



A just weight
and balance

are the
LORD'S:

Thus saith the Lord...

IDENTITY THEFT

IS ON THE RISE

**WHAT YOU NEED
TO KNOW**



- There are people today who will try to **steal your identity** in order to steal your assets and good name.
- We must be very careful in the **use of credit cards,** Social Security numbers and other forms of personal identity.

- **In order to restore**
your personal identity
you must inform the world
and your banking institutions,
 - Your **name**,
 - Where you were **born**,
- Your mother's **maiden** name,
- Your **Social Security number**
and the last four digits of
your credit cards.

- When you give them all of your identification marks then they know that you are who you claim to be.
- Someone may use some of your marks of identification, but unless they use all of them they can not be you.

- May I suggest to you that the same principle is true in identifying the New Testament church?

- Many churches have some of the marks of identity of the New Testament church,

- But not all of them and maybe not even the essential marks of identity. ⁶

- We must look for the **salient features of the** New Testament church in order to identify that church in our day and time
 - **How** do we accomplish that?

- Let me give you an example from the Old Testament of a man who stole the identity of the worship of Israel.
- He hijacked the identity of the true worship of Israel.
 - His name is Jeroboam.
- His story is told in 1st Kings.
(**1 Kings 11-14**)

- **Under the United Kingdom**,
Saul, **David**, and **Solomon**
ruled for 120 years—40 years each.
- After the death of Solomon,
his son **Rehoboam**
was in line to be the next king.
- **But he was a foolish young man**
having grown up in the
permissiveness and luxury of the
royal court.

- His young counselors were just like him.
- When he was ready to be King, his father's advisers encouraged him to lessen the tax burden on the people.
- They promised him that if he would do that they would be his loyal subjects for ever.

- But his younger advisers encouraged him to make the burdens even heavier.
- He listened to them and as a result ten of the 12 tribes rebelled against the house of David under the leadership of a young prince by the name of Jeroboam.
- He led these 10 tribes away and established a rival kingdom in the north.

- After this division took place, Jeroboam was very brilliant in the way he consolidated his power.

- He reasoned that if the people continued to go back to Jerusalem to worship God their hearts would be inclined back to the leadership of Rehoboam.

- If this were to happen he would lose his power and influence over the people.
- He realized he had to innovate in some way to keep their loyalty to him in the north.

- In order to keep his power over the people, **Jeroboam hijacked the true worship** of Israel and changed it to fit his own selfish design.

- He did this in **four ways.**

- 1st he changed the object of worship.
- One of the things that distinguished Israel from all of the nations around them was the fact that they worshiped one God.

- The nations around them worshiped many gods.
- Nothing would make God angrier than when his people stopped worshiping
the one true God
and started worshiping many gods in the form of idols.

- **Exodus 20:3**

**You shalt have
no other gods before me.**

- **20:4 You shalt not make any
graven image, or any
likeness of any thing that is
in heaven above, or that is in
the earth beneath, or that is
in the water under the earth:**

- God would punish them quicker for that than any other act of rebellion.
- God is a jealous God
(Exodus 20:5)
and he will not tolerate worship offered up to idols and false gods.

- Jeroboam encouraged the people **to worship idols** instead of the true God.
 - King Jeroboam made **two golden calves as substitutes** for the worship of the God of Israel.
He said,
 - **“It is too much for you** to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt
out of Egypt
(1 Kings 12: 28).

- **It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem.**
 - An appeal to the **fleshly love of ease.**
- There have never been wanting those who are ever ready **to take the easiest road to heaven,**
- Nor have there ever been **ungodly ministers to point it out.**

- **# 2** He Changed the **Place of Worship.**
- This is what we call the **religion of convenience.**
- Some people will choose a church **simply on the basis of convenience.**
- Let's not worry about the **doctrine.**

- After all one church is as good as another.
 - One wife is as good as another.
 - One child is as good as another.

- Many do not consider any of the marks of identification of the New Testament church,

- Only is it convenient for me to go there?

- If it is convenient I will go

- And if it is not I will not go.

- Jeroboam used that idea of convenience
- And it worked because he was able to keep the people loyal to his leadership
- By making gods for them to worship
- Close to where they lived instead of going all the way to Jerusalem.
(Deut 12:5; 1 Chron 22:1)

- The Bible states:
 - **“One he set up
in Bethel,**
 - **and the other
in Dan.**
 - **And this thing
became a sin;...”**
- **(1 Kings 12:29-30).**

- **This was a sin,**
because God did not command
them to worship at
Dan and Bethel,
- But they were to worship at
Jerusalem.
- **Why call me, Lord, Lord
and do not
the things I say”**
(**Luke 6:46**)

- **# 3** He Changed the **Priesthood of Worship.**
- The priests were to come from **the tribe of Levi.**
 - Their job was to **make preparation** **and officiate** **at the altar.**

- They had a very difficult job.
 - They had to do all of the physical work of preparing the sacrifices and taking care of all of the implements required to make the sacrifice.
- That is the reason that God allowed them to retire from their service at the age of 50.
(Numbers 8:24–26)

- **“Jeroboam built shrines on high places**
 - **and appointed priests from all sorts of people,**
 - **even though they were not Levites**
(1 Kings 12:31).

- **# 4** **He Changed the Time of Worship**

- **1Kings 12:32**

- **And Jeroboam**
ordained a feast
in the eighth month,
on the fifteenth
day of the month,

- **like unto the feast**
that is in Judah,

- 1Kings 12:33

And he went up
unto the altar which
he had made in Beth-el
on the fifteenth day
in the eighth month,

- even in the month
which he had devised
of his own heart:

- God had ordained that the **“Feast of Tabernacles”** was to be held on **the seventh month and the 15th day,**
- But Jeroboam delayed this festival one month later to the **eighth month and 15th day.**
- **It was rank disobedience.**

- Jeroboam was a religious politician.
- And like most politicians he leaned in the direction popular opinion was blowing.

- **And He will give Israel up because of the sins Jeroboam has committed and has caused Israel to commit”**
(1 Kings 14:16).
 - Jeroboam was the man who **hijacked the true worship of Israel**
 - And established his own **“will worship”**
(Colossians 2:23)
 - **“of his own choosing”**
(1 Kings 12:33).

- We have like minded people today who have stolen the worship of the New Testament church and have set up a rival worship **“of their own choosing.”**

- If one were to visit the **various denominational churches** it would be obvious that the worship today would be **quite unlike the true worship of the Bible.**
- True worship having been hijacked and changed **to fit the convenience and culture prevailing in our society.**

- Leaders have a great responsibility, because they have **a great deal of power.**
 - **Ahab**, the king of Israel, began his reign with **very little conviction in his heart.**
 - His wife was **Jezebel**, a foreign woman **who worshiped idols.**
 - And brought her idol worship with her.

- Ahab's religion meant very little to him,
so it was not much of a sacrifice of conviction
for him to give up the worship of God
- And worship Baal along with his strong minded wife.
 - She ruled Ahab
- And Ahab ruled the nation.

- **But there was none like unto Ahab,**
- **who did sell himself to do that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah,**
 - **whom Jezebel his wife stirred up (1Kings 21:25).**

- **The religion of Baal** became the dominating religion of the kingdom.
- All the court lords and ladies followed the lead of the king and queen, **desiring to be in style.**
- But it was not the style **to worship God.**
- So nearly all of them **went the popular way.**

- But there was a stubborn prophet in town.
- His name was Elijah.
- Elijah was not a crank.
- He was not stubborn for the mere sake of being different or odd.

- He was not anxious to stir up trouble.
 - He loved peace and harmony,
- But he loved God more.
- His conscience would not allow him to forsake Jehovah.

- His courage led him to stick by his convictions, even though it meant a break with the king
- And even though it made him a social outcast.

- He had sense enough to look beyond the authority and demands of an earthly king.
- His dedication to the authority and will of the King of the universe.

- He could see the emptiness of Baal's religion
- To Elijah, persecution and even death were minor things as contrasted with loyalty to God.

- Of course Elijah was misrepresented.
 - At court he was spoken of as, **"the troubler of Israel."**
(1 Kings 18:17)
 - He was so hated by the queen **that she planned to kill him.**
(1 Kings 19:2)
 - But while that was extremely discouraging, **it did not take away his loyalty to God.**

- He preferred to be ”fed by the ravens” than to sit in the palace of Ahab in Samaria.
(1 Kings 17)
- He chose rather to hear the voice of Jehovah than to listen to the empty jabber of Queen Jezebel.

- It cost Elijah just about everything that flesh holds dear to maintain his religious and moral integrity,
- But he knew that the reward was worth far more than the price he had to pay.

- Pomp and pageantry are not a test of principles, but they do command a big following.
- What is in style and what is right are two different things.
- The real test is the will of God!



Psalms 57:1

(ESV2011)

**In the
shadow of
your wings
I will take
refuge,
till the storms
of destruction
pass by.**

- Just as this lighthouse still stands, though it has been obscured by many a cloud and lashed by many a storm,
 - So the will of God is supreme and eternal.

- **Ahab and Jezebel
were drunk
with power.**
- The nation was
intoxicated with
Baal worship.

- But out on Mount Carmel the proud king and his clamoring followers saw Baal's worship go down in defeat (1 Kings 18).
- They saw the prophets of Baal — 400 of them — work themselves up in an all-day frenzy of pleading and shouting and bodily mutilation,
- But no answer came from their idol.

- Then in the evening the prayer of faith reached the throne of God.
- God heard that prayer and answered.
- As fire fell from heaven and consumed the sacrifice, the altar of stone, and even the water in the trenches.
 - The people finally acknowledged their wrong.
 - "Jehovah, he is God"
(1Kings 18:39 ASV).

- **A Modern Application**

- **Baal** is abroad in the land today — not the old fish god of the Philistines and Sidonians, **but the god of human exaltation and lust of the flesh.**

- His religion is voiced in the maxim,

"Whatever the crowd is doing do it."

- This modern Baal has branded the God of the Bible as "out of date" and fit only for the age of superstition.

- He is proclaiming from the ivy towers of educational institutions and from the centers of social prominence that to be religious in the Bible way is a matter of ignorance and lack of sense.

- Like the Pied Piper of Hamelin, he plays his tune in the halls of colleges, in the pulpits of fine churches,
- He echoes his claims from the lips of the prominent and powerful among religious denominations.

- But men and women of Elijah's type will ***fear God and keep His commandments,*** though **ostracized** socially and **belittled** religiously.
 - We must not think that days **like Elijah's are gone.**
 - **There is plenty of opposition now,** and discouragement and persecution for people who love the Lord and are willing to serve Him.
 - It takes different forms, **but it is just as effective and deadly.**

- A good old song says,
- "Am I a soldier of the cross,
 - A follower
of the Lamb;
 - And shall I fear
to own His cause,
 - Or blush to
speak His name?"

- The Lord Himself has issued this challenge:

- "For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation,

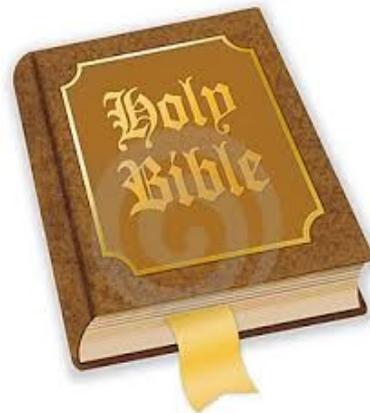
- The Son of man also shall be ashamed of him, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels"

(Mark 8:38 ASV).

**The doors of the church
are open.**

**The Spirit and the Bride
Say
“Come”.**

Revelation 22:17



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