

## BELIEVING A LIE

Many people have the idea that it is relatively unimportant what your religious beliefs may be as long as you are sincere in your beliefs.

- a. The basic “rule” they live by in religious matters is often expressed something like this: “It really doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you are honest and sincere in your beliefs. The important thing is to live up to your beliefs.”

But while many people are comfortable with this “rule” in religious matters, they know this “rule” does not apply in other matters of human interest.

- a. If a man boards the wrong train through mistake, that train will not carry him where he intends to go.
- b. If a stockholder believes in the soundness and safety of the bank which is about to fail, the sincerity of his confidence in it will not keep the bank from failing. The greater his confidence in that institution, and the more he invests, the greater will be his loss when it does fail.
- c. If an unscrupulous young man seeks to win the heart of a trusting young lady, the young lady's confidence in him will not save her from the misery he will inflict upon her if she marries him. The greater her confidence in him the worse it will be for her when she finds out his true character.

So long as there is a true and a false, a genuine and a counterfeit, this will be the case -- in religious matters as well as in temporal things.

- a. For this reason, the apostle John warns, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1Jn 4:1).

### **1. The Bible is filled with warnings to us about believing and following false teaching.**

Heb 13:9 -- "Do not be carried away by various and strange doctrines . . ."

Col 2:8 -- "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ."

1 Th 5:21 -- “But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good;”

The Bible writers warn against those who pervert the gospel (Gal 1:6,7) and twist the Scriptures (2 Pet 3:16).

- a. Gal 1:6,7 -- “I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; 7 which is

really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ.”

- b. 2 Pet 3:15,16 -- “and regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, 16 as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.”

And Jesus denounced the scribes and Pharisees for transgressing the commandments of God for the sake of their traditions.

- a. He said they worshiped God in vain, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men (Matt 15:3-9).

## **2. We must value the truth and seek the truth in all matters -- and especially in spiritual matters -- because nothing is more important than truth.**

Nothing is more important than truth in spiritual matters, because . . .

- a. We are going to be judged by the truth.
  - ▶ Psa 96:13 -- “For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, And the peoples with His **truth**.”
  - ▶ Rom 2:2 -- “But we know that the judgment of God is according to **truth** against those who practice such things.”
- b. Those who are saved are saved by the truth.
  - ▶ Prov 16:6 -- “In mercy and **truth** atonement is provided for iniquity.”
  - ▶ 2 Th 2:13 -- “But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the **truth** . . .”
- c. Those who are sanctified are sanctified by the truth.
  - ▶ Jn 17:17, 19 -- “Sanctify them by Your **truth**. Your word is **truth** . . . 19 And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the **truth**.”
  - ▶ 1 Pet 1:22 -- “Since you have purified your souls in obeying the **truth**”
- d. If our worship is acceptable to God, it’s because we worship Him in truth.
  - ▶ Jn 4:23 -- “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and **truth**; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and **truth**.”
- e. Anyone who rejects the truth will be condemned.

- ▶ 2 Th 2:12 -- “. . . that they all may be condemned who did not believe the **truth** but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

With all this in view, the apostle John, in his 3rd epistle, said: “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in **truth**” (3 Jn 4).

So we would do well to heed the admonition of the wise scribe of the book of Proverbs: “Buy the **truth**, and do not sell it . . .” (Prov 23:23).

You must realize: a *lie* will not do for you what *truth* will do for you.

And you must realize: there is always danger in believing a lie.

### **3. There is a story in the Old Testament that illustrates, in a very dramatic way, the danger in believing a lie.**

The story I’m talking about is recorded in 1Kings, chapter 13.

- a. But before we get into that story I want to give you some background information.
  - ▶ Shortly after the death of King Solomon, the 10 northern tribes of Israel rebelled against the rule of Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, and made Jeroboam their king.
  - ▶ But Jeroboam did not trust in God, and he was afraid that if the people continued to go to Jerusalem 3 times year for the appointed feasts Rehoboam might ultimately win them over.
  - ▶ So, in order to secure his reign over the 10 northern tribes, Jeroboam devised a plan -- a wicked plan -- and put it into effect.
    - 1 Kgs 12:26-31 -- “And Jeroboam said in his heart, ‘Now the kingdom will return to the house of David. 27 If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will return to their lord, even to Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah.’ 28 So the king consulted, and made two golden calves, and he said to them, ‘It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt.’ 29 And he set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. 30 Now this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one as far as Dan. 31 And he made houses on high places, and made priests from among all the people who were not of the sons of Levi.”
  - ▶ In the course of time, Jeroboam assumed the place of a priest and planned to offer incense on the new altar at Bethel.
- b. Now that I’ve refreshed your memory with regard to that background information, we are ready to consider the story recorded in 1Kings, chapter 13 -- the story that so vividly illustrates the danger in believing a lie.

- ▶ It's the story of a brave young prophet from Judah who was sent by God to condemn the false worship Jeroboam had introduced at Dan and Bethel.

- ▶ Let's begin reading the story.

- 1 Kgs 13:1-10 -- "Now behold, there came a man of God from Judah to Bethel by the word of the LORD, while Jeroboam was standing by the altar to burn incense. 2 And he cried against the altar by the word of the LORD, and said, 'O altar, altar, thus says the LORD, "Behold, a son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and human bones shall be burned on you.'" 3 Then he gave a sign the same day, saying, 'This is the sign which the LORD has spoken, Behold, the altar shall be split apart and the ashes which are on it shall be poured out.' 4 Now it came about when the king heard the saying of the man of God, which he cried against the altar in Bethel, that Jeroboam stretched out his hand from the altar, saying, 'Seize him.' But his hand which he stretched out against him dried up, so that he could not draw it back to himself. 5 The altar also was split apart and the ashes were poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD. 6 And the king answered and said to the man of God, 'Please entreat the LORD your God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored to me.' So the man of God entreated the LORD, and the king's hand was restored to him, and it became as it was before. 7 Then the king said to the man of God, 'Come home with me and refresh yourself, and I will give you a reward.' 8 But the man of God said to the king, 'If you were to give me half your house I would not go with you, nor would I eat bread or drink water in this place. 9 For so it was commanded me by the word of the LORD, saying, "You shall eat no bread, nor drink water, nor return by the way which you came.'" 10 So he went another way, and did not return by the way which he came to Bethel.

- c. So God sent this young prophet . . . by himself . . . to confront King Jeroboam and condemn the false worship he had instituted.

- ▶ God gave him the words to say in condemnation of Jeroboam's false worship.
- ▶ And, in addition, God gave him some very unusual instructions: (1) eat no bread, (2) drink no water, (3) do not return by the way you came.
- ▶ And the young prophet was determined to do exactly what God told him to do.

- d. To this point in the story, the young prophet of Judah shows himself to be one of God's finest servants.

- ▶ He was not afraid of the people or the king.

- He was alone . . . in hostile territory . . . on a mission to condemn the religious practices of an entire nation -- religious practices instituted by the king himself.
    - + The people could mob him and stone him to death.
    - + Or the king could imprison him . . . or have him killed.
    - + But he showed no fear.
  - ▶ He was not swayed by the flattery of the king.
    - He was invited to dine with a king!
  - ▶ He was not swayed by the prospect of enriching himself.
    - The king promised to give him a reward if he would come home and dine with him -- but he refused.
    - “Not even for half your kingdom!”
  - ▶ He did not rationalize.
    - A lesser man would have convinced himself that he could accomplish more good by going home with the king than by following God’s instructions to the letter.
      - + “I might be able to bring Jeroboam to true repentance. Surely that would be more important than adhering to the “little details’ of God’s instructions.”
  - ▶ He did not adopt the doctrine of “essentials” and “non-essentials”
    - Some people sort out God’s commands and instructions and decide which ones are really “essential” and which ones are “non-essential”
    - But this young prophet was intent upon doing exactly what God told him to do.
  - ▶ None of these things could deter this young prophet from fulfilling his mission in strict obedience to the instructions God had given him.
- e. But, unfortunately, the story does not end there.
- ▶ 1 Kgs 13:11-19 -- “Now an old prophet was living in Bethel; and his sons came and told him all the deeds which the man of God had done that day in Bethel; the words which he had spoken to the king, these also they related to their father. 12 And their father said to them, "Which way did he go?" Now his sons had seen the way which the man of God who came from Judah had gone. 13 Then he said to his sons, "Saddle the donkey for me." So they saddled the donkey for him and he rode away on it. 14 So he went after the man of God and found him sitting under an oak; and he said to him, "Are you the man of God who came from Judah?" And he said, "I am." 15 Then he said to him, "Come home with me and eat bread." 16 And he said, "I cannot return with you, nor go with you, nor will I eat bread or drink water with you in this place. 17 "For a command *came* to me by the word of the LORD, 'You shall eat no bread, nor drink water there; do not return by going the way which you came.'" 18 And he said to him, "I also am a prophet like you, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the LORD, saying, 'Bring him back with

you to your house, that he may eat bread and drink water." *But he lied to him. 19 So he went back with him, and ate bread in his house and drank water.*

- ▶ He had been able to withstand every temptation.
    - He did not give in to intimidation.
    - He was not swayed by the king's invitation.
    - He was not swayed by the prospect of enriching himself.
  - ▶ He was not a bad man -- but a brave character and a devoted servant.
- f. But he fell on the plausibility of a lie.
- ▶ The old prophet lied to him . . . and he believed the lie . . . and it caused him to do the very thing he had been so determined not to do.
  - ▶ Believing the lie caused him to disobey God -- it caused him to sin.

And now, the rest of the story.

- a. 1 Kgs 13:20-26 -- "Now it came about, as they were sitting down at the table, that the word of the LORD came to the prophet who had brought him back; 21 and he cried to the man of God who came from Judah, saying, "Thus says the LORD, 'Because you have disobeyed the command of the LORD, and have not observed the commandment which the LORD your God commanded you, 22 but have returned and eaten bread and drunk water in the place of which He said to you, "Eat no bread and drink no water"; your body shall not come to the grave of your fathers.'" 23 And it came about after he had eaten bread and after he had drunk, that he saddled the donkey for him, for the prophet whom he had brought back. 24 Now when he had gone, a lion met him on the way and killed him, and his body was thrown on the road, with the donkey standing beside it; the lion also was standing beside the body. 25 And behold, men passed by and saw the body thrown on the road, and the lion standing beside the body; so they came and told *it* in the city where the old prophet lived. 26 Now when the prophet who brought him back from the way heard *it*, he said, "It is the man of God, who disobeyed the command of the LORD; therefore the LORD has given him to the lion, which has torn him and killed him, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke to him."
- b. Someone might say: "But what about the old prophet? He lied. Surely his sin was greater. "
  - ▶ The Bible everywhere condemns lying.
    - Rev 21:8 -- ". . . all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."
  - ▶ But this story was needed in order to impress upon our minds the danger of believing a lie.

**4. There are valuable lessons to be learned from this story.**

We must render full obedience to God.

- a. Matt. 4:4 -- “But He answered and said, ‘It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.””
- b. James 2:10 -- “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.”

There are no “essentials” and “non-essentials” to God’s commands.

- a. Matt 28:18-20 -- “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even to the end of the age.*”
- b. Luke 16:10 -- “He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.”
- c. Matt 23:23 -- “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.”

We cannot judge whether or not a thing is true by *who* says it.

- a. In the story we’ve just read, the lie came from an old prophet.
- b. We must remember: 2 Cor 11:13,14 -- “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.”
  - ▶ There are many false teachers in the world (1Jn 4:1,2; 2Pet 2:1).
  - ▶ Elders of the church can become false teachers (Ac 20:28).
  - ▶ A well-meaning preacher can still preach error -- Apollos did (Ac 18:24-26).
- c. Gal 1:8 -- “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.”

## **5. Before we bring the lesson to a close, let’s look at some New Testament examples that illustrate the danger of believing false teaching.**

False teaching: “And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved’” (Ac 15:1).

The danger: “Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. . . . 4 You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace” (Gal 5:2,4)

2 Tim 2:16-18 -- “But shun profane *and* idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. 17 And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, 18 who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.”

- a. False teaching: “the resurrection is already past.”
- b. Danger: “they overthrow the faith of some.”

1 Tim 4:1-4 -- “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, 3 forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. 4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving;”

- a. False teaching: “forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from foods.”
- b. Danger; “some will depart from the faith.”

## **Conclusion**

The one who believes and obeys the truth is the recipient of many blessings from God.

But there is always danger in believing a lie.

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