

# 1 Kings 12:25 -14:20 //The Lion, The Altar and The Failed Disguise

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[ 0 : 00 ] Today's reading is from 1 Kings, chapter 12, verse 26, through to chapter 13, verse 6, and that's on page 352.

So that's 1 Kings, chapter 12, starting at verse 26, on page 352.

Jeroboam thought to himself, After seeking advice, the king made two golden calves.

He said to the people, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, Israel, who brought you out of Egypt. One he set up in Bethel, and the other in Dan.

And this thing became a sin. The people came to worship the one at Bethel, and went as far as Dan to worship the other. Jeroboam built shrines on high places, and appointed priests from all sorts of people, even though they were not Levites.

[ 1 : 46 ] He instituted a festival on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the festival held in Judah, and offered sacrifices on the altar.

This he did in Bethel. This he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves he had made. And at Bethel he also installed priests at the high places he had made.

On the fifteenth day of the eighth month, a month of his own choosing, he offered sacrifices on the altar he had built at Bethel.

So he instituted the festival for the Israelites and went up to the altar to make offerings. By the word of the Lord, a man of God came from Judah to Bethel, as Jeroboam was standing by the altar to make an offering.

By the word of the Lord, he cried out against the altar, Altar, altar! This is what the Lord says. A son named Josiah will be born to the house of David.

[ 2 : 55 ] On you he will sacrifice the priests of the high places who make offerings here, and human bones will be burnt on you. That same day, the man of God gave a sign.

This is the sign the Lord has declared. An altar will be split apart, and the ashes on it will be poured out. When King Jeroboam heard what the man of God cried out against the altar at Bethel, he stretched out his hand from the altar and said, Seize him!

But the hand he stretched out towards the man shriveled up, so that he could not pull it back. Also the altar was split apart, and its ashes poured out according to the sign given by the man of God, by the word of the Lord.

Then the king said to the man of God, Intercede with the Lord your God, and pray for me that my hand may be restored. So the man of God interceded with the Lord, and the king's hand was restored, and became as it was before.

Well, good afternoon, and it's lovely to be back in St. Silas.

[ 4 : 22 ] I've been friends with some people here for ages and ages. I know Amy Wicks for ages, and I know Martin and various others of you. But if I haven't met you, then hello. Thank you for coming. Thank you for the invitation.

And thanks particularly for giving me the chance to preach on this passage. It's just an amazing, amazing period of history. Amazing story. And I think a bit later on we're going to come to, I think, one of the two funniest passages in the whole of the Bible.

So you can work out what you think the other one is. But one of the funniest ones is in today's reading. I wanted just to get our bearings. I don't know if you've been here for the whole of the series in 1 and 2 Kings. But basically it's a story about kings, and there are good kings, and there are bad kings.

One of my friends actually made a Top Trumps card set of the kings of Israel and Judah. And they had, you know, you get scores for different things like how strangely they die. That gets you points for how long they reigned for, and how good or evil they are.

And just to get our bearings, I thought I'd test you. So if you think a king's good, you can cheer. And if you think they're bad, you can boo. And there'll be some easy ones and some hard ones. So here's a test.

[ 5 : 28 ] David. Okay, David is a good king, so it's a good king. David, hooray. What about Hezekiah? Hooray. What about Jeroboam?

Boo. Okay, excellent. You're really on the track. Final one, Josiah. Okay, excellent. That's basically all you need to know for today. Jeroboam, boo, Josiah.

Hooray. That would be a good guide. So Jeroboam, boo, he is the, and this is a slightly awkward thing as an English guest to Scotland, that you've given me the passage about a breakaway king in the north who tries to set up his own independent kingdom.

That's awkward, okay? I'm not drawing any parallels here, but that's the story here. So Jeroboam is leading off a rebellious group in the north to be its own country.

So Israel in the north as opposed to Judah in the south. But he's got a problem because the law of God says in the first five books of the Bible that God's people need to gather together to worship God three times a year at Jerusalem.

[ 6 : 39 ] And the problem with that is Jerusalem is in the south. So if people are going to obey God's word, then every year, three times in the year, they're going to make a pilgrimage to the former capital city.

They'll see the temple there in all of its glory that Solomon had built. They'll see the king, the king in the line of David, in all of his glory. And they'll realise, actually, we don't want to be independent anymore.

We want to reunite. Let's be part of one country again. And Jeroboam realises this is a disaster. So he has a brilliant plan. Now, I don't know whether you saw, I guess most of you did see the Trump, I am Jesus meme.

Did you see that? I mean, it's just, it was just crazy. When I first saw it shared on Facebook, I couldn't believe that it's actually real. But, you know, it was real. And that was a disaster for Trump, both politically, because he basically alienated the entire Christian vote in America.

And it was a disaster theologically, because, you know, Jesus doesn't want people pretending to be Jesus. But with Rehoboam, sorry, with Jeroboam, I mean, it at least makes sense politically what he does, although theologically it's a disaster.

[ 7 : 49 ] What he does is this. He thinks, I don't want people travelling all the way to the temple down south. What I'll do is set up an alternative centre of worship in the north.

In fact, I'll make it even more convenient. I'll set up two places they can go to. You don't have to go to Jerusalem anymore, but near you and an alternative worship centre, either Dan, if you live in the north of the north, or Bethel, if you live in the south of the north, but both north of the border with Judah.

He thinks, basically, I'll build my own cathedrals, people can worship there. But, of course, you need a centrepiece. So, down in the temple in Jerusalem, they've got the Holy of Holies with the Ark of the Covenant in it.

That's pretty cool. What can I find to put in my shrines? I know. I'll make, and he took some advice, apparently. I don't know who he asked for advice. And they suggested, why don't you make two golden calves?

Brilliant. Okay, so he does this. Now, I don't know whether you know the backstory, but actually they tried this once before in Israel's history, at the time of Moses, and they built a golden calf, and they worshipped it, and it turned out really, really badly.

[ 9 : 02 ] And God was angry with them, and he sent a plague, and it was terrible. So, really, the idea of a golden calf in Israel, it ought to be like the word Auschwitz for modern German.

You know, it's a deeply, deeply awful moment in their past. But they're so theologically illiterate that they go, yeah, let's do it again. Golden calf sounds like a good idea.

So, they build two of them. And this is the real problem with Jeroboam. In service of a political goal, he does a blasphemous thing.

He thinks, this will serve my ends better. Now, how does that relate to us? Because I don't know whether you're in politics, maybe you are, but I doubt very much that in service of your political goals, you are considering creating a massive idol made of gold and encouraging people to worship it.

I doubt that. That isn't a big danger for us. But actually, when we look at what Jeroboam does, I think he comes quite close to something that would be a temptation for each of us.

[10:08] Namely this. He still wants to be religious, still wants to worship the God who brought them out of Egypt at the Exodus. He still wants to have festivals and sacrifices and priests.

He just wants to change it a bit to be a bit more convenient to him, to be a bit more in line with his own aims. And I think that is quite a big danger for Christians today.

You don't want to stop being Christian. You don't want to become a Muslim or a Hindu. You still want to be in a church. But if only I could just adjust things in church a bit.

Like, let's take the bits of the Bible that we like and maybe change the bits we don't like or at least edit out the bits we don't like so that we can have Jesus on our terms.

I think that's quite tempting. It's quite tempting for me that there's certain things in the Bible I find difficult. I reckon it's difficult for you. And that's really at the heart of what Jeroboam does. He makes his own version of the true faith.

[11:15] Just look at it again with me. Look at verse 31. Jeroboam built shrines on high places and appointed priests from all sorts of people even though they were not Levites.

So again, the Old Testament says that the priests had to be from the tribe of Levi. Jeroboam thinks that's pretty inconvenient for me because all the Levites are down south. I'll just get other people to be priests.

That will work. He instituted a festival on the 15th of the 8th month like the festival they held in Judah. He makes up his own religious festivals.

I call that the Clinton Cards Sin. You remember Clinton Cards that before they went out of business? But you have Mother's Day, Mother's Day cards, Father's Day, Father's Day cards and then they're like, that isn't enough cards being sold.

So Uncle's Day or Second Cousin's Day or Your Neighbour's Dog Day, etc. Anyway, he does that. He makes up his own festivals. And then look at this bit with me.

[12:13] This he did at Bethel, sacrificing to the calves he had made. And at Bethel he also installed priests at the high places he had made.

On the 15th, the 8th month, the month that he had chosen, he offered sacrifices on the altar he had built. You get the repetition of it.

It's basically, it's just, it's DIY Christianity. Like he just chooses what he'll have and what he won't have. And I reckon that is a danger for the church nowadays.

We like some bits about Jesus' teaching. We find other bits more difficult. So for example, as we heard that the children are learning about God's plans for marriage and for sex.

One man and one woman in a lifelong union. That doesn't suit us really, does it, in the 21st century? So some people say, well let's keep some of what the Bible says, but not that bit.

[13:14] Not the man and a woman for life bit. Or the Bible says that Jesus is the only way that we can be saved. Jesus said, I'm the way, the truth and the life.

No one can come to the God, the Father except through me. Well that doesn't really fit, does it, in multicultural Britain? We've got friends who are Muslims and Hindus and all sorts of different beliefs.

So let's miss out that bit. And you know, Christianity is good if that's your thing. And other things we also respect and embrace them too. Or Jesus says some pretty challenging things about love of money and storing up our treasure here.

I don't really like that because I want to be a Christian but I also want to have a middle class, prosperous, materialistic life. So maybe I'll go soft on that bit. And so it's so tempting to keep religion but to miss out the bits I don't want or to sort of freestyle.

That's what Jeroboam does. But it's actually slightly worse than just him doing it himself because he's a king. So he does it and it means he encourages everyone else to do it as well.

[14:19] And so he gets this title and I put it on the sheet if you look on the handout. Jeroboam the son of Nebat who, this is the phrase, he made Israel to sin.

It's not just that he sinned but he made everyone else sin. And this just becomes his title every time he's mentioned. He's mentioned a lot of times in 1 or 2 Kings.

It's like William the Conqueror, William of Normandy. It's always called William the Conqueror. Or if you're Scottish, you always call Robert the Bruce. And Jeroboam is Jeroboam, the one who made Israel to sin.

Always. And Jesus said, that is a particularly bad thing to do. And this is a message maybe not just to everybody but particularly to those who are pastors or teachers here.

People like me or say this to myself, say this to Martin, say this to you if you're a home group leader or you teach in a Sunday school or you've got some responsibility for others. Even worse than sinning yourself is to lead others into sin.

[15:21] And this, I guess, is a really serious message for our denomination. As some of the bishops, even some of the leaders are willing to silence what the Bible says in certain areas and make out their own slightly more comfortable version of Christianity.

Be careful, says the Lord Jesus. So Jeroboam, he invents a fake religion. Now the way this passage works is basically two points.

That's the first one. The other point is that God hates that and God really has a problem with that.

And God says through his word, through prophecy, I am going to destroy that.

And I put right at the top of the outline a little, this is how kind of the whole passage works so we're going to have a bit more than just our reading. And it basically switches back and forth between what Jeroboam did, made the golden calves, and what God says about it.

So you'll see Jeroboam's sin, we just looked at that. And then a first prophecy against Jeroboam in the beginning of chapter 13. Then a second prophecy against Jeroboam the end of chapter 13.

[16:22] Then Jeroboam's sin continues. So even though God says to him through his word, I hate this. Just look at the end of chapter 13. Even after this, even after both of these prophecies, Jeroboam did not change his evil ways, but once more appointed priests for the high places from all sorts of people, like not just Levites, but anyone he wanted.

Anyone he wanted to become a priest, he consecrated for the high places. This was the sin of the house of Jeroboam that led to its downfall and to its destruction from the face of the earth.

And then for good measure, one more prophecy against Jeroboam. So we can now look at these three prophecies that God says, I hate this and I'm going to intervene and destroy it.

Now, I think the problem with prophecies is if they're a long time in the future, people don't take them very seriously. So if I said to you, in 200 years time, then such and such, you're like, well, how do you know and how can we check and you'll be long gone and I'll be long gone before that even happens.

So, who cares? Right? So, long-term prophecies, people don't tend to care about very much. And that's a problem for Christians because our faith is built on long-term prophecies, isn't it?

[17:38] It's like things that haven't happened yet that are going to happen at some point and they've been quite a long time. Such as, one day Jesus is going to come back to judge the living and the dead.

It's been a long time, right? 2,000 years and counting. And so people stop caring about it because it's so far away. Or one day there'll be a new creation, a new heavens and a new earth with no suffering.

But it's hard to be really comforted by that because it's so far in the future. And so people live in the moment and the danger is that people then, they make their religion in the moment because they don't care about the long-term prophecy.

So, you know, we know that Jesus says he's got a problem with fake religion. But, you know, he hasn't done anything about it. And the Church of England's been doing its own thing for quite a long time now.

So it seems fine. Let's just carry on. And actually, whenever we're tempted to depart from what God's word says in the Bible, it's because we're calling God's bluff about the fact that he says he cares about it and one day he's going to sort it out.

[18:47] So this passage, it's three prophecies against Jeroboam that they might not take seriously but God wants us to. And he's going to show us in the second half of this talk why you ought to take God's word seriously.

And we've got three different episodes. So I've done a little table to show you how they'll work. You see the three in the left-hand column, three episodes, a man from Judah, an old prophet from Bethel and a prophet called Ahijah.

Three prophets. And the way that they convince you that you should take it seriously is all of them, say, make two predictions and one of the predictions immediately comes true.

So I put that in the table. There's a first prophecy, there's a second prophecy and then one of them comes true. And I've shaded in which one comes true. So for the man of God from Judah, it's the second prophecy that comes true straight away.

For the guy from Bethel, it's the first prophecy that comes true straight away. And for Ahijah, it's the second prophecy that comes true straight away. But the point is this, if I predict two things and then one of them immediately happens, maybe you'll take me seriously about the other thing I predicted.

[ 19 : 49 ] That's where it works. So let's just follow it through and we'll see how it goes. So the first one, Jeroboam makes this altar, makes these golden calves. God's very upset and he sends to him a man of God from Judah.

And this is what he says. So beginning of chapter 13, by the word of the Lord, a man of God came from Judah to Bethel. Remember, that's where the golden calf shrine is. They were worshipping this idol. And Jeroboam, the king, was standing there by the altar to make an offering to the golden calf idol.

By the word of the Lord, he cried out against the altar. Altar, altar, this is what the Lord says. Now, churches shouldn't have altars because altars are about sacrifices and Jesus has made the final sacrifice 2,000 years ago.

So there shouldn't be an altar. I'm glad you haven't got one. You just got a table, which is good. But if there was an altar, some churches have altars, like St. Paul's Cathedral has a massive altar in London. Imagine you could go and actually preach a sermon to the altar and say, altar, altar, God is going to destroy you.

I think that would be quite fun. I don't know whether you get arrested or escorted out politely by the stewards, but God's got it in for you. Altar. He said, a man named Josiah will be born to the house of David.

[ 21 : 07 ] On you, he will sacrifice the priests of the high places who make offerings here and human bones will be burned on you. It's a very graphic prophecy.

He said, sometime, a guy is going to come from the south called Josiah and he's going to come and destroy the fake priests and sacrifice their bodies on this fake altar.

Now, you'll get to Josiah. I don't know how long your one or two king series is going to go at St. Silas, but you'll get to Josiah, I reckon, sometime next year. It's way towards the end of two kings. hundreds of years later. It's so far in advance. I mean, it's crazy that he knows the guy's name already. I mean, you can tell it's God's doing, but really? I mean, why should we take this seriously? It's such a long time away. There's not even anyone called Josiah at the moment. Why should we take it seriously? Well, because then he gives another prophecy which is going to come true immediately.

[ 22 : 05 ] Verse 3, the same day, the man of God gave a sign. This is the sign that God has declared. The altar will be split apart and the ashes will be poured out. So just get this, two prophecies.

One is, Josiah will come and destroy this whole fake religion, but meanwhile, a sign of it is this altar will immediately be destroyed. Now, at this point, Jeroboam tries to stop it and he stretches out his hand and says, seize him.

Now, if you're powerful enough and you're a king, I guess you can try and intimidate people in the church. Lock him up. We don't want preaching like that anymore.

So he puts out his hand to say, seize him. But unfortunately for him, his hand gets stuck like that. Now, when I was young, and maybe your parents said this to you as well, they told me that if I made a nasty, frowny, scowly face, he said, be careful or your face might get stuck like that.

Did your parents say that to you? I mean, that's a lie, isn't it? You shouldn't say that to your children. It's not true. But it does scare children and it stops them doing nasty faces. But in this case, his hand actually gets stuck. He's like supernaturally unable to stop the prophecy coming true.

[ 23 : 19 ] And then while his hand is stuck, he looks at the altar and it suddenly breaks in half and all the ashes pour out. Now, I reckon at that point you probably want to take the prophet seriously.

Supernaturally, you've seen a fulfillment of his words. So now you ought to believe what he says for a couple of hundred years' time. This whole fake religion thing is doomed, says God.

And humiliatingly, he said, I thought I'd see how long I could do this for before it starts to hurt. And the lactic acid is building up in my hand. But then the man of God says, verse 6, pray to the Lord that my hand may come back.

So he prayed and his hand came back. So scene 1, a prophecy, God's against this, and then a sign that immediately comes true. Now the second story is a bit more involved.

Now to get into this story, we've got two characters. We've got the man of God from Judah. That's the guy we just met, the first prophet. I'm going to call him Jude for short. And he's a goodie.

[ 24 : 21 ] So when we say Jude, you can cheer. Yeah, Jude. Hooray! Okay, the other one is an old man from Bethel. And you can probably guess that because he's from Bethel, that's the golden calf place, he's a baddie.

So the old man from Bethel, boo. I know this is a bit pantomime, but it is a bit of a pantomime story, as you'll see. So we've got two characters. The guy we just met, the prophet we just met, and the baddie.

So, the king, verse 7, said to the man of God, Jude, come home with me for a meal, and I'll give you a present. Now, what's going on here? One moment, he's like, seize him!

Arrest him! The next moment, he's like, come for dinner, we can be friends. Okay, but Jeroboam isn't planning to repent. He's just trying to cozy up with God's people, as if maybe that route will help him to get a bit of influence and leverage instead.

He's got two, you know, alternative approaches. Persecute him or try and cozy up to him. But the man of God answered the king, verse 8, even if you were to give me half of your possessions, I wouldn't go with you or eat bread or drink because God commanded me, you must not eat bread or drink water or by the return the way you can.

[ 25 : 34 ] God said, you're not to eat with this evil king. Don't even associate with him. I'm not coming. So off he goes. Now, verse 11, there was a certain old prophet living in Bethel.

Boo. His sons came and told him all the man of God had said. He told him he's not allowed to eat with the king, he's gone home, etc. And so the old prophet goes and intercepts him and says, come home with me and have a meal.

The man of God says, I can't go and have a meal with you because I've been told by the word of the Lord you must not eat bread or drink water there. You know, while you're in Bethel, don't have any meals, get out of there and run.

The old prophet answered him, I too am a prophet just like you are. An angel said to me, by the word of the Lord, bring him back to your house so that he may eat bread and drink water.

But he was lying to him. Okay, so what you've got here is a clear word from God, don't eat with them and then a false prophecy from this evil old man.

[ 26 : 44 ] He says, no, no, honest, an angel appeared to me and told me that God's changed his mind and the word of God that he told to you has now been superseded by the word of God that he told to me.

And so Jude is sort of deceived by this and he goes and has dinner with him. And this is the really harsh bit of the story, okay? While he's having dinner at the house of the old guy he lied to him, the old guy he lied to him suddenly gets an actual prophecy from God and he says, this is what the Lord says, verse 21, you have defied the word of the Lord.

You haven't kept the command that the Lord God gave you. Brackets, because I lied to you. Sorry about that. You came back and ate bread and drank water in the place where he told you not to eat or drink therefore your body will not be buried in the tomb of your ancestors.

It seems a bit harsh to me, doesn't it? He lies to him that Jude believes him and then he suddenly says God's against you because you believe me. But it's true, isn't it? That God, you can always trust what he says even if someone else tells you that God said something different later because God doesn't change his mind.

It's a really key thing this because this is the trick that the false prophets always play. They say, yeah, I know it said that in the Bible but God's told me something different.

[ 28 : 05 ] I've got an update for you on that. This verse actually gets alluded to in the book of Galatians where Paul says, if I or even an angel from heaven were to tell you a gospel different to the gospel you heard, you shouldn't believe it.

Right? Say, oh, an angel told me. No, he didn't. If it goes against the Bible it wasn't an angel. It's a lie. The kind of forms it takes nowadays are, yes, I know it said that in the New Testament but the Holy Spirit has given the church more light on this.

No, he hasn't. The Holy Spirit doesn't contradict the things that the Holy Spirit has already said. Or, all the theologians agree now that that's actually a bit harder to interpret than that now.

So, you know, we've moved on from what Christians ought to think. Really? Like the church for 2,000 years has always thought this and now you think God's saying something else? It's a warning sign, isn't it?

And Jude, he falls for it and he gets this prophecy. You are not going to be buried in a normal way. Well, let's see if it comes true. When the man of God had finished eating and drinking, the prophet who brought him back saddled his donkey for him.

[ 29 : 17 ] As he went on his way, a lion met him on the road and killed him and his body was left on the road with both the donkey and the lion standing beside him. Some who passed by saw the body lying there with the lion standing beside the body and they went and reported it in the city where the old prophet lived.

Now, this is a very, very strange thing. This is not a normal way to die. Being mauled by a lion, I mean, it's not very common in Scotland, I guess, but it would have been, that's the sort of thing that could happen.

You could die from wild animals in the Middle East at that time. But if a lion mauls you and you are riding on a delicious donkey, what is the normal thing to happen?

You've seen David Attenborough. What happens? The lion eats the donkey. I mean, I don't know whether the lions like the taste of prophets, but they definitely like the taste of donkeys. But this lion doesn't do that. He just stands there like this.

And this is a very odd sight. I know this is a very odd sight, but it was a, they walk past and they see a dead man and a donkey that's perfectly fine and a lion that's standing there not eating it.

[ 30 : 18 ] That's weird, right? That's a sign that this is a God-sent lion, right? Not a lion doing normal lion things, but a lion that, it's like a sign.

Sure enough, the evil old man prophet hears about this and he says, it's the man of God who defied the word of the Lord.

The Lord has given him over to the lion which has mauled him and killed him as the word of the Lord warned him. The prophet says to his son, saddle the donkey for me and they did so. They went out, they found the body lying on the road with the donkey and the lion standing beside it. The lion hadn't eaten the body nor mauled the donkey. So the prophet realises, you know what? What God says to this man is true.

Like he's died for defying the word of the Lord but God's word's true. It's not just a matter of different theologians making up different theories about what God says and what God thinks.

[ 31 : 20 ] It can seem like that, can't it? You know, you've got your opinion at St Silas, we've got our opinion at our church. They've got their view as Muslims, we've got our view as Christians. It's just all these different human voices about what God might or might not mean.

But they suddenly realise here that there's actually a living God and the living God has really said something and really means it. How do they know? Well, the sign comes true immediately that the altar's cracked in half, sign one.

The man dies with a lion next to him, sign two. And then very briefly our last one. I think this is the comedy one. This is chapter 14. At that time, Abijah, son of Jeroboam, became ill and Jeroboam said to his wife, go, disguise yourself so that you won't be recognised as the wife of Jeroboam. Now, I find this sort of quite comedy although it's very sad. Jeroboam is very evil and he knows that God's crossed with him but he doesn't want to repent.

Unfortunately, though, he needs God's help because his son's got ill. So what do you do? Say, I need God's help but I don't want to turn back to God and I know God's a bit cross with me and he probably won't help me. So what I'll do is I'll send my wife in disguise so that the prophet won't realise that an evil king is asking for help and will just think it's a normal person.

[ 32 : 39 ] It's a brilliant plan. So she spends the whole day elaborately disguising herself. So you imagine she says, darling, I'm quite sure he might guess that it's me because I'm quite sure.

No, don't worry, darling, you can put on these platform heels. Okay, great, sorted. But darling, he might recognise me because of my long head. Now don't worry, darling, you can put it in a bob and

then we can put a hat on and you won't see.

Okay, good idea. But darling, you might recognise me because of my distinctive green eyes. No, no, you can wear these sunglasses he won't know it's you. So the wife of Jeroboam spends the entire day getting disguised so that the prophet won't realise it's her so that he might help her even though her husband's evil.

It's like he hasn't really thought this through, has he? And I think this is the comedy line, it's brilliant. She spends the whole day getting ready, she's halfway down the driveway and then he suddenly calls out, come in, Jeroboam's wife!

Because he's a prophet, obviously he knows who she is. And then he makes a terrible prophecy that Jeroboam will be food for the dogs and eaten by the birds.

[ 33 : 48 ] We, I had the privilege of going to Uganda for the Student Conference of Living Word Uganda charity there and they have a tradition that all the students on the camp take a scene from their Bible passage and act it out and they chose this scene and I always remember it and we did, because they love rhythm and drums and stuff, we did a kind of little rap to go with it.

Hey Jeroboam, you think you're so wise, sending your wife to the prophet in disguise, but God knows everything. He told me you would come and now because you're evil I have something to say to you, yeah?

Now listen to my words, you're going to be food for the dogs and the birds. And he is and he dies, right? Of course he does because God said he would, right?

Because that's the point of this passage that what God says is going to happen and it might be long term, wait, like a guy called Josiah, he won't be born for a couple hundred years would do it, it could be a long term, or it could be straight away, but the point is you should take it seriously when God says something.

And if it's a contest between what everyone accepts as fair enough and what God's word says is true, you'd be stupid not to trust God's word. There's all sorts of signs in this passage, aren't there, that seize him and his hand gets stuck and it turns out you can't change what God says just by intimidation or the lion death and it turns out you can't dodge God's word just because somebody tells you that God told them something different or the prophecy with the disguise and you can't pull the wool over God's eyes because God hates the fake religion.

[ 35 : 32 ] A lot of people practice it at the moment in our country, a lot of churches practice it, a lot of bishops practice it. Wouldn't it be a terrible thing to be the archbishop standing before God on the last day explaining why you thought it was okay to change the word of God that you taught around the country?

That would be a terrible, terrible thing, wouldn't it? And wouldn't it be bad for us if there's those bits of the Bible that you kind of don't really like that the Bible said and so you think well I can dodge that. I can kind of make my own version of Christianity that suits me and Jesus says no, I'm going to destroy it and then you think well he hasn't yet, has he?

I mean you know 2,000 years and we're still getting on with it so you can't really matter that much and Jesus says don't call God's bluff right? Because he's predicted the things that have already come true so we should take him seriously about the other ones.

Jesus said looking at the temple in Jerusalem in the 80s 30s you see these great buildings there will not be left one stone on another that will not be thrown down and when he said that there was the temple looking glorious on the hill etc and 40 years later the Romans turned up they besieged it and it was destroyed and Jesus has got the other prophecies right so we ought to trust him for the final one.

There is a day when he will judge the world in righteousness there is a day when he will end fake worship and so King says don't call his bluff repent turn back to him worship him his way let's pray Father these are very amazing moments in history and extraordinary signs and vivid things but Lord we pray that we would take you seriously and believe what you say Father we're sorry when we want to adjust the Bible's message to see ourselves and we pray that we'd repent before the judgment day for Jesus sake Amen