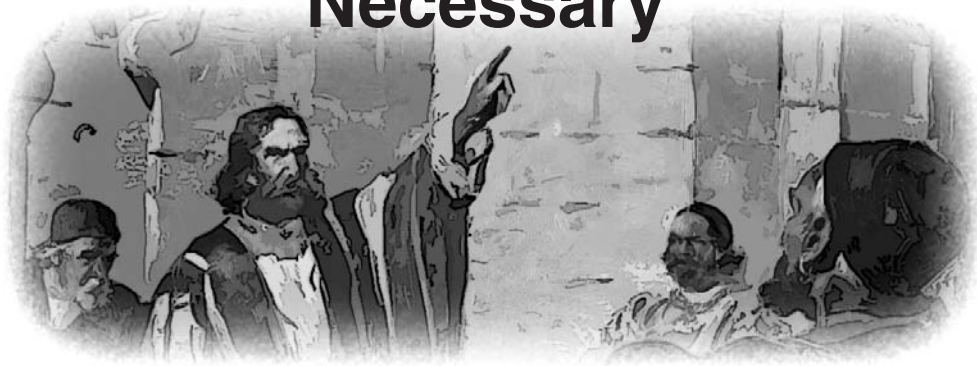


# The Man of God: Obedience Is Necessary



## SABBATH—NOVEMBER 27

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Exodus 32; 1 Kings 13:1–34; Daniel 5:13–17; Luke 16:31; John 15:24; 2 Timothy 4:3.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Above all, here is what you must understand. No prophecy<sup>1</sup> in Scripture [the Bible] ever came from a prophet’s [special messenger] own understanding. It never came simply because a prophet wanted it to. Instead, the Holy Spirit guided the prophets as they spoke. So prophecy comes from God” (2 Peter 1:20, 21, NIV).

**THIS WEEK WE WILL STUDY ONE OF THE STRANGEST STORIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.** It is a story that has a rebellious king, a prophet who makes special food bans (laws), an altar that splits open like a cracked egg, a lying old prophet, and a dangerous lion.

The story, which is about a nameless prophet, takes place in the first years of the divided kingdom.<sup>2</sup> It is a time of political and religious tension. With Jeroboam as their leader (with the blessing of the Lord, 1 Kings 11:29–39), the 10 tribes of Israel have separated from Rehoboam. Rehoboam is the son of Solomon and heir<sup>3</sup> to the kingdom of David. War is in the air. It is at this time that God sends a prophet with a special message to King Jeroboam about the idol (false god) worship in the northern kingdom. This idol worship would soon destroy the northern kingdom.

This story deals with the issue of obedience and how seriously God takes our obedience. There may be unanswered questions, but this story shows that without obedience the gospel (good news) is a false gospel.

1. prophecy—a special message from God, often an explanation of what will happen in the future.

2. divided kingdom—during the rule of Rehoboam, son of Solomon, Israel was divided into two kingdoms, one to the north with ten tribes and the other one to the south with two tribes.

3. heir—someone who will gain property, position, or a title that belonged to someone before them.

**SUNDAY—NOVEMBER 28****THE POLITICS OF RELIGION  
(1 King 12:25–33)**

After the death of Solomon, Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, made a bad decision (choice). This led to the division of the nation into two kingdoms. King Jeroboam ruled Israel to the north. Rehoboam ruled Judah to the south (1 Kings 12).



**In Rehoboam's time the nation of Israel was divided in half.**

Not long after the break, Jeroboam put the northern kingdom on a very dangerous path. It was not his goal to lead Israel from a worship of God to idolatry (worship of false gods). He simply wanted to get ahead for political reasons. Jeroboam created two centers of worship, one at Bethel and one at Dan. Jeroboam claimed to be trying to make things easier for the people of Israel. Now they would not have to travel all the way

to Jerusalem to worship. The golden calves were supposed to be something people could see to remind them of God. This would make worship more credible (believable) for the common people. But what started as a political move soon led to the breaking of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:4, 5).

**What things are the same in the story of the golden calf in Exodus 32 and the story of the golden calves in 1 Kings 12:25–33?**

It is not a bad thing to be creative to help worship fit with the customs of a culture.<sup>4</sup> But we must be careful. Even a small break from a clear command of God can have results far beyond our control. In the case of Israel, the golden calves led the nation on the path to open sin. But Jeroboam did not stop there. He tried to make other changes. He wanted to encourage some of the Levites in his kingdom to serve as priests in the new places of worship. But the Levites knew the dangers of disobeying God's commands. When they refused, Jeroboam was forced to make common people priests (1 Kings 12:31, 32). This damaged the holy office of the priest.

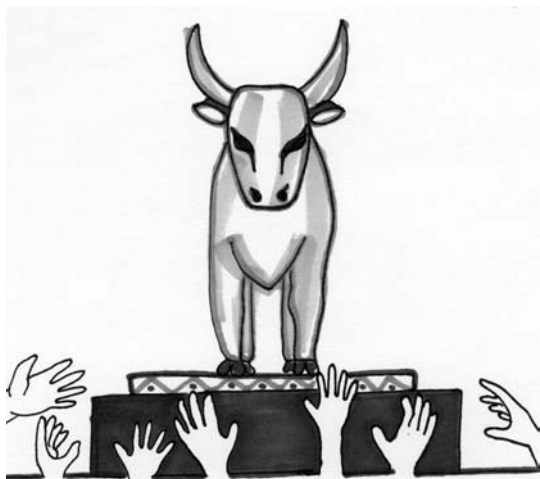
The story of Jeroboam's religious-political changes should have been a warning to the early Christian church. But the same thing happened again. God's commandments were changed because of political or social influences.<sup>5</sup> The Sabbath was ignored,

4. culture—the beliefs, customs, arts, and so on, of a particular society, group, place, or time.

5. influences—people or things that affect someone or something in an important way.

and Sunday became the new “holy” day. Sunday was chosen as a way of separating the church from the Jews. The statues (idols) of saints were introduced to make the worship of God more visible (seeable) for heathen believers. The things that led to these changes did not go away after the time of Jeroboam or early Christianity. Today, as a church, we face many challenges that are almost the same as in the days of Jeroboam.

**What kind of cultural pressure is your own church facing? How weak are you to the cultural pressures around you? How easily do you give in on “little” things?**



The golden calves led Israel on a path toward open sin.

## MONDAY—NOVEMBER 29

### GOD’S MOVE (1 Kings 13:1–6)

In the middle of these political moves, God steps in and makes Himself heard. He speaks through a

prophet from Judah. This unnamed prophet arrives at a very dramatic moment. Jeroboam is standing at his altar at the ceremony to dedicate (give) it to God. God has chosen the perfect time to act. Anyone who had power in Israel would have been at the ceremony.

**Read 1 Kings 13:1–6. What happens in these verses? What lessons come to mind from this story?**

The unnamed prophet is spoken of as the man of God. This was a common title used for a person who was seen as a messenger of God. It was used for Moses (Deuteronomy 33:1) and Elijah (1 Kings 17:18). This title connects our nameless prophet with some of the great prophets of the Old Testament. As a reader, we now expect great things from him. The man of God cries out against the altar Jeroboam has made. Then he gives a prophecy. In the prophecy, the name Josiah is said (1 Kings 13:2). This is amazing because Josiah is born almost three hundred years later. It reminds us of King Cyrus, the Persian, whose name is said by the prophet Isaiah about two hundred years before his birth (read Isaiah 44:28; Isaiah 45:1).

What are the important points of the message this man of God brings? First, the altar is against God’s law. The man of God makes a prophecy that a king named Josiah from David’s line will destroy the altar. This is exactly what Jeroboam is most afraid of. Jeroboam is building these

worship centers in order to avoid losing his kingdom to someone from the line of David.

The second part of the message gives an example of God's power. This moment guarantees that the prophecy will be fulfilled. In front of everyone, the altar splits apart. Perhaps this is to remind those who are watching of the tablets of the Ten Commandments that Moses broke when he saw the people worshipping the first golden calf.

It seems that Jeroboam has not learned from history. He has two golden calves instead of one. And now, instead of being sorrowful and repenting, Jeroboam points at the man of God. Pointing a hand, stick, or scepter (symbol of the king's power) was a sign of judgment in Bible times. Jeroboam wants to have the man of God arrested. Jeroboam tries to have the man arrested instead of surrendering (giving oneself completely) himself to the will of God.



Before everyone's eyes, the altar splits apart.

**In this story, how do we understand how God grants mercy to someone as stubborn as Jeroboam? How often do you find yourself showing almost the same kind of stubborn feeling toward the clear leading of God? What are the results of that attitude (thought or feeling)?**

## TUESDAY—NOVEMBER 30

### THE GIVER OF GIFTS (Luke 16:31)

It is a wonderful miracle (special sign from God). Jeroboam's hand, which had "dried up, so that he could not pull it in again" (1 Kings 13:4), is given back to him. After such wonderful proof of God's power, we would expect a public confession from Jeroboam, the king. But miracles cannot change our will (desire to do something). Even after a wonderful act of God, it is still so easy to find a natural explanation or just simply to go right back to our old habits.

**What did Jesus say about the connection between miracles and belief in Luke 16:31; John 10:25–28; and John 15:24? Why do you think this is so true of us?**

Jeroboam could have destroyed the altars and, with God in his heart, began a reform (change). Instead, he just changes his methods (read 1 Kings 13:7–10). He invites the man of God home with him and offers him a reward. This was a political move

to make people who witnessed the miracle forget God's message. King Jeroboam tries to get the man of God to work for him. Only the person who has the power, or who is paying for a service, can offer a reward. But the man of God is not for sale. He owes his loyalty to God and cannot let his messages from God be changed by anyone else but God.

**Read 2 Kings 5:14–16 and Daniel 5:13–17. How did the prophets in these verses accept the offers of gifts?**

Giving a gift places the giver in a position of power. Now the person who got the gift owes the giver. The man of God refuses the king's gift and then goes on to say that he will not eat or drink as long as he is in Israel. By not accepting Jeroboam's hospitality (offer of food and drink), the man of God says "No" to mixing true worship with idol worship. God's people should not be for sale. They should walk a different way. Even with this different way, the man of God did not have too far to walk, because the dedication of the shrine at Bethel took place about 1.4 miles (2 kilometers) from the border with Judah. The next town in the kingdom of Judah was Mizpah, a 7-mile (10-kilometer) walk from Bethel. The man of God was to walk this different way home without eating or drinking to show how disgusting idol worship was to God.



The loyalty of God's people is never to be on sale.

**How is the giving of gifts or favors viewed in your culture? Do you owe the people who give you gifts? Pray for God's wisdom in helping you avoid traps because of gifts given to you.**

### WEDNESDAY—DECEMBER 1

#### TEMPTING LIES (1 Kings 13:11–19)

**Read 1 Kings 13:11–19. Compare<sup>6</sup> these verses with the first temptation (desire to do wrong) and lie in Genesis 3:1–5. What things are almost the same? What can we learn from these events?**

The man of God must have understood something about how important his mission (special work) was. God told him to give his message to the king and then return right away, taking no

6. compare—to show how two or more things are the same or different.

time for eating or drinking. But here he is, sitting under a tree in Israel, resting. He could have walked the 1.4 miles (2 kilometers) and then could have sat under a tree in Judah. But by losing his sense of how important his mission was, the man of God opened himself to temptation (desire to give into sin).

The old prophet deceives (tricks) the man of God. We do not know why the old prophet wanted to deceive the man of God. Whatever his reason, the Bible tells us that “he was lying to him” (1 Kings 13:18, NKJV). In this moment the old prophet becomes a tool of Satan, the father of lies (John 8:44). What is strange is that this man of God is so easily deceived. He is clearly being led by God and doing the Lord’s will (plan; desire). When the old prophet comes to him, he falls for the trick and goes against what God has told him to do.

It is hard to understand. We would like to excuse him for disobeying God because he was deceived. But God never excuses belief in a lie, especially when the lie goes against a clear command that He has given.

Temptation comes with the choice to disobey God’s will as He has shown it to us. Temptations do not change as much as the forms of the temptations do. Hebrews 4:15 tells us that Jesus was tempted as we are. The same temptations we face today were faced and conquered (overcome) by Jesus. Jesus promises us wisdom and a “way of escape” so that we will not be deceived by the lies of Satan (1 Corinthians 10:13).

**How easily do you let temptations**

**lead you to disobey God’s will? What can you do, and what choices can you make to protect yourself from the temptations that trap you?**

## THURSDAY—DECEMBER 2

### TWIN TEMPTATIONS (2 TIMOTHY 4:3 )

**The man of God faced two temptations. The first one came from the king, and the man of God refused. The second one came from the old prophet, and he was deceived (tricked). By studying 2 Timothy 4:3; 2 Peter 2:1; and Jude 4–16, what important lesson can we learn from the man of God’s story?**

The greatest threat to our faith is from false prophets and teachers, who move in among our people and claim to speak in God’s name.

It is important to have a clear word from the Lord. In other words, we need to study God’s Word, the Bible, for ourselves. A true prophet or teacher will never disobey God’s Word. Any new prophecy or teaching from God will add to His established truth and not subtract from it because God never changes. It also will lead us to obedience and never to disobedience. Finally, we can judge prophets and teachers by the results of their teaching in their lives and the lives of their students.

**Read 1 Kings 13:20–34. What do these verses tell us about what happened next? What lessons do they have for us?**

Perhaps the hardest part of this story to understand is why the old prophet lies to the man of God. The old prophet starts out in the role of Satan, the father of lies. Then, before the chapter is over, he is the one saying “Thus saith the Lord” (verse 21) to the man of God. Much of this is hard to understand, but there is one important thing to remember. The man of God should not have disobeyed the clear command of the Lord.

There are different responses to the death of the man of God. Jeroboam continues in his sin even after witnessing a miracle (read 1 Kings 13:33, 34). But the old prophet believes that God’s word will be fulfilled. He tells his sons to put his bones next to the bones of the man of God when he dies. The prophecy made by the man of God from Judah is fulfilled by Josiah three hundred years later (2 Kings 23:15, 16). As the prophecy foretold, Josiah burns bones on the altar. But Josiah spares (does not burn) the bones of the man of God. And later, Josiah spares the bones of the old prophet who was buried with him (2 Kings 23:17, 18).

**Study this verse: “It is the man of God, who was disobedient unto the word of the Lord” (1 Kings 13:26). What difficult but important message can we learn from this for ourselves?**

### FRIDAY—DECEMBER 3

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** “Those who are tempted are not to look at situ-

ations, in the event that they may weaken to the power of temptation. Instead, they are to depend on the power of God’s Word [the Bible]. All the strength of God’s Word is ours. As the psalmist says, ‘I have hidden your word in my heart so that I won’t [will not] sin against you.’ ‘By obeying your word I have kept myself from acting like those who try to hurt others.’ Psalm 119:11; Psalm 17:4, NIV.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Ministry [Work Done for God] of Healing*, page 181.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ Truth means growth. The better we understand God’s truth, the more we may have to make changes in our lives, beliefs, and outreach work. Keeping things as they are is not an option (choice). Discuss in your class how we can tell if our actions arise from God’s leading or from society’s influence.
- ❷ In many societies, bribes or special gifts are common in almost all business, legal (lawful), and political deals. How can we, as Seventh-day Adventists, stay honest in such societies? As a class, write a list of rules for dealing with this problem based on the lesson this week.
- ❸ Suppose someone in your church claims to have a message from the Lord. Suppose your head elder claims to have new light on last-day events in the Bible. How would you test such claims?