

Exegetical Notes – 1 Kings 13:1-10

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1 Kings 13:1-10

Verses 1-2

¹ By the word of the Lord a man of God came from Judah to Bethel, as Jeroboam was standing by the altar to make an offering. ² By the word of the Lord he cried out against the altar: "Altar, altar! This is what the Lord says: 'A son named Josiah will be born to the house of David. On you he will sacrifice the priests of the high places who make offerings here, and human bones will be burned on you.'"

- God directed a man to go from Judah, the southern kingdom, to the city of Bethel, which was in the Kingdom of Israel, the northern kingdom. Bethel was one of the cities where Jeroboam, the king of Israel had placed one of the golden calves he had ordered the people of the northern kingdom to worship as their God (see 1 Kings 12:28-30).
- This man is not named, and his credentials are not given. We are not told how God directed him to go to Bethel. But the text is clear that he went there at God's direction. He arrived as the king was about to offer sacrifice to the golden calf.
- The man sent by God cried out against the altar to the false god. He spoke against what was happening.
- He predicted that a descendant of King David named Josiah would sacrifice the lives of Israel's false priests on that very altar. This prediction happened about 300 years later (see 2 Kings 23:15-20).

Verse 3

³ That same day the man of God gave a sign: "This is the sign the Lord has declared: The altar will be split apart and the ashes on it will be poured out."

- Because the prediction would be fulfilled in the distant future, a short-term sign was required to verify it (see Deuteronomy 18:21-22). So, the man of

God gave a sign. The altar to the false god would be divided and the ashes on it spilled on the ground.

Verses 4-5

⁴ When King Jeroboam heard what the man of God cried out against the altar at Bethel, he stretched out his hand from the altar and said, "Seize him!" But the hand he stretched out toward the man shriveled up, so that he could not pull it back. ⁵ Also, the altar was split apart and its ashes poured out according to the sign given by the man of God by the word of the Lord.

- When Jeroboam heard the man's prediction, he stretched out his hand and ordered that the man be arrested.
- The hand he stretched out shriveled up and stopped working correctly.
- The altar split at that moment, and its ashes spilled on the ground. This sign confirmed God's power to fulfill the long-term prediction and showed that the offering made to the golden calf was unacceptable to YHWH.

Verse 6

⁶ Then the king said to the man of God, "Intercede with the Lord your God and pray for me that my hand may be restored." So the man of God interceded with the Lord, and the king's hand was restored and became as it was before.

- Jeroboam then asked the man to pray to YHWH to restore his hand. The man did, and Jeroboam's hand was restored.

Verses 7-10

⁷ The king said to the man of God, "Come home with me for a meal, and I will give you a gift."

⁸ But the man of God answered the king, "Even if you were to give me half your possessions, I would not go with you, nor would I eat bread or drink water here. ⁹ For I was commanded by the word of the Lord: 'You must not eat bread or drink water or return by the way you came.'" ¹⁰ So he took another road and did not return by the way he had come to Bethel.

- Jeroboam then invited the man to come home with him for a meal. He promised to give the man of God a gift, a bribe. Apparently, Jeroboam hoped to get the man of God on his side.
- The man of God rejected the king's offer in its entirety. He would not eat with the king, nor would he accept any gift from Jeroboam. His rejection of the king was a message to the king that YHWH had also rejected Jeroboam.

- The man of God went back to Judah. He had been warned by God that he should not return to Judah by the way he had come to Bethel. So returned home by another route. Apparently, Jeroboam would be looking for the man of God to kill him. Neither the words of the man of God nor the signs performed that day altered Jeroboam's behavior.

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