



Lesson 9 May 1st, 2021

Micaiah: Speaking Truth to Power

Middle/High School

Study Scripture – 1 Kings 22:15-23, 26-28

Background Scripture – 1 Kings 22:1-40

Key Verse:

But Micaiah said, "As the Lord lives, whatever the LORD says to me, I will speak it".

1 Kings 22:14

INTRODUCTION

There has always been a continuing and relentless assault on the idea that there is something called the absolute truth. Leaders in private act as if they deny that there is something called truth that they should follow. But many times in public they deny the truth and follow the way of lying. Our Study show this practice of denying the truth in a Royal event taking place in the city of Samaria at the gates of the city where judgments are rendered.

This same attitude is being shown today. It is out in the open for all to see.

This disregard for truth has happened because of an official 'removal' of God from the affairs of men. This has been done even in societies where truth was once regarded as a virtue, and truth is now seen as some quaint relic from the distant past.

It is very important to note that our Study makes us realize that in the past days and in present days there is no absolute or ultimate authority that men are prepared to accept.

To stand for God will make you strange as far as the world is concerned.

The Study really warns us that we must reject the notion of peace at all costs for this approach will get us into all kinds of unacceptable and ungodly alliances. We must be prepared to speak the truth even if it brings disharmony.

Our Study today deals with several important issues. It examines and teaches us about the nature of God, His government of the Earth and the universe and men, and how the Earth is really run by the leaders of the people.

It deals with the great need for integrity in leadership and it therefore tells us of a man of integrity who was trustworthy and who stuck with the truth despite all the odds and at risk to his life. This of course is an example for us.

It also highlights the weakness of a King who though he was considered to be righteous to a certain extent did not always tell the truth because he apparently needed unity at any price, and so he was prepared to get into an alliance with a decidedly wicked king named Ahab and his incredibly wicked wife named Jezebel.

The Study also indicates to us the need for discernment, especially when we get into situations with ungodly people who tried to entangle us in their ungodly affairs.

Without exercising this spirit of discernment we might place ourselves in the situation where our only help comes when we called on God out loud for help.

The Study would also reveal how the nation of Israel got into a situation where there are few prophets or even men of God left. There was a deliberate policy of extermination of all of Yahweh's prophets by leaders who should know better for they had benefited from the ministry of the great Elijah the prophet.

We therefore see a false prophet Zedekiah who even prophesied in the name of Yahweh. But he was false and prophesied for money.

Let us not fool ourselves that in this modern world there are not all kinds of concerted powerful attempts to wipe out the Words of truth coming from people of God.

Our Study shows the dangerous tragedy of having 'itching ears'. This character trait leads those with "itching ears" to always want people to tell them what they want to hear.

Our Study also shows that the important issue is what God thinks and not what prophets or what kings whether or not they are like Ahab think.

Importantly, the only 'objective' standard and source of truth remains the Bible, the Word of God. Unsurprisingly, any who subscribe to this position is marginalized, demonized, and sidelined, as humanism, consumerism and social engineering set the standards for right and wrong. Any public voice for truth and the Word of God is met with hostility and disdain among all levels of society in our day.

Those who hold the reins of power have no interest in God, except for token references at some national tragedy but it is the voices of evil that control the narratives and there are competing agendas from all political and religious stripes.

This was also the case in Israel for a ninth century prophet named Micaiah. He made the very unpopular and dangerous choice to speak God's word to a hostile audience that included the king of his country as well as another King from a country that housed the Temple of God and a country which knew the truth. Then as now, arrayed against the prophetic word of God was the political forces of the state and the false prophets of deceit, ready to endorse any and all evil political and military decisions. Still, as in the days of Micaiah and as always, the sovereign Lord God Almighty reigns in all the affairs of men and His will has been done; is being done and will be done!

Micaiah showed great courage and trust in Yahweh. He well knew that if he spoke God's truth persecution would follow, maybe even the loss of his life. Nevertheless, he put himself at risk and delivered God's message. The prophet was committed to speaking God's truth regardless of opposition and personal cost and thereby laid down a challenge to all subsequent believers. Many have since taken up that challenge. What risks are you prepared to take and what are you prepared to lose for the sake of Jesus Christ?

The books of First and Second Kings detail that very turbulent period in the history of Israel that had such a promising start with the ascension of Solomon to the Davidic throne, but which ultimately ended with the exile of the Northern Kingdom to Assyria in 722 B.C. and the exile of Judah to Babylon in 586 B.C.

Sadly, these two books show the story of Israel's persistent rebellions against the terms of their covenant with Yahweh, divine judgment in the form of the curses prescribed in Deuteronomy 27–28, Israel's returns to God, and God's responding mercy.



Noteworthy, Israel's unfaithfulness, rebellions, and idolatry during this period, happened in the face of God's prophets constantly in their ears calling them to repentance, providing divine guidance to their kings and giving warnings of God's judgments!

At the time of our Text Ahab is King in Israel and has a well-earned reputation as one of its most evil Kings. He was a committed idolater and made idolatry the official religion in Israel. The prior chapter 21 details how his even more wicked wife Jezebel conspired and had a man murdered so the king could take a vineyard he long coveted.

Jehoshaphat a pious man is king in Judah, but he had married his son to Ahab's daughter, thus creating a matrimonial alliance. A righteous man had thus allied himself to an evil family. This he did for political gains for Jehoshaphat's weakness was that there should be peace "at all costs" and so he would compromise and temporize in order to maintain peace to fulfill his dreams that Judah, the Southern Kingdom, and Israel, the Northern Kingdom, be reunited. Without even reading anything else, we know that this would not end well for the man of God and his family and in 2 Chronicles 19:2-3, a prophet of God rebuked King Jehoshaphat for his relationship to Ahab and his family: *"Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? Therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord"*.

God wants His people to be separated from the world, and from anything that would pollute us. Associating with false prophets, false teachers and with those who openly, blatantly, and defiantly defy the commandments of God, inevitably harms the believer.

Today's Text is set against the backdrop of impending war with Syria due to the 'failure' of their king to honor a treaty (1 Kings 20:34), he had with Israel and one in which Ahab had unadvisedly gone against the word of God. We should remember the historical context. God had been merciful to Israel, the 10 Tribes, though they had highly offended Him. When Ben-Hadad, the Syrian king and 32 kings that were confederate with an attack Israel, God graciously sent a prophet to build the courage of the people and used 232 young men to boldly go into the camp of the enemy and destroy the Syrians. Note that God's deliverance came through the young leaders, as if to show that He could not work through the older ones.

The gracious God had again used the same prophet to warn the king against a renewed attack the next year. Again, the Syrians were miraculously defeated.

Despite God's instructions, Ahab dishonoured God by showing mercy to the Syrian King, calling him "brother", inviting him to sit in the Royal chariot, and sending him away with a covenant of peace. This was done in the face of the many attempts to destroy Israel, and then in Ben-Hadad's insulting description of Yahweh in 1 Kings 20-23.

This was a gross case of misplaced kindness to a proud ruler, and impious idolater. His words and actions were in opposition to God's purpose. God had determined to destroy the Syrian king for his abominable behaviour and words. So grave was this action in the sight of God that God sent a prophet to act out a parable similar to the one that the prophet Nathan had acted out with King David. The prophet similarly led Ahab to pronounce his own doom. See 1 Kings 20:35-43.

Ahab's leading here against God's goal was just as disloyal and as big an affront to God as his predecessor kings, King Saul did something similar in letting go Agag in 1 Samuel 15. That marked doom for the disobedient King Saul, and this marked doom for Ahab. One would have thought that Ahab would begin to behave himself. But this was not in the cards.



In our Study today we see that Ahab's misplaced kindness to Ben-Hadad had not affected his hereditary enmity against Israel. Ben-Hadad was guilty of a great breach of faith, for by the treaty he made, he was to restore all the cities which his father had seized (1 Kings 20: 34), and of course he had no intention of honouring this treaty.

There is a lesson here for believers. When we disobey God and form associations and agreements with the enemies of God, we should expect nothing else than treachery. It is amazing how believers are often associated with, and support people who are against the Commandments of God. Following disobedient and or evil people will never benefit the believer.

The Chapter opens by describing a conversation between the two aforementioned kings: Ahab of Israel (northern kingdom) (874–853 BC) and Jehoshaphat of Judah (southern kingdom) (873–849 BC). Jehoshaphat had undoubtedly come down from Jerusalem (topographically, and symbolically) to Samaria at Ahab's invitation. Verses one and two seem to introduce the events in verses three-forty as they read in the Text. However, several years passed between Jehoshaphat's visit in verse two and Ahab's invitation to him in verse four (2 Chron. 18:1-2). Ahab greeted Jehoshaphat with lavish hospitality. He used the opportunity of the visit to take advantage of and push something on which he had set his heart. Note that the wicked always look for an angle to get something for themselves. When the righteous behave foolishly this makes the job of the wicked easier. The Syrian king Ben-had had not returned the town of Ramoth- Gilead to Ahab as promised (1 Kings 20:34) and Ahab was determined to regain control.

That town was an important Trans Jordan outpost that was on one of the main roads to Damascus. It had important strategic military value. King Solomon had made it one of his district Officers headquarters, but now the Syrians had control and did not want to give territory and control to Israel.

In addition, it was a Levitical and free town on the North border of Gad. Jehoshaphat, a righteous man to whom God's Covenant possessions were important, would therefore have some interest in restoring this town to Israel. Ahab cleverly puts a request to Jehoshaphat (1Kings 22:3) as he wine and dined him, that they both join together to recapture Ramoth-Gilead.

The disobedient Jehoshaphat agreed that Ramoth-Gilead, had to be returned to Israel, and he would certainly join Ahab in doing what God supposedly would have wanted.

As a good man of God however, he wanted to get God's approval for the war. Ahab was quick to oblige; he had a rubber-stamp of false prophets ready to endorse all his decisions. Note that consulting God (or false gods) before battle was customary (Judges 20:18; 1 Samuel 23:2; Ezekiel 21:21). Ahab followed the practice, but he sought divine guidance from about four hundred false prophets. These men were charged with discerning God's will while having no access to Him! Their counsel was united: God would grant victory in the expected battle (1 Kings 22:1–6). A favorable report, delivered from a unified front, would certainly convince the two kings of the veracity of their message!

King Jehoshaphat was unimpressed by the verdict of the false prophets. His reign was characterized by religious reform and the suppression of idolatry (2 Chronicles 17:3–6). But here he was in a compromised position because he had entered into a political alliance with the ungodly. Jehoshaphat's request to hear from a 'prophet of Yahweh' did not seem to offend



Ahab and this triggered the appearance of the main character in our Study. Ahab admitted that there was one such a prophet Micaiah. Not entirely surprising, Ahab hated Micaiah. One may be known by one's enemies as much as by one's friends!

Some commentators believe that these were prophets of Baal, but it is hardly likely that Ahab would have risked offending Jehoshaphat by bringing before him such obvious phonies.

But Ahab and the incredibly wicked Jezebel who had brought the terrible practices of the Canaanites involving male and female prostitution, child sacrifice, and all of the atrocities and inhumane practices associated with Canaanite's worship had apparently organized again a group of 400 prophets that took the place of the prophets of Baal that had been killed after their showdown with the prophet Elijah described in 1 Kings 18.

These were definitely apostate prophets, or false prophets, who, being creatures of Ahab, would be more concerned with giving Ahab the kind of advice they thought he wanted to hear so as to please him, and bring them material reward. They did not concern themselves with telling the people the true word of God. They declared to a man that Ahab would be successful and prosperous in the war.

“In the New Testament Paul refers to people like that as those who like to have their ears scratched. They have itching ears. Those of you who have dogs know that when a dog's ear itches and you scratch it, he inclines his ear forward where ever the itching is coming from. That describes Ahab. He wanted people to scratch his ears. He wanted them to tell him what he wanted to hear, and anything else was evil. If they told him what he had already made up his mind to do, then that was good news. Any other news was bad news. When anyone dared to speak the truth, he did away with them”

But note that these prophecies were spoken in ambiguous terms; the very same way that the false prophets of the pagan and secular worlds speak. They carefully craft their words in clouded language and in ways that can be interpreted in multiple ways. Notice that in verse 6 the false prophets said that the Lord would deliver the city into the hands of “the King”. So no matter what happened, a good juggler could say that “the King” could be the King of Syria or the King of Israel. Their prophecy could have a double meaning.

One writer clarifies for us what these false prophets were saying and why Jehoshaphat spotted what was really being said: We too must be careful when we hear people use the word “God”:

“If you have a revised Standard Version or the new American Standard translation you will notice that in verse 6, when the prophets replied, “Go up; for the Lord will give it into the hand of the king”, that, with the exception of the letter “L”, the rest of the word “Lord” is in lowercase letters, signifying use of the generic name Adonai, rather than Yahweh. In verse 7, when Jehoshaphat says, “is that there not yet a prophet of the LORD...” the entire word “LORD” (Yahweh) is in capitals. The point is this: these 400 prophets were not prophets of Yahweh; they were prophets of Asherah, Jezebel's personal appointees, her hand-picked priests, priestesses, and prophets of Baal and Asherah”.

So be careful when you're listening to people who use the word “Lord”. It might not be what you mean by Lord.

Jehoshaphat, always the diplomat and being where he should not have been, was forced to rebuke Ahab only mildly. He obviously could not openly and honestly state what he thought of Ahab's little circus.



When believers mix with, and associate with evil people, they cannot be honest, but must say what is not right or honest, that is, if they want to keep their friendship with the world. One writer states this about Jehoshaphat at this stage of his encounter with Ahab:

“Jehoshaphat was an upright man and was accustomed to the ring of a genuine prophetic voice. Jehoshaphat had a good spiritual discernment. Just so, a true child of God who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit today can often recognize “the spirit of error” (1 John 4:1-6). It seems that Jehoshaphat detected a false note in the words of Ahab's prophets, and so he asked, *is there not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might inquire of him?*” (Verse 7). Is there not at least one prophet in the Northern Kingdom who can be trusted to speak the truth? Ahab admitted *that there was such a prophet*, but because he did not prophesy good concerning the king-- Ahab said, *“I hate him”*. (Verse 8). Ahab was more concerned about feeling good than he was about knowing the truth. The name of this prophet was Micaiah”. Micaiah was urged by those that summoned him to agree with the already given verdict of the false prophets.

False prophets give favorable prophecies. True prophets receive their words from God Himself and proclaim that word fearlessly. God does not permit His prophets to lie, or to speak mistakes. True prophets of God have a one hundred percent accuracy rate when they proclaim the word of God.

Like Elijah, Micaiah was willing to stand alone for God against hundreds of false prophets (v. 14; 18:22).

Believers in the West face nothing of the like but are we even prepared to be identified with Jesus Christ?

We too must remember that we face our own immense pressures for those who use the Internet and YouTube to support the word of God will tell you that once they do that, they will face thousands of vitriolic attacks. People will even approach the Courts, the “Justice system”, and the Government to say that you are preaching hate speech. Simply try to preach against homosexual behavior or LGBT practices and see what happens to you. It will not be pleasant. So if you think the world has changed just remember that it has not. It has really gotten worse. Let us read and thank God for the examples of those courageous for God and be challenged to do likewise!

THE TEXT

Verse 15. Ahab despised Micaiah because of a series of negative reports that the prophet made against the King. The unnamed prophet in 1 Kings 20:35-43 was suggested by both the Talmud and the first-century Jewish historian Josephus to have been Micaiah. Little else is known about this prophet.

Ramoth-Gilead was a city of refuge within the tribe of Gad (Deuteronomy 4:43). It was located on a large plain, making chariot warfare possible (1 Kings 22:31–38). In Ahab's day, the Arameans held the city (22:3). In the days of Rome, this people group came to be known as Syrians. Israel had some ethnic relationship to Arameans (Deuteronomy 26:5), including Bethuel who was Rebekah's father (Genesis 22:20–23). Despite these ancestral links, the Arameans were often opposed to Israel, either instigating or experiencing warfare with the nation (Judges 3:8, 10; 2 Samuel 8:5–6).



We are now looking at a very dramatic scene where a disaster is foretold. Just imagine the two Kings Ahab and Jehoshaphat on thrones in a large open area, the threshing floor at the gate of Samaria with the Kings dressed in their royal regalia or clothing. Then before them stood there 400 crowd-pleasing prophets of Ahab prancing around dressed in their paraphernalia telling Ahab he would be successful in recovering the city of Ramoth-Gilead. Micaiah was brought to Ahab: some think out of prison.

... *Go up and succeed* Micaiah surprised Ahab, by telling him exactly what he wanted to hear and what the other prophets had already told him. Maybe this true prophet of God wanted to see Ahab's reaction to these probably sarcastic statements which mocked the false prophets. Based on Ahab's prior characterization of Micaiah (1 Kings 22:8), we might also be surprised that Micaiah agreed with the majority of prophets affirming Ahab's future success (22:13–15). Note that these were paid prophets, people who had been bought, and paid for. No truth could be expected from these kinds of people. They would say whatever it took to protect their position and their intake of money. There are many such today, and their pronouncements shift with the winds. Anything goes for them.

Verse 16. *How many times* ... King Ahab clearly read Micaiah's sarcastic tone in his affirming response and knew it was not meant to be believed. Ahab's asking *how many times* implies that Micaiah had fallen into the pattern of sardonically telling the king whatever it was he wanted to hear.

The king ironically demanded that Micaiah fulfill his prophetic duty and only relay God's word (Deut. 18:18). Of course, Ahab had no interest in hearing God's actual will. He only used his prophets to legitimize the plans that were already in his heart (vs. 22).

It took a lot of courage for Micaiah to tell Ahab the truth that he did not want to hear.

Actually, to spot false prophets and teachers today, one simply has to get copies of their teaching, and track them. You will see that they shift their views to suit the times, and come up with more and more absurd, ridiculous, and unbiblical ideas. At look at their history will show their phoniness (falsehoods) clearly. One writer warns the modern church:

“One of the dangers confronting salaried Pastors today is the temptation to say what they know some respected people in the congregation want to hear. Many pastors are tempted to avoid offending the liberal givers in the congregation, lest it affect their salary. You can be grateful if your minister is a modern-day Micaiah. My prayer is that every pastor will determine to become a faithful expositor of the Word of God. My advice to pastors is this: determine to preach the Word with kindness and with careful interpretation, and then “let the chips fall where they may”.

Verse 17. ... *I saw all Israel scattered* Micaiah dropped his act, causing the atmosphere in the room to immediately darken. Micaiah stated simply and bluntly that he saw all Israel scattered over the hills of Gilead like sheep without a shepherd, wandering around aimlessly and in need of leadership. Israel would be thrown into disarray; the picture was ‘they had no master’!

... *return to his house in peace* ... note that the prediction was clear and unambiguous. Israel would be defeated, and Ahab would fall in battle. The only good thing for the people was that God would allow them to return home without either being pursued or destroyed by the enemy.



Verse 18. *Did I not tell you ...* this is the old 'I told you so'; an attempt to shift attention from the prophet's message to the man Micaiah. In other words, this was just one more *evil* thing the 'hostile' prophet said about the king of Israel. Ahab's heart was so hardened against God that he was able to dismiss Micaiah's warning.

King Jehoshaphat's non-reaction is equally disturbing. Jehoshaphat worshipped the God of Israel but here he failed to advise the other king to heed the word of the Lord. The Northern Kingdom enjoyed military prowess during this period of their combined histories. With their allies, Israel held off the encroaching Assyrian Empire. The alliance between Israel and Judah was secured by the marriage of Ahab's daughter Athaliah to Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram (2 Kings 8:16-18). So, we see two kings, one idolatrous and one godly, who witnessed the testimony of God's true prophet and for their own reasons refused to alter their foolhardy plans.

We note that Ahab was upset with Micaiah's word, but then the prophet gave an additional vision from God. Here was a very curious scene in heaven. One writer notes about this scene:

"Few narratives in the Old Testament have been the focus of more infidel criticism than 1 Kings 22, and particularly these five verses. How could God, who is revealed in the Bible as being One Who "cannot lie" (Titus 1:2; cf. Hebrews 6:18), "put a lying spirit in the mouth" of Ahab's prophets (1 Kings:22:23)?

What rational explanation can be given to this alleged discrepancy? Is God, or Satan, the "father of lies" (John 8:44)?"

Verse 19. *I saw the Lord sitting on His throne ...* we do not get many glimpses of Heaven.

Micaiah now proceeded to tell both Kings, not about the battle, but about the kind of advice that they were receiving from the four hundred false prophets.

The scene pictured was the divine throne room. The angelic armies of God were assembled around God's heavenly throne. This scene brings to mind the conversation between Satan and God in the Book of Job.

All the host of heaven refer to angels (Psalms 103:20–21; 148:2; Luke 2:13). Another possibility suggested by some is that the phrase refers to the heavenly bodies worshipped as gods by pagan nations (Deuteronomy 4:19; 2 Kings 17:16; 21:3; Jeremiah 19:13). Whether real angels or fictitious deities, the image is that God is the only one *sitting on a throne*. This is a visual image of God's sovereignty over everything, real or imagined.

Verse 20. This verse makes explicit what was implied in verse seventeen above: *Ahab* would die on the battlefield. Such a sentence was just since Ahab followed the ways of his evil queen, Jezebel and led the Northern Kingdom into the idolatrous worship of Baal (1 Kings 16:31–33). Unlike Ahab's prophets, who all answered the king in unison, God's court had many ideas on how to lure Ahab to his death.

Verse 21. *Then a spirit came forward a...* a spirit stepped forward and expressed willingness to take up the task of luring King Ahab into battle and by extension, to his death. The exact identity of the *spirit* is less significant than is his depicted role in the unfolding spiritual drama (Job 1:6–12; 2:1–7).

There are some questions whether the conversation that Micaiah described actually took place, or whether the revelation was simply described in this way, so that the people could visualize what was happening. Many commentators believe that the prophetic language must not be



interpreted literally, and the command must be viewed as only permission to the lying spirit. One scholar states:

“There is a common Hebrew idiom used throughout the Old Testament by which the permissive will of God is expressed in a forceful, active jargon. The Lord is said to have “hardened Pharaoh's heart” (Exodus 7:3,13; 9:12; 10:1; et al.), “incited David against Israel” (2 Samuel 24:1), “deceived” His people (Jeremiah 4:10), and given them “statutes that were not good” (Ezekiel 20:25).

In the New Testament, God is characterized by sending a strong delusion that some might believe a lie and be condemned (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12). Even Jesus used “commands” in a permissive sense. For example, He commanded the demons to “go” into the herd of pigs (Matthew 8:32), yet the preceding verse informs the reader that the demons begged Jesus to let them enter the swine. Those, he was not the initiator of the demon’s move (from inhabiting man to dwelling in pigs). He merely permitted them to do so. Similarly Jesus told Judas, “What do you, do quickly” (John 13:27). He was not giving him a direct command, and (since she knew what Judas was about to do) even encouraged him to do it quickly.

All these passages basically indicated that when men are determined to disobey their Creator, He allows them to follow the base inclination of their own hearts. He knew Ahab was going to go to war before he'd even consulted with his prophets (1 Kings 22:3-4). He knew that the prophets were accustomed to telling the king whatever he wanted to hear (cf. 22:8), and He knew that they were also going to tickle Ahab's “itching ears” on this occasion (cf. 2 Timothy 4:3-4). Although God's will was made known to Ahab and his prophets in this case (i.e. Micaiah warned Ahab of the impending doom), He permitted their hardened hearts to believe a lie”.

See Romans 1:18-32 for confirmation of the warning that God will act to give you what you want, even if it destroys you. Nebuchadnezzar found out that THE Watchers were watching him, and evil would come on him because of his disobedience.

Verse 22. The volunteer spirit (some believe that the spirit was a demon who appeared before God from time to time with Satan) enticed Ahab with the king’s own confirmation bias. This false belief arises from choosing only to consider evidence that confirms what a person already wanted to believe. In this case, the *lying spirit* unified *all* the king’s *prophets* in order to strengthen the evidence that favored Ahab’s false hope: that he would have victory over his enemies.

Micaiah declared that the lying spirit had done the intended work and had spoken through the 400 prophets. Ahab should therefore understand that evil was intended for him, and his false prophets were the instruments used to achieve the certainty of the evil to befall him. But note that Ahab was not stupid, and he tried to protect himself when he went into battle.

Ahab did not want to listen to the prophet of the Lord, preferring the pleasant prophecies of his paid sycophants. Ironically, if Ahab chose to listen to Micaiah now, the prophecy would not have come true! But the man’s character was known not only to the prophet but also to God (22:29–38).

Verse 23. *...Lord has declared disaster against you...* the prophet presented Ahab with a message of judgment. However, implicit in that message was the opportunity for repentance (Jonah 3). Mercifully, Ahab was given the opportunity to admit his sinful state, repent and abort his doomed campaign.



Note, the Lord used Ahab's character and the deference of the king's prophets to deceive the man. God never lies, but He does work through humans to accomplish His purposes, whether they do good or ill. God also never does moral *evil*, but He can put events into motion that from a human perspective are catastrophic. In this case, the *lying spirit* intensified human dynamics already in play to ensure that Ahab would be deceived.

Verses 24-25. The leader of the false prophets took umbrage at Micaiah's words and challenged the veracity of God's prophet. He like everyone else would see God's vindication of Micaiah in the coming judgment.

The leader of the false prophets named Zedekiah knew exactly what Micaiah was saying and he went up to the prophet of God, and slapped him on the face, and with great insolence brazenly asked him to tell where the lying spirit had gone. He was claiming that he had not invented his prophecies but that the prophecies had been given to him by God and not by a demon. We recall that this man had been mentioned previously in verse 11 for he had predicted victory for Ahab using a set of horns made of iron to demonstrate how Ahab would gore the Syrian army into defeat.

Believers therefore should understand that people will respond in anger when they declare the truth.

Verses 26. ... *return him to Amon ... and to Joash the king's son ...*, Ahab's response was anything but one of repentance. Referencing *the governor of the city* and *the king's son* lets the reader know that Ahab was so determined to silence Micaiah and so he evoked both local and national authorities to ensure the prophet's secure incarceration.

Verse 27. '*... Put this man in prison ... until I return safely...* Micaiah was to remain in his cell and be given grim rations until Ahab returned 'safely' from battle. Ahab's sentence assumed that his triumphant return would expose the jailed prophet as a charlatan. Though Ahab expected to return *in peace*, the prophecy had revealed that only his men would do so (1 Kings 22:17, 28). Ahab's command had the effect of silencing the prophet. The king knew that if word got out that he himself was under divine judgment, it could lead to poor troop morale on the eve of battle or even embolden a rival to attempt a coup. Plus, the king did not like the prophet.

Verse 28...*if you actually return safely...* the question of whether Micaiah spoke the truth would be determined on the battlefield. If the prophet truly spoke for God, then Ahab would die, never returning home *in peace* as the king assumed.

Note carefully that Micaiah submitted his prophecy to the test of Deuteronomy 18:21-22. It'd be nice if our so-called "modern prophets" would submit their prophecies to that test. But we know that they will not.

*"Listen, all you people! ...*Micaiah was so confident in what he heard from God that he challenged those present to be witnesses. Ahab's death would not only vindicate Micaiah, but God as well.

Ahab died, just as Micaiah said (1 Kings 22:29-38). Micaiah's fate in prison is unknown.

We should remember though that Ahab did not totally disregard Micaiah's warning. It was only the foolish Jehoshaphat that did not take heed and recklessly joined Ahab in battle against the Syrians without taking any precautions.

Ahab convinced Jehoshaphat to wear his royal clothing when he went into battle, but Ahab went into battle dressed just like an ordinary soldier. We note therefore that Ahab was a coward and Ahab secretly feared that Micaiah's prophecy would indeed be true. The Syrian king



had told his troops to concentrate on capturing or killing Ahab and when the Syrians saw Jehoshaphat dressed like a king, they thought he was Ahab and went after him deliberately to kill him. Jehoshaphat cried out to God for help and God helped him and turned the Syrian armies away from him. He was spared but Ahab, though he thought he was getting away scott-free, did not escape. A Syrian archer shot at random, and it found a narrow opening in Ahab's armour and it pierced Ahab's body and he bled to death in his chariot.

CONCLUSION

King Ahab is easily vilified for his idolatry, miscarriages of justice and animosity toward God's prophets. However, whenever we find ourselves willfully in rebellion to the truth, we see shades of Ahab within our own spirits.

When we find ourselves in this precarious state and are then admonished by concerned friends, we should realize that this is a form of God's mercy, even when their words challenge and inconvenience us (Proverbs 27:5-6). Yet we need to be alert to possible Ahab-like tendencies in others and be prepared to admonish those who clearly ignore God in their choosing of unholy paths.

In Jehoshaphat, we have a case study of a person who desired to please God but lacked consistent, faithful follow-through. All believers, from senior ministers to occasional pew-fillers, can find themselves walking in this king's shoes. That happens when we are hesitant, for whatever reason, to execute a God-given plan. Any of us can find ourselves tempted like Jehoshaphat. So, when we encounter a fellow believer in a similar situation, the correct response is to offer encouragement and wise counsel.

As a prophet, Micaiah was bound by the simple adage that he was only to preach the word that God gave him and not add or subtract from that word (Deuteronomy 4:2). We see Micaiah's ability to think and speak independently in the face of a hostile crowd of four hundred false prophets, two powerful leaders and a prevailing climate of wickedness.

The prophet's outspokenness reminds us that speaking truth can result in very negative consequences. He was aware of this but was still obedient to God. We can build a life centered on truth through the regular study of God's Word. That is how we discipline ourselves to hear the voice of the Lord and to obey that voice, one opportunity at a time.

Many people today, as in Micaiah's day, prefer to question God's truth rather than their own sinful patterns. This is not to say that doubt and confusion are never legitimate. But we must be aware of the possibility that sometimes our "confusion" over truth has the function of legitimizing ungodly behavior.

You are not to seek the friendship of ungodly people for they will always lead you into predicaments and you might almost lose your life.

The prophet Jehu reprimanded Jehoshaphat when the king returned home. 2 Chronicles 19:1-3 reads:

"Then Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned safely to his house in Jerusalem. And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to King Jehoshaphat, "Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord"? Therefore the wrath of the Lord is upon you.



Nevertheless good things are found in you, in that you have removed the wooden images from the land, and have prepared your heart to seek God”.

So what can we say to you? You surely must witness to unbelievers and help them. But you have no right to join with them in immoral and anti-God activities. You have to know how to build bridges, and when and how to build walls.

In addition, the prophet knew that God was in control and that any disguise that Ahab did could not fool God. He did not know exactly how Ahab would die but he knew that any scheme that Ahab came up with would never work.

So the prophet was a courageous truth-teller because he was a specific relationship with God. We must echo Apostle Paul’s words, *“Let God be true, but every man a liar”* (Romans 3:4).

Will God see something good in you as He saw in Jehoshaphat?

Micaiah knew that God was the greater King than the wicked King Ahab or King Jehoshaphat. He knew that he had to answer and give an account of himself to God, so he told Ahab what he knew God wanted him to say.”

“What the Lord saith unto me: that will I speak”.

These are hard words. But we know that God is on the throne and He gives His strength so we can speak the Word in our generation.

So we pray to God to open our hearts so that we do nothing against this great assignment that we have been given. None of us are adequate and maybe none of us really want that responsibility. But yet we have been called by God to speak the Word in season and out of season.

We can only pray for God to give us the grace to be obedient, a grace that is available to us to meet every demand upon us. This is a result of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the love of God the Father.

