

PLAIN SPEECH

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“Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech” (2 Cor. 3:12)

By Scott Parker

RELIGIOUS BARGAINING

In the days following the death of Solomon and the breach in the kingdom of Israel, a king named Jeroboam set his heart towards innovation and sought to strike a religious bargain with his subjects. The specifics of the account are found in **1 Kings 12:25-33**. Take a moment to read that text. I have it inserted below.

“Then Jeroboam built Shechem in mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and went out from thence, and built Penuel. And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah. Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi. And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense.”

What a wonderful “bargain” right? Wrong! Did you notice what the end result was of playing “Let’s Make a Deal” with Jeroboam? The answer is one short, but very serious, word: **SIN (1 Kings 12:30)**.

Later those who accepted Jeroboam’s deal would find out the hard way that serious consequences ensue when one starts to treat their religion like they dicker over a trinket at a flea market. Notice: *“For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them; until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day” (2 Kings 17:22-23)*.

A nation was separated from God (**cf. Isa. 59:1-2**) and was smashed by foreign invaders... all over a religious “bargain.”

The world is still filled with those like Jeroboam. Yes, many are the times I’ve heard denominationalists, when asked by a saint to attend an assembly of the Lord’s church, say something like: *“I’ll come to your church if you come to mine.”*

What are those in error trying to do? They are trying to strike, what I like to call, a “religious bargain.” Are their motives pure or vicious in doing so? I do not know.

I do know this, however: what’s even worse than hearing such “bargains” proposed by those who are not Christians, is learning that so-called members of the church accept such proposals. It happens. It happens more often than some might care to admit. They come up with all the “good and wonderful” “reasons” why they sign on the dotted line. But folks the truth of the matter is that there is never a good reason for one to stop doing what he/she knows is right. In the first century James wrote: *“Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (Js. 4:17)*.

Listen, striking the kind of religious “bargain” noted in this article is tantamount to shaking hands with the devil and his cohorts. Too harsh you say? Hear afresh **1 Cor. 10:20-21**. That text reads this way: *“But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and of the table of devils.”*

Why in the world would anyone who is a Christian ever accept such a “bargain” is beyond me! Denominational churches (and apostate congregations that dare to refer to themselves as churches of Christ for that matter) have **NOTHING** to offer the true follower of the Lord. The true follower already has the truth and must not ever compromise such (**cf. 1 Cor. 15:58**).

Next time you come across some modern day Jeroboam who wants to negotiate, refuse to give him/her an inch.