

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

July 23

MONDAY

King Jeroboam's hand had dried up when he pointed at the prophet and gave orders to seize him. Now, Jeroboam turns asks that same prophet to pray to his God that his hand be restored. The prophet did so, and God healed his hand. Jeroboam promises to reward the prophet.

READ: I Kings 13:6-7

The idolatry of Jeroboam is clear enough: he says to the prophet, "Pray to your God." And the grace of God is clear enough, as well, for He healed his hand. He healed the hand of one who would use that hand against Him! That is a great picture of grace! That's the same grace which came to us when were far from God! It's the same grace that is ours today. Wonderful grace of Jesus, abundant and free!

TUESDAY

The prophet tells Jeroboam that no matter what reward the king might give him, he will not eat with him, nor return to Bethel with him. He explains this by telling the king that it's the Lord's command that he not do so.

READ: I Kings 13:8-10

Having witnessed firsthand the prophet's relationship with God, Jeroboam tries to figure out a way to keep him around. But God had directed the prophet otherwise. "Don't go back the same way," He had commanded him. Those same words are fairly common in the OT, and are God's way of saying "Be different! Walk a path that's different from the rest of the world." That message is given to us, as well: don't walk according to the ideas and values of this world! Don't be caught up in what the lost world around you is doing. Walk according to God's Word. Keep yourselves from evil. Far from it!

WEDNESDAY

News of the king's withered hand and its healing spread quickly, and an old prophet in Bethel (where Jeroboam ruled) heard the story from his sons. He got on a donkey and headed off in pursuit of the first prophet.

READ: I Kings 13:11-13

There's some mystery here, of what the old prophet is up to. But there's no mystery to why the news spread so quickly. That's one reason it is so urgent for us to live for God day-by-day in all things. Boy, does the news travel fast when we don't! But it also travels around when we do! The life and testimony of one who lives for God is news that gets around. It's the kind of news that blesses God's people, and it's the kind of news that stings those who live for themselves, and for the pleasures of this world.

THURSDAY

The old prophet catches up to the younger one, and invites him to his home in Bethel. The younger prophet responds by repeating what he had told the king, that God has commanded him not to go there. But the older prophet lies to him, saying

that an angel had appeared him telling him to bring the younger prophet home with him. So they go back together.

READ: I Kings 13:14-19

This is a story of a lie. In one sense, God treats all lies as serious, but this lie is one about God Himself. He claims that an angel - a messenger from God - gave him a message. He lies in order to get the prophet to go home with him. Why he wants him to do that is a mystery. But whatever his reason, he lies. There are lies all around us in the world today. Some lies are harder to distinguish than others. What we really need is wisdom from above! And we need a constant diet of truth to combat the lies. (We get that by reading the Bible!) If a prophet of God can be deceived by a lie what hope do we have? How important it is that we always seek wisdom and stay in God's Word!

FRIDAY

In Bethel, the two prophets are eating together when suddenly, the older one tells the younger that because he has disobeyed God by coming to Bethel and eating and drinking, he will die.

READ: I Kings 13:20-22

Wow! This is hard stuff to understand. God is pronouncing judgment on a man for being deceived by another, and He's pronouncing that judgment through the mouth of the very one who did the deceiving! What's going on here? Well, I think there is one clear lesson, at least: that we are accountable for doing what God commands us to do. God had spoken directly to the first prophet. We know that man understood what God said because he repeated the same command two times to others. But in the end, he didn't obey it. When we read a command of God in the Bible, we are responsible to obey it. The world can disregard it; others may ignore it; still others may dismiss it as impractical or not relevant. But what God tells us we must do! Read the Word today and remind yourself of some things God has commanded.

SATURDAY

The prophet finishes his meal, mounts a donkey, and heads home. Down the road, a lion attacks and kills the prophet. Some people came along that same road and saw the lion and the donkey both standing beside the body of the dead prophet, and they reported the news back in Bethel.

READ: I Kings 13:23-25

In Israel, in the days of the kings, people were sometimes attacked by lions. But the amazing part of this story is that the donkey stood there next to the dead body and to the lion. That's against nature, of course, and the point is this: this all happened according to the Law of God rather than the rules of nature. The so-called 'laws of nature' are really just God's laws which are so commonly in force, they are almost natural, you might say. But God can choose to suspend one law and enact another. It's God's world. And it's run according to His word. He will have His way. When the Lord comes again, even the law of gravity won't hold believers down!