

DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU HEAR

The story is told in the first book of Kings of a young prophet sent by God to cry out against the idolatrous practices at Bethel. God's instruction to this seer was: "You shall not eat food, or drink water, or return by the way that you came" (1 Kings 13.9).¹ But an old prophet from Bethel, claiming a revelation from God to the contrary, invited the man of God to come to his house for bread and water. The young man agreed, so he obeyed the lie of the old prophet and disregarded the truth of God. What was the consequence of this action by the young prophet? As he returned to Judah, the young man was met by a lion and was killed. What lesson can we learn from this? One lesson is that we should not believe everything we hear, especially when someone claims to have new revelation that is contrary to what we know to be the truth.

Just about anything has been said and attributed to God, but much of it is just not true. Because of such deceit, the admonition of the apostle Paul is practical and wise. He wrote, "Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5.19-22). If the young prophet, before he acted contrary to his original instruction from the Lord, had examined the message of the old prophet, he would have acted differently, and the outcome would have been less tragic. But the young man was too naive; he was too gullible. He did not put the words of the old prophet to the test.

Sadly, most people are of the same disposition today. They do not care to investigate. With matters of the heart and our spiritual life, it will not do to say, "I don't have time." Or, "what was good enough for my parents is good enough for me." As people of God, we should

¹Scripture references are from the *New Revised Standard Version* (1989).

desire to “test everything.” This also implies not believing everything the preacher says just because he says it. When Paul and Silas visited the Macedonian town of Beroea, Luke tell us that the people there “were more receptive than those in Thessalonica, for they welcomed the message very eagerly and examined the scriptures every day to see whether these things were so” (Acts 17.10-11). We would do well to follow their example and “search the scriptures” that lead us to Christ and his gift of eternal life (see John 5.39).