

Background Characters in the Old Testament Lesson 10 4Q 2010

The Man of God: Obedience Is Not Optional

SUNDAY

Read first two paragraphs – “After...” thoughts?

Do we have any modern day examples of well intentioned actions leading away from God?

- What about attempts to provide a day of rest for people leading to legislating Sunday laws?
- What about attempts to “promote life” leading to restricting liberties?

Read third paragraph, “It is necessary...” What do you think about the idea of “even small deviation from the clear command of God has far-reaching effects.”

Can we think of any examples of this and why?

- Adam and Eve eating the fruit – on the surface it appears a fairly minor act – it’s just a piece of fruit – why is it so significant?
 - Eve believed the words of Satan, and the belief of that falsehood in regard to God's character, changed the condition and character of both herself and husband. They were changed from good and obedient children into transgressors, and it was only by repentance toward God and faith in the promised Messiah that they could hope ever to regain the lost image of God. {RH, January 5, 1886 par. 8}
 - So the taking of the fruit, was it the primary problem or an outward manifestation of something much more significant? Is it a minor or major deal to no longer trust God?

- Analogy, what if you were traveling and following a compass and your compass was off by 1 degree – it is a minor deviation, would it really matter?

Can we think of any examples of this idea being abused, of how this truth of the importance of not deviating from God’s expressed commands gets twisted to result in people who think they are keeping God’s commands but are actually opposed to Him?

- Did God give an expressed command regarding keeping the Sabbath holy? Did God give express commands on all permutations of all behavior over all time? Could someone in seeking to keep the Sabbath holy be offended at Christ healing on the Sabbath? Could someone be a Sabbath keeper and still crucify Christ?
- What about today – could we be Sabbath keepers but still be God’s enemy? If a person goes to eat at a restaurant on Sabbath does that mean they are breaking an express command of God? Can we tell if someone is God’s friend or enemy by the way they observe Sabbath?

The last sentence of the paragraph states, “Jeroboam was compelled to make priests of common people, which in turn degraded the sacred office.” What do you think about this idea?

Was the priesthood degraded in Israel? Yes it was – was it necessarily because the priests were not Levites? If this is the reason then would genetics mean a person makes a better priest? Do we have any Biblical evidence that genetics doesn’t make a difference?

- Melchizedek - was he a priest of God? Was he a Levite?
 - **It was Christ that spoke through Melchisedek, the priest of the most high God. Melchisedek was not Christ, but he was the voice of God in the world, the representative of the Father.** And all through the generations of the past, Christ has spoken; Christ has led His people, and has been the light of the world. When God chose Abraham as a representative of His truth, He

took him out of his country, and away from his kindred, and set him apart. He desired to mold him after His own model. He desired to teach him according to His own plan (RH Feb. 18, 1890). {1BC 1093.1}

- Christ – from what tribe was Christ? Judah, He was not a Levite, yet is He our High Priest? Was the priestly office degraded because Christ wasn't a Levite? This argument of Levitical priesthood is what Paul was dealing with in Hebrews.
- What about the priesthood of believers, is God's church composed of priests? Is it degraded because we are not of the tribe of Levi?
- Let's turn the argument around – if the priests are from the tribe of Levi does that mean that the priesthood is pure?
 - Consider Eli's sons, Samuels sons, those who crucified Christ, and Jeremiah 2:8 tells us the priests led the people astray.

So we know the priesthood was degraded in Israel – what was the primary reason, was it genetics? Or was it rejecting the truth about God and holding to lies, promoting self, refusing to humble self, seeking one's own way, selfishness reigning in the kingdom? And as such selfishness leads us to do things our way rather than cooperating with God and following His counsels, and we set up priests of our own not of Levi, but is the problems primarily and simply only that they were not genetically descended from Levi?

MONDAY

The story – Jeroboam sets up new places of worship in Israel. He builds altars and golden calves. A young prophet of God is dispatched for Judah to warn the king – let's pick up the story in 1Kings 13:1-24:

13 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 He cried out against the altar by the word of the Lord: "O 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 now make offerings

here, and human bones will be burned on you.’ ” 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.”

First question – did Josiah do what the prophet foretold? Yes see 2Kings 23. How was the prophet able to predict, first that a king named Josiah would exist and secondly what that king would do? Of what is this evidence? It is evidence of God’s foreknowledge, that He actually knows the future, not what might happen, but what will happen.

Let’s keep reading our story for today:

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.

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.

Thought about this? Was God punishing Jeroboam? Why did the king’s hand wither? What was the purpose in the prophet going to Jeroboam in the first place? Was it God’s design to punish and destroy or to warn and save?

Was the miracle of the withered hand in harmony with His overall purposes to heal and save? When the king cried for mercy and the hand was restored, what impact did it have on the king?

Did the king humbly repent of his error? Why not? What does a miracle not do? It doesn’t present evidence to change a person’s beliefs or character.

Not by might nor by power but by the way the Spirit works says the Lord. Zech 4:6. This is why God doesn't accomplish His purposes with miracles. Consider the flood, Sodom, plagues of Egypt, fire by Elijah, etc. did these miracles ever get what God wanted from people? Even Christ's own miracles did not accomplish His purposes so He stopped doing them.

Today, if we see miracles does that mean we should follow the person performing the miracles? Why or why not? Can miracles be counterfeited? What about a talking serpent?

That is why God says we are to come and reason and our sins will be cleansed. It is in our minds that God works to heal and cleanse and this through His methods of truth and love presented in a free environment.

⁷ The king said to the man of God, "Come home with me and have something to eat, 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.

¹¹ Now there was a certain old prophet living in Bethel, whose sons came and told him all that the man of God had done there that day. They also told their father what he had said to the king. ¹² Their father asked them, "Which way did he go?" And his sons showed him which road the man of God from Judah had taken. ¹³ So he said to his sons, "Saddle the donkey for me." And when they had saddled the donkey for him, he mounted it ¹⁴ and rode after the man of God. He found him sitting under an oak tree and asked, "Are you the man of God who came from Judah?"

"I am," he replied.

¹⁵ So the prophet said to him, "Come home with me and eat."

¹⁶ The man of God said, "I cannot turn back and go with you, nor can I eat bread or drink water with you in this place. ¹⁷ I

have been told by the word of the Lord: ‘You must not eat bread or drink water there or return by the way you came.’ ”

¹⁸ The old prophet answered, “I too am a prophet, as you are. And an angel said to me by the word of the Lord: ‘Bring him back with you to your house so that he may eat bread and drink water.’ ” (But he was lying to him.) ¹⁹ So the man of God returned with him and ate and drank in his house.

²⁰ While they were sitting at the table, the word of the Lord came to the old prophet who had brought him back. ²¹ He cried out to the man of God who had come from Judah, “This is what the Lord says: ‘You have defied the word of the Lord and have not kept the command the Lord your God gave you.

²² You came back and ate bread and drank water in the place where he told you not to eat or drink. Therefore your body will not be buried in the tomb of your fathers.’ ” ²³ When the man of God had finished eating and drinking, the prophet who had brought him back saddled his donkey for him. ²⁴ As he went on his way, a lion met him on the road and killed him, and his body was thrown down on the road, with both the donkey and the lion standing beside it.

What do you think of this story? Was the old prophet a false prophet or a prophet of the Lord?

Does this give us any insight in how we should relate to prophets? Are prophets supposed to do our thinking for us? Can prophets lie, even prophets of the Lord? Can Apostles be wrong? Consider Peter and Paul’s need to rebuke him publicly.

What does this say about the purpose and role of a prophet? A prophet is a spokesperson for God an individual through whom God can speak or carry out a purpose. But is a prophet God? Does a prophet retain their humanity and sinful nature? Can they make mistakes?

If a prophet prophecies and their prophecy fails to come true what does that mean? What about Jonah – true or false prophet? Did he give conditions on his prophecy? Did it come true?

Was the point of Jonah's prophecy to predict the future or to bring a people to repentance?

Should we allow the words of prophets to be our thoughts for us or are we to hear the words of the prophets and then weigh them out for ourselves, asking the Holy Spirit to enlighten and come to our own conclusion as to the meaning?

TUESDAY

Jeroboam invited the prophet to his home for dinner and offered the prophet gifts – why do you think God told the prophet to say no? The lesson suggests that gifts put the receiver in the debt of the giver – thoughts about this?

If I give a gift and then expect the receiver to owe me something, have I actually given a gift? Have you ever received gifts with strings attached – you knew if you accepted the gift expectations were attached?

Have you ever received gifts without strings attached?

Which kind of gifts are given in love? Which do you like better? Which do you give to others?

Why do you give gifts? Because you are obligated? Because you want to influence someone to do something for you or like you? Because you love the other person and want to bless them in some way? Other reasons?

We are told that God gave the gift of His Son – why?

- What type of gift was it?
- Did God's gift indebt us to Him?
- Did He give His Son freely or with strings attached?
- Was the motivation to bless us or manipulate us?
- How can we tell?

When people give gifts with strings attached and they don't get reciprocity, how do they react? Do they feel they were cheated, that

something fair didn't happen? Do they get angry, upset, threaten? How is God often portrayed in treating those who don't accept the gift of Jesus?

WEDNESDAY

Why did the young prophet die in the story? Was he condemned for believing a lie, for being tricked? Or was his problem that he failed to hold to the truth? Is there a difference?

Read fourth paragraph, "It's really..." thoughts?

Eve really believed the words of Satan, but her belief did not save her from the penalty of sin. She disbelieved the words of God, and this was what led to her fall. **In the judgment men will not be condemned because they conscientiously believed a lie, but because they did not believe the truth, because they neglected the opportunity of learning what is truth.** Notwithstanding the sophistry of Satan to the contrary, it is always disastrous to disobey God. We must set our hearts to know what is truth. All the lessons which God has caused to be placed on record in His word are for our warning and instruction. They are given to save us from deception. Their neglect will result in ruin to ourselves. Whatever contradicts God's word, we may be sure proceeds from Satan. {PP 55.2}

Thoughts? What does this mean? What happens if we don't love the truth?

They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. ¹¹ For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie ¹

Why is this the result? What happens in the mind if we reject truth, on any subject.

¹ *The Holy Bible : New International Version*. 1996 (electronic ed.) (2 Th 2:10–11). Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Is it important to have a mind receptive and open to the truth? Is having a mind like this related to obedience? How?

The Greek for obedience is: ὑπακοή *hypakoē* obedience

It means having a humble willingness to listen and be instructed, it is not primarily about performance, but secondarily about performance. There was a servant whose title was the *hypakoē* and the job of this servant was to listen for the sound of the master's voice and when he heard it open the gate for the master. If the servant faithfully listened and as soon as he heard the master jumped up to open the door, but the door was stuck, and with all his might he couldn't open it, is the servant disobedient.

This is why the religious leaders in Christ's day were disobedient because they wouldn't humbly open their minds to new truth that Jesus wanted to bring.

We can keep all the rules, eat the right foods, worship on the right day, but if don't develop a love for truth, a willingness to grow in the truth we are disobedient.

THURSDAY

Read second paragraph, "the greatest..." thoughts? Do you agree with this? What evidence from history do we have?

Where did Lucifer come from when originating his rebellion? The presence of God.

What about in human history, who have opposed God most successfully? Hasn't it been various religious leaders?

Thoughts on how to prevent oneself from being led astray by a powerful speaker or teacher?

- Always think for yourself, never surrender your mind or judgment to another
- Require your beliefs to be evidenced based

- Require the evidence to harmonize
- Use all the evidence available, inspiration, science and experience
- Listen to perspectives that differ from your own but filter those perspectives through the lens of your own sanctified judgment, comparing it with the truth of God's word and science.
- Establish testable parameters to compare theories to –
 - Law of love
 - Law of liberty
 - Law of worship
- Use Jesus as the touchstone or lens to understand all doctrines regarding God

FRIDAY

Read questions 1,2,4 and discuss.