

drinking, the prophet put a saddle on his donkey for him, and the man left. As he was traveling home, a lion attacked and killed him. His body lay on the road, with the donkey and the lion standing nearby.” (vs. 20-24)

The story doesn’t end there — it continues for ten more *very* interesting verses but we’re going to move on. We want to engage in a bit of speculation as to exactly *how* this “man of God” might have so easily let such a thing happen. He stood *firm* with the King but *fell* for the old *prophet’s* story. How *was* he so *easily* influenced by *this* guy but not the king? Probably for the same reasons *we* are so easily deceived into accepting beliefs and theologies that are not substantiated in the Bible.

First — The old prophet *sounded very* “official.” He told the man of God that he too, was a prophet. That’s pretty impressive! It *hard* to not get sucked-in by one who seems to be so close to God. One could therefore probably *assume* that he would *know* what he was talking about.

“But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned.” (Gal 1:8 NIV-1984)

Second — The old prophet *claimed* that an *angel* had spoken to him. What a spectacular event!! (He *did* lie about that though — but it still *sounded* impressive). Even if he *had* seen an angel, he *could* have just *thought* it was an angel from the Lord — *“This does not surprise us. Even Satan changes himself to look like an angel of light. So it does not surprise us if Satan’s servants also make themselves look like servants who work for what is right” (II Cor. 11:14-15 NCV)*

Third — The man of God instantly felt “a connection” with the old prophet. He told him that he *too* was a prophet. Imagine that! They were instant buddies.

Fourth — The old prophet seemed like a “regular guy.” Why should a man of God shun him? “Come on over to my house” he said — seemed to be a friendly chap.

Fifth — The man of God probably had *respect* for the old prophet. After all, he *was* older than *he* was — *should* be trustworthy — wouldn’t you think?

Sixth — The old prophet claimed to be speaking for God and that God’s instructions to the man of God had been *changed* — that the Word of the God had been “updated” — that what the *man of God* had been told was no longer applicable.

All of these possible reasons we’ve listed above are so — so — what should we say — normal? — typical? — everyday? — common? Sure they are! And *that’s* the very reason *we* too so easily “fall for” instructions and teachings that are from someone other than God in His Word. We “fall” for them because they *sound* impressive and come from someone we *think* should know what they’re talking about. Guess the moral of *this* article (and the two previous ones) is to stay alert. Never relax our ears when our salvation depends on it.

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Dennis and Sherri Owens — Cincinnati, Ohio
diligence@gorfsystems.com — <http://diligence.gorfsystems.com/>*



DILIGENCE

“We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure.” — Hebrews 6:11

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The Man Of God And The Old Prophet

In the previous couple of issues of *Diligence* we’ve been discussing ways in which individuals, including Christians often fall victim to being deceived into accepting beliefs and theologies that are not substantiated in the Bible. We suggested that deception can come through numerous ways. It *can* come by simply placing trust in what someone *tells* us the Bible says without checking it out for ourselves. *One* example of *this* kind of deception would be the doctrine of Premillennialism. We noted in the February 15th issue how that belief is *easily* refuted by just *one* verse in Jeremiah — although there are *many* other verses one could *also* use. Yet a huge number of “christians” have accepted that doctrine *because* — and apparently *only* because someone has *told* them it is so. They failed to study it out for themselves to see if what they had been *told* was indeed according to the Bible.

In the February 1st issue of *Diligence* we discussed how deception can also come through hints, implications and subtle suggestions. *This* manner of deception is far more stealth in nature. It is therefore important that we “keep our guard up” to avoid falling prey to ideas and concepts that will perhaps, over time cause us to move away from the solid principles that we previously used to help us understand what the Scriptures tell us. This kind of deception can come by way of so called christian writers — fiction as well as non-fiction — christian music — even current trends and events as well as society’s pressure to be politically correct about *everything*.

In *this* issue, we’re going to look at an example in the Scriptures of a “man of God” who was deceived — then we’ll engage in some speculation as to exactly *how* he might have so easily let such a thing happen.

Let’s begin by looking at some background information. We know that after Solomon’s death, the United Kingdom of Israel split into two Kingdoms — the Northern (Israel) and the Southern (Judah). The Northern Kingdom rejected the rule of Solomon’s son, Rehoboam and established Jeroboam as their “king.” The Northern Kingdom was *plagued* with idolatry from the very beginning. There was in fact not one single good King over the Northern Kingdom — *all* were evil. Jeroboam was perhaps one of the *worst*. He feared that his people would defect to Judah if they regularly returned to Jerusalem to worship.

So let's pick up the story in I Kings, chapter 12 at verse 26 —

“Jeroboam said to himself, ‘The kingdom will probably go back to David’s family. If the people continue going to the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem to offer sacrifices, they will want to be ruled again by Rehoboam. Then they will kill me and follow Rehoboam king of Judah.’ King Jeroboam asked for advice. Then he made two golden calves. ‘It is too long a journey for you to go to Jerusalem to worship,’ he said to the people. ‘Israel, here are your gods who brought you out of Egypt.’ Jeroboam put one golden calf in the city of Bethel and the other in the city of Dan. This became a very great sin, because the people traveled as far as Dan to worship the calf there.” (vs. 26-30 NCV)

Jeroboam appealed to the “convenience factor” of his people— *“it is too long a journey for you to go to Jerusalem to worship.”* So he made it easier for them to worship golden calves than it would be to worship God. Given the opportunity, mankind will often take the easy way out — Jeroboam knew that if he could make it more “convenient” for them, they would do it. But that wasn’t all he did.

“Jeroboam built temples on the places of worship. He also chose priests from all the people, not just from the tribe of Levi. And he started a new festival on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, just like the festival in Judah. During that time the king offered sacrifices on the altar, along with sacrifices to the calves in Bethel he had made. He also chose priests in Bethel to serve at the places of worship he had made. So Jeroboam chose his own time for a festival for the Israelites — the fifteenth day of the eighth month. During that time he offered sacrifices on the altar he had built in Bethel. He set up a festival for the Israelites and offered sacrifices on the altar.” (I Kings 12:31-33 NCV)

OK — now that we know what was going on in Bethel and exactly what kinds of things Jeroboam was doing there — we can get to the part of the story that introduces the “man of God.” Let’s resume reading in chapter 13 at verse 1 of I Kings —

“The Lord commanded a man of God from Judah to go to Bethel. When he arrived, Jeroboam was standing by the altar to offer a sacrifice.” (NCV)

Ooops — probably not the best place for Jeroboam to be at that moment.

“The Lord had commanded the man of God to speak against the altar. The man said, ‘Altar, altar, the Lord says to you: ‘David’s family will have a son named Josiah. The priests for the places of worship now make their sacrifices on you, but Josiah will sacrifice those priests on you. Human bones will be burned on you.’ That same day the man of God gave proof that these things would happen. ‘This is the Lord’s sign that this will happen,’ he said. ‘This altar will break apart, and the ashes on it will fall to the ground.’” (I Kings 13:2-3 NCV)

Jeroboam was not going to just stand-by and let this guy make those kinds of threats. So he sprang into action.

“When King Jeroboam heard what the man of God said about the altar in Bethel, the king raised his hand from the altar and pointed at the man. ‘Take him!’ he said. But when the king said this, his arm was paralyzed, and he could not move it. The altar also broke into pieces, and its ashes fell to the ground. This was the sign the Lord had told the man of God to give.” (vs.4-5)

Apparently, Jeroboam thought it best to reconsider the order he had just given.

“Then the king said to the man of God, ‘Please pray to the Lord your God for me, and ask him to heal my arm.’ So the man of God prayed to the Lord, and the king’s arm was healed, becoming as it was before.” (vs.6)

Hum-m-m-m. Maybe it would be best to make friends with this guy.

“Then the king said to the man of God, ‘Please come home and eat with me, and I will give you a gift.’ But the man of God answered the king, ‘Even if you gave me half of your kingdom, I would not go with you. I will not eat or drink anything in this place.’” (vs.7-8)

Really? Why not?

“The Lord commanded me not to eat or drink anything nor to return on the same road by which I came.’ So he took a different road and did not return on the same road by which he had come to Bethel.” (vs. 9-10)

Now, here’s where the “old prophet” enters the story.

“Now an old prophet was living in Bethel. His sons came and told him what the man of God had done there that day. They also told their father what he had said to King Jeroboam. The father asked, ‘Which road did he use when he left?’ So his sons showed him the road the man of God from Judah had taken. Then the prophet told his sons to put a saddle on his donkey. So they saddled the donkey, and he left. He went after the man of God and found him sitting under an oak tree. The prophet asked, ‘Are you the man of God who came from Judah?’ The man answered, ‘Yes, I am.’ The prophet said, ‘Please come home and eat with me.’ ‘I can’t go home with you,’ the man of God answered. ‘I can’t eat or drink with you in this place. The Lord said to me, ‘Don’t eat or drink anything there or return on the same road by which you came. ‘Then the old prophet said, ‘But I also am a prophet like you.’ Then he told a lie. He said, ‘An angel from the Lord came to me and told me to bring you to my home. He said you should eat and drink with me.’ So the man of God went to the old prophet’s house, and he ate and drank with him there.” (vs.11-19)

The “man of God” fell for the lie — even though God had told him to not eat or drink anything there in Bethel. Things didn’t go well for him after that.

“While they were sitting at the table, the Lord spoke his word to the old prophet. The old prophet cried out to the man of God from Judah, ‘The Lord said you did not obey him! He said you did not do what the Lord your God commanded you. The Lord commanded you not to eat or drink anything in this place, but you came back and ate and drank. So your body will not be buried in your family grave.’ After the man of God finished eating and