

Excuses – Excuses

1 Kings 12:28-33

When I did the Psychology thing there was one constant as I dealt with people and their problems. **It was NEVER their fault!** My wife, my husband, my kid, my dog, my cat.... on and on, refusing to take responsibility for their situation. I had one client that I gave a writing assignment to. When she returned 2 weeks later, she told me she had not done the assignment because she had broken her arm and could not write. No cast, no bandage, arm was fine in my office! The word excuse literally means, **“attempt to lessen the blame attaching to (a fault or offense); seek to defend or justify.”**

Excuses are everywhere in our society. Think of some of the stories you have told to minimize a situation and not look bad in the process. Remember in school when the dog, cat, monkey, horse ate your homework? I had a friend in SC who owned a business. He had about 12 people working for him. We would play golf together and he would tell me some of the excuses he had heard from employees for being late to work. Some of them were pretty good and others – well, just plain silly.

Man is good about finding ways to take things that are hard and make them easy. There is no problem with that. Henry Ford found a way to make manufacturing much better. Think of all the things in use today to make heavy work less burdensome – like a fork lift. But we sometimes go too far because we see ways to make things God has spoken about “easier” for us. So, we see Excuses everywhere in the religious world too.

A. Excuse of inconvenience.

In our text we have the story of “King” Jeroboam introducing calf worship in Dan and Bethel. He did this for a couple of reasons. One to keep his followers away from Jerusalem and two, it was “too much” to go to Jerusalem to worship God (12:28-30).

There is an enormous problem with this approach to worship. Jeroboam presumed that God would accept the worship the way he decided to set it up. However:

- a. God had appointed Jerusalem as the place of worship (2Ch 7:12).
- b. But the distance between Samaria and Jerusalem is about 30 miles.
- c. Jeroboam himself worshipped at Bethel (1Ki 12:33).

Some today change the pattern of God's word because it is "too much" inconvenience.

- a. They change the frequency of worship (Act 20:7).
- b. They change the plan of salvation (Mar 16:16).
- c. Some in the Lord's church forsake the assembly (Heb 10:25).

Do we do the will of God only when it is convenient for us? We do need to be careful in this. Paul said, *"preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching."* 2 Tim 4:2. Paul wrote to this young preacher and told him to be single minded when it came to the will of God. This extends to those who hear this preaching as well.

Been reading more and more about churches of Christ that are doing things out of convenience that are simply not authorized in God's word. Read about a church in northern CA that was limiting baptisms to twice per year. Not in the same hour of the night. The reason? Baptistry was broken and it was not convenient to go to the Y or a pool just "any old time". Or the group that did away with preaching since they could not find a preacher. They just met, gave, prayed and took the Lord's supper.

B. Excuse of inflexibility.

Jeroboam introduced priests from among all the people because it was "too much" to appoint priests only from the tribe of Levi (12:31). After all, there were just a limited amount and the need was great. He assumed that just anyone would be ok with God.

- a. God had appointed the Levites to minister to Him (Num 18:6).
- b. But the priests and Levites had left their lands and possessions in Israel to resume true worship in Jerusalem (2 Chron. 11:13-14).
- c. Jeroboam even made offerings himself! (1Ki 12:33).

Some today change the pattern of God's word because after all, the Bible is pretty inflexible.

- a. They change the manner of worship (Eph 5:19).
- b. They change the role of women (1Tim 2:12). Just heard about a congregation that had decided they could have a full-time preacher that is female and now they are talking about a female elder. When asked for Book, chapter, verse the elders said that was just too legalistic for them. I know some women that would be outstanding preachers or elders. But so what? God has spoken.

Leroy Garrett and Ed Fudge many years ago along with Karl Ketcherside decided that the Bible was just too narrow regarding fellowship. They insisted that God would understand if we joined hands with Baptists and Catholics without insisting that they follow the Bible. After all, they were "brethren in prospect". Listen we can call sin by some other name but it will still be sin in God's view. The Apostle John must have had to deal with this too. Look at 2 John 9-11.

"Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works."

Do we honestly think that we are more aware than our creator? In Zech. 7:5-6 we read, ***"Say to all the people of the land and the priests, 'When you fasted and mourned in the fifth month and in the seventh, for these seventy years, was it for me that you fasted? And when you eat and when you drink, do you not eat for yourselves and drink for yourselves?"***

C. Excuse of inexpedience.

Jeroboam introduced a feast on the 15th day of the 8th month because it was “too much” to observe the feast of tabernacles on the prescribed date (12:32).

- a. God had appointed the feast of tabernacles/ingathering on the 15th day of the 7th month (Lev 23:34,39).
- b. But the harvest came later in the more northern regions.
- c. Jeroboam himself observed the feast that he ordained (1Ki 12:33).

Some today change the pattern of God’s word because it is “too much” inexpedience.

- a. They change the day of worship (Act 20:7).
- b. They change the organization of the church (Php 1:1).
- c. Some in the Lord’s church impose restrictions on the elders (Heb 13:17).

There is a congregation in Macon GA where the preacher has so much influence that the Elders have agreed to report to him. He oversees the work and the Elders and they are his worker bees. First, Elders that would allow this are not qualified to serve. Second, any preacher that does this is certainly “Lording” it over not only the flock but also the Elders and by extension – GOD!!

What time we meet on the Lord’s day – unimportant. That we meet on the Lord’s Day – not open for discussion!! God has spoken on that. How the Elders oversee the congregation – a matter of their judgment. That they oversee – not open for discussion. God has spoken on that.

These things become diluted when we decide that we do the will of God **only when it is reasonable to us** (Isa 55:8-9)? That is dangerous and anti God’s word.