

It Is Written

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The Bearer of Bad News

By Stan Cox

Jeroboam was rewarded by God with the 10 tribes which made up the northern kingdom of Israel. He became their king, according to the prophet Ahijah, because the reign of Solomon led to Israel forsaking Jehovah, and engaging in idolatry, cf. 1 Kings 11:29-39. His tenure as king was conditioned upon his obedience to God. The prophet Ahijah shared with Jeroboam these words from God, "Then it shall be, if you heed all that I command you, walk in my ways, do what is right in My sight, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build for you an enduring house, as I built for David, I will give Israel to you" (38).

Jeroboam responded to Jehovah's gift of the northern kingdom by rebelling against Him. Just as Solomon led Israel into idolatry, Jeroboam encouraged the northern Kingdom he ruled to worship gold calves he had fashioned for them.

1 Kings 14 reveals that Jeroboam's son Abijah had become ill. He told his wife to go to the prophet Ahijah to inquire about his son. She was to disguise herself, as Jeroboam seems to think that such deception might bring a positive prophecy from the prophet. Jeroboam said, "Indeed, Ahijah the prophet is there, [at Shiloh], who told me I would be king over this people."

The wife took an offering to the prophet, but the Lord had spoken to Ahijah, telling him exactly what to say. When she came through the door, Ahijah was ready. He said, "Come in, wife of Jeroboam. Why do you pretend to be another person? For I have been sent to you with bad news" (14:6). Because Jeroboam had done "more evil than all who were before you" (14:9), God determined to bring disaster to his family, including taking the life of Jeroboam's son. When the wife crossed the threshold of Jeroboam's house, the child died. Eventually, the kingdom of Israel was taken away into Assyrian captivity, as God had foretold through the prophet Ahijah.

Can you imagine Ahijah's feelings in sharing this harsh message from Jehovah? If he were to remain faithful to his God, he had to say what he said. "Now the Lord had said to Ahijah, 'Here is the wife of Jeroboam, coming to ask you something about her son, for he is sick. Thus and thus you shall say to her; for it will be, when she comes in, that she will pretend to be another woman'" (14:5). "Thus and thus you shall say to her." No other message was acceptable. His purpose as a prophet of God was to share the message that God ordained.

This is what God requires today as well. There will always be teachers who are willing to scratch the itching ears of the ungodly (cf. 2 Timothy 4:3-4). But, Paul told Timothy, "But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Timothy 4:5).

The work of an evangelist is to tell people what God says, rather than what they want to hear. It is to "declare the whole counsel of God" (cf. Acts 20:27). This must be done, even when the message is not pleasant to the hearer.

Is it enjoyable to be the bearer of bad news? Not at all. The message is severe, and it is often met with opposition. There is a reason why some will plead, "Don't kill the messenger", as often the messenger gets blamed for the content of the message. As Stephen accused his Jewish tormentors, "Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers" (Acts 7:52). Stephen was stoned to death for his trouble.

The next time you are convicted of sin by the truth of God, consider that the one doing the convicting is simply doing what God expects. Don't kill the messenger. Repent!

**God Does Not Dwell in Temples
Made With Hands**

By Clarence Johnson

In Old Testament times, worship was centered in the tabernacle. There were priests, altars, incense, sacrifices, ritual, etc. The temple built by Solomon was costly, beautiful, and elaborate.

But when Christ came "to fulfill the law" this was the end of the old order. In answer to the woman of Samaria, Jesus said, regarding the place of worship, "Neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem...but true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth" (John 4:19-26).

It was fortunate that all Christians were not required to worship in one location, for bitter persecution soon scattered them, Acts 8:11. In their travels they had Christ's promise to be with them even to the end of the world, Matt. 28:20. So they worshiped God in spirit and in truth from house to house, in upper rooms and caves and catacombs. The place was not important so long as they did not forsake the assembling of themselves together, Heb. 10:25.

Centuries later, misguided worshipers began to emphasize the place of meeting. Years were spent in decorating the walls of church buildings. Thinking they did God service, men added gold, jewels, and costly ornaments. Fortunes were poured into construction of cathedrals while multitudes were starving for physical and spiritual food. Today in ancient European nations, we see the result of centuries of that kind of thinking as elaborate cathedrals stand in the midst of poverty, filth, ignorance and superstition.

Of course, it is not wrong for Christians to erect a place of assembly adequate to meet their spiritual needs, but common sense would seem to direct them to avoid over extending themselves in the matter of bricks and mortar and real estate. Let us be aware that God still does not dwell in temples made with hands, and let us rather emphasize the true essence of Christianity: loving God, loving our neighbor, and worshiping God in spirit and in truth.

WHAT THE RED LETTER SAYS ABOUT THE BLACK

By J. Princeton Simons

Certain modern Bibles are called "red-letter" editions. In these editions, effort has been made to identify the words directly spoken by Jesus and to specially highlight these words by the use of red ink.

There are those who use these red-letter editions who suppose that the red letters are superior to the rest of the Bible text. But let us notice what the "red letter" has to say about the black letter.

Since Jesus quotes the Old Testament in Matt. 4:4, the Old Testament quotation appears in red: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." In this "red letter" statement, Jesus affirms the importance of EVERY word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God: "every word" includes the black letter words of the Bible.

Not long before Jesus ended His personal-teaching sojourn upon this earth, He assured His appointed spokesmen: "He that heareth you heareth Me; and he that rejecteth you rejecteth Me; and he that rejecteth Me rejecteth Him that sent Me" (Luke 10:16). Jesus vested special authority into the teaching of His hand-chosen apostles: the red-letter so declares. "And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:18-20). This red-letter statement places the full weight of divine authority upon the rest of the New Testament words -- even those in black. To reject or discount any of the New Testament is to reject Jesus and to discount what the red-letter teaches.

The red letters tell us to accept the black letters as well.

Which Translation is Best?

(From "The Old Path, 1999)

Several preachers were discussing various translations. One liked the KJV because of its beautiful English. Another liked the ASV because it is very literal and comes nearer to the original Hebrew and Greek texts. Another liked his mother's translation. Surprised, the other preachers said they didn't know his mother had a translation of the Scriptures. "Yes, she did," he replied. "She has translated them into action, and it is the best translation I have ever seen." We need to get our Bibles off our shelves; we must read them and study them, and we must translate what we read into action.