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Beyond Belief

CAPITOL BIBLE STUDY

monthly (interim) schedule

TUESDAY, 12 APRIL 2016

12 NOON in 123 CAP

Capitol Commission (interim) Bible Studies are held the first Tuesday of each month at 12 Noon, in accord with the Public Service Commission devotional at 9:55am. **Due to a schedule conflict, and only for the month of April, the first Capitol Commission (interim) Bible Study will be held on the second Tuesday: 12 April 2016.** The *monthly* Bible study is nonpartisan and non-denominational. We are continuing our Bible study from the 2016 General Assembly in the book of First Kings.

I pray that this study will be edifying to you. My sole intent is to serve you, and to be a resource to you for pastoral care, counsel, and prayer. **Please accept my study in the Word of God, as evidence of my desire to serve you.**

– Dr. Ron J. Bigalke, Georgia State Minister, Capitol Commission

Capitol Commission (interim) Bible Study *is* Tuesday, 12 April 2016

First Kings 13 – “Beyond Belief”

How surprised are you to learn that Scotland’s national animal is the unicorn? Did you know that raspberries and strawberries are not truly berries (in the botanical sense); however, a banana is a berry as is a tomato? For every human on Earth, there are 1.6 million ants, yet their aggregate weight is approximately the same as all human beings. There are 5-10 times more stars in the universe than there are grains of sand on all the world’s beaches.

Some facts seem too incredible to be true; they appear beyond belief. Indeed, the astonishing nature of the gospel of grace is one primary reason why many people struggle with the message of salvation. The reality of God’s grace – received through faith in Jesus Christ – seems too good to be true. To think that everything needed to receive God’s favor has already been accomplished through the saving death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus – and that all one must do is trust in Him – seems beyond belief.

Certainly, some think they must earn salvation on their own, or (at least) attempt to resolve the predicament of human sinfulness by their own self. The good news of God’s grace is that salvation is an unmerited gift. “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 6:23). All that is needed to receive God’s salvation is trust in the Lord’s promise: “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God” (Eph 2:8; cf. Matt 3:8; Eph 5:8).

THE GOOD NEWS OF GOD’S GRACE IS THAT SALVATION IS AN UNMERITED GIFT.

The account in First Kings 13 concerns a man who received an astounding promise. God pledged his word to Jeroboam that if he would obey and trust him alone, the Lord would establish his family as a dynasty in Israel, which would be as secure as King David’s everlasting dynasty in Judah (cf. 2 Sam 7:8-16). However, the pledge seemed too inconceivable to be true. Jeroboam was encountering some foremost political problems that seemed to threaten his kingdom unless he dealt with those issues himself.

Jeroboam did not truly know or trust the Lord; consequently, he could not accept what God promised him, based upon trust. Jeroboam’s actions were based upon political expediency, which is evident in that he responded to the problems on his own. He denied and distorted God’s promise, and commenced a course of actions that was disastrous for himself and his nation.

AN ACT OF COURAGE

(*1 Kgs 13:1-10*) Jeroboam did not earn his office as king; rather, it was bestowed upon him as a gift of God’s grace. He did not become king by political maneuvering; rather, his kingship was granted by the kindness of God. Indeed, all political office is a divine gift, and thus one must heed God’s commands and decrees as revealed in the Holy Bible (cf. 13:1-2, 5, 9, 17-18, 20-21, 26, 32). Jeroboam had witnessed the fulfillment of God’s promise to him, and he had every reason to believe that God would honor his Word.

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Indeed, the Word of God – not the king’s prowess or even the person of the prophet – is what determines events in the nation. The author emphasized the “the word of the LORD” so all readers of First Kings would discern the significance of God’s Word. The tragedy of Jeroboam’s life is that he decided not to trust the Lord. The leader’s greatest responsibility is to honor the will and Word of God.



Capitol Commission (interim) Bible Study

Tuesday (12th of April) from 12 Noon - 12:45pm, 123 CAP

lunch provided from sponsorship by Faith Community Church, Woodstock



Enhancing Trust

An unnamed prophet received his message from God, and was sent to Jeroboam's shrine for the purpose of denouncing the king's actions (vv. 1-3). The prophet did not fear the king's threats nor did he succumb to his bribes, for if the prophet had done either, he would have invalidated his prophetic ministry. Sadly, the king did not heed the warning. Nearly three hundred years later, King Josiah would fulfill the prophetic message (2 Kgs 23:15-20).

Jeroboam challenged the prophet, yet he would quickly learn his powerlessness against God. Not only did Jeroboam's hand shrivel in instant paralysis when he tried to harm the prophet, but also he watched helplessly as the altar collapsed in front of him, in fulfillment of the Word of the Lord. Forced to recognize the authority of God's messenger, Jeroboam pleaded for the healing of his hand (1 Kgs 13:4-6). The incident demonstrates that Jeroboam was not in control of the events; rather, God predestines (Acts 4:28).

Not ready to concede defeat, Jeroboam sought to reward the prophet and thus gain his favor (1 Kgs 13:7). Hospitality indicated fellowship in the ancient world; therefore, if the prophet accepted Jeroboam's invitation, it would be regarded as a public sign of approval and thus an essential negation of his previous words. Compelled by his divine orders, the man of God refused (vv. 8-10).

THE PARTICULAR EMPHASIS OF THE PASSAGE IS THAT GOD, WHO IS OMNISCIENT, IS THE ONE WHO ANNOUNCED EVENTS IN ADVANCE, AND THIS ACT PROVES HIS DEITY.

The book of First Kings was written in Babylon in the time between Jehoiachin's release (25:27) and the return of the first deportees to Jerusalem (ca. 538 BC). The most probable date for the writing of First Kings is 555 BC (the final Babylonian king was Nabonidus who appointed Belshazzar as his co-regent; cf. Dan 7:1) since the account does not indicate that the return was becoming apparent politically. The significance of the dating is that a biblical prophecy was given regarding Josiah almost three centuries prior to his time (1 Kgs 13:2; 2 Kgs 23:15-18).

First Kings 13 is not the only place in the Bible where God named an individual many years prior to his birth. In the eighth century BC, the prophet Isaiah announced Cyrus – who lived in the sixth century – as the restorer of God's people. The particular emphasis of the passage is that God, who is omniscient, is the One who announced events in advance, and this act proves his deity. Destructive critics who discount such obviously prophetic passages commit the same error that the idolaters in the time of the kings made. They are similar to the Sadducees of another time, of whom the Lord Jesus Christ said, "You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God" (Matt 22:29).

AN ACT OF COMPROMISE

(1 Kgs 13:11-34) If the biblical account ended with verse 10, the prophet's commitment to the Word of the Lord would impress us. Suddenly, however, we are introduced to a prophet from Bethel who invited the unnamed prophet from Judah to his home for a meal (vv. 11-15). The man from Judah initially refused because all formal

contact with the northern kingdom of Israel was to be avoided (vv. 16-17). The prophet from Bethel lied and said the Lord had told them to "eat bread and drink water" (vv. 18-19).

When they had settled in the old prophet's home, the man of God received an authentic message from God, which condemned the prophet from Judah for his actions (vv. 20-22). Had the prophet continued to obey God's directives, a lion would not have killed him (vv. 23-25). He was buried in Bethel, which was a far distance from his ancestral home, and thus was a fate tantamount to being cursed (vv. 26-32; cf. 16:4).

UNLESS IT CAN BE PROVED FROM GOD'S WORD – THE HOLY BIBLE – BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OTHERS CLAIM TO KNOW THE LORD'S WILL FOR YOUR LIFE.

Jeroboam would have learned that the man of God who confronted him so courageously had died strangely. He had seen evidence of God's power and heard it from others, yet Jeroboam "did not return from his evil way" (vv. 33-34). Jeroboam would not escape the consequences of his sin (any more than the man of God) nor would his house or nation because they also persisted in sin.

The man of God had gradually distanced himself from the commissioning Word of the Lord. Rather than hurrying home, he was found "sitting under an oak" (v. 14), and there the prophet from Judah believed the lies of the old prophet. The man eventually had fellowship with an enemy who pretended to be a friend.

Unless it can be proved from God's Word – the Holy Bible – be cautious when others claim to know the Lord's will for your life. When the city of Chicago determined to give cyclists "their own signal," the result was a notable behavior change. Truly, we all need to heed our own signals, which God provides through his Word.

The account of the two prophets demonstrates that God's people have tremendous responsibility to do what they know to be right and thus not to be swayed by the persuasive speech of others. Similar to Jeroboam, the prophet from Judah heeded bad advice in contrast to following the word of God. Scripture warns God's people that challenges will arise among persons who claim to speak for the Lord but – in truth – they seek to lead one astray (Deut 13:1-5; 1 John 4:1-6). All action and speech must be tested, and rejected if found to be contrary to the known Word of God (cf. Deut 18:15-22).

Thank you for allowing Capitol Commission the nobility to provide Bible studies to you. If you have any questions, please talk with us, or contact by email or phone.

About Capitol Commission

Capitol Commission state ministers are pastors-missionaries who teach weekly verse-by-verse Bible studies for legislators, lobbyists, and staff members. The Bible studies are hand-distributed to each legislative office, emailed, and made available throughout the Capitol community. Capitol Commission is a ministry of the church seeking to proclaim the gospel message, and to help believers mature through verse-by-verse Bible teaching. In the Bible, we see God's love for the world, especially those who have been placed in authority. The divine mandate is the foundation for our ministry to you. The church is instructed to submit and honor government leaders (Rom 13:1-7), and to pray for their eternal salvation (1 Tim 2:1-4). The desire of Capitol Commission is to witness God transform the hearts and lives of elected officials, lobbyists, and staff members. We apply this mandate to four primary areas of discipleship: (1) *evangelize* those who have not known saving faith in Jesus Christ; (2) *establish* those who desire to grow in their faith and knowledge of Scripture; (3) *equip* those called to spiritual leadership; and, (4) *encourage* churches to participate with us in ministry.

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NEXT CAPITOL COMMISSION (INTERIM) BIBLE STUDY:
Tuesday, 3rd of May @ 12 Noon in 123 CAP
(the 1st Tuesday of each month, during interim)