

Why Did Ahab Go To Battle? 1 Kings 22

Tonight, I would like to examine another Old Testament event and consider some lessons we can learn from it. In this lesson I want to go through 1 Kings 22 and then make some applications to our lives. This chapter is a rather lengthy reading, so we are not going to read the entire chapter first, but we will read through much of it as we go through this lesson, making observations along the way.

I. Background

- a. In this text we read about the events that led up to the death of King Ahab, but even more we find therein that it was something that could have been prevented.
- b. Who were Ahab and Jehoshaphat – this was during the divided kingdom.
 - i. **Jehoshaphat** was the 4th king of Judah after Israel divided into 2 kingdoms (known as Israel and Judah), thus the 5th generation after king David. He reigned for 25 years and was described as a good king, “doing what was right in the eyes of the Lord.” He began his reign in the 4th year of King Ahab. You can read about his reign in 1 Kings 22:41-50, and 2 Chronicles 17-20 (which also includes the account of our text – ch. 18). Among the things we are told about him is that he did not worship the Baals, tore down high places and wooden images (idols), and sent his priests throughout the land reading the book of the Law to the people. It was a fairly godly time for Judah.
But 2 Chronicles 18:1 tells us that “by marriage he allied himself with Ahab.”
 - ii. **Ahab** was a very wicked king in Israel. We have addressed him in past lessons dealing with Elijah who prophesied during his rule. There was no king in Israel described as wicked as he was. He was married to Jezebel who introduced the Baals and Asherah worship to Israel. Ahab even built a temple to Baal in Samaria (capital of Israel). It was during his reign that Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18). It was during his reign, that wicked Jezebel had Naboth murdered so that the king could have his vineyard.
Yet he reigned in Israel for 22 years. Yet it was a time of relative prosperity for Israel, and they experienced several military victories over surrounding enemies, as YHWH tried to turn the people back to Him with prophets and other efforts.
These did not work though there is a brief period in the life of Ahab where he repented (for what had happened to Naboth). We can read about his reign in 1 Kings 16:29-22:40.
 - iii. And that brings us to our text:

II. The account – 1 Kings 22

- a. We begin with noting that there was 3 years without war between Syria and Israel. King Jehoshaphat comes to Samaria to visit with Ahab. Ahab asks him if he would go with him to take the city of Ramoth in Gilead from Syria.
- b. Vs. 4-5 - Jehoshaphat agrees to go, BUT he has a request first. “Please, inquire of the LORD today.”
Lesson: Before we do anything, we ought to always inquire of the Lord whether or not it is the right thing to do – Colossians 3:17
- c. Vs. 6 – Ahab summons HIS prophets, about 400 of them. These were false prophets who would tell him whatever he wanted to hear. They tell him to Go up, for the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king.”
NOTE: They do not use the name, “YHWH”, but rather the generic term for Lord God (Adonai). Thus in their prophecies they are appealing to a false god.

- d. Vs.7 – Jehoshaphat is not impressed asking, *“Is there not still a prophet of the LORD (YHWH) here, that we may inquire of Him?”*
Lesson: If you are searching for answers, you need to look in the right place. ALL the wrong places in the world will NEVER give you the answer you need.
 That is why when we are struggling spiritually, we need to turn to God and His word rather than anyone or anything else (Proverbs 3:5 tells us to “trust in the LORD with all your heart...”)
- e. Vs. 8 – Ahab says *“there is still one man, Micaiah, the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the LORD (YHWH)” BUT, I hate him, because he does not prophecy good concerning me, but evil.*
Lesson: NOTICE: Ahab hates the one (the ONLY one) who tells him the truth. Why because he knows what he is doing is wrong and that God is against him.
 Sadly, such has always been the case, and continues to be so. They hated Jesus – why? They hated Paul – why? They hated Peter – why? BECAUSE THEY TOLD THEM THE TRUTH.
 Jesus explained to Nicodemus in John 3:19-21, *And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”*
 HOW many today, for various reasons and struggles, avoid the very ones who will tell them the truth. They avoid doctors, auditors, and of course preachers who will tell them they are wrong. Friends, ALL THE LIES in the world will not change the truth.
- f. Vs. 8b - Jehoshaphat rebukes Ahab for saying this. So King Ahab calls for Micaiah.
- g. Vs. 10-12 – while they go to fetch Micaiah, some of the prophets start making a show – horns of iron saying you will gore the Syrians until they are destroyed. All the prophets say “Go” and this time they say, *“For the LORD will deliver it into the king’s hand.”*
- h. Vs. 13- meanwhile, the messenger who sent for Micaiah pleads with him saying that the other prophets encouraged the king to go to war. PLEASE agree with them!
- i. Vs. 14 – Micaiah answers, *“As the LORD lives, whatever the LORD says to me, that I will speak.”*
NOTE: Here you have the convictions of a TRUE prophet or messenger from God. He will speak the truth regardless of what others think. He will NEVER compromise the truth, even when there are consequences. (cf. 2 Timothy 4:2-4)
- j. Vs.15 – the king then asks Micaiah, *“Shall I go to war or refrain?”* Micaiah (obviously sarcastically) *“Go ahead and prosper.”*
- k. Vs. 16 – the king rebukes Micaiah saying, *“How many times shall I make you swear that you tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?”*
NOTE: I find this puzzling, as clearly Ahab didn’t want to hear it. BUT something to consider, EVEN those who are doing wrong, many deep-down want SOMEONE they can trust to tell them what they NEED to hear, even though they might avoid them as much as possible.
How many today put off hearing the truth because of what it might mean to their lifestyles?
 I think of Felix who told Paul to *“go away for now...”* (Acts 24:25) Have you ever arranged studies with someone only to have them cancel, over and over?
- l. Vs. 17- Micaiah tells him what is going to happen. Israel will lose. The will be scattered and return without their master (King Ahab).
- m. Vs. 18 – Ahab is upset because of the message!
- n. Vs. 19-23 – Micaiah, in summary, says that all of these false prophets have a lying spirit telling him to go and prosper in battle.
 This is a challenging text as it seems to imply that the LORD sent one to lie. We do not know exactly what transpired – but the point is clear – the prophets of Baal were lying, and likely they knew what they were doing. This could be a parable to illustrate the results before them.
 Lies come from Satan – “the father of lies” (John 8:44) and his deceivers (2 Thessalonians 2:9 speaks

of the lawless one coming with signs and lying wonders.

COULD this simply be saying, God allowed the so-called prophets to lie and did not stop them?

Romans 1:18 speaks of those who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. Vs. 24, 26, 28 – we read that “God gave them up”, IOW, He allowed them to say and do what they wanted. They WILL be dealt with later.

- o. Vs. 24-25 – continuing, Zedekiah, stuck Micaiah and challenged him for calling him a false prophet.
Lesson: Don’t expect false teachers to just roll over and surrender. Many will seek to do you harm before admitting they are wrong. We have seen that throughout our study of Acts (Philippi, Ephesus, etc.)
- p. Vs. 26-27 – Ahab now confines Micaiah to prison and “bread and water of affliction” till he returns.
NOTE: AS if you can blackmail God!!!!!!! Ahab is basically threatening God here with consequences.
- q. Vs. 28 – Micaiah does not back down.
- r. Vs. 29-40 describes the battle. They go to battle, but Ahab tries to be deceitful. He has Jehoshaphat dress like the king, while Ahab disguised himself. The King of Syria had instructed his men that the only person they were interested in was the king of Israel. They come upon Jehoshaphat and leave when they see it is not Ahab.
Vs. 34 – a certain man drew a bow at random and struck Ahab between the joints of his armor. The king died that evening. And every man went home.
Lesson: You CANNOT hide from God! You cannot disguise yourself! (Psalm 139:7-12)

III. **Why did Ahab go to battle?**

- a. Ahab had every reason to not die that day. He had been warned by God what would happen. He had seen the power of God at work. Yet he went anyway. And just as God said would happen, he died! So why did he do it?
- b. Could it have been because:
 - i. It is what the majority said? – how many today want to follow the crowds. Ahab had some 400 “prophets” telling him to go. But 400 were wrong on this occasion. Just like a few chapter earlier, 850 were wrong facing Elijah at Mt. Carmel.
 - ii. Because he thought he knew better than God. He thought he could outsmart God by putting Micaiah in prison. He thought he could disguise himself.
Friends you do NOT know better than God what is best for you. So why keep resisting Him?
 - iii. Was he confused and didn’t know who to believe? He was facing 2 different answers. But does that mean he could not investigate and find the TRUE answer.
So many today find faith so confusing they choose to not look, or blindly accept what they WANT to believe. That is not good enough.
We have the truth and we can know it – Ephesians 5:17 – understand what the will of the Lord is. The question is are we willing to ask, seek and knock? (Matthew 7:7-8).
- c. So that brings us to the REAL answer. Why did Ahab go to battle?
Because he wanted to! It is that simple.

Friends, we are face with decisions every day. Are we going to serve God today or not? And while there may be many factors that weigh into our decision, it really boils down to this – “We do what we want to do”! So, what are you going to do with this day, this week, the rest of your life? Will you be foolish and cast it away like Ahab did? Or will you surrender to God’s will? If there is any way we can help you, let us know how. Think about it.