is remembered, not as the disobedient servant, but as the "man of God"! Continue to verse 18.

***He [Josiah] said, "Let him alone; let no one disturb his bones." So they left his bones undisturbed with the bones of the prophet who came from Samaria.***

Even though the man was dead, he had, for three hundred years, spoken.

For us today, be alert; be on guard. Remember that the best safeguard for tomorrow is the godly use of today. As the song says,

*In my life, Lord, be glorified, be glorified;*

*In my life, Lord, be glorified today.*

*In my heart, Lord, be glorified, be glorified;*

*In my heart, Lord, be glorified today.*

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 8/20/1995 by Stephen Davey.

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