

Get thee behind me Satan for thou art an offence unto me!"

Another thing I think is worth noticing in this is that the reality of Satan is recognized in this verse. It is quite common today to scoff at the idea there is a personal devil. But you cannot look at Christian history without seeing all through it the evidences that there is an evil force, that he is not only coming as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, but he is transformed into an angel of light and let us who think we stand take heed lest we fall.

Last week we looked at 1 Kings 13, and noticed there how Jeroboam for political reasons set up a new altar -- one at Bethel, one at Dan. For political reasons in order to keep the people from going down to Jerusalem and worshipping there, he said, "These be thy gods O Israel that brought you up out of Egypt." Jeroboam claims to be following the same God as they followed down in the ~~XXXXXX~~ southern kingdom. "This is your god that brought you up out of Egypt; the one who is standing here, the invisible God of Israel standing here above the golden calf here. Here is where you can come and worship."

He simply changed the forms, changed the ceremonies, changed the expressions and put new people in power, but of course they were free to worship their same God who had been with them all through history. Later on we read in 1 Kings 22 when Jehoshaphat came up to see King Ahab who was ruler of a much larger area than that over which ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ Jehoshaphat ruled as king of Judah, and Ahab said, "God with me and help me capture back this part of trans-Jordan that belongs to us. And Jehoshaphat said, "Isn't there a prophet of the Lord here we can inquire of whether we should do this? And Ahab said, "I have prophets of the Lord, bring them in and let them tell us what the word of the Lord is." Ahab was claiming to be a follower of the Lord. He made his == gave his two sons names which contained the Name of the Lord of Israel as part of the name. That was his claim. But you see what happened. When Jeroboam departed from the Word of God, it went on to Ahab who departed still farther and then his wife Jezebel brought in the Baal worship that completely abandoned the worship of God, that introduced the licentious and wicked practices of Baal.

This is a process that goes on over and over in Christian history. It is very vital that each of us look to Christ for salvation and look to Him to lead us as we go through life, but it is also vital that we learn something of the wiles of Satan and learn the ways in which Satan has led astray individuals and above all the ways in which he has led astray institutions and in which as a result that which had at one time been a great source of leading God's people and blessing them has come to be that which has led great numbers of people astray. Christian people need to become familiar with this process and to see the steps and to learn the point at which they must cease supporting and praising an institution and must turn to condemnation and opposition of it.

I'd like to call your attention to a few illustrations of this in history.