

THE ALTAR OF CONVENIENCE

1 KINGS 12: 25 - 33

BACKGROUND

Solomon has died & the throne of Israel has passed to his son Rehoboam. But Rehoboam foolishly tried to secure the throne & the loyalty of the people through fear.

The northern 10 tribes of Israel seceded from the southern 2 tribes and became a separate nation.

They selected this man Jeroboam, to be their new king. Jeroboam had been an effective official and leader in the Solomon's court years before.

But Ahijah the prophet had foretold that he would one day lead the northern tribes as king. When Solomon found out, he tried to kill Jeroboam, who fled to Egypt to hide out.

Now he returns to take the throne of the new kingdom, just as God had foretold.

Here at the beginning of his reign, he selects his capital, the village of Shechem, and builds it into a fortress.

He also built up Peniel, on the Eastern border as another fortress to protect Israel's eastern

flank. So far so good, It's his next step which was a grave mistake . . .

FEAR OF LOOSING POWER

Jeroboam reasoned that while the people had split politically, they still shared a common religious bond.

God had commanded that the people were only to offer their sacrifices at one place, the temple in Jerusalem, which was the capital of the southern kingdom.

Jeroboam feared that after a few years of making the repeated trips to Jerusalem and seeing the glories of the Solomon's temple the people would come to regret their political disunity and be drawn back to King Rehoboam and the South.

Then, needing someone to blame their rebellion on, they would find a ready scapegoat in Jeroboam and execute him.

So he gathered his counselors about him, laid out his concerns, and together they came up with a solution...***Provide an alternative to the temple and Jerusalem.***

So they made a couple of golden calves and presented them

to the people and said, "These are your gods"

- Do not underestimate what fear can do
- Jeroboam was afraid of losing his position, power and ultimately, afraid of losing his life
- And he built new altars; altars of convenience. He brought a more convenient way that was appealing to his heart and to the people
- Power is not for everyone
- Power intoxicates. Unlike alcohol, one can seldom recover from the intoxication of power. It can take one to the grave.
- Jeroboam feared so much for losing the power and authority that he had to do something to secure himself
- Today, we fear for losing our marriages and some of us allow and even approve our spouses to do the opposite of God's commands.
- We have built altars of convenience in our homes in order not to lose our only child
- We have built altars of convenience in our offices because "job pays my bills"
- We have forgotten our first love and we keep communication with corrupt manners

OBEDIENCE, NOT CONVENIENCE

Notice that Jeroboam had little confidence in the promise of God.

In 1 Kings 11:38 we read God saying this to Jeroboam...*"It shall be, if you heed all that I command you, walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build for you an enduring house, as I built for David, and will give Israel to you."*

God's blessings on Jeroboam were conditioned on only one thing – his obedience. All he had to do was trust God and remain faithful and God would take care of everything. But to Jeroboam's sensible mind, inaction meant certain ruin.

- We must understand that sometimes God's promises demands no action.
- We think we have to do something to help God out. No!
- Inaction is not always weakness
- Convenience is a palatable sin while obedience is a sacrificial plea
- Friends, God does not need our help; only our obedience!

WATCH YOUR HEART AND YOUR COUNSEL

1 Kings 12:26: *“And Jeroboam said in his heart...” Jeroboam leaned on his own wisdom and craftiness.*

- The heart of man is desperately wicked Jer. 17:9
- Be careful of your thoughts in your quiet time.
- Jeroboam trusted in his own heart and he was doing what he felt was good for him; not what God said was good for him.
- Be watchful of leaders who:
 - Do not take advice
 - Have the wrong advisers
- 1 Kings 12:28: *“Therefore the king asked advice, made two calves of gold, and said to the people, “It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!”*
- Jeroboam had the wrong advisers and he committed twice the sin that was done before Exo. 32
- Following your heart can lead you to deception: *“It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!”*
- Is it really too much? When we built altars of convenience for ourselves, was it really because of the

burden we had or because of the lie we believed?

CONCLUSION

Convenience is everything sweet. Life becomes sweeter when things are convenient. But Obedience is not always rosy.

As Christians, we must be careful enough to trust that God would do what he has promised.

Do not look for a convenient way to achieve God’s purpose in your life. Do not help God out.

Do not be crafty in your decisions.

Do not build altars of lies on the premise of “worshipping God”.

May God help us to steer clear of altars of convenience in Jesus name. Amen.