

Kings and Prophets 13-04-26a

This is Friday, April the 26th, 2013. We continue our study of Kings and Prophets. We're gonna be in 1 Kings chapter 13 tonight.

So if you'll turn to that, we'll prepare ourselves to study the word of God by taking a moment to go to the Lord in prayer. Father, we thank you for this opportunity to spend time together in fellowship in the study of your word, receiving the benefits of the spiritual gifts that you have distributed to each one of us. We pray that your Holy Spirit will superintend that he will be our teacher, that each of us will find meaningful and pertinent truth in this passage before us tonight, that we will be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

We ask it in Jesus' name, amen. Turn with me to 1 Kings chapter 13. You recall that at this point in the history of Israel, the kingdom has divided.

Jeroboam is on the throne in the north. Rehoboam is on the throne in the south. And at the end of chapter 12, we saw that war was averted.

Rehoboam does finally start listening to sage advice and the people of Judah do not go to war against their brethren in the north because it is the will of God. And in the concluding section of chapter 12, it says in verse 25, this is 1 Kings 12, 25, then Jeroboam built Shechem in the mountains of Ephraim, Ephraim, and dwelt there. And he went out from there and built Peniel.

Now, Shechem has existed before this. Peniel has existed before this. Both of these cities are very much associated with Jacob.

Remember the men of Shechem? Remember the Dinah incident? You remember Peniel? I've seen the face of God. And all of this harks back to the days of Jacob. And when it says he built them, he actually rebuilt, rebuilt.

Remember, Peniel had been knocked down. Well, you may or may not remember. Think back to the days of the judges.

Think back to the days of Gideon. Remember when Gideon, you remember everybody, the one story everybody knows about Gideon is the 300 men, you know. Still too many, still too many, 300.

Lambs and pitchers, hurrah, hurrah. Do you remember who they are attacking? Remember the type of ites that they're after? It's the Midianites, camp of the Midianites. Confusion in the camp, they're running away.

You got two kings that are fleeing. And Gideon with his 300 men is in hot pursuit. The number, you know, LF is translated as thousands.

And even though it's probably not a full one followed by three zeros. It's a, you know, like a

battalion size element. Well, of the Midianites, they slew 120 LFs.

And there's 15 LFs fleeing. He's chasing them with 300 guys. And they're in full route, full retreat, running as fast as their little Midianite legs will carry them.

So Gideon and his men are beginning to flag. They're beginning to fade. They're getting tired.

And so they come across the river and he appeals to his fellow Israelites for help. And they say, well, are these guys actually in your hand yet? Is the palm of the kings in your palm? And they won't help him. And he says, I'm going to come back and I'm going to teach you a lesson with thorns and briars to one city.

And to Penuel, he says, I'm going to come back and tear down your tower. And so after he catches the kings, he brings them back and shows them to the people in these towns. And then he proceeds and it says, and with thorns, he taught them, taught them, disciplined them.

He fulfilled his threat and he tears these guys apart with thorns. And then he goes and tears down the tower at Penuel and kills all the men. And so that's kind of where the village was left.

I'm sure there's a few goat herds and scavenger birds and things living there. But Jeroboam goes and rebuilds Penuel. So think of the history of Penuel.

It's more recent history after Jacob. You can see the face of God and you can ignore the face of God. The people in Penuel are uninterested in helping the man of God, Gideon, and they suffer judgment.

Well, it puts you in mind of the prophecy of Jericho and rebuilding the city. Remember anybody that rebuilds this, the guy loses one son setting the foundations and another one establishing the gates. And that which God hath destroyed, don't be trying to resurrect and bring back.

So that's kind of where we're at now. Jeroboam is rebuilding this city and also Shechem. And he says in his heart, now the kingdom may return to the house of David.

Oh, heaven forbid that they should go back to the Lord's anointed and be reunited. He wants to keep the piece of the kingdom that he's got, the 10 tribes. So if these people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn back to their Lord and we can't have that.

Notice that's Lord small L, Rehoboam, King of Judah, and they will kill me and go back to Rehoboam, King of Judah. So this is really a political strategy on his part, a power play. Therefore the king asked advice and uses religion for political purposes.

You see this? His motivation is now these people may go back and worship God in Jerusalem. No, they may return to loyalty to the king in Jerusalem. So he is going to use religion to bolster his political power.

So the king asked advice, made two calves of gold. He's doing Aaron one better. When is Israel gonna learn that making golden calves is a bad idea, but they just don't seem to catch the historic resonance at all.

So he makes these two calves, says to the people, it is too much. Now, by the way, why calves? If I was gonna start a religion and I was gonna make an idol, I mean, look at your anime, your futuristic space things where the Death Star and things like this, people don't make little baby cows and say, be afraid, baby cow, worship my mighty baby cow. It just does not intimidate.

It doesn't inspire with, wow, I'm on the winning side now. Look, a little calf. So why do they make golden calves? Why a calf? Why not a lion? Why not a ostrich or why not a vulture or an eagle or something intimidating or a jackal or something fearsome, something that inspires a little bit of awe? A calf, why don't they have a little baby deer and let's worship the little baby deer.

Why a calf? There is, I believe, a satanic effort to forestall God's perfect sacrifice, which Satan knows is coming. Calves and goats and lambs have been the traditional sacrifice going back to the dawn of human history, going back to the days of Abel and Seth. And of course, Adam probably taught them the proper way to offer a sacrifice, but you take a calf or a bullock or a lamb.

And these, it's one thing to offer a sheep and you say, well, sheep aren't carnivorous. They don't have giant fangs. They don't have big sharp canines hanging, you know, the meat eating sheep.

They're a passive animal. They're a subordinate animal. They're not independent.

They are in flocks and herds, goats, and they're all subordinate. These, it's very interesting. If you get a chance and you have access to something like Netflix, or you can rent it at the library, find the National Geographic three-part documentary on guns, germs, and steel.

I read the book. Actually, I got the book on audio disc first. And then after I had finished the book, I found it online and we just finished watching the three parts of it off Netflix.

But it's a fascinating view of human history. You notice I'm in a phase now. I've got this macro view.

You step back and look at the shape of the forest instead of the insects crawling between the grooves and the bark on the trees. I'm stepping back and looking big. And one of the things that is a defining factor in the growth of civilization is farming and livestock.

Why is it that the Middle East became the early breadbasket and the cradle of civilization and Africa did not? Even though Africa is overloaded with natural resources, and there's nothing inherently defective or deficient about any given race or set of inhabitants. They're all human beings. They're all gifted by God with the same basic set of mental skills and physical abilities.

So why is it that in the Middle East and spreading across East and West, you have farming and agriculture and the development of crops. And because you have crops, you have people who don't have to go hunt and gather. Therefore, you can have villages and you have people who don't have to farm for a living and they become specialists and they learn metallurgy and pottery and other arts and crafts and skills.

And this becomes more and more civilization where you've got people in other places that after thousands and tens of thousands of years are still chipping away with stone axes and digging roots out of the ground and eating bugs and wearing loincloths and they never get anywhere. And you think, well, are they just inferior people? They're not, it's defined by their placement. God places people in history.

He places people geographically. He places them genetically and in families and so on. And many of the God rejecting types, God put in other latitudes and other continents because they're content and given a limited set of distractions to maximize their chance to think about God.

Of course, they throw away that chance, but very undistracting. You know how hard it is to put two spiritual thoughts together in our culture because we've got all of this civilization and technology and this fire hose of information that hits us. You think about someone who lives in a jungle and spends a lot of time sitting there waiting for a game animal to come by or they're in the village peeling bark and weaving baskets and doing very simple tasks.

They've got maximum time for contemplation and thought. God's put the knowledge of himself in their heart. He's put the design and the configuration of things in the skies and men become aware that there's something bigger and beyond themselves.

Why do they not seek? Why do they not ask? Why do they not knock? When you think, well, that's such a detriment and such a negative to be put off in some far off place. It's their maximum chance. They're not being brainwashed with science, blinded by science.

They're not being given a whole lot of other things to think about and to numb themselves with. They're not given recreational drugs. And it's very simple.

It's very primitive in the sense that they've got a lot of time to observe and to respond. And these primitive people that everybody says, oh, what about the heathen? They have less excuse than anybody for their rejection because God has cleared the decks. It's the man, a little bit of nature and God.

So don't feel sorry for the Aborigine or the arboreal dwelling tree people of Zimbabwe or wherever they are. Are there tree drilling people? I'm sure there are. I just wanted to use the word arboreal.

So my point being that it is farming and cultivatable crops. Wheat and barley grow in that particular latitude. And because of the configuration, because they call it the Middle East,

because it's in the middle between going to the West toward Europe and going to the East toward Asia and that.

And these cereal grains and crops and the animals that they could cultivate and domesticate spread with them. And this created civilization. It's in the documentary, it's called an accident of geography, but it's God's design.

That's why God put his people right smack in the middle of this blessing belt. You call it the fertile Crescent. It's the blessing Crescent.

And God moved Abraham from one end of that Crescent right around to the other. And he traversed it from Ur to Egypt. Abraham defines the fertile Crescent.

He passes through every foot of it during his lifetime. So say all of that to say this, why do they make golden calves? Ancient people recognized that the beast of burden, the ancient tractor was the bedrock and the foundation of their civilization. The calf is the future of having bullocks.

This in modern parlance would be like Motown, Detroit, the automotive industry being central to your economy. You look and say, wow, you know where it's trucks and cars and engines. And this is what makes our economy go.

And they recognized that because they weren't dumb and they looked around and they said, wow, you know where we would be if we did not have the bullock? We could chase sheep, but we'd be semi nomadic. We would be, we couldn't build cities. We couldn't farm because plowing and harvesting and threshing and all the rest of it was done with these animals.

This is why they worshiped the calf. The calf is a potential bull. And sometimes you have the bulls, you know, in Egypt, they recognize the bull.

They go to the other end of the spectrum, but the golden calf, they're looking at the incipient and the potential and the future in the same way that children were viewed as a gift from God, because that's your next generation. That's your heritage. So golden calves, he makes these things and says to the people, it is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem.

Here are your Elohim. Elohim can't boil God down to a single statue. So we've got a pair of them.

It's twin gods, which brought you up from the land of Egypt. You're no longer slaves. You are no longer the beasts of burden.

You now have beasts of burden that are the center in the court. You have ownership. You have the kind.

Remember one of the big devastations in the plagues was the wiping out of the cattle in Egypt. They recognized this. They weren't dumb.

These are brilliant people. They were as smart as we are. All of these people would say, well, you know, the Bible is a collection of things written by these guys smacking goats on the rear end.

What could they have possibly known? Are arrogant. If anything, ancient man probably had more of his original brain power than we do. Far smarter, more time to meditate, much better memory.

These people didn't have PDAs and smartphones. Couldn't just Google something. They had to remember.

They would listen to a speech and go back and repeat it to others almost verbatim. They were smarter than us. They could put things together better than us.

This is why God could use oral communication through prophets and didn't need everybody to have a scroll. God could have spread literacy among his people so that they could all have a personal little scroll to take home. He could have had the Levites have a whole scriptarium ministry where every Israelite could go down to the tabernacle or the temple and get his own scroll and they could all read and study at home and parse and exegete.

They didn't need it because they were smarter than us. They had much greater mental retentiveness. They were brilliant.

These are the people who invented the foundations of modern civilization. And you could drop a lot of these people into classrooms and laboratories and science efforts in the modern day and they would quickly outstrip and surpass all of us because they were just way smarter. So this is no accident.

He wasn't a primitive guy. Primitive people would have made a lion or a bear or a vulture or something awe-inspiring. They understood.

They put thoughts together. It's a wonderful ambition for us. Here are your gods.

And by the way, don't think that these people invested the gold objects with mystical significance. This is a political statement. This is saying, hey, this is an appeal to patriotism.

This is the equivalent of the South making their own flag. This is now your capital. This is now the symbol of the presence of God.

They knew it was a symbol. They didn't think the golden calves were gonna come grow into bulls and plow their fields or answer their prayers. The worship was formalized.

These are the apostate people. If they were interested in worship, they would have never split off from Judah and Jerusalem. They're not worshipers.

They're not superstitious per se. This has a lot of socio-political baggage with it. Even the

idolatry that they engage in the land.

This is your rotary club. This is your masons. This is your, I scratch your back, you scratch mine.

We're members of this club. Very few of these people were mystical enough to think that there were actual prayers being answered unless there was some demonic activity going on. It's man-to-man stuff.

It's the club, us against them mentality. And that's what Jeroboam symbolizes with these twin calves. He set up one in Bethel and the other he put in Dan.

Remember, they often say from Dan to Bethel or Dan to Beersheba. And this is sort of his definition of the, this is us. This from the Redwood forest to the Gulf Stream waters kind of a thing.

So the thing became a sin, why? For the people went before the one as far as Dan. Which one's closer to Jerusalem? Bethel. Which way do they go? Dan.

So this is symbolically significant. The people went before the, the one at Dan was even more popular. Further away, by the way, much closer to old Canaanite and Northern Palestinian culture.

And they're wanting to get along with the people up in Lebanon, Tyre and Sidon, the Syro-Phoenician area that will eventually come about. So he made shrines on the high places, made priests from every class of people who were not of the sons of Levi. So it just gets further and further.

We're gonna have this hierarchy, this ritualistic system. And this becomes probably the closest equivalent. And somebody will probably, if anybody besides you all heard me, they'd write me hate mail, but this is sort of like Catholicism.

There is a real sense of fraternity within Catholicism that doesn't have a lot to do with dedication to God. It has more to do with, we all go to mass and we're all Catholics and we all follow the same rituals. And there's a comfort level that I'm a part of a community that observes and perpetuates these rituals.

There's not a great deal of personal spiritual investment. Not all Catholics, there's some very wonderful spiritual Catholics, but by and large, the Catholic community has a comfortable level of ritual. I'll go to mass and I just kind of feel spiritual.

I absorb it from the stained glass and the smoke and the chanting and the Latin and whatever, if they still do a Latin mass. So shrines, priests, Jeroboam ordained, look at verse 32 now. Jeroboam ordained a feast on the 15th day of the eighth month, like the feast that was in Judah and offered sacrifices on the altar.

Now, what feast in Judah is on the 15th day of the eighth month? Don't strain yourself because

there's not one. There is a feast on the 15th day of the seventh month. The seventh month on the religious calendar is the first month.

You remember Passover and all that, you've got the spring starting calendar and the fall starting calendar. And the seventh month is the equivalent of the first month. And they shifted, actually the religious calendar I think is the earlier one because when God instituted the Passover and he said, this shall be the beginning of months for you.

But the old year began, remember Rosh Hashanah, head of the year down in the fall. So you've got your first month of Eve and now you're down in the seventh month is Tishri. And so what happens after Rosh Hashanah? That's the first day of the seventh month, right? That's the feast of trumpets.

Then 10th month, day of atonement, 15th day of the month, booths. Last for seven days eventually became eight days. Feast of booths.

Well, not real sure what happened, but in these days, the calendar had kind of floated. There's various explanations for it. Some people think, well, the seventh month was actually written, what was backfilled into the Deuteronomist and the Yahwist and all of the critical stuff.

They say the early stuff was actually put in last, stuff in numbers and so on was the last. Well, suffice it to say that in these days, even down in Judah, they were celebrating the feast of booths in the eighth month instead of the seventh. And whether there'd been some creep in the calendar because they're on a lunar deal, it'll creep if you don't throw in the 13th month.

So anyway, he is competing with the feast of tabernacles. This is one of the three assembly feasts. Remember, you've got Passover, you've got Pentecost and you've got booths.

The fall feast time is the third time of assembly. So everybody was supposed to go to Jerusalem. Well, now that we've split the kingdom, what are they gonna do about this third feast? And apparently this was the first occasion to come up after the split, kind of tells you the time of year.

So he says, well, look, we're gonna celebrate it up here. So he's got a new feast he's instituting to compete with tabernacles. Now, what is the thrust and the meaning of the feast of tabernacles? It has sort of a dual significance.

This was the time of the harvest. And several of the references to the feast in the Old Testament say it's the feast of ingathering. And what they used to do was go out to do the harvest and whether it's the fruit trees or the fields or whatever, to keep the work going and get it all in at once, they would just live out there.

They'd camp out while they were doing the harvest instead of trekking all the way back to where they live. It's like hauling hay, but you live in the hay field at night. You just stay there and get it all done or baling hay.

So that's what they did. Well, God converted this to a significance of God tabernacling with man, man tabernacling with God, because you go to the city of God and the place of the presence of God and you dwell in booths there. And we sort of had a temporary form of fellowship with God, a limited paradigm for fellowship with God.

In this life, we have a preview form of the kingdom. We have fellowship with God. God comes and abides with us.

Jesus said, I in you, you in me, and it's prefigured by that feast of booths. Well, this is the counterfeit. This is the counterfeit.

You've got a counterfeit God. You've got a counterfeit capital. You've got a counterfeit King, so to speak.

And now you've got a counterfeit ritual system. Everything is faked up. And this gets even more interesting as you go forward.

So that's where we are. So he sacrificed on the altar. He did at Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made.

And at Bethel, he installed the priests of the high places, which he had made. And of course, why is he making high places? He's even counterfeiting the high places that Solomon installed down in Jerusalem. A lot of people were already finding this to be a popular destination for vacations, the high places in Jerusalem.

So Jeroboam has also got high places up north. He's even counterfeiting the fallenness and the depravity of what's happening down in Judah. It's a really good fake.

It's a really good substitute. He made offerings on the altar, which he had made 15th day, the eighth month, in the month which he had devised in his own heart. And notice he doesn't even return to the proper calendar, which is the seventh month.

He devised this in his heart as competition and alternate. This was the intention of his heart. It doesn't mean that he just thought up a new date.

In his heart, he fully intended to compete with and replace the other. He ordained a feast for the children of Israel and offered sacrifices on the altar and burned incense. Who has the authority to ordain feasts in Israel? God alone.

So when you see the abomination of desolation set up and the one who puts himself in the place of God, Jeroboam is an early archetype, an early foreshadowing of the Antichrist with a competing kingdom, competing system of worship, competing feast schedule. Well, that is the setting that brings us to chapter 13. Behold, a man of God went from Judah to Bethel by the word of the Lord and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense.

Then he cried out against the altar by the word of the Lord, the prophet does, and said, O altar,

altar, thus says the Lord. Behold, a child, Josiah by name, shall be born. Josiah is like 300 years in the future, just so you know.

You know, this goes like from nine something before Christ to six something before Christ. Remember Josiah, the last good king, days of Jeremiah and so on. That's in the 600s BC.

We're in the 900s BC. Calls him by name, Josiah. You would think somebody would have seen Josiah coming based on this prophecy.

And in fact, they will and they do when he appears. Child Josiah by name shall be born to the house of David and on you, he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you and men's bones shall be burned on you. And he gave a sign the same day saying, this is the sign which the Lord has spoken.

Surely the altar shall split apart and the ashes on it shall be poured out. The altar is going to split in the middle. I say again, the altar is going to split in the middle and its contents will spill out.

Who's being prefigured and foreshadowed here? What did Daniel say about the 70th week? The guy is gonna set himself up and in the middle of the week, he will do what? He will cut off, he will split. The week is divided by the dividing or splitting or cutting or breaking of the covenant. The week is divided.

The covenant that he has made with the many is cut, is divided in the middle of the week. The middle of the altar, middle of the week, middle of the covenant, it's split. This is the sign.

It's going to happen. So it came to pass in verse four, when King Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God who cried out against the altar in Bethel, that he bowed down on his knee and said, oh God, I have made a big mistake. I take it all back.

I remember the promise you made to me. That's not really how it reads. Well, it's time for us to pause and take our break.

What do we take away? My fear is that somebody in the future is pulling up an MP3 and this is the only one they have time for today and they're not gonna get to the second class until tomorrow and they say, well, you didn't give me a so what out of that class, out of that session. Here's the thing. God knows the end from the beginning.

God saw this coming. God ordained it as a judgment on the people of Israel. Why? Why is there a divided kingdom? Why is there a Jeroboam? Why does God allow these calves? Could God not do the thing that he did with Uzzah? Uzzah just reached out his hand and touched the Ark of the Covenant and for that sacrilege, he's instantly killed.

There's God could have forestalled and prevented all of this. An earthquake could fire from heaven to any one of a number of things. Why does God permit it? God tells Jeroboam, you're

going to be the guy.

And if you will be obedient, I'll set up a dynasty for you. Just like he told Saul, we saw this two and three back, but God knew this was coming. Why is there a tribulation? Why is there an Antichrist? Could God not stop this? It is the, here's something you don't hear every day.

It is the will of God that the Antichrist come. God has ordained the Antichrist. Now, has he caused him? Does he motivate him? Does he guide him? Does he bring him into being and pull his strings? No, but in God's permissive will, it is the will of God that the Antichrist be permitted to appear.

God restrains with the presence of the spirit and the presence of his people. When he pulls that out, that is God's timing. And God says, all right, I have taken down the wall.

I have removed the restraint. What thou doest, do quickly. God didn't motivate Judas, but God allowed Judas to do what was in the overarching plan and purpose of God that he do of his own free will.

Same thing with the Antichrist. Same thing with Jeroboam. Now, when we look around and we see the disintegration of our society, when we see the crumbling of our economy, when we see the desecration and the dismemberment and the putrefaction of our country and our society and our Christian values, just remember, let not your heart be troubled.

Neither let it be afraid. It is in the sovereign plan and purpose of God that woes will come, that evils will come, that offenses will come. Remember last week? Scandal on, scandal on, scandal on, but woe to him by whom they come.

Offenses will come. Don't be shocked at what's going on. It can be at the personal level.

It can be right next to us. It can be my familiar friend, a member of my own household, sharing bread at my table, lifts up his heel against me. Be calm.

Be steady. Be rock solid. My hope is built on nothing less than the blood of Jesus Christ and his righteousness.

He will never suffer the righteous to be moved. Can you imagine the people? There were some healthy believers up in the North and they're trapped by political circumstances. Should I pack up and move to Judah? What should I do? And they had to make those individual decisions, but it is within the purview of God's plan and purpose that these things come.

And this is a set piece. God is allowing this and recording it in Scripture as a harbinger and a foreshadowing of things historical and things ultimate in the day of the Lord. And he allows them.

And the people of God are enmeshed in it. God will create a personal ark and a personal provision and a personal deliverance. And the trick is not to panic and not to fail to be obedient.

The second half of this story, which we're gonna look at when we come back from the break, emphasizes that second point. Yes, it is a time of disturbance. Yes, it is a time of uncertainty.

Yes, it is a time of great departure and apostasy and deceit and intentional replacement of the things of God with counterfeits. But don't fail when you come in contact with it to be consistent and obedient in every detail. Do not fail to be obedient.

Concentrate on the word of the Lord. The message coming up in this second half is all about faithfulness to the word that you have received. If you remember this story, you know what's gonna happen to this man coming up from Judah to Bethel.

Think about it. It doesn't matter that Jeroboam is an evil king. It doesn't matter that there's a counterfeit system.

It doesn't matter about any of these things. The one thing that matters for this one guy is you have received the word of the Lord. Don't fail it.

Don't depart from it. Don't forget it. Don't decide that it's been superseded or countermanded.

And there's a couple of real interesting details that I promise you, you, however many times you've been through this story, as many times as I've been through it, I didn't see some things until I went through it this time. That's what we'll look at when we come back from the break.