

This man came out of Judah "by the word of the Lord unto Bethel." Here we have a specific command given to him. Nowadays we go and take with us the word of the Lord. We try to present to people the word of God which we find here. Today when there are those who say that God specifically speaks to them and gives them specific commands, I do not say they are necessarily wrong, but I look with great skepticism upon it. Certainly as far as any general lasting command where God's word is concerned, God's word is complete. So no one of us has the right to speak with quite the authority that this man did. We can say, The Bible says this, here read it for yourself. See the context, see that I'm not taking a verse out of context; I am giving you what the Bible teachings. Compare it for yourself. See that I am putting the stress upon the emphasis of Scripture, not on a couple of words here or there.

We expect people to look into the Word of God and judge for themselves whether we are doing right or not and we should urge them to and encourage them to. But this man was in a different situation. The Bible was not yet given, most of it, and God gave him a direct word and so he went by the Word of the Lord to Bethel. Now he came out of Judah, the kingdom which was controlled by Rehoboam, and he came into the area just at the southern part of the northern kingdom. Evidently there was quite easy entrance back and forth between the two kingdoms, even though there was political division.

We read, And Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. The altar that he had put up in Bethel there where he had put up one of the two golden calves. The one at the southern end of the kingdom to make people stop at it instead of going to Jerusalem, and one at the northern end to attract people in the northern part of his kingdom up to Dan instead of the long journey down to Jerusalem.

So as Jeroboam stood there by the altar, the man of God, (v.2) "cried against the altar in the word of the Lord." He was not simply giving his own ideas. He was giving the revelation God had given him. He said, "O altar, altar, thus says the Lord: Behold a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high place who burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burned on thee." He made a terrible prediction, a prediction of destruction, and of judgment but he did not say when it would be fulfilled. Actually it was fulfilled about 300 years later. What was the value of giving a prediction like this if this was going to be destroyed 300 yrs. later? It had value to give comfort to the godly people in the northern kingdom, to give them the assurance that God would not allow these conditions to last forever. That God was going to send judgment upon this altar. They did not know when it was coming. It might be soon. It might be a long ways off. But they knew that it was coming.

Then we find that this was literally fulfilled. In 2 Kings 23:15 we read about 300 years later that Josiah of the house of David went up there. "Moreover the altar that was a Bethel and