

1 Kings

Chapter 12

27- If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Yahoah in Jerusalem then shall the heart of this people return unto their lord rechavam (Rehoboam) king of Judah. And they shall kill me and return to rechavam (Rehoboam) the king of Judah¹.

Chapter 18

41 And Elijah said to Ahab come up eat and drink for I hear the sound of an abundance of rain².

¹ How quickly many men of God forget who blessed them with the power and ability that they have (1 Kings 11: 29-31). Jeroboam (yarveam) the Ephraimite was one of those men. God had by His own choice given him the ability to become the king of the ten tribes of Israel because of Solomon's grievous sins of idolatry (1 Kings 11: 4-8, 11, 33). Yet, somehow Jeroboam completely lost all sense of reality. Trust in God and obedience to His will is not something that he was willing to commit his life to do. When he saw his power and his life threatened he immediately set into action whatever reason dictated to preserve them both. Although God gave him the power and authority he thought that his own power would preserve them. He began by the word of the Lord and the Spirit of God but felt that only through his own fleshly efforts could he keep what he had freely received. In so doing he set up the idols of his own creation and began to do worse than what Solomon was punished for. He created a new altar and a new order of worship to tear the people away from the worship of God. Oh he kept as many things similar to the worship of the One True God in Jerusalem as he could so that he might deceive the people but it was still nothing more than a terrible abomination. The only motive he had was to retain his power over the people. Therefore he removed anything including God Himself because it threatened his existence.

His self interest and hard heartedness was only magnified when the Lord sent yet another prophet to prophesy his doom and the doom of his religious practices. When the prophet from Bethel declared the judgment against the altar that he had set up and the judgment against his house he reached out of harm the prophet. The hand that he had lifted up against Solomon was now lifted up against God and it withered up (1 Kings 12: 33-13:4). Instead of crying out to God and asking for mercy and repenting of his evil he only asked that the prophet pray that he could have his hand restored to him again.

We must wonder are all men so blind to their own self-interest? Is the purposes of God and the honor of his name second to our own interest? It was not as though Jeroboam had forgotten how he received the power to reign over Israel for when his son whom he had named after the prophet Aviyah was sick he sent his wife to find out from the prophet what would happen to the heir to his throne (1 Kings 14:1-2). The prophet foretold his death and the destruction of Jeroboam and his house but still Jeroboam did not repent (1 Kings 14:7-14). His own self-interest laid the foundation for the whole of the northern kingdom of Israel to be destroyed. If he would have simply trusted God to keep that which was committed to him then he would have prospered and his house would have been established.

Ephraim who had always been jealous of Judah was given an opportunity of greatness among the tribes of Israel (Isaiah 9:9; 28:1,3; Hosea 5:5). Yet the pride of Ephraim, which always lurked in the background of his actions rose up at the moment of greatness and destroyed everything. Men's self will and pride can do nothing but destroy. The humility of David is in stark contrast to the pride of Jeroboam. Oh that men would realize that it is only possible to walk with God and achieve the status of greatness through humility. If we can only see the disastrous effects of holding on to our own self interest and be willing to realize how we must deny ourselves if we are to achieve the great things to which we have been divinely appointed!

² After three and half years of drought, God told Elijah to go and stand before Ahab (1 Kings 18:1). Elijah challenged Ahab, the company of Baal's prophets, and the whole assembly of those gathered around: that the God who could answer by fire be the one that all would acknowledge as God; and to this everyone

agreed (1 Kings 18:24). God was about to send an abundance of rain - but before the rain of refreshing, the fire of God's judgment had to burn. The mixture of the doctrines of devils and men had to be removed, and the sin of idolatry put to death.

Once the fire of God fell, all the assembly that were gathered around fell to the ground and said: "Yahoah is God, Yahoah is God" (1 Kings 18:39). Surely now that God had shown Himself to be the only true and sovereign God, Ahab would step up and restore worship to the true God of Israel, and send Jezebel and her idols back to Sidon. Therefore Elijah invites Ahab to come and feast at the table of the Lord, to eat and drink; for the provision and blessing of God was about to fall, and an abundance of rain was about to come. Ahab, who had seen the mighty cloven tongues of fire fall and lick up the water and the stones of the altar, would need to be strengthened for the great task that was before him. He must hurry so that his assignment would not be delayed by the abundance of rain. He could not delay to execute the will of God - and be the champion of a great national revival - anymore than Elijah could have delayed to execute the prophets of Baal. The rain was about to fall that would wash away the blood and the bodies of those sinful men, and it was necessary that Jezebel and her idols be washed away too.

To insure that there would be no delays, Elijah ran before the chariot of Ahab as a servant to the king. He was there to assure Ahab that God was on his side. The same God that had answered by fire, and had shown Himself to be the sovereign power over the rain, would also give aid to Ahab: so that he could carry out the will of God for the nation. When they reached the gate of the city, Elijah stood still; for now Ahab would have to make the decision - would he serve the One True God who had revealed Himself at Carmel? Would he follow through with His vow? Would he be willing to step up and do what was necessary to restore the nation of Israel to God? Ahab stood at the precipice of greatness: all he had to do was to make a stand for what was right, and God would do the rest. Elijah waited hopefully to hear the cries of revival in Israel before he entered into the gates; instead he heard the rebellious and demonic shrills of Jezebel, who vowed to kill the one whom God had anointed, so that she might retain control of God's people. Instead of a great revival and glorious restoration of the people of God, Ahab's disobedience sealed the fate of the Northern Tribes of Israel (1 Kings 19:13-17).