

**“Jeroboam: The Wicked King”**  
*Who’s the Boss? – A series on the Kings*  
*1 Kings 13:1-14:20*

**Introduction:** Take your Bibles and turn to 1 Kings 13, 1 Kings chapter 13.

Jeremy Lin is a basketball star for the NBA’s Houston Rockets. Before the season last year he signed a 3-year \$25 million deal with them because of his stellar performance the year before with the New York Knicks. For the Knicks he had come off the bench after the starting point guard got hurt and Lin had a fantastic game that led to him gaining the starting job. His play as the starting point guard for the Knicks over the next few weeks of that season led to them going on a long winning streak, and eventually led to what the sports world called Linsanity. Jeremy Lin is a Taiwanese player and he recently had the opportunity to speak at a youth conference in Taiwan. He was telling the crowd about his rise to stardom from being a bench player to a multi-million dollar a year kind of player. He had big expectations placed on him for his first year with the Rockets and it was an utter failure. It was supposed to go so much better than it did. Jeremy spoke at this youth conference and told them about how he had bought into the lie of finding his identity in his job and in his fame and in his money and in his success instead of in the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, Jeremy Lin is a devout follower of Jesus, but in the heat of the NBA season he got sucked into thinking wrongly about all of his current failure in light of his past success. He went on to tell the thousands of people at the conference that they too needed to find their identity in Christ. He clearly presented man’s sinfulness, our just penalty for our sin, God’s love in sending Jesus, and our need to repent from sin and believe in Jesus Christ for forgiveness and eternal life. The point of his talk was clearly to point people to the saving hope found only in Jesus Christ. If you were writing a news story about this for say, Espn.com, you would think that you might title it – “Lin Calls Fans to Follow Jesus” or “Lin lost faith in game, but not in God” or even “Lin struggles with identity.”

But, here was the title of Espn.com’s article on Jeremy Lin’s talk – “Jeremy Lin: Coaches Lost Faith in Me.” They took the title from one small phrase in Lin’s talk where he was describing for his fans his descent into frustration and discouragement. His point was not to complain about his coaches or question his standing with the organization, but rather to lay the groundwork for how much he needed the Lord in the midst of his difficulty. And yet, the Espn journalist missed it. They totally misunderstood or disregarded Jeremy’s main point.

It is easy to do the same thing when we come to an OT narrative like the one we find in 1 Kings 13-14. In this narrative we will find the rest of the story of King Jeroboam. We saw last week that Jeroboam was the rival king. He was given rule over the 10 northern tribes of Israel by God to rival the house of David, and yet through his own rival trust, rival authority, and rival worship he became a rival to God himself. This became a defining reality for the life of Jeroboam. He was given an unconditional promise from God that he would be made king over the 10 Northern Tribes, and he was given a conditional promise from God that his dynasty would be established like David’s was established if only he would follow the Lord with his whole heart, just like David had done. We saw last week that he did not do that. He trusted in his own word rather than God’s and therefore he went his own way and went so far as to create a rival worship to the Temple Worship that had been setup in Jerusalem.

Chapter 13 picks up right where chapter 12 left off – with Jeroboam in the midst of idolatrous worship. While chapter 12 was all about what Jeroboam had done in making a kingdom for himself, chapter 13 is all about the consequences of these fateful choices that Jeroboam makes. We will see that God sends a man from Judah to pronounce judgment on this idolatrous worship, but by the end of the chapter that man is dead and another prophet of God is burying him in his own tomb. Then in chapter 14 we have another prophet who is consulted by Jeroboam because his own son is sick and he wants to know what will happen to him. So, in this chapter and a half that tells us the rest of the story of Jeroboam, the King of Israel, we have several different things that we could focus our attention on. We could explore the wicked heart of Jeroboam. We could focus on the 4 or 5 main characters. We could look at the 3 different men of God in the text and examine their unique roles in the story. We could even seek to answer all of the questions that plague our minds when we read some of the perplexing details of the interaction between the man of God from Judah and the old prophet from Bethel. But all of those pursuits would be like missing the main point of Jeremy Lin’s talk at the youth rally. In fact, we are considering a big chunk of the text this morning because taken together it packs a powerful punch and makes a life-shaping point. In reading through chapter 13 and the first part of chapter 14 you can hardly miss the main point because the oft-repeated phrase, “the word of the Lord” saturates the text. That is the main point of the original author to the original hearers. He is pointing out to them, and to us the importance and value of the Word of God. So, as we work our way through the text this morning we will be considering 5 timeless truths about God’s Word. Let’s begin by considering the text starting at chapter 13:1 and reading through 13:10.

#### I. The Word of the Lord Speaks Against Wickedness – 13:1-10

- a. Jeroboam was continuing on in his wicked practice of idolatry and of setting up a rival worship to the true worship happening in Jerusalem. You will remember that right belief and right practice became dangerous to Jeroboam, not because they were now false but because if the people followed God they might not follow Jeroboam. So he created a whole scheme of false worship with golden bulls and high places and shrines and fake priests to make sure that people didn’t go back to Jerusalem.
- b. With Condemnation
  - i. Well, Yahweh God is not going to simply sit idly by and watch this happen to his people, but rather he is going to speak to it through the mouth of one of his prophets. This man of God from Judah would clearly be a stranger among the idolatrous worship service that was happening. He was not there to worship a bull, but rather he was to condemn an altar at the command of God. He was sent by God with a word from God. And so he speaks. He speaks a word of condemnation upon the altar on which they are offering this wicked and idolatrous worship.
  - ii. Can you imagine the scene? The crowd of Israelites are all looking on as their king is offering his sacrifice on his altar at his specified place to his hand-made god, and then this man from Judah interrupts the whole ordeal and boldly speaks a word of condemnation against the very thing that is at the center of this idolatrous worship – the altar? Those Israelites left that church service with a “you will never believe what happened in church today” kind of story.
  - iii. The man of Judah faithfully declares the message that the Lord has given him by stating, “Thus says the Lord” and he goes on to tell them that there will be a son from the house of David who’s name will be Josiah who will obliterate this false worship by getting rid of the priests and defiling the altar by burning human bones upon it.
  - iv. There are no punches pulled here by God. His Word speaks plainly against wickedness with words of condemnation. It will not go unpunished or unchecked. Though it may for

a season, as it did in Israel, and though this judgment brought by Josiah was still some 280 years away, the Word of the Lord made clear the mind of the Lord on this false worship that was happening in Bethel. No one left that day wondering how the true God of Heaven felt about this rival worship. The Word of the Lord speaks against wickedness with condemnation.

c. With Authority

- i. This condemnation is coupled with authority. The Word of the Lord through the mouth of the man of God from Judah was given on this day to Jeroboam with great authority. In verse 3 he tells them that this word from the Lord is accompanied by a sign. This is necessary because Josiah didn't immediately appear on the scene and start his reforms. This event was hundreds of years away and so God gives an immediate sign to show that the yet to come prophecy is true. And sure enough we read in verse 5 that this sign comes true as the altar was torn down, or literally torn apart and the ashes fell to the ground. This word for torn apart is a word that Jeroboam has heard before from God's prophet. Back in chapter 11 he was told by Ahijah the prophet that 10 tribes of the kingdom were being torn out of Solomon's hands and given to Jeroboam, and now here in chapter 13 he hears that word again. It is a word of judgment and condemnation and it is coupled here with a sign of great power and authority. Without a human hand touching the altar and at the very moment of the proclamation of the sign, the very thing happened. Everyone, including Jeroboam, knew that there was something supernatural happening here – God was present and God was speaking against the wickedness of the Israelites.
- ii. But Jeroboam was too busy opposing God to be listening to God. Verse 4 tells us about Jeroboam's reaction to this rogue prophet of God that has found his way into their idolatrous midst. Jeroboam refuses to put up with an interruptive word from the Lord and so he stretches out his hand from before the very altar that was being condemned and said "Seize him!" Instead of hearing the prophet he was interested in getting rid of the prophet. This is nothing new. He had already made clear that he would go to any length, even creating false places of worship and false gods and false priests all to protect his power and position, and so at this point he certainly isn't going to let a puny little prophet get in his way.
- iii. But God had other ideas, and he responds to Jeroboam's stiff arm with a literal stiff arm. God dried up Jeroboam's arm so that he cannot draw it back to his body. Sometimes God has to bring drastic physical limitation to get an audience with us, and this is what he did with Jeroboam. At the very same moment the altar before which Jeroboam is standing to offer his idolatrous worship is torn in two by the supernatural power of God and the ashes fall to the ground, and all of this stands as validity to the message of the prophet of God. The Word of the Lord had come to speak against wickedness and it came with great authority.
- iv. So there Jeroboam stands before a broken altar with a paralyzed arm pointing at the prophet of God, and miraculously his tune changes. God has gotten his attention, at least momentarily, and his lips that just spoke of violence against God's man, now speak softly to God's prophet to ask of the Lord his God to restore his hand. So the prophet does entreat of the Lord to restore Jeroboam's hand and the Lord does so and Jeroboam's hand became to him as it was before.
- v. Now you must ask, why did God restore Jeroboam's hand? If I were God, I think I would have rather enjoyed leaving this wicked and arrogant man with a constant physical

reminder that I am more powerful than him. But God does restore the hand – why? He restored Jeroboam’s hand because he wanted to prove that the man from Judah was indeed His prophet. Through the act of the prophet entreating God to do this and then God doing this, it shows that this man is connected to God and has been sent from God. Therefore, just like the altar being torn apart, and Jeroboam’s hand being dried up, the restoration of Jeroboam’s hand serves the same purpose – to let it be known to all that this message of condemnation against wickedness comes with great authority.

d. Without Compromise

i. This great authoritative message of the Word of the Lord against Jeroboam’s evil deeds is also a message that speaks without compromise. We see this in verses 7-10 where Jeroboam tries to make peace with God’s prophet by bribing him with lunch from the royal kitchen. Whether Jeroboam is just trying to make peace, or if he sees an opportunity to try to get God back on his side by stealing his prophet from the land of Judah, we are not sure. What we are sure of is that God warned the prophet about this and told him very clearly that he was not to eat any food or drink any water and he was not supposed to return the way that he came. These may seem like silly instructions to give, but when you consider that partaking in food and drink conveys fellowship and communion with the person you are eating with, God was intending to send a visible sermon as well as an audible one. His prophet not only made clear that God did not approve of this worship through word, but he also made it clear through his action. He denied the offer put forward by Jeroboam and he went back a different way without eating and without drinking. The visible sermon was as loud as the audible one. God’s Word in the face of wickedness speaks with condemnation and with authority and without compromise.

e. But it is here that the story about Jeroboam is interrupted to chase the rabbit trail of what happened with the man of God from Judah. Let’s pick up the story in verse 11.

II. **The Word of the Lord must not be Disobeyed – 13:11-32**

a. What a bizarre account! We have so many questions when we get done reading this part of the narrative. Why did the man of God from Judah not question the claims of the old prophet of Bethel about his new prophecy? Why didn’t he ask him for a sign? Why was the old prophet interested in having this prophet from Judah come to his house anyway? Why did the Lord use a man who would willingly lie to bring an actual word of prophecy? Why didn’t the man of God from Judah react violently to the news about his impending death? There are so many things that we are not told, and this is true because there is one main thing that we are being told. All of the details would get in the way of making it clear to us that the man of God from Judah disobeyed the Word of the Lord and because of this drastic consequences were brought into his life. The point of the text is to display for us another timeless truth about the Word of God – that the Word of the Lord must not be disobeyed.

b. Especially by God’s Prophet

i. And this is especially true of God’s prophet. The man who was tasked with delivering a message of condemnation upon Israel’s disobedience was to have a life marked by obedience. We see in his original interaction with the old prophet that he did indeed have a desire to obey, but somewhere along the way he let down his defenses and he gave in to the deceptive words of the older prophet. He received a counter claim to the clear word of prophecy that he had already received and he accepted it. That was the essential problem and it provoked the swift judgment of God. This man who had so courageously

proclaimed condemnation upon wickedness at the command of the Lord was now duped into believing a counter-revelation claim by an older prophet. He let his guard down and went against the word of the Lord. In this we see that the Word of the Lord must never be disobeyed. It doesn't matter if you are the king or the prophet or anyone in between. The Word of the Lord is the Word of the Lord and it must be obeyed. This power and authority of the Word of the Lord is seen by how the prophet's disobedience provokes the righteous wrath of God.

c. Because it Provokes God

- i. It starts with a true word of prophecy at the dinner table that finds its fulfillment on the road on the way home. A lion is sent by God to tear into the man of God who had disobeyed, simply because he had disobeyed. He had not done what God had commanded, and because of this he became public object lesson number 2 of what happens when you disobey God. Jeroboam was public object lesson number one. Verse 28 gives a captivating description of the dead prophet strewn in the road with the donkey standing next to him, and then the lion next to the donkey. The text explicitly tells us that the lion did not tear into and eat the man or the donkey. Lest you think the lion is on a diet, the lion is being used by God to put on display to everyone who passes by that this lion was sent by God. There is supernatural power at work here, because the normal events would have included the lion having the man for a hearty lunch and the donkey for an appetizing dessert. But this is not how it went down because God had sent the lion and kept the lion there to make it known that the lion had killed the man at the behest of God.
- ii. The old prophet got the point. The man from Judah was indeed God's man and did indeed deliver God's message and this message would indeed prove true. But this man of God disobeyed the word of the very God that he represented and in so doing he provoked the swift judgment of God upon himself. God doesn't always work this way. In fact, more often than not God is much more patient and longsuffering with our sin, and for this we praise His name. But this does not mean that we should presume upon that longsuffering and forbearance of our sin. This story serves as an arresting illustration of the wrath of God that we provoke with our disobedience. The Word of the Lord is not to be disobeyed.

III. **The Word of the Lord Hardens the Wicked – 13:33-34**

- a. Then in verses 33-34 the camera pans back to Jeroboam and his long-term response to this interruption by the Word of the Lord. *Read verses 33-34.*
- b. Jeroboam did not turn from his evil ways, but rather he is hardened in them. Though he has heard the clear Word of the Lord that condemned this false worship, and though he has experienced the unmatched power of God in his own stiff arm, and though he has seen the veracity of God's prophecy put on display through the broken altar and the dead prophet, he still does not repent. Rather than repent he resumes. And not only does he resume, but he increases. Anyone who wants to be a priest can now be a priest at the high places. He increases the wickedness of the nation's idolatry to the point that verse 34 tells us that this became a sin to the house of Jeroboam that provoked God to destroy it from the face of the Earth.
- c. This is often what the Word of the Lord does. It often hardens the wicked. One only has to think of Pharaoh in Egypt who wouldn't let the people go, and in the face of the undeniable signs that the God of Heaven was speaking through Moses, his heart was hardened by this

Word rather than turned to obedience. The opponents of Jesus in the Gospels stand as another example of this. Though they could not deny that Jesus was the Son of God because he made himself so powerfully known, they refused to believe and their wicked hearts were hardened to the point of willingly killing the Incarnate Son. So, the same is true here with Jeroboam. The Word of the Lord did not soften him and draw him to repentance, but rather it hardened his heart.

- d. I wonder what the word of the Lord does to your heart. If you are not yet a Christian, but you are here this morning, I wonder how your heart reacts to the Word of the Lord. If you are soft to it, and if the Spirit of God uses the Word to call you to Himself, then this is a good sign that God is at work in you to save you. May today be the day of your salvation as you willingly and humbly submit to the Lord's Word and believe in Jesus Christ.
- e. How about your heart today Christian? Are you eager to hear from the Lord? Are you seeking out God's Word and longing to grow in your knowledge of God through His Word? Or is your heart full of scorn for the Word? One of the products of unrepentant sin in your life is a loss of a right relationship to the Word of the Lord. Just like a child in rebellion cringes to hear the voice of the parent, so the Christian in rebellion despises the Word of the Lord. Wicked hearts are hardened by the Word.

#### IV. The Word of the Lord cannot be Manipulated – 14:1-18

- a. The story of Jeroboam continues on in chapter 14. His son falls deathly sick and Jeroboam, though he is living in open rebellion to God and has created his own rival worship, still thinks that he can enquire of God when he needs to. Let's pick up the story in verse 1.
- b. Jeroboam finds himself in a situation that his golden bulls can do nothing about. His son is sick and it doesn't look good. His good luck charm of false worship isn't helping, so he decides to use a prior good luck charm. In chapter 11 he heard good news about how he would be King of the 10 Northern Tribes from the mouth of Ahijah the prophet, so he tells his wife to go and enquire of him about the boy. You see Jeroboam has a hardened heart of wickedness, but he still knows where to get the truth. But he is not interested in all of the truth, but just the truth that will be helpful to him. In fact, he thinks that he can manipulate the Word of the Lord from the mouth of Ahijah the prophet to his own ends. So, he tells Mrs. Jeroboam that she is going to disguise herself and go and enquire of Ahijah the prophet in Shiloh. She takes some food with her as a gift to the prophet for his services, but her gift is meager in comparison with what the king would have at his disposal. This too was probably a part of the disguise. But the Word of the Lord cannot be manipulated like this. To add to the drama, the prophet Ahijah could not see because he was old. If ever there was a perfect time to inquire of the Lord and get a positive, though manipulated Word from the Lord, this would be it. Like Isaac who was easily tricked in his old age, certainly this prophet of the Lord would prove to be an easy target for Mr. & Mrs. Jeroboam. But Ahijah didn't need his eyes because the Lord had his ear. The Lord made clear to his prophet what was coming and how he should handle it. Imagine the shock on Mrs. Jeroboam's face when Ahijah hears her enter and calls her by name and tells her to come and hear what the Lord has to say about her family! The Word of the Lord cannot be manipulated to our own liking and selfish purposes like Jeroboam tried to do. This is true because God's Word is God's.
- c. Because God's Word is God's
  - i. By this I mean that God's Word is not ours to have and to manipulate however we please to make it say whatever we want. God's Word is not a pliable good luck charm that we can squeeze and fashion to fit our current circumstance like the Jeroboam's do here in

chapter 14. This is because when we deal with the Word of the Lord we are actually dealing with the Lord of the Word. He is never detached from this Word as though it were now a book of spells and magic formulas that can be molded to any situation for our own ends. Rather, this Word of the Lord is living, active, and sharp and it searches the mind and the heart and it pierces to the deepest part of our existence because it is always alive with the powerful working of God.

d. Because God's Word is All-Encompassing

- i. Yet another reason that God's Word cannot be manipulated is the fact that God's Word is all-encompassing. Jeroboam didn't care for all of God's Word, but rather just the parts that he wanted and needed. He didn't care what God's Word said to him about his false golden calf religion. He didn't care what God's Word said to him about his own wicked heart, but he did care what God's Word would say about his sick son. Even idolaters care about their children. And Jeroboam cared so much that he sought to manipulate the Word of the Lord for the situation. But the Word of the Lord isn't merely situational, it is all-encompassing. It speaks to every part of life with the same amount of authority.
- ii. Isn't this often how we seek to manipulate the Word of the Lord as followers of Christ? We look to the Word to guide us in this area or in that, but not in this one or that one. We want God's Word to be situational, but it isn't – it is all-encompassing.

e. Because God's Word is True – 14:17-18

- i. Therefore it cannot be manipulated. Ahijah gives Mrs. Jeroboam a Word from the Lord, but it is a message that is unbearable news for Jeroboam and his kingdom. In verses 7-8 God rehearses the favor that he has shown to Jeroboam. God exalted Jeroboam to be a leader over Israel. God tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to Jeroboam. But in the face of God's favor and grace, Jeroboam did that which was evil by making other gods and casting the one true God behind his back. But Yahweh cannot be disregarded by his appointed king like this without drastic consequences. And so Ahijah rehearses in verses 10-16 the consequences and judgment that will fall upon Jeroboam and Israel because of this great sin. The boy will die and all of Israel will mourn for him and he will be the only descendant of Jeroboam who will receive a proper burial. The rest of the sons of Jeroboam will be killed and they will not receive a proper burial, but will rot in shame and their dead carcasses will be devoured by the animals. As for the dynasty of Jeroboam, it will be cut off and God will raise up another king that will cut off the house of Jeroboam. But this judgment is not limited to the king, but will also come to the nation. The whole nation will be uprooted from the land they have been given and they will be scattered beyond the Euphrates because they have provoked the Lord through their idolatrous worship. Verse 16 repeats the damning words that will be the refrain of Jeroboam's life that we will hear throughout the rest of the Israel's history. "And God will give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, which he sinned and made Israel to sin."
- ii. But this judgment upon the whole nation will not come for quite some time. In fact, we will spend the next many weeks seeing one king after another who will reign over Israel who will continue the wicked legacy of Jeroboam. But this does not mean that the Word of the Lord has proven untrue. In fact, in verses 17-18 we are told that as soon as Mrs. Jeroboam entered the house of her sick son, the son died, just like Ahijah had said. The Word of the Lord proved true that day and in so doing this was both a warning and a

prophecy. It was a warning about the judgment that was soon to come, and it was a guarantee of the rest of the prophecy that had been given.

- iii. You see God's Word once again proved true and in proving true it has proven that it cannot be manipulated. As hard as we try we cannot simply mold and shape the Word to be what we want it to be when we want it to be that. Rather, the Word of the Lord proves true and in so doing it calls us to submission to it rather than it submitting to us.

V. **The Word of the Lord has the Final Say – 14:19-20**

- a. Then lastly this morning I want to point you briefly to verses 19-20. They seem to be a mere biographical note with little significance. The narrator says that the rest of the acts of Jeroboam can be found written in the book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. What he is saying by this is that he was not interested in telling you about how Jeroboam ruled and warred. He was not interested in giving you the details about Jeroboam's military success or his ruling acumen because those things are not the legacy of Jeroboam's life. Jeroboam's life is judged by the Word of the Lord in the end and the Word of the Lord has found him to be an idolatrous and wicked King. The selective Word of the Lord has spoken about Jeroboam and what it has said is condemning upon Jeroboam's wicked false worship.
- b. We too will have the Word of the Lord as the final say on our lives. We will not have our lives recorded in the eternal Word of God, but we will all stand before the Eternal Incarnate Word of God and give an account for our lives.
  - i. <sup>10</sup> And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. <sup>11</sup> Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy." <sup>12</sup> "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. (Rev 22:10-12)

**Conclusion:** Each one of us deserves the eternal condemnation of the Lord because of our sin, but as the book of Revelation says, we can have our robes washed in the blood of the Lamb and be forgiven, or we can continue on in our sin and be condemned. I wonder, are you ready for the soon return of the Lord?