

### *Idolatry Part 3*

Turn to 1 Kings 11

(Note: I use the term “religion” and “idolatry” interchangeably in this teaching series as they both refer to the same thing).

Jeroboam became king of ten of the tribes or families of Israel. The country of Israel was split after Solomon died. Judah and Benjamin stayed under the rulership of the son of Solomon, Rehoboam. The split in the kingdom happened because Solomon introduced idolatry into the country. The Bible informs us how this came about.

1 Kings 11:1

**1** Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh:

Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women,

**2** from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the people of Israel, “You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods.” Solomon clung to these in love. (*he did not cling to or love God with all his heart*)

**3** He had 700 wives, princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart.

**4** For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.

**5** For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.

**6** So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done. (*he did not completely follow the Lord through every phase of life, all the way to the end of his life*)

**7** Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem.

**8** And so he did for all his foreign wives (*here is his excuse*), who made offerings and sacrificed to their gods. (*he did this for his wives, but in the end he participated in and promoted idolatry as verses 3 through 7 indicate*)

**9** And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice

**10** and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods. But he did not keep what the LORD commanded.

**11** Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, “Since this has been your practice and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant.

**12** Yet for the sake of David your father I will not do it in your days, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son.

**13** However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son, for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem that I have chosen.”

So, the great and wise Solomon succumbed to the spiritual attacks which came through his beautiful foreign wives. He was seduced by them; they turned his heart aside just as it was written in the law. Solomon's own safety and success against the spiritual attacks had always been in his own hands. If he would have obeyed the scriptures and not married all these women, idolatry would not have been

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established in the country in this manner.

As we previously learned, Jeroboam established idolatry in an attempt to consolidate his political power. He was afraid that if the people under his rule continued to worship God in Jerusalem, they would eventually rebel against him and return to king Rehoboam in Judea. Jeroboam's fear was that they would rebel and then kill him. Let's review this in 1 Kings 12

1 Kings 12:26

**26** And Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom will turn back to the house of David.

**27** If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the temple of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn again to their lord, to Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah."

**28** So the king took counsel and made two calves of gold. And he said to the people, "You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt."

Can you imagine this? The king knows that these inanimate objects are not gods. He knows that they did not bring the people out of Egypt. He knows that he is perpetrating a fraud on the people, with their money and resources! He knows it! As he makes this declaration he has got to be wondering if the people will comply with this edict or not. However, it really does not matter if anyone believes the lie or not. What matters is that they **MUST OBEY** the lie. It is the people that must **SUPPORT** the lie with their money, time and talents. This means they must be made to **PARTICIPATE** in the lie. Ultimately they must promote the lie declared by the king.

1 Kings 12:29

**29** And he set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.

**30** Then this thing became a sin, for the people went as far as Dan to be before one.

**31** He also made temples on high places and appointed priests from among all the people, who were not of the Levites.

**32** And Jeroboam appointed a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month like the feast that was in Judah, and he offered sacrifices on the altar. So he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he made. And he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places that he had made.

**33** He went up to the altar that he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, in the month that he had devised from his own heart. And he instituted a feast for the people of Israel and went up to the altar to make offerings.

But wait, there is more! Turn to 2 Chronicles 11.

2 Chronicles 11:13

**13** And the priests and the Levites who were in all Israel presented themselves to him from all places where they lived.

**14** For the Levites left their common lands and their holdings and came to Judah and Jerusalem, because Jeroboam and his sons cast them out from serving as priests of the LORD,

**15** and he appointed his own priests for the high places and for the goat idols and for the calves that he had made.

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2 Chronicles 11:16

**16** And those who had set their hearts to seek the LORD God of Israel came after them from all the tribes of Israel to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the LORD, the God of their fathers.

**17** They strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and for three years they made Rehoboam the son of Solomon secure, for they walked for three years in the way of David and Solomon.

The king Jeroboam took all the lands and houses that had been allotted to the Levites. The tithes were no longer paid by the people to support the Levites; no more offerings were taken to Jerusalem. All this revenue now reverted to the new temple system of idolatry established by the king.

In chapter 13, the price of the priesthood is recorded. In this chapter, there is a war brewing between the king of Judah and the king of Israel. Abijah, the king of Judah is addressing Jeroboam.

2 Chronicles 13:8,9

**8** “And now you think to withstand the kingdom of the LORD in the hand of the sons of David, because you are a great multitude and have with you the golden calves that Jeroboam made you for gods.

**9** Have you not driven out the priests of the LORD, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and made priests for yourselves like the peoples of other lands? Whoever comes for ordination with a young bull or seven rams becomes a priest of what are no gods.

Turn to 1 Kings 12

Jeroboam, the king of Israel has established a religious franchise. He had to make sure that the priests were loyal to him. If you pay the fee to the king, you get to work as a priest in the new temple system! This was commerce on a grand scale, which was made possible by a few grand religious lies. The religious idolatry was established and protected by the resources of the king, which he took from the people. Here is Politics, religion and commerce all working together in one accord.

Who did the priests work for? For the people? NO! They worked for the king!

Who had the idols made? The king! Who formulated and proclaimed the doctrine of this new religion?

The king! Who controlled the revenues that came into the temples? The king!

Now lets read 1 Kings 12, starting in verse 28. Pay attention to the words “Jeroboam” and “he”. The question is, who or what does Jeroboam worship? Who or what is his god?

1 Kings 12:28

**28** So the king took counsel and made two calves of gold. And he said to the people, “You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.”

**29** And he set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.

**30** Then this thing became a sin, for the people went as far as Dan to be before one.

**31** He also made temples on high places and (*he*) appointed priests from among all the people, who were not of the Levites.

**32** And Jeroboam appointed a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month like the feast that was in Judah, and he offered sacrifices on the altar. So he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he made. And he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places that he had made.

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1 Kings 12:33

**33** He went up to the altar that he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, in the month that he had devised from his own heart. And he instituted a feast for the people of Israel and went up to the altar to make offerings.

Jeroboam was clearly aware of the deception, the fraud that he was perpetrating upon the people. The entire reason it existed was because he was afraid. To Jeroboam, his own life and his rulership was the most important thing to him. He had become so egotistical that he became his own idol.

All religion includes idolatry in one form or another. All religion exists to promote the worship of many gods even if only one god is openly proclaimed. All religion exists as a commercial enterprise. Those who run the religion realize this; they manage the religion as a business enterprise!

The lesson of this record of Jeroboam is that religion does not exist for the benefit of the people. The purpose of religion and idolatry is NOT truth, or the worship of the one true God. Its purpose is to steal the hearts, allegiances, and worship away from the one true God. Its purpose is to steal the physical resources, money, time, talents and strength away from the people of God. Its purpose is to deceive and darken the understanding of those involved in the religion.

Consider the beliefs, the theology of the religious systems in the world. The teaching of those beliefs is called a catechism in the western culture. It is a summary or exposition of doctrine.

The words of Jeroboam in 1 Kings 28b form a brief but accurate catechism of any religion, any religious denomination or non-denomination:

“Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.”

In religion, there is no place for truth of God's Word, salvation by way of the messiah, Jesus Christ. In religion there is no tolerance for the worship of the one true living God. There is no place for functioning believers, who walk by the spirit. All these are in conflict with religion.

Turn to Ephesians 4

The beliefs of religion as internalized by an individual is called “faith” of one kind or another by the world. The world says that there is a Christian faith, a Roman Catholic faith, a Greek Orthodox faith, a Baptist or Methodist faith or Presbyterian faith or a Muslim faith, your faith or my faith.

As a person internalizes the lie of idolatry into their belief system, they are trained to filter out the voice of God. This is why it can be difficult at first to learn to hear the voice of God, as the believer begins to learn how to walk by the spirit.

In a manner of speaking, if you are learning to walk by the spirit, then the sooner you can lose your religious faith, the better. Get rid of your religious faith!

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Ephesians 4:4

- 4** There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—
- 5** one Lord, **one faith**, one baptism,
- 6** one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

How many different types of faith is there? The Bible says one and only one! This is the faith of Jesus Christ. This faith does not originate with you or with any other man. Jesus Christ is the originator, the founder, the perfecter and finisher of the one faith. It cannot decrease and it cannot increase. You and I and all the other believers have the same measure of faith. We all have been given the ability to operate the power of God which is inherent in the newly created spiritual self which is created when a person becomes born from above.

Turn to Acts 8

Now let's consider a record where an entire town is delivered from the slavery of idolatry. This is the record of Philip in Samaria. This is the same area that Jeroboam ruled centuries before.

Acts 8:5

- 5** Philip went down to ~~the~~ (a) city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ.
- 6** And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip when they heard him and saw the signs that he did.
- 7** For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed.
- 8** So there was much joy in that city.

The people in this city received great deliverance and joy because of the exercised power of God working in just one believer who was walking by the spirit. Why was there so much spiritual pollution and oppression in that city?

Acts 8:9

- 9** But there was a man named Simon, who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great.
- 10** They all paid attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the power of God that is called Great."
- 11** And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic.
- 12** But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.
- 13** Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed.
- 14** Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John,
- 15** who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit,
- 16** for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

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Acts 8:17

17 Then they laid their hands on them and they received (*manifested*) the Holy Spirit.

Simon had used unclean deceiving spirits to trick the people into believing the error that “This man is the power of God that is called Great”, they idolized the man.

The preaching of Christ and the exercising of the power of God as Philip walked by the spirit is what brought great deliverance to these people. Their eyes were open and they turned from Satan and his power to the living God. The new believers began to worship the one true living God in spirit and in truth as HE Desires. No longer were they a prey to the devil spirit kingdom. Their resources, money, time, talents and strength were no longer given over to the devil spirit kingdom. They were enabled to walk away from the polluted slavery of religion and idolatry.

Although Jeroboam did not respond to God's love, encouragement and reproof, Simon did respond! Simon recovered himself and God accepted him.

The details of what Philip did in this city of Samaria is not a recipe or a formula for how we are to move and function. It is an example of what is possible as any believer walks by the spirit.

Turn to Ezekiel 34.

Ezekiel 34 is a prophecy against those who were supposed to be functioning as shepherds of Israel. They were obtaining all the benefits of their calling, but they were not performing the work that they had been called to. There was great spiritual calamity to the believers when the shepherds did not function. These consequences are recorded here. Remember, this is a prophecy concerning the believers in Israel and their shepherds, it is not addressed to us. However, the spiritual principles can be applied in our day and time as well.

Ezekiel 34:1

1 The word of the LORD came to me:

2 “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord GOD: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep?

3 You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep.

4 The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them.

5 So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts.

What was the cause of the believers calamity? What was the cause of their distress? Were the problems caused by the unbelief of the believers? Was it because they were not positive, or did not maintain a positive confession? Was it because they had not memorized the proper verses of scripture, or they did not pray enough? NO! The fault was NOT with the individual believers! Their leadership, the

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shepherds were at fault; they were accountable! This is what happens when there is no genuine functioning spiritual leadership! The believers become a prey for the evil spirit realm. This is what opens the door to people being racked and ruined. The individual can memorize and repeat the entire Bible, maintain a positive attitude and confession, pray until they are blue in the face, but none of these things will not remove the cause of the problem! Wrestling with our flesh to correct spiritual problems will not bring about deliverance.

Of course the shepherds were deceived too. However God made sure that they had multiple opportunities to hear the truth and repent. Therefore the shepherds in this record are without excuse.

Ezekiel 34:6

**6** My sheep were scattered; they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them.

**7** “Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD:

**8** As I live, declares the Lord GOD, surely because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild beasts, since there was no shepherd, and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep,

**9** therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD:

**10** Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them.

**11** “For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out.

**12** As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness (*that's the day of the Lord which is still future*).

**13** And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country.

**14** I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel.

**15** I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord GOD.

There is a day coming when the religious leaders and organizations will no longer be permitted to feed upon the believers. God will make sure that the believers are untroubled and are fed.

Ezekiel 34:28

**28** They shall no more be a prey to the nations, nor shall the beasts of the land devour them. They shall dwell securely, and none shall make them afraid.

**29** And I will provide for them renowned plantations so that they shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land, and no longer suffer the reproach of the nations.

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Ezekiel 34:30

**30** And they shall know that I am the LORD their God with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, declares the Lord GOD.

**31** And you are my sheep, human sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, declares the Lord GOD.”

To be consumed with hunger in the land means that you starve to death in the midst of plenty. They starve and are prevented from partaking of the food produced by the land. This is not talking about physical food, although that too is involved. The shepherds were to feed the believers spiritual food, but the shepherds refused to comply. There was spiritual food available but the shepherds refused to feed the believers.

This record in Ezekiel is not written directly to the believers or the leadership in our day and time. However the leaders in religion and idolatry go on feeding on the believers and do not feed the believers. There is a famine of massive proportions occurring today; it is a spiritual famine. Believers are deceived into being thankful to feed on ashes, when a feast of the meat of God's Word is available. Starving believers are a prey for the devil spirit realm. These spirits infest the religious realm promoting the idolatry which allows them to feed upon the believers and others in the senses realm. In a very real way, people have become the feeding pasture of the spirits and of the religious realm.

Just so it is clear – when I speak of the religious realm and idolatry, I am not referring to some odd religion in a far off land. I am speaking of the current religious organizations, the denominations, non-denominations, the seminaries and leadership programs, the radio and television campaigns and publications which move through our country every day. You see their buildings and idols on many of the street corners in almost every city, town and village.

If believers are to be delivered from the spiritual calamity of religion and idolatry, they must be fed good spiritual food; they must be strengthened. As we see from the book of Acts, feeding and strengthening the believers is not a popular activity; the world and the devil spirit kingdoms fight against it.

The questions to the spiritual leaders of our day and time are:

Who is ready to feed the believers? Who is ready to stand against religion, idolatry, spiritual bondage and slavery? Who is preparing for this work? Who will actually walk by the spirit and actually do the work? God is ready, are you?