

1 Kings 22 – Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

XIII. Ahab (Israel) • 16:29-22:40

We ended last week with Elijah's prophecy of God's judgment on the wicked Ahab.

It terrified the king of Israel who repented in sackcloth & fasting.

God then promised to relent from the announced judgment, at least in Ahab's day – the judgment would come in the days of Ahab's wicked son, who reigned after him.

F. Ahab's Demise • 22:1-40

1. Micaiah's prophecy • vs. 1-28

¹Now three years passed without war between Syria and Israel.

The Syrians had mounted 2 major offenses against Israel but had been soundly defeated both times.

In fact, in the last defeat, Ben Hadad, the king of Syria had completely capitulated to Ahab, promising to return the Golan Heights & northern Gilead which had been taken by the Syrians some time before.

The problem is, as soon as Ben Hadad returned to the safety of Damascus, he went back on his word and failed to turn the territory over.

Ahab waited for 3 years, then decided to go take what was belonged to Israel.

²Then it came to pass, in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went down to visit the king of Israel.

Jehoshaphat, a descendant of the royal line of David was king of the southern Kingdom of Judah.

While there'd been war between Judah & Israel in the first years of the secession, Omri, Ahab's father, had forged an alliance between the 2 nations.

Jehoshaphat was on a diplomatic foray to the court of Ahab to *renew* the alliance.

³And the king of Israel said to his servants, "Do you know that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, but we hesitate to take it out of the hand of the king of Syria?"

Of late, Ahab had made reclaiming Golan & Gilead a major political topic.

This is something politicians do when they want to *make a change* – they begin building consensus by *talking up* an issue.

Watch how the press & media introduce a topic then run dozens of reports on it over a short period of time.

They stage a media blitz on a topic to make sure everyone is exposed & that topic becomes the subject of discussion in as many places as possible.

They've done it with abortion, homosexuality, immigration, global-warming, & a host of other things.

They're acting as an *agent for social change*.

As much as the press tries to hide behind a screen of *neutrality*, it's often

little more than a *shill* for a political viewpoint of one kind or another. They use newspapers, magazines, radio & TV as vehicles for raising public pressure for some political objective.

Ahab wanted to stage a military venture to reclaim Ramoth, the capital of northern Gilead.

His first step was to begin agitating the leaders around him with the wrongness of the way the Syrians had treated them after their defeat.

Jehoshaphat arrived at Ahab's court in the midst of this political hot potato.

⁴So he said to Jehoshaphat, "Will you go with me to fight at Ramoth Gilead?" Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses."

The decision had been made to mount a campaign to go reclaim Gilead & Golan.

Ahab invited Jehoshaphat to join him & the king of Judah agreed.

Why would the good king Jehoshaphat consent to join the wicked Ahab in this venture?

There's probably a couple reasons . . .

1) Ahab's proven himself to be a highly competent military leader.

He's defeated the Syrians, when they far outnumbered Israel and had the decided advantage, twice!

Also, though Kings doesn't tell us about it, Ahab's been part of a coalition that's managed to hand the mighty Assyrian war-machine a huge defeat up in northern Lebanon at the city of Qarqar.

So Jehoshaphat sees little military risk involved.

2) By rights of inheritance & the division of the land under Moses, Gilead & Golan belong to Israel.

It was simply not right that Syria controlled them.

These were rich lands for growing grain & grazing cattle & they were important to the economic health of Israel.

So Jehoshaphat committed Judah to the campaign.

But having said that, he then suggested they seek the mind of God on the matter.

Was this campaign ordained of God?

⁵Also Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "Please inquire for the word of the LORD [YAHWEH] today." ⁶Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about 400, and said to them, "Shall I go against Ramoth Gilead to fight, or shall I refrain?" So they said, "Go up, for the Lord [adonai-master/boss] will deliver *it* into the hand of the king."

⁷And Jehoshaphat said, "*Is there not still a prophet of the LORD [Yahweh] here, that we may inquire of Him?*"

When Jehoshaphat suggested they seek God's mind on the idea of attacking Ramoth, Ahab replied by sending for the prophets, all 400 of them!

If Jehoshaphat wants some counsel, let's give him all he could possibly want!

And while Jehoshaphat had asked specifically for a word from Yahweh, these guys simply prophecy in the most generic of all possible titles for deity – "the big-boss / the man upstairs."

Jehoshaphat takes one look at these guys and how they go about speaking on

behalf of God and knows they're not speaking forth the mind or counsel of Yahweh.

Their prophet-wannabe's, pretenders.

Who were these guys? Where'd they come from?

They're replacements for the 450 prophets of Baal that had been executed on Mt. Carmel after the showdown with Elijah.

They don't come right out and say they're the prophets of Baal because it's become dangerous to take such a position – public opinion post-Carmel is against Baal & the other religious changes Jezebel had enacted.

But these guys aren't genuine prophets, they're professional religionists.

They're office holders, who saw the vacant positions left by the prophets of Baal as an opportunity.

They're opportunity-taking, salary-seekers.

Power-hungry, position-fillers.

Their *job*, as they saw it, was to tell Ahab what he wanted to hear & hope it would work out so they could keep drawing a salary.

As long as there are human societies, there will be a plethora of such professional religious office-holders.

They're men & women who take the deepest selfish desires of a fallen race & weave them by clever words into an appealing religion/philosophy that allows people to fulfill their lusts while avoiding guilt.

Their market is the message people *want* to hear. That's what these guys give Ahab.

Jehoshaphat took one look at them & *knew* they were charlatans.

He queried Ahab; "Isn't there a *real* prophet around?"

⁸So the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "There is still one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the LORD; but I hate him, because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." And Jehoshaphat said, "Let not the king say such things!"

Interesting Ahab doesn't mention Elijah.

Maybe because recently Elijah told him he was going to be eaten by dogs.

When that announcement of judgment had provoked Ahab to genuine repentance, God sent Elijah back to him with the message God had relented & judgment would come in the time of his wicked son instead.

But Ahab's repentance didn't stick; it didn't last – he reverted to form & once again began his old ways.

Ahab probably feared if Elijah was summoned, he'd renew the curse.

So he doesn't even mention him. He instead speaks of another prophet who'd given him grief over the years – Micaiah.

Like Elijah, Micaiah was a true man of God who only spoke what God told him to say.

He'd backed up Elijah's ministry by challenging Ahab & warning him of the consequences of turning away from the Lord.

Ahab hated Micaiah precisely because he told him the truth, which he didn't want to hear!

There's a saying – The truth hurts. It certainly did in the case of Ahab &

Micaiah.

And *because* it hurt, Ahab *avoided* Micaiah.

Several years ago now, when the seeker-sensitive church movement thing was building steam, one of the things they claimed unchurched people didn't go to church was because it was *boring & irrelevant*.

The seeker-sensitive folk wanted to provide a church environment that was novel & exciting, and scratched people where they itched, meeting perceived needs.

Hey, no doubt some churches are boring & the message is irrelevant, but I wonder how many people don't go to church, not for that reason, but because of the *conviction* they feel when they do go.

They're doing stuff they know they shouldn't.

The Spirit convicts them, urging them to repent and put their faith in Christ.

They struggle & it hurts. It's not easy dealing with the pain of moral failure.

So, they avoid the Gospel as much as possible.

They don't listen to Christian radio, don't engage believers in spiritual conversation, and they certainly don't go to church! *Church is their Micaiah*.

Jehoshaphat was shocked by Ahab's reply. How could someone say something so obviously wrong as, "I don't want to hear what God has to say to me because it's never good"?

⁹Then the king of Israel called an officer and said, "Bring Micaiah the son of Imlah quickly!" ¹⁰The king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, having put on *their* robes, sat each on his throne, at a threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them. ¹¹Now Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah [the famous 60's Motown trio] had made horns of iron for himself; and he said, "Thus says the LORD: 'With these you shall gore the Syrians until they are destroyed.'"

When this guy Zedekiah heard that Jehoshaphat wanted a word from Yahweh, he stepped forward to give it.

Following the pattern of many of the prophets, he used an *object* as part of his message.

Horns were known all over the ancient world as a symbol of physical might.

The horns of an animal are its business end and are used in battle to inflict pain.

So ancient warriors used horns as one of the most prominent symbols on their weapons & armor.

Zedekiah rigged some iron horns, probably put them on his head, & used them as a way to reinforce his message that Yahweh was telling the kings to go for it in attacking Ramoth.

¹²And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, "Go up to Ramoth Gilead and prosper, for the LORD will deliver *it* into the king's hand."

See now how they've changed their tune from *Adonai* to *Yahweh* – because that was what Ahab *wanted* to hear.

Who's your *real* friend – the one who tells you what you *want* to hear, or the

one who tells you the truth you need to hear?

13Then the messenger who had gone to call Micaiah spoke to him, saying, “Now listen, the words of the prophets with one accord encourage the king. Please, let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak encouragement.”

This guy tells the true prophet to tell Ahab what he wants to hear.

This guy has no real belief in prophecy.

Typical for someone close to the center of political power, he sees everything through a *political* lens.

This is the great *danger of power*, whether it's political, economic, military or whatever; it has a profound ability to *color* everything else.

Those in politics tend to look at everything *politically*.

Those in business see everything *economically*.

Still others see everything thru a *military filter*.

Getting, keeping, & expanding power becomes the be-all & end-all.

The brilliant philosopher Frederick Nietzsche said the *will to power* was the strongest drive in the human race & that all of history could be explained as man's pursuit of power.

Why is power so seductive? Why is it such a lure?

Simple – because power is our means to *control*.

You see, the essence of the Fall was the desire for *independence*.

Adam & Eve were attracted to the appeal of Satan that they could define their existence *independently* of God.

Up to that point, their whole existence had been complete dependence on Him.

Life was communion, fellowship with the Creator.

But the devil suggested they could live as gods, defining existence according to their own ideas.

Of course, as soon as they ate, their eyes were opened to the reality that they were alone in a hostile world without the power to live what the lie had promised.

The rest of their days were spent in a futile search for the power to make the lie come true.

Returning to God means coming to the realization our lives are not our own & we will NEVER have the power to live as we were created to be – apart from our vital union with & total dependence on God.

It's not our power but His that provides what's need to REALLY LIVE!

But fallen humanity continues to live with the delusion that power will provide the means of control over circumstances needed to make the Lie come true.

The lesson here is that as people enter various fields, they tend to filter everything through the lens of how *power is used* in that venue.

This messenger's realm was the political arena.

For him, everything was about moving up the political ladder, amassing more and more political power.

His advice to Micaiah was to take advantage of this once in a life-time opportunity when he appeared before, not 1 but 2! Kings - & speak a word

that would earn him political capital.

It never occurred to this guy that Micaiah might actually hear from God. And this is the peril that faces those today who are trying to bring an *evangelical influence* into politics.

All too often, instead of politicians *really listening* to well-meaning believers who seek to inform them with Biblical counsel on contemporary issues, politicians use *them* as supporters for *their* humanistic policies & self-seeking programs.

Nearly *every* time believers become buddy-buddy with politics, it spells disaster.

What our posture ought to be is that taken by Micaiah here – stand apart and speak the Word of God.

No matter how good & godly civil government might be, it always will have a lot more ground to cover before it's what it ought to be.

The Church needs to take a *prophetic* stance toward politics & culture, not the posture of a partner in political power.

14 And Micaiah said, “As the LORD lives, whatever the LORD says to me, that I will speak.”

AMEN!

15 Then he came to the king; and the king said to him, “Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall we refrain?” And he answered him, “Go and prosper, for the LORD will deliver *it* into the hand of the king!” **16 So the king said to him, “How many times shall I make you swear that you tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?”**

Micaiah said what Ahab wanted to hear, but Ahab knew he was being sarcastic & urged him to hand over the real word from the Lord.

Ahab claimed he'd asked Micaiah to tell the truth *many* times before.

What a joke – he *never* had! He only said this to make himself look better to Jehoshaphat.

As if truth mattered to Ahab!

17 Then he said, “I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd. And the LORD said, ‘These have no master. Let each return to his house in peace.’ ”

Since the king was called the shepherd of the nation, the meaning of this was clear – Ahab would die in battle & Israel would be defeated.

18 And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “Did I not tell you he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?”

Told ya' so!

19 Then Micaiah said, “Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left. 20 And the LORD said, ‘Who will persuade Ahab to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?’ So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner.

Micaiah explains, not what will take place in the coming battle, but the spiritual

basis for what had taken place there at the gate of Samaria with these 400 prophets.

Because Ahab had gone back to his old evil way, God's purpose was to judge him.

Micaiah sees the court of heaven opened as God holds council with the angels to see how best to accomplish Ahab's demise.

Of course, God already knows what He's going to do, but He brings the angelic host into His plan & welcomes their participation – just as He does with us.

21Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, 'I will persuade him.' **22**The LORD said to him, 'In what way?' So he said, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And the LORD said, 'You shall persuade *him*, and also prevail. Go out and do so.' **23**Therefore look! The LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, and the LORD has declared disaster against you."

A deceiving spirit, a demon, if you will, stepped forward with a plan.

It would inspire the false prophets to speak a lie.

God consented to allow this lying spirit to deceive because Ahab had already made it abundantly clear that he rejected the truth!

So much so, that even with Micaiah's warning about what fate awaited him at Ramoth, he went anyway!

Some are disturbed by God's use of a lying spirit to accomplish His will here.

What's important to remember is how long suffering with Ahab He'd been.

Ahab reigned for 22 years, & as 21:25-26 says, no one was as wicked as he.

Few saw as many clear evidences of God's presence & power either.

Ahab even knew the goodness of repentance & God's forgiveness.

He was well acquainted with God's mercy & grace – yet in the end he shunned the Lord & His word.

So, rejecting truth, he chose the lie.

God's allowing this deceiving spirit to come to him was really Ahab's choice –

God was honoring his very well-informed decision!

And even though Ahab chose evil, because God is Who He is, He was able to turn it to good in removing the wicked king from continuing his evil, cruel reign.

24 Now Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near and struck Micaiah on the cheek, and said, "Which way did the spirit from the LORD go from me to speak to you?"

Zedekiah couldn't abide Micaiah calling him a false prophet so he let fly.

25 And Micaiah said, "Indeed, you shall see on that day when you go into an inner chamber to hide!"

The day would come when someone would come for Zedekiah, to execute him for his false prophecy.

26 So the king of Israel said, "Take Micaiah, and return him to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king's son; **27** and say, 'Thus says the king: "Put this *fellow* in prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and water of affliction, until I come in peace.' ' " **28** But

Micaiah said, “If you ever return in peace, the LORD has not spoken by me.” And he said, “Take heed, all you people!”

There was only one way to know if Micaiah or Zedekiah was giving a genuine prophecy – the outcome of the battle.

So, Micaiah was thrown into prison until the end of the campaign.

If Ahab returned victorious, Micaiah would be executed as a false prophet.

But notice that Zedekiah didn't have the same treatment.

So much for the supposed blind justice of the State.

When the ungodly rules, justice weeps.

Ahab is going to be defeated & Micaiah will be vindicated.

Zedekiah will be chased into an inner room & executed, probably by Ahab's son.

2. Ahab's death • vs. 29-40

²⁹ So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth Gilead. ³⁰ And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “I will disguise myself and go into battle; but you put on your robes.” So the king of Israel disguised himself and went into battle. ³¹ Now the king of Syria had commanded the 32 captains of his chariots, saying, “Fight with no one small or great, but only with the king of Israel.”

The Syrians realized their previous losses to Israel were due to Ahab's military genius.

They figured if they focused on taking him out, Israel would crumble.

It seems Ahab may have had an informant among the Syrians because he knew of their plan & persuaded Jehoshaphat to trade places with him.

Jehoshaphat agreed & remained in the center of the forces in his royal chariot dressed in his regalia.

Ahab on the other hand dressed as a regular commander & took his place at the front of the melee.

³² So it was, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, “Surely it *is* the king of Israel!” Therefore they turned aside to fight against him, and Jehoshaphat cried out. ³³ And it happened, when the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him.

Both Jehoshaphat's appearance & behavior in battle combined to prove he wasn't the guy they were looking for.

³⁴ Now a *certain* man drew a bow at random, and struck the king of Israel between the joints of his armor. So he said to the driver of his chariot, “Turn around and take me out of the battle, for I am wounded.” ³⁵ The battle increased that day; and the king was propped up in his chariot, facing the Syrians, and died at evening. The blood ran out from the wound onto the floor of the chariot.

Ahab wasn't identified by this Syrian archer; he simply took aim and shot what he thought was one of the thousands of Israelites doing battle that day.

The arrow happened to find its way between the pieces of Ahab's armor where it buried itself deeply into his flesh.

Unable to fight, Ahab directed his driver to pull aside to a place where he could continue to give orders.

The battle was precarious with each side holding it's own and Ahab didn't feel he could leave his post.

If he had, he could have received treatment & possibly survive, but it would have meant certain loss.

So he hung tough, hoping he could at least steer the army to a victory that day.

He died of blood loss before it was decided.

And as soon as the word went out the king was dead, the counsel of the King of Syria proved true; the Israelite army retreated.

³⁶Then, as the sun was going down, a shout went throughout the army, saying, "Every man to his city, and every man to his own country!" ³⁷So the king died, and was brought to Samaria. And they buried the king in Samaria. ³⁸Then someone washed the chariot at a pool in Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood while the harlots bathed, according to the word of the LORD which He had spoken.

In 1 Kings 21:19 it was foretold that dogs would lick up Ahab's blood in the same way they'd licked up Naboth's innocent blood, whom Jezebel & Ahab conspired to kill so they could steal his vineyard.

That was in Jezreel; this is Samaria.

When God said the dogs would lick up Ahab's blood in the same manner as Naboth's it didn't mean the exact location – it meant in the same place; outside the city walls, in a place of indistinction & dishonor.

That's why the author says it was where the prostitutes bathed.

These women were so *shunned* they had to find a pool outside the city walls to take a bath.

That's where Ahab's royal blood was washed out – and dogs came to lap it up.

The height of shame & dishonor.

³⁹Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, the ivory house which he built and all the cities that he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

This reference to Ahab's ivory house is interesting because archaeologists have indeed discovered a lot of ivory in the ruins of Samaria.

Ivory was a rare & precious material. The concentrations it's found in at Samaria are staggering!

And they're dated to exactly this period of history.

⁴⁰So Ahab rested with his fathers. Then Ahaziah his son reigned in his place.

XIV. Jehoshaphat (Judah) • 22:41-50

⁴¹Jehoshaphat the son of Asa had become king over Judah in the 4th year of Ahab king of Israel. ⁴²Jehoshaphat was 35 years old when he became king, and he reigned 25 years in Jerusalem. His mother's

name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. ⁴³And he walked in all the ways of his father Asa. He did not turn aside from them, doing *what was right* in the eyes of the LORD. Nevertheless the high places were not taken away, *for the people offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places.*

This was the perennial problem for the good kings; they weren't able to tear down the high places people had built all over to worship God.

⁴⁴Also Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel.

This is marked down as a blot on Jehoshaphat's otherwise good name.

Since the kings of Israel were universally wicked, entering into an alliance with them was not a good idea.

I think there's a principle revealed there about evangelical Christians entering into alliances with cults & other religions to address specific social issues.

⁴⁵Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, the might that he showed, and how he made war, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? ⁴⁶And the rest of the perverted persons, who remained in the days of his father Asa, he banished from the land.

Perverted persons refers to homosexual prostitutes.

Jehoshaphat's father, Asa, had removed these guys from the land, but not all.

Jehoshaphat finished what his father had begun. Notice that he didn't execute them; he exiled them.

⁴⁷There was then no king in Edom, only a deputy of the king.

Israel had defeated Edom, reducing it to a vassal state.

⁴⁸Jehoshaphat made merchant ships to go to Ophir for gold; but they never sailed, for the ships were wrecked at Ezion Geber.

Solomon was the first to make a navy for Israel but by this time his ships had worn out.

Jehoshaphat tried to restore Judah's navy but the fleet was destroyed, probably by a storm.

⁴⁹Then Ahaziah the son of Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "Let my servants go with your servants in the ships." But Jehoshaphat would not.

Chronicles tells us that the fleet began as a joint operation between Israel & Judah.

When a prophet rebuked Jehoshaphat for his alliance with Ahaziah, he broke off all ties, including this naval venture.

⁵⁰And Jehoshaphat rested with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the City of David his father. Then Jehoram his son reigned in his place.

XV. Ahaziah (Israel) • 22:51-53

⁵¹ Ahaziah the son of Ahab became king over Israel in Samaria in the 17th year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned 2 years over Israel. ⁵²He did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father and in the way of his mother and in the way of Jeroboam

the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin; ⁵³for he served Baal and worshiped him, and provoked the LORD God of Israel to anger, according to all that his father had done.