

BELIEVING A LIE

I Kings 13:20-26

I. INTRODUCTION: 1, 2

1. **3** This morning we are going to turn to God's word and consider some information that is valuable in determining how we live.
2. Before we turn to God's word I want to establish the proposition that we will consider in this lesson.
3. There is a consensus of religious opinion in our country that goes something like this: **
"If you sincerely believe something religiously, if you believe it with all your heart and if you honestly follow the convictions of your beliefs it will result in a home in heaven. It will result in safety as far as the eternal home of your soul is concerned." Let me repeat that so everyone understands (REPEAT proposition)
4. ** I would suggest to you that the hypothesis that sincere belief equals safety is only held in religion. Consider some examples:
 - A. **Business:** does the fact that a company sincerely believes that its latest product will turn them a profit equate with it actually coming true? (e.g., Edsel, New Coke, Pepsi Clear)
 - B. **Finance:** does the fact that a financial institution sincerely guarantees me my money is safe when deposited in their institution actually guarantee I will not lose my money? (Lincoln Savings & Loan scandal, Charles Keating, The Keating Five, 21,000 mostly elderly investors lost their life savings; Bernie Madoff, \$10-\$17 billion in losses)
 - C. **Military:** if a general sincerely believes a certain battle plan will conquer the enemy does that guarantee the plan will lead to victory? (Napoleon and Waterloo, lost ~60% of his army, Hitler and the battle of Stalingrad, 850,000 German casualties, America and Vietnam, 58,220 U.S. dead)
 - D. **Travel:** did the fact that the elite of society sincerely believed a certain ship was "unsinkable" save them? I'm certain all of us know the name of that ship (Titanic, 1,514 lost, 68%).
5. In all of these cases, the fact people sincerely believed a certain course of action would lead to safety did not necessarily bring the desired result. The fact that everyone on the Titanic sincerely believed the ship was unsinkable did not save them.
6. We all recognize in all realms of life besides religion sincere belief of a thing does not make it true.
7. Isn't it a curious thing then that so many believe sincerity equals safety when it comes to religion!
8. **4** Affirmation of this proposition is not, I repeat, **is not** found in the teachings of God's Word. The inspired apostle Paul certainly did not subscribe to a doctrine that the sincere belief of a thing is the guarantee of it (**2 Thess. 2:9-12**). Let us to consider some key truths from this passage:
 - A. This passage says there are people in the world that did not receive the love of the truth. Paul isn't saying they did not receive the truth. We live in a land where the truth is accessible to everybody (e.g., Gideon Bibles in every motel/hotel).
 - B. The problem is not the availability of the truth, but a love of the truth.
 - C. The deluding influence of which Paul speaks is not by direct communication from God. God does not single people out and directly send them a lie to believe (Titus 1:2 "God cannot lie").
 - D. But, God does allow false teachers to teach lies (free moral agency). Example:
Gen. 3:3: ... "God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" Perhaps Eve did not love the truth, she became deluded but the delusion was not directly from God!

Gen. 3:4: “Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die.” (2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14)

- E. God allows people that do not love the truth to believe false teaching.
 - F. God allows people that do not love the truth to feel comfortable believing false teaching (Gen. 3:6); it’s part of free will.
 - G. God allows a person who does not love the truth to have a clear conscience believing a lie (e.g., Saul; cf. **Acts 23:1:** “Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, ‘Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.’”; **Acts 26:9-11:** “Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. 11 And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.”; 1 Tim. 4:2: be careful not to sear our conscience.).
 - H. God allows a person to fall asleep religiously and lose their soul if they do not have a love for the truth (**2 Thess. 2:11-12:** “...God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, 12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”; **Mk. 4:24:** “Take heed what you hear.”; **Lk. 8:18:** “Therefore take heed how you hear.”).
 - I. We’re not talking about having the truth...but having a love of the truth!
9. In the Old Testament there is a story that vividly and dramatically demonstrates the tragic consequences of believing a lie better than any Bible story.
10. This Old Testament account has a definite message for us; it is important for us to study messages in OT even though we are under the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2) in the NT (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11).
11. The great thing about the OT is that we get to see the:
- ☛ beginning,
 - ☛ the middle,
 - ☛ and the end;
 - ☛ then we get to see how God reacts to it.
12. Thus, we are able to learn the mind of God; which is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.

II. DISCUSSION:

I. 5 Background: turn to 1 Kings 11

A. United Kingdom years (all 12 tribes united under one king; 1095 BC – 975 BC):

- (1) Saul reigned 40 years,
- (2) David reigned 40 years,
- (3) Solomon reigned 40 years.

B. Unfortunately, especially in his later years, Solomon disobeyed God. Solomon fell into the trap that many, otherwise, godly men often fall into (1 Kgs. 11:1-13).

C. 6 Divided Kingdom (after Solomon’s death):

- (1) Rehoboam (Solomon’s son): ruled Southern Kingdom (Judah: two tribes, Judah and Benjamin).
- (2) Jeroboam (unrelated to Solomon): ruled Northern Kingdom (Israel: 10 tribes; 1 Kgs. 11 & 12).
- (3) Jeroboam had a major political problem: He feared losing his political base if he let his citizens go outside his jurisdiction to worship. The temple was located in Rehoboam’s territory, Judah.

So as all good politicians do, Jereboam compromised (1 Kgs. 12:26-33). Jereboam offered the people a religion of “convenience” (e.g., California church: drive-in communion; Grandma Thomas and Saturday evening mass).

- (a) Made shrines in the high places (v. 31),
- (b) Made priests from non-Levites (v. 31),
- (c) Ordained a feast of his own making (v. 32),
- (d) He himself (non-Levite) offered sacrifice and burned incense (v. 33).

2. 7 Scene #1: Jereboam’s glorious “grand opening” for his new altar:

- A. So for political convenience Jereboam has set up a false religious system “*which he had devised in his own heart*” (12:33) and which was unapproved by God (12:30).
- B. To heap insult to injury, Jereboam plans a pompous, lavish “grand opening” for his altar in Bethel.
- C. But, God has other plans: 1 Kgs. 13:1-4 (BTW: fulfilled by king Josiah in 2 Kgs. 23; ~ 336 yrs. later)
- D. Here is where we get into the meat of our lesson this morning.
 - (1) Use your imagination to transport yourself to the scene unfolding in Bethel.
 - (2) In Bethel we have a festive scene. A lavish “grand opening” is unfolding. The king, Jereboam, is there; gathered with all of society’s elite. Surely the air must have been charged with excitement as this spectacular and magnificent grand opening begins to unfold.
 - (3) But the Judean prophet intrudes on the grand opening and spoils it, because God has sent him to cry out against the sins of Jereboam’s false worship.
 - (4) The Judean prophet is faithful to God’s command to go and he speaks that which God commanded him, crying out against Jereboam and his false religion. We need to fully appreciate the tremendous amount of courage demonstrated by the Judean prophet. Prophets were as often as not killed by wicked kings when they spoke out on God’s behalf (2 Chron. 24:20-21).
 - (5) And, Jereboam does not react kindly to the prophet’s rebuke. He quickly and angrily stretches out his arm and points his finger at the Judean prophet and commands, “*Arrest him!*”
- E. But instead of the Judean prophet being arrested notice what unfolds: 1 Kgs. 13:4b-7.
 - (1) Jereboam gets a sudden “*attitude adjustment.*”
 - (2) The Judean prophet miraculously “*withers*” Jereboam’s outstretched arm, he cannot pull it back.
 - (3) That would surely change my attitude! And it certainly changed Jereboam’s attitude (he knows he is caught “*dead to rights*”). He instantly realizes that this man is God’s man!
 - (4) He asks the prophet to petition God on his behalf that he might be restored. And so it is that the Judean prophet entreats God on Jereboam’s behalf and God restores Jereboam’s arm.
- F. 8 Now we come to a very critical juncture in the story that God has revealed to us. The Judean prophet faces his first temptation: 1 Kgs. 13:7-10.
 - (1) Jereboam forgot about the grand opening and gives the prophet of Judah his first temptation. If you received a registered letter from the White House to go to dinner would you go?
 - (2) But notice the Judean prophet’s commitment to truth: “*I wouldn’t come for half your house.*” Imagine how much half the king’s house was worth, imagine how wealthy the king was.
 - (3) We need to begin building a character profile of the young prophet. Was he weak or strong? Was he faithful or unfaithful?

- (a) He had done exactly as God said and with no man on his side, backing him up; he cried out against Jereboam and his altar. History taught prophets doing similar things had been killed!
- (b) **9** He was still determined to follow God's simple commands. God had told him:
 - (i) *'You shall not eat bread,*
 - (ii) *nor drink water,*
 - (iii) *nor return by the same way you came.'*

I Jn. 5:3: *"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome"* (not heavy, not difficult).

Eph. 3:4: *"...when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ"*

- (c) His preaching and miracle had shown that he bravely *"fulfilled his ministry,"* he changed Jereboam from one who sought to kill him into one who wanted to reward him.
- (d) He bravely cried out against Jereboam and his false altar; now he resisted the temptation to accept Jereboam's reward. Again, was he weak or strong? Was he faithful or unfaithful?

3. **10 Scene #2:** That takes us to our next "scene" in God's story. We now learn of another prophet, an old prophet who lives in Bethel (**I Kgs. 13:11-14**).

- A. Why hadn't the old prophet gone to Jereboam's grand opening? Ever wonder about that? You can't tell me that the old prophet did not know about the grand opening, about Jereboam being in town (e.g., Ronald Reagan's visit to Danville, IN.). Why didn't he go? Maybe he thought he better leave well enough alone, don't rock the boat (character insight?!).
- B. The old prophet seeks out the Judean prophet. He finds him sitting under an oak tree and gives the Judean prophet his second temptation. He simply invites him home for dinner (**I Kgs. 13:15**).
- C. But the Judean prophet remains true to God's simple commands and refuses the invitation (**I Kgs. 13:16-17**).
- D. Now the old prophet shows his true colors. He does not show respect for God, but disrespects God by lying (Judean prophets 3rd temptation): **I Kgs. 13:18**.
 - (1) **11** If God said don't eat, would an angel come to the old prophet and tell him it was OK for the young prophet to eat? No! **Gal. 1:6-9**
 - (2) The Judean prophet makes a grave mistake: he believes the old prophet.
 - (3) Was the Judean prophet dishonest? Could he be bought? No, he turned down the first temptation, he turned down the second temptation. But he now believes a lie and that is the proposition we are considering in this lesson:

Does believing a lie carry consequences? Does sincere belief in a thing bring safety?

- (4) He not only believed a lie, he believed a lie a preacher told him. That should mean something to us!! (Phil. 2:12; **I Jn. 4:1:** *"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world."*; **Rom. 16:18:** *"For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple."*; **2 Pet. 2:1-2:** *"But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. 2 And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed."*; **→Acts 17:11:** *"These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so."*)

4. **12 Scene #3:** Now we turn to scene 3, the dinner party at the old prophet's house: **1 Kgs. 13:19-22.**
- Old prophet begins to speak. "*Thus saith the Lord*" think that got everybody's attention? That kind of talk will break up most dinner parties!
 - The young prophet had disobeyed the Lord and the consequences for believing a lie are announced by God through the old prophet from Bethel. The Judean prophet is going to die!
 - Can you imagine how the Judean prophet felt? Do you imagine that he even finished his dinner?
 - Can you picture how the old prophet must have felt? His lie was going to, in part, cause the young prophet's death.
5. **13 Scene #4:** Now we turn to scene 4, the Judean prophet's tragic death: **1 Kgs. 13:23-25.**
- Lions don't kill fast (grasp the neck and suffocate their victim). Did you ever wonder what the last thoughts of young prophet were? I don't know, but I wouldn't be surprised if he didn't think about how important it is not to trust a man's word unless it can be squared with God's word!
 - I find it very interesting that after the Judean prophet's death people pass by and see his corpse and see the lion and donkey standing side-by-side (**v. 28:** "*...he donkey and the lion standing by the corpse. The lion had not eaten the corpse nor torn the donkey.*"). Passersby thought it was really unusual. It was unusual! A donkey will always run from a lion. The fact the lion and donkey are standing together was a sign from God to signify what had happened was from God and a lesson needed to be learned from this prophet's death!
6. **14 Scene #5:** The old prophet learns of the young prophet's death and he makes a very important statement that goes to the heart of our proposition:
- ** Recall our proposition: "If you sincerely believe something religiously, if you believe it with all your heart and if you honestly follow the convictions of your beliefs that it will result in safety."**
 - Did believing a lie have consequences for the Judean prophet? YES! WHY! ****
1 Kgs. 13:26: "*Now when the prophet who had brought him back from the way heard it, he said, 'It is the man of God who was disobedient to the word of the LORD. Therefore the LORD has delivered him to the lion, which has torn him and killed him, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke to him.'*"
 - I get all tied up in knots by this story. I want to cry out and say wait a minute here...the wrong man has died! Why didn't the liar get killed!! Well, all I can say about that is this: all liars will be condemned (**Rev. 21:8:** "*...all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.*").
 - But, it is an inescapable fact that the young prophet believed a lie and it made him do something God told him explicitly **not** to do!
 - How important is it to God for us to love the truth? If we can't learn that fact from this story what does it take! It's a good story, because God chose it to teach you and me a lesson.
 - 15** Every rational thinking person in the audience should have a question in their mind because of this story. How can I make sure that I don't believe a lie? Just because you are in this building does not mean you are immune to believing a lie. How can I know I am walking in the light?
 - There is only one way to know. There is only one set of men we can follow...the men that wrote God's book (Jn. 16:13; 1 Cor. 2:1-13; Jn. 14:15; 1 Jn. 2:3-5).
 - I don't care how smooth anyone can preach to you. You must have a love for the truth and you don't believe it unless you can read it in God's book. (Acts 17:11; 1 Pet. 4:11; Gal. 1:6-9)
 - The better it sounds, the smoother it flows the more you need to check it out!! 1 Jn. 4:1

D. You are going to answer for yourself in judgment. You can't say on judgment day... "well, Craig told me..." That will not be an acceptable excuse. You have a responsibility for having a love for the truth and checking things out with God's book before you believe it!!!

(1) What is in the book is easy enough to understand. Let me demonstrate how easy it is to discern between what are lies and what is the truth. **16-18**

<i>Man says</i>	<i>God says</i>
<i>Universe & man came via 'Big Bang' and evolution</i>	→ <i>Gen. 1 & 2</i>
<i>One church is as good as another.</i>	→ <i>Matt. 16:18; Acts 2; Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23</i>
<i>All going to heaven, just traveling different roads</i>	→ <i>Matt. 7:13-14; Jn. 14:6</i>
<i>Peter first pope, pope head of the church</i>	→ <i>Eph. 1:22-23; Acts 20:28; Matt. 8:14; 1 Cor. 9:5</i>
<i>Observe religious holidays (e.g., Easter, Christmas)</i>	→ <i>Col. 3:17; 1 Pet. 4:11</i>
<i>Saved by faith only</i>	→ <i>Jas. 2:24</i>
<i>Baptism not necessary for salvation</i>	→ <i>Gal. 2:26-27; Mk. 16:16; 1 Pet. 3:21</i>

(2) You tell me! Which is error and which is truth? Which is a lie? Which will lead one to heaven and which will lead one to hell?

III. CONCLUSION: **19**

1. What are the consequences of believing a lie? Just ask the Judean prophet!
2. Long ago a great experiment was performed. It was the greatest experiment ever conducted because it was an experiment that concerned the meaning of life.
3. ****Recall our proposition: "If you sincerely believe something religiously, if you believe it with all your heart and if you honestly follow the convictions of your beliefs it will result in a home in heaven. It will result in safety as far as the eternal home of your soul is concerned."** Is it true or false? F-A-L-S-E!
4. ****A wise man examined the greatness of riches, the wonder of ability and wisdom, and the fascination of pleasure. And when the results came in from this great experiment this was the simple, yet profound conclusion: **Eccl. 12:13-14:** "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. 14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."**
5. In Jas. 4:14, God offers some more important advice:
"For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away."
6. Life is short, time is passing quickly. We need to hurry up and get it right! We need to share the true message of God's word with others, we must persuade men who believe lies with the truth from God's book!
7. Invitation:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Hear: Rom. 10:17 ✓ Believe (faith): Heb. 11:6 ✓ Confess: Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:10; Acts 8:36-37 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Repent: Acts 2:38 ✓ Baptism: Acts 2:38; 8:38; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21; Acts 2:47; 1 Cor. 12:13 ✓ Faithfulness: Col. 1:18-23; 2 Pet. 1:3-11
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—based in part on a sermon of the same title by Ken Leach, Phoenix, AZ