

1 Kings 14:1-20 Jeroboam – The end, what have you done? (03.03.13 pm)

I don't know if you've ever been to a fancy dress party? Perhaps themed, like a Roman party, or Pixies and elves, or animals, or celebrities, and everyone makes an effort to dress up like someone or something else and everyone has great fun making a **fool** of themselves!

When I was at university training to be a languages teacher, our tutor often used examples including a grey **elephant**. So when we were invited to his house for drinks and nibbles, I **foolishly** decided to dress **up** as a grey elephant! (Ah to be young again!) I spent a **week** stringing toilet rolls together to make the trunk and sticking big ears on a coat hanger. **Great** fun! Very difficult sucking peanuts up the **trunk** though!

More **seriously**, perhaps, you go to the doctor's with some complaint, and you try to hide the real truth, you say it's only a **little** ache, because you're afraid of the possible diagnosis and the **treatment** you'll need.

Even **more** seriously, sometimes we try to hide things from **God**. Ever tried to do that?

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We're going to talk some more about King Jeroboam this evening, and we're going to read about **his** use of disguise. 1 Kings 14:1-20. (P.354 blue Bibles)

If you were here 2 weeks ago, you'll remember, we looked at Ahijah's **first** encounter with king Jeroboam in chapter 11. Whistlestop recap – shepherd boy David killed Goliath and became king – a **good** king - of God's people Israel; his son Solomon was **seemingly** a successful king but didn't follow the commands of God and so after **him**, God divided the 12 tribes between Solomon's son Rehoboam and **Jeroboam**, no relation. Jeroboam got 10 of the tribes and Rehoboam was king over the other 2. This all happened about 930BC.

Ahijah's first message from God to Jeroboam the **bricklayer** promised he'd be **king** – great promise – but the promise would only **last** if Jeroboam followed God's commands and worshipped **him** as the only God.

If you did the homework I set, you'll have seen how power went to Jeroboam's **head** – he was **king**, so he could do what he **wanted**. All thought of **God** went out the window!

This evening I want us to look at this **second** message and see what it tells us about God's **word**, his message to us today.

Of course there are **lots** of things that can be said about the word of God, but I think this passage tonight shows us **three** things: it's a **knowing** word; it's also a **judging** word; and thirdly it's an **enduring** word.

Firstly then, it's a **knowing word**, and we find this in verses 1-6, which explain the **background** to the message.

Jeroboam's son Abijah is ill, and Jeroboam wants to know if he's going to get better. He's in difficulty and needs help. So who's he gonna **call**? He's going to call on Ahijah the prophet. **Why**? Because Ahijah helped him **before**, because Ahijah was a **prophet**, a man of **God**, and **he** gave Jeroboam the promise about his kingship. So when in **trouble**, go for help to the man who knows the mind of **God**.

And we find this happening **today**, don't we? When people are going along **fine**, they wouldn't **ever** be seen in a church; but when **trouble** arrives, so many will quite **readily** turn to Christians for help and advice. Like Jeroboam, they seek God in times of **trouble**, but totally **neglect** him when things are going **well**. Jeroboam and many people today want God's word to help in **dark** times, but they don't want to be bothered with God's word at any **other** time. **Not** good.

God wants us to have a **relationship** with him and know his help and guidance in good times as **well** as bad. Don't leave him out, you'll end up in **more** trouble that way.

Jeroboam wants a favourable message from Ahijah about his son, that he's going to pull through. The only thing **is**, he doesn't want to go **himself**, because although God fulfilled his promise to make Jeroboam **king**, Jeroboam hadn't remained faithful to **God**. He's gone **against** God and he knows it. We all know right from wrong, we all know when we've not done things God's way, don't we?

So in verse 2 he comes up with a cunning **plan**: if his **wife** goes to Ahijah in **disguise**, he won't know who it **is** who wants the **news**.

So, imagine the scene: Jeroboam's wife has spent **ages** on choosing poor-looking clothes, working on her makeup, practising how she's going to walk in, changing her voice so **that's** not recognisable either. She may **well** have asked her husband numerous times 'Do I **have** to do this? Do I **really** have to?' 'Yes, dear – it'll be **fine**.' She's finally picked up courage and she's on her way to Ahijah's house with her speech all worked out. She approaches the door, ready to knock. But before her knuckles reach the wood, she hears 'Come **in** Mrs. Jeroboam! Why the **pretence**?' How **annoying** is that! All that work getting the **disguise** right, and the walk, and the voice, and Ahijah knows **already**! How **can** he know? He can't even **see** properly – he's blind!

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God **knows**. In verse 5 God's **told** Ahijah who's coming and why, that she'll be disguised and what he's to **tell** her. God **knows**. Jeroboam's wife's been sent to Ahijah, but God has also sent **Ahijah** with a message from God. A **knowing** word. God **knows**.

We can't fool **God**. We can't **trick** God. He **knows**. We can't **hide** from God. Psalm 139 tells us we can't hide **anywhere** from God because he's **there**. We can't hide in **darkness**, because he's **light**. He knows.

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Are **you** hiding from God? **What** are you trying to hide from God? **Why** are you trying to hide from God? Is it because you know you're not going **his** way? You're not giving him the place in your life he **should** have? Perhaps you feel **embarrassed**, or **guilty**.

God **knows** that sin you're managing to hide from everybody else. He **knows** that sin you just **can't** or **won't** let go of. He **knows** that part of your life where you don't want God to be in **charge**. He **knows** the guilt you feel because you can't believe you're **forgiven**. He knows what you've **done**, what you've **said**, what you've **thought**. He knows your **heart**, he knows your **motivations**. You can't hide from **God** – he **knows**.

We **all** have things we'd rather hide from God. We **all** have things we're **ashamed** of. If a film was made of our life and was shown on a big screen on this wall, there **would** be parts of it we'd feel embarrassed about.

The Bible says '*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*' [Rom.3:23] We've gone our **own** way, we've **neglected** God in our lives. We need to search our hearts, ask God to **show** us our hearts, and ask his **forgiveness** for those things we're trying to **hide**.

A preacher called Spurgeon said, “God’s gospel will search you **out** and **unmask** your true character, disguise yourself as you may.” You can’t hide from **God** – he **knows**.

But the **flip** side of that coin is that God **knows** – he knows **you**, he knows all **about** you, your strengths and your weaknesses, your successes and your failings. But **despite** that, the Bible says God loves you **so much** that he sent his Son Jesus to **die** for you on the cross. He knows you and he **still** loves you! God **loves** you! He wants you to be in **relationship** with him. That’s what he wants more than **anything**, he wants **you** to know **him**. He **made** you so that you could enjoy being **with** him forever. Do you **believe** that?

He knows you, he knows you’ve **neglected** him – the Bible calls that **sin** – and because God is perfect he has to **punish** sin, but the amazing thing **is** that if you believe that **Jesus** suffered your punishment on the cross, God will not punish **you**. **Whatever** you’ve done, God wants to **forgive** you, and he **can** forgive you because Jesus has taken the punishment in your **place**. Good news or **what?**

So don’t try and **hide** it – **come** to God, say you’re **sorry** about your sin and ask him to forgive you, and he **will**, because that’s why he sent **Jesus**, because he **knows** you, he knows what you **need**, and right now you really need **Jesus**.

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Jeroboam’s got things he wants to **hide** from the man of God. He **can’t**. God tells Ahijah the word to give to Jeroboam’s wife, and it isn’t easy listening, because it’s **a judging word**. A **judging** word. The consequence of not accepting forgiveness for our sins through Jesus is **judgement**.

You’ll remember that Jeroboam was working on rebuilding the wall of **Jerusalem** when God promised him he’d be **king**. So we’re reminded in v. 7, *‘I raised you up from among the people and made you a leader over my people Israel.’* Jeroboam didn’t **deserve** God’s favour, God raised him up through **grace**. Jeroboam didn’t earn the **right** to be made king, God in **grace** raised him up and gave him a kingdom he didn’t **deserve**. God’s wonderful **grace**.

But what did Jeroboam **do** with God’s **grace**? In effect – if we can say this reverently - he threw it back in God’s face! This is what’s so **offensive** to God and has made him **angry**.

We come to the ‘but you’ in verse 8; *‘but you have not been like my servant David, who kept my **commands** and **followed** me with all his heart, doing only what was right in my eyes.’* He didn’t walk in God’s ways – which was the condition God put on his promise. Jeroboam has received God’s **grace**, but has abused it by **rejecting** God and provoking him to anger.

Our society today says, ‘You can’t **do** what God’s **asking** you to do. God’s asking you to say there’s only **one** God, and any **other** god is wrong. You can’t **do** that. That’s intolerant. That’s inciting **hatred** against other religions. You just can’t **do** it in an enlightened world like **ours**.’

The God of the **Bible** is **different** from other gods. God’s entered into a relationship of **love** with his people, likened to a **marriage** relationship. In a true, loving marriage relationship, exclusive trust and **faithfulness** in the wife or husband is demanded and **expected**, isn’t it? You don’t expect your husband or wife to have **other** partners. If they’re unfaithful to you, you’ll feel **crushed**, **devastated**. It’s not **like** that in a true, loving marriage relationship.

It’s the same with God’s loving covenant relationship with his **people**. In Exodus 20, God said, *‘I am the Lord your God ... You shall have no other gods before/besides me.’* God’s **unique**. The **relationship** we can have with God is **unique**. There **is** no other. So God’s **angry** if people run after **other** gods. Jeroboam didn’t worship God, he worshipped **other** gods. God judges him for it.

Acts 4:12 tells us, *‘Salvation is found in **no-one** else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.’* Salvation can **only** be found **in** and **through** Jesus Christ. That’s what the Bible says very clearly. God’s **unique**: **Jesus** is unique. Only faith in **him** and obedience **to** him brings salvation.

People may say ‘That’s intolerant.’ The **Bible** claims and I **believe** that it’s the **truth**. If it’s the **truth**, the truth that sets you **free**, it **has** to be proclaimed, doesn’t it? Because recognising and believing this truth brings **salvation** and eternal **life** in Jesus; **not** recognising and believing this truth brings **judgement** and death. That’s the message of Jeroboam and the clear message of the Bible. Neglecting the way of God, rejecting his **grace**, his undeserved love is **sin**, and Paul tells us in Romans 6:23 *‘The wages of sin is **death**, but the gift of **God** is eternal **life** in Christ Jesus our Lord.’*

Where there's **sin**, God has a judging word. But God's **gracious**, he invites everyone to be **saved** from judgement, he offers **forgiveness** and eternal **life** to all who **believe**. There's judgement for any who keep their **back** to God, but there is **forgiveness** from sin and **salvation** for any who turn their **face** to him. For **everyone** who turns to Jesus and asks for forgiveness for sins through what Jesus achieved in his death on the **cross** and in his **resurrection**, there's now no **condemnation**, no **punishment**, because **Jesus** has taken that punishment on himself.

Jeroboam receives a judging word because he puts other gods **before** the God of Israel. Are **we** guilty of this? Are **we** provoking God to anger? Are **we** putting other things in the place that only **God** should be? Are **we** putting idols in place of God? What we **want** can so easily take the place of what **God** wants, can't it? We think, 'Why let God be in control when we can do the job just as well!' Can we? Really? We **think** we can. But that's putting ourselves in the place **God** should be, the place he **expects** to be, the place he **demands** to be. Are **we** facing God's **rewards**, or facing his **anger**?

Let's not be like Jeroboam facing judgement for thinking we're a higher **authority** than God. Let's make sure we receive God's gracious gift of eternal life in Jesus, and then make sure we're walking in God's **ways**, loving, serving and obeying him.

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Thirdly from this sad prophecy from Ahijah, we see that God's message is **an enduring word, an unchanging word, the final word**. There's no going **back** for Jeroboam, **nothing** will change God's word. When God makes a **promise**, it will not change. But the other side of the coin is **also** true, when God issues judgement, that won't change **either**, no matter how **long** it takes, the promise and the judgement will be carried out.

In our story **here** we see the **immediate** consequence for Jeroboam and his family in verses 12-15, but we also see the **long-term** consequence for his family in verses 10,11, and for **Israel** as a result of what has happened under Jeroboam's rule, and this will happen 180 years **later**.

Jeroboam's son Abijah is going to die as soon as his mother arrives home. How **devastating**! But this is only the **beginning** of the catastrophe to happen to Jeroboam's family. As for the **rest** of Jeroboam's family, they'll experience **disaster**, they won't be buried, they'll be eaten by dogs and birds, which I'm sure you'll agree, isn't very nice!

What an **end** to a promising start. Promised **kingship**, promised a **dynasty** like King David's – what has he **done**?! He wasn't **ignorant** of what God wanted of him – Ahijah told him in chapter **11** that he had to walk in the ways of God. He wasn't **ignorant** – he was **selfish**.

And look what it **brought** him. Jeroboam wanted to follow **other** gods, rejecting God for **power**, for **popularity**, for **pleasure**, for **pride**. Did following God come **into** it? No. He went his **own** way, and ruined his family and his people. His destruction is **certain**. *'The Lord has spoken!'* verse 11. The prophecy comes **true** in chapter 15, his family wiped out. There's no going back - *'The Lord has spoken!'* God's word will not **change**, God's word is **final**. Sin's consequences are **guaranteed**, although it seemed for a **time** that he was getting **away** with it.

And what about **Israel**? Verse 15 tells us how God's people provoked him to anger by not rejecting foreign gods as he **told** them to [Exodus 34:13 and Deuteronomy 12:3]. God was angry because his people had **sinned** against him, they'd broken the first **commandment**. God is **God**, and he demands people worship only **him**.

What about Israel? Sin's consequences are guaranteed, although it seemed for a time that they were getting **away** with it, they were an unstable people, like a **reed** swaying in the water, verse 15. 180 years later, they were **uprooted** from this land, and they were taken into **exile** in Assyria. Downfall **complete**. *'The Lord has spoken!'* An **unchanging** word. A **final** word.

And **us**? What must **we** learn from this sorry story? Sin's consequences are **guaranteed**. *'The Lord has spoken!'* Paul says in Romans 6:23 – *'The wages of sin is death,'* he says. This is **God's** word. This word will not **change**. How seriously do **we** take sin? When we neglect God, go our **own** way, seek praise and **popularity** for ourselves instead of walking in God's ways, do **we see** it as sin that provokes God to anger? Or do we say like Jeroboam, 'Got **away** with it again, no bolt of lightning **this** time.' How **seriously** do we take sin? We won't get away with it **forever** – sin **will** be judged, that's God's enduring, unchanging, final word on sin.

But there **is** a way out. Romans 6:23 goes **on** to say, *'but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.'* The wonderful **news** is that God has given us a way to be **saved** from this judgement.

There's only one **God**, there's only one **Saviour**, there's only one **way**, and that's by **coming** to God, asking for **forgiveness** for our sins on the basis that **Jesus** took the punishment **we** deserve for our sins as he died on that cross. *'There is now **no** condemnation for those that are in Christ.'* This is God's **promise, unchanging, final**. *'To **all** who received [Jesus], to those who **believed** in his name, he gave the right to become **children** of God.'*

God **will** have his way. When we meet him face to face, there are only **two** possibilities – either **we** have to be judged for our sin and pay the price ourselves, or we **come** to him knowing that our sins have been judged and paid for **already** in the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Those are the **only** two possibilities.

In Jeroboam's story we've seen the **negatives** – God knows so we can't **hide**; God judges sin so someone has to **pay**; God's word is **final** – there's no going back.

But where there are **negatives** there are always **positives**. God knows, *'And my God will meet **all your needs** according to his glorious **riches** in Christ Jesus.'* Philippians 4:19.

God judges sin, but *'he has **rescued** us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have **redemption, the forgiveness** of sins.'* Colossians 1:14.

God's word is final, unchanging, enduring through all generations. God's word will bring judgement, but it will also bring **grace** and **salvation** to those who believe that Jesus loves us and *'while we were still **sinner**s, Christ **died** for us.'* Romans 5:8.

Jeroboam's story should serve as a warning; let's take the advice to go **God's** way. And at the **end** may we not be thinking, 'Oh **no**, what have I **done**?!' but may we hear the Lord say to us *'Well done, good and faithful servant!'* [Matthew 25:21]

What's it to be? Your way? Or **God's** way? The decision is **yours**. Choose **wisely**.