

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS
LESSON 16
THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS
CHAPTER 22**

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 22 picks up from chapter 20. After defeating the Syrians, Ahab made a treaty with Ben-hadad, the Syrian king, whom he should have executed as commanded by God. By sparing the enemy, he had disobeyed God and the judgement of death was pronounced upon him. Chapter 22 narrates the events that led to the death of Ahab. It is the fulfilment of the word of God to him. The focus of the inspired writer in this chapter is on the authority and authenticity of the word of God. Almost the whole chapter is devoted to the battle between the false prophets of Ahab and Micaiah, the lone prophet of the LORD. It centres on who truly declares, "Thus saith the LORD." The test to evaluate the truth of this declaration is featured in this chapter. God also reveals that He is ever merciful and forgiving in His dealings with men. Often, God provides opportunities for men to heed His word and repent. But stubborn and proud men reject His word and some even persecute His messengers.

OUTLINE

1. War with Syria on account of Ramoth-Gilead (vv.1-6);
2. Seeking the will of God to go to war (vv. 7-28);
3. War ended with Ahab mortally wounded (vv. 29-40);
4. Judah ruled by a good king (vv.41-50);
5. Ahaziah, the son of Ahab, reigned over Israel (vv.51-53).

COMMENTARY

War with Syria – 22:1-6

After Israel's two victories over Syria, Ahab, the king of Israel, made a treaty with Ben-hadad, the king of Syria (1 Kings 20:34). There was peace for three years between the two countries. In the third year Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, paid a royal visit to Ahab. There was close alliance between Israel and Judah because Ahab's daughter, Athaliah was given in marriage to Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat.

Interestingly, the inspired writer did not refer to the king of Israel by name in this whole chapter except in verses 20 and 39. He referred to Ahab by his title. The "king of Israel" was definitely Ahab for there was no change in the kingship of Israel in chapters 20 and 21. It was as if Ahab was non-existent, thereby hinting that his death was imminent.

Ahab seized the opportunity of Jehoshaphat's visit to solicit a military alliance to reclaim Ramoth-gilead from

the king of Syria. Ramoth-gilead is a city which held a strategic location. It commanded the eastern approach to Israel's heartland through the Jezreel Valley. Three years before, Ben-hadad, the king of Syria, promised to return all the Israelite cities taken by Syria to Israel. Presumably, Ben-hadad did not fully keep his promise and Ahab did not press for the return of Ramoth-gilead. The reason Ahab did not press for the return of Ramoth-gilead was because he desired to have Syria as an ally against Assyria. The situation had now changed for Assyria posed less of a threat. Ben-hadad seemed not keen to return the strategic city to Israel. So Ahab decided to take it by force. Jehoshaphat readily offered his support with full cooperation, *"I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses"* (v.4). After committing his support, Jehoshaphat asked Ahab to enquire of the LORD that day.

Seeking the Will of God – 22:7-14

Accordingly Ahab gathered four hundred prophets. These were not the prophets of Baal. Four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal were killed at Carmel. These four hundred were the royal prophets of Ahab. They were prophets who worshipped the LORD (Yahweh) with calf images which were first introduced by King Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:28). These four hundred prophets were under Ahab's pay and control. So they would naturally say the things that would please Ahab. The king asked them, *"Should I go against Ramoth-gilead to battle or*

shall I forbear?" The prophets urged him to go for "the Lord" would deliver the city into the hand of the king (v.6). The prophets did not say the proper name of the LORD (YAWHEH). Instead they used the common name of "Lord" (ADONAY) which means "master or lord".

Jehoshaphat was not satisfied. His request showed that he could not trust the state-sponsored prophets and their version of the LORD (YAHWEH). He sought a second opinion. Jehoshaphat was familiar with the traditional custom of the prophets of the LORD in Jerusalem who would preface their declaration with "Thus saith the LORD." Ahab's prophets did not use the proper name "YAHWEH". Instead, they used "lord" (ADONAY). Jehoshaphat asked whether there was a prophet of the LORD (YAHWEH) that they might enquire. Ahab answered straightaway that he knew of one named Micaiah ("who is like YAHWEH"), the son of Imlah. But Ahab remarked that he hated him because he did not prophesy good concerning him but evil. Jehoshaphat however, wanted to hear him.

Ahab sent an officer to bring Micaiah to them. The two kings sat on their thrones wearing their kingly robes at the entrance of the gate of Samaria. All the prophets and the people were gathered there. Probably a big canopy was erected to house the two kings and the prophets. It was a formal and official occasion. In the meantime, Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah, who appeared to be the leader of the four hundred prophets, brought a visual aid

in the form of iron horns, and prophesied in the name of the LORD (YAHWEH) that the “horns”, meaning Israel, would completely defeat the Syrians (v.11). And all the other prophets echoed Zedekiah’s words and urged the king to go to battle. In the meantime, the messenger, who went to bring Micaiah, had found him. On their way to see the king, the messenger advised Micaiah to be agreeable with all the other prophets who spoke with one voice for good towards Ahab. Micaiah however, swore that he could only speak what the LORD told him to speak (v.14).

Micaiah’s Counsel to the Kings

– 22:15-28

When Micaiah stood before the kings, Ahab posed the same question he posed earlier to the four hundred prophets. Micaiah answered, *“Go, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver it into the hand of the king”* (v.15). This angered Ahab. He could have felt embarrassed because earlier he had remarked to Jehoshaphat that Micaiah always did not prophesy good concerning him but evil against him. However, Ahab sensed that Micaiah was mocking them. He read a tone of sarcasm and a lack of prophetic conviction in Micaiah’s words. Ahab provoked Micaiah to tell nothing but the truth to him. So Ahab asked for it. Micaiah was prepared now to give him the whole truth. Micaiah’s prophetic word came in the form of two visions. The first one, he said that he saw Israel scattered on the hills as sheep that had not a shepherd. The LORD then said, these have no master, let

them return every man to his home in peace (v.17). The shepherd-sheep metaphor was often used to describe the relationship between the king and his people.¹ The point of this prophetic word was that the king would die and his army would return home safely. Ahab interrupted and said to Jehoshaphat, *“Did not I tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?”* (v.18). Micaiah continued and said that he saw another vision. The LORD was seated in His throne and all the host of heaven standing on the right and left of Him... The LORD posed a question to His heavenly hosts: *“Who shall persuade Ahab that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?”* (v.20) The LORD was asking for a volunteer who would lure Ahab to his death at Ramoth-gilead. One “spirit” volunteered. The LORD asked how he would do it. The spirit replied that he “will be a lying spirit in the mouth of His prophets.” In other words, he would inspire the prophets of Ahab to lie so that Ahab would willingly be enticed by their counsel. The LORD then permitted him to do so. Micaiah then proclaimed: *“The LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee”* (v.19-23). Zedekiah stepped forward and slapped Micaiah on the cheek, and posed the question: *“Which way went the Spirit of*

¹ Numbers 27:16 Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation,;17 Which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the LORD be not as sheep which have no shepherd.

the LORD from me to speak unto thee?" (v.24)

Zedekiah was rejecting Micaiah's assertion that he and the other prophets were lying. Zedekiah demanded from Micaiah to show proof that the Spirit of the LORD was speaking through him and not through the prophets. Zedekiah was saying in effect that Micaiah was the one who was lying and not him and the other prophets. Micaiah replied that Zedekiah would know when he would go and hide himself in an inner room. This implied that Zedekiah would hide himself when the Syrians attacked Israel. At this juncture, Ahab had enough. He ordered that Micaiah be taken away to Amon the governor of the city to be locked up until he returned from battle. They should feed him only with the most meagre amount of bread and water. Micaiah immediately retorted that if Ahab should return safely, then the LORD had not spoken by him. Then Micaiah turned to the people and told them to take heed. There was no way Micaiah could prove the truth of his prophetic word except when what he had prophesied would come to pass.

A theological point is raised which touches on the content of Micaiah's second "vision", namely, "*Can God use deception for His own purpose?*" Many modern students of the Bible find it very hard to comprehend. Can it be said that God lied in this instance or enticed the spirit to lie? It is a true revelation that God cannot lie for it is contrary to His moral

nature.² On the other hand, Scripture reveals that the father of lies is Satan.³ However, the angel that said that "I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his (Ahab's) prophets" was not the devil or his cohorts. It was an angel who volunteered. The fact that the LORD asked the spirit how he would carry out his mission is significant. It intimates that the LORD would forbid any deceitful means. In actuality, the spirit was saying that he would encourage or inspire Ahab's prophets in the direction which they were already bent on going. God did not use them against their own inclinations. Their prophetic word to Ahab was not the truth but a lie. The spirit volunteered to entice them to continue with their prophetic word and not to change it because it would be futile. If they could change, they would have accepted Micaiah's prophetic word and all would be well. God gave them over to their own evil inclinations.⁴

This writer is of the understanding that Micaiah was speaking in the figurative sense like a parable and using it to rebuke the false prophets since both sides said that they are of the LORD. Therefore the scene was a throne room scene. One

² Titus 1:2 In hope of eternal life, which **God**, that **cannot lie**, promised before the world began

³ John 8:44 Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

⁴ Romans 1:28 And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God **gave them over** to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;

had to be lying and the other telling the truth. Micaiah's point was that they are the liars; hence, their violent reaction against Micaiah.

Ahab Mortally Wounded – 22:29-40

Ahab prepared himself for battle against the Syrians. He told Jehoshaphat that he would disguise himself as an ordinary warrior in battle but that Jehoshaphat should wear his kingly robes. He openly rejected Micaiah's prophetic word, yet he secretly believed that Micaiah might be right after all. By disguising himself, he knew that he could not be easily recognised in battle and it would be difficult for the enemy to target him. On the other hand, he put Jehoshaphat in great danger. The enemy for certain would be looking for the leader of the opposing army – kill the leader and the warriors would be demoralised. Moreover, did Micaiah not predict that the king would be killed and the army saved? Ahab conducted himself in a most despicable way – a cheat and a coward! One wonders whether Jehoshaphat realised what was in Ahab's mind. Could Jehoshaphat be really that dense?

The battle was fought. The Syrian king had briefed his thirty-two chariot commanders that they should not fight with the soldiers but to seek out Ahab and kill him. His intention was to keep the army intact that when he had defeated Ahab, he could put the Israelite army to future use. In the midst of the fighting, Jehoshaphat, who wore royal robes, caught the eyes of the Syrian commanders. They thought he was Ahab. They turned

against Jehoshaphat, who was desperate and cried out. He cried out to the LORD who helped him. At that moment, the Syrian commanders realised that he was not Ahab, and stopped pursuing him. Jehoshaphat narrowly escaped death, the LORD permitting! In the meantime, an ordinary Syrian soldier drew his bow and simply shot an arrow and it hit the "bull's eye". Ahab was struck by the arrow between the joints of his armour which mortally wounded him. He quickly ordered his charioteer to turn away from the battlefield. He could not manoeuvre away because the battle was too heated and the path of escape blocked. Ahab propped himself up in his chariot and bled till the evening. His blood flowed and stained his chariot. Towards the evening, a proclamation was made to the combined Israeli-Judaeen armies to retreat to their country.

Ahab died. His body was brought to Samaria where he was buried. His chariot was taken out of the city to be washed in the pool of Samaria. The dogs came and licked his blood according to the word of the LORD. Historically, Ahab was one of the most powerful kings in his day, but religiously by God's standard, he was one of the worst. He introduced Israel to Baal worship on a large scale and what was even worse, he rejected divine correction through the prophets of God. Ahaziah, his son, then acceded to the throne.

Jehoshaphat the King of Judah– 22:41-50

The inspired writer turns his attention to Judah in the south. Jehoshaphat (“Yahweh-judged), the son of Asa, reigned in Judah (872-848 B.C.). He began his reign in Judah when Ahab was in the fourth year of his rule in Israel. Jehoshaphat was thirty five years old when he began to rule over Judah. He reigned for twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother was Azubah, the daughter of Shilhi. Jehoshaphat was a good king who did what was right in the eyes of the LORD. He did remove some of the high places, but not all. He probably removed the more prominent ones. The people continued to make sacrifices and burn incense in some of the high places which he did not remove. He made peace with the king of Israel which was a good thing. But his military alliance was not right before God. It was an unholy alliance and he nearly lost his life. He should have searched the Scriptures and enquired of the LORD before he took such an important step. However, he removed the sodomites, the male religious homosexuals, who served as temple prostitutes in the days of his father Asa. He took them out of the land. He revived shipbuilding and hoped to sail to Ophir to bring gold to Judah like in the days of King Solomon. But before his ships could sail, they were ship-wrecked at Ezion-geber. Ahaziah, the son of Ahab, proposed that they should start a joint venture in shipping, but Jehoshaphat rejected the plan. He probably learned his lesson of being unequally yoked.

His other achievements are recorded in 2 Chronicles 17-20. He died and was buried with his fathers in the city of David. His son, Jehoram, reigned in his stead.

Ahaziah Succeeds Ahab– 22:51-53

In the Northern Kingdom, Ahaziah (“held by Yahweh”), the son of Ahab, acceded to the throne. He began his reign in Israel in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat’s reign in Judah. Ahaziah ruled for two years only (853-852 B.C.). He was a bad king walking in the ways of his father and mother, and Jeroboam who led Israel to sin. He worshipped and served Baal. He provoked to anger the LORD God of Israel. First Kings ended on a negative and sad note.

PRACTICAL VALUE

It is clear that the main thrust of the chapter is about the word of God against the word of the false and apostate prophets as well as biblical separation. Who to believe – Micaiah who spoke the word of the LORD or the four hundred prophets of Ahab who worshipped the calf-images? Micaiah stood alone whereas the other side were four hundred strong. We learn that numbers do not make a wrong right or falsehood truth. Rejection of the truth will result in disaster and tragedy. God gave many opportunities to Ahab to heed His word and repent. But Ahab rejected God each time he was given the chance to repent until he died unrepentant.

We also learn that to be unequally yoked will endanger our life

as in the case of Jehoshaphat. It was an unholy alliance when he had a joint-military force in battling against Syria. It nearly cost him his life. This brings us to the lesson that before we embark on such a union, we must search the Scriptures and seek the counsel of the LORD. Jehoshaphat did not do that. He also did not enquire from the LORD first before agreeing with Ahab to go to war. He and Ahab seemed to have an erroneous concept of prophetic word. Ahab thought that the prophetic word was like magic. He believed that Zedekiah's use of drama using iron horns and mockingly driving the enemies away could give moral support and victory to him and his people. Jehoshaphat, on the other hand, thought that the prophetic word which came from God's servants was to confirm decisions which he had already made. The reverse was true. He should have consulted the LORD first before making the decisions. How often the same flawed conception is still committed today.

We should always take comfort and reassurance in life that God is Sovereign and that His Word is true. He is able to protect and deliver His children in times of crisis if only His children would trust and believe in Him. Ahab cowardly tried to protect himself from being killed in the war but exposed foolish Jehoshaphat to the grave dangers of war. However, God intervened and delivered Jehoshaphat His servant and caused the death of Ahab the wicked king. The Syrian soldier's single arrow although simply shot found its way by divine direction into the heart of Ahab in the midst of

so many soldiers. It did not happen by chance. God was in control. God watches and cares for His people who fear and love Him. AMEN

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: 1 Kings 22:1-6; 2 Chronicles 18:1-3; 19:1-2; 1 Corinthians 6:14-18.

TUESDAY: 1 Kings 22:7-14; 2 Chronicles 18:4-12; Colossians 1:9-10.

WEDNESDAY: 1 Kings 22:15-28; 2 Chronicles 18:13-27; 2 Thess. 2:10-11.

THURSDAY: 1 Kings 22:29-40; 2 Chronicles 18:28-34; Matthew 5:18.

FRIDAY: 1 Kings 22:41-53; 2 Chronicles 17:1-6.

Discussion Questions

1. How important is the doctrine of biblical separation in the church's and believer's life?

2. Why did Jehoshaphat agree so readily to ally with Ahab and Israel against Syria? What two compromises did Jehoshaphat commit which nearly cost his life? In what way did Ahab repay Jehoshaphat's compromises? What may we learn from this? (1 Kings 22:4, 30-31)

3. Compare the attitude of Ahab with that of Jehoshaphat in regard to asking counsel of the LORD. In what way did they both err?

4. Why did Ahab hate Micaiah? How did Ahab sense that Micaiah was sarcastic in giving his first

prophecy? What may we learn from this?

5. If you were Jehoshaphat listening to these 2 opposing views would you have gone to battle? Apply the same to Ahab.

6. Do you see the same dilemma in the doctrine of VPP today where two opposing views are proposed? How should members caught in between make their judgements since both sides claim to speak, "Thus saith the LORD"?

7. Did Ahab and Jehoshaphat believe the prophetic word of Micaiah?

10 What lesson can you benefit from this chapter for yourself and for the church?

8. What great example did Micaiah set for us?

9. What seemed to be an incident which happened by chance? Or was it?
