



A tale of two prophets



Part 1:

a man of God comes to town

Some observations so far...

- Jeroboam built the cultic sites in Dan and Bethel to keep his citizens' eyes from wandering southward, to the temple in Jerusalem (Rehoboam's "ace in the hole"). Sadly, the new king sacrificed the promise of 1 Kings 11:38 in the process. The altars and idols he built became an enduring stumbling block to Israel for centuries.
- The courageous "man of God" from Judah predicted that the very site before them would be the place of divine punishment (fulfilled in 2 Kings 23). This prophecy, along with the altar splitting and the king's hand withering, is a demonstration of the power of God in prayer. Clearly, the man of God knew that the LORD wasn't just empty words.
- The man of God neither feared the king's threats nor succumbed to his bribes!



Part 2:

an old man, a lie, and a detour

A tale of two prophets...

- These two prophets were on apparently different trajectories. The “man of God” (a distinct title, to be sure) and an “old prophet” (which may, at best, point to a once-active ministry). The old prophet comes across as tired, discouraged, perhaps even lonely. He lives in Bethel, once the center of a school of prophets but now the seat of national idolatry. Where was he when the altars were built? Did he say anything?
- We find the man of God resting under a tree. Perhaps an indication that his guard was down? With his prophetic mission complete, he does not feel in danger. Watch out for idleness (Proverbs 6:4-5). “Be as watchful after victory as before battle,” a saying goes.
- Why does he listen to the old prophet? Before judging, maybe ask, “Would I?” Don’t we all struggle to keep God’s voice at the forefront?



Part 3:

empty saddle, full grave

Trajectories turned...

- The younger prophet, who started off with such courage and promise, was derailed presumably by his idleness and lack of discernment. In some ways, he is representative of many younger saints. In spite of his initial enthusiasm, he ended up listening to the wrong people and suffering for it.
- The old prophet, cynical, worn down by a decaying spiritual environment, became the catalyst for the younger man's demise. Perhaps due to enthusiasm, or maybe moral compromise, he gave bad advice to his fresh-faced counterpart. He contributed to the very decay in the next generation that he probably decried every night around the dinner table. Yet there is an element of reignited faith in his repentant and gracious treatment of the deceased prophet.

The final lesson...

- Older and younger saints can either stand together or fall apart. Both parties in this story failed in their obligations. The "man of God" faltered before reaching the finish line. He listened to the wrong voices. He respected people of position more than what was right. The old prophet was a liar who "dropped the ball" of doing God's work in his own back yard. He accidentally quashed the potential of the other prophet through his interference and lack of wisdom.
- Old and young Christians must pursue the lost art of multi-generational discipleship. See Deuteronomy 6:7, 1 Peter 5:5, Titus 2:3-4. We must encourage each from both ends of the age spectrum, recognizing the valuable talents, skills, wisdom, and energy we bring to the work (Proverbs 20:29).