

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

The Books Of Kings: The Kings Of Israel And Judah From Solomon To The Babylonian Captivity

II. The Divided Kingdom, 1 Kings 12:1-22:53

C. Heeding Biblical Epistemology To Avoid Strong Deception

(1 Kings 13:1-32 with 2 Kings 23:15-18)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

We believers in Christ face a lot of potent deception today, a fact we can readily illustrate (as follows):

(1) We face it on Twitter: A study by researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology found "that false information" on Twitter "travels six times faster than the truth and reaches far more people." (Seth Borenstein, "Study finds fake news travels faster than the truth on Twitter," Republican-American, March 9, 2018, p. 4A)

(2) We face it in evangelical circles: typical of what often occurs, Christian "A" is criticized by Christian "B" for putting "truth above love," and Christian "B" supports this charge with 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, 13 that teaches if a believer has the greatest of spiritual gifts and faith and hope even to move mountains, but lacks "love," he is nothing!

Such criticism creates a dilemma for many: if one takes a stand for "truth" and is criticized for putting "truth over love," he may wonder if he must "fudge" a little on the "truth" to avoid lovelessness! How can he know for sure?

Need: *Accordingly, we ask, "What does God direct that we do to avoid succumbing even to strong deception?!"*

- I. We recall from our last message that Jeroboam formed a potently deceptive religious syncretism:**
 - A. Jeroboam put golden calves in Dan and Bethel, telling his subjects that these were the gods that brought Israel up out of Egypt, so they should worship them rather than going to the Jerusalem temple, 1 Kings 12:28-29.
 - B. This was a potently deceptive religious syncretism, for it mingled pagan belief with strong biblical precedents:
 1. The use of gold calves for worship mimicked Aaron's effort back at Sinai in Exodus 32:1-4, and this directive was not pure paganism, but a syncretism: Ancient Near Eastern gods often rode bulls (B. K. C., O. T., p. 512, citing W. F. Albright, From the Stone Age to Christianity, 1957, p. 299), so to say Israel's God, a Spirit (John 4:24a), rode a calf, fit the culture around Israel and also seemed biblically plausible.
 2. The places of worship chosen by Jeroboam were biblically plausible, too: (a) Abraham had sacrificed at Bethel upon first entering the Promised Land (Gen. 12:1-8), (b) Jacob's dream which led him to name the place "Beth-el," or "House of God," occurred at Bethel (Gen. 28:10-22) while (c) Dan was where Moses' grandson began an apostate priesthood (Judges 18:30; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Judges 18:30).
 3. Jeroboam's subjects thus went to Dan and Bethel instead of Jerusalem to worship the Lord, 1 Kings 12:30.
- II. So potent was the deception of this syncretism, God had to get an uncorrupted prophet from down in the Southern Kingdom of Judah to travel up north to Israel to denounce its syncretism, 1 Kings 13:1. In doing so, the Lord ordered the prophet from Judah NOT to eat with anyone in Israel, but to go home a different way than he went that he avoid corruptive fellowship with everyone in Israel, 1 Kings 13:7-9.**
- III. However, after denouncing the syncretism, this prophet succumbed to deception so that God slew him:**
 - A. The prophet of Judah initially biblically discharged his ministry and began to return home, 1 Kings 13:2-10:
 1. He obeyed God's call to denounce Jeroboam's syncretism, announcing at Bethel how Josiah would be born, rule Judah as its king and offer the bones of false prophets on the altar, that the sign that this event would occur would be the immediate rending of the altar with its ashes being poured out, 1 Kings 13:2-3.
 2. Jeroboam who was present then stretched out his arm, pointed at the prophet and called for his arrest only to see his hand shrivel and the altar split with its ashes being poured out, 1 Kings 13:4-5.
 3. The king begged the man from Judah to ask God to restore his hand, so he complied, and God graciously healed Jeroboam, so Jeroboam invited the prophet to a meal where he would reward him, 1 Kings 13:6-7.
 4. The man from Judah declined the invitation, saying God did not want him to eat with anyone in Israel, but even to go home a different way than he came to avoid fellowship with anyone in Israel, 1 Kings 13:8-9.
 5. Thus, the prophet from Judah began to go home another way in obedience to God's words, 1 Kings 13:10.
 6. However, this prophet himself then succumbed to a strong deception so that God slew him, 1 Kings 13:11-24: an older prophet corrupted by Jeroboam's syncretism found the prophet from Judah resting under an oak, so he lied to him, saying he was a prophet, and that God's angel told him have the prophet from Judah eat with him, 1 Kings 13:11-18. The man from Judah heeded the corrupted prophet's words, for the aged prophet was culturally superior and used biblical terms as if he walked with God. The man from Judah thus ate with the older man, only to have God judge him to be slain with a lion, 1 King 13:19-24.

[The lion and the slain man's donkey, enemies, calmly stood by the prophet's body. The lion neither mauled the donkey nor ate the body, showing God caused the killing, Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 515.]

IV. In realizing the truth of the slain prophet's denunciation of Jeroboam's syncretism, the older, corrupted prophet took steps to guard his own honor when the slain prophet's denunciation was later fulfilled:

- A. Realizing through God's punishment of the prophet from Judah the validity of his denunciation of Jeroboam's syncretism, the old prophet told his sons to bury him in the slain prophet's grave that his bones might not be unearthed and desecrated by future king Josiah's coming religious purge at Bethel, 1 Kings 13:25-32.
- B. Thus, 290 years later, Josiah did not unearth the bones of the slain prophet, but left his grave alone, honoring him and the the older prophet who was buried with him, 2 Kings 23:15-18; *Ibid.*, Ryrie, fn. to 1 Kings 13:2.

V. Nevertheless, the prophet from Judah was WITHOUT EXCUSE for BEING DECEIVED, for he had VIOLATED God's BIBLICAL EPISTEMOLOGY, the BASIS of KNOWING GOD'S TRUTH:

- A. The Hebrew text at 1 Kings 13:21 shows the prophet of Judah disobeyed God's order not to eat with the older prophet **because** he had **ALREADY** "been rebellious" (*marah*, B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 598) against the "mouth" (*peh*, *Ibid.*, p. 504-505) of "Jahweh." He had chosen to heed the "**mouth**" of the **older prophet ABOVE Jahweh's "mouth,"** an **errant epistemology**, an errant way of *knowing reality!*
- B. When the corrupted prophet saw by God's use of a lion to slay the prophet from Judah that God had punished him, the corrupted prophet commented, *highlighting* the slain prophet's *epistemological error*: he put the sign of the definite object, *et*, before the phrase, "mouth of Jahweh" to **emphasize** how the slain prophet had violated the "[very] **MOUTH** of **JAHWEH**," 1 Kings 13:26; Kittel, Bib. Heb., p. 535; *Ibid.*, B. D. B., p. 84-85.

VI. We then note HOW this lesson applies to equip us to AVOID even STRONG DECEPTION TODAY:

- A. God no longer speaks to **us vocally** by "mouth" as with the prophets, but 2 Timothy 3:16 claims **written Scripture** is "God breathed," *theopneustos*, that God "breathed out" Scripture's words so that they "emanate directly from His own mouth," Rene Pache, The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture, 1971, p. 45-46.
- B. Thus, the "mouth of the Lord" for **US** is **WRITTEN SCRIPTURE** in the **AUTOGRAPH MANUSCRIPTS**, cf. 2 Peter 1:21; Matthew 5:18; *Ibid.*, Ryrie, fn. to Matthew 5:18. **We must thus heed written Scripture above all other authorities to the contrary as God's way for us to avoid being deceived, 2 Timothy 3:13-17!**

Lesson: *In replacing reliance on the words he heard from God's mouth for the words he heard from the mouth of the older, corrupted prophet, the prophet from Judah believed a lie and thus disobeyed God, so the Lord slew him with a lion to support the validity of his message that had denounced Jeroboam's potently deceptive syncretism.*

Application: *To avoid even strong deception in our era, (1) may we hold to the divine inspiration of written Scripture above all other authorities on how to gain eternal life and heed the Bible's call to trust alone in Christ alone for salvation, John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-9; 2 Timothy 3:15-16. (2) Then, to avoid yielding even to strong deception, (a) may we rely upon written Scripture, the words of the "mouth of the Lord" for us today (2 Timothy 3:15-17) above all other sources of authority to the contrary in order to define what is true.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

In our introduction, we reported that, typical of what happens a lot in evangelical circles today, Christian "A" is criticized by Christian "B" as putting "truth above love," and Christian "B" backs this charge with 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, 13 that states if one has the greatest of spiritual gifts and faith and hope, but then lacks "love," he is nothing!

Such criticism produces a dilemma for many believers: they want to uphold "truth," but then wonder if they can become unloving for doing so, that they must then "fudge" some on the "truth" to avoid become unloving!

To avoid being deceived on the matter, we turn to the "mouth of the Lord" for today, **written Scripture**, and that **above all other sources of authority**, and note that (1) 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, 13 does **not** teach "love" is greater than "truth," but that it is greater than spiritual gifts, faith and hope. Christian "B" thus misapplies this passage!

(2) Also, in the **context** at 1 Corinthians 13:6 ESV, the "love" Paul describes "does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth." **True** "love" supports the "truth," so only a **false** "love" tolerates departing from it!

(3) Thus, the "mouth of the Lord" for today -- written Scripture -- shows Christian "A" who takes stands on issues to uphold "truth" is aligned with **true** "love" while Christian "B" who charged him as wrongly putting "truth above love" is aligned with a **false** "love"! Heeding the "mouth of the Lord" keeps us from being deceived on this!

May we trust in Christ to be saved. May we then practice biblical epistemology, relying on Scripture, today's "mouth of the Lord" for us, above all other sources of authority to the contrary, that we might avoid succumbing even to strong deception!