

1 Kings 22:1-53

The End of King Ahab

1 Kings 22:1 - "And they continued three years without war between Syria and Israel."

After Ahab's repentance, God held off on His judgment against the king for three years. During this time, Syria had also been quiet with no attacks after Ahab allowed BenHadad to go back as a vassal to Israel.

1 Kings 22:2 - "And it came to pass in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel."

Jehoshaphat lacks judgment in this decision. He hopes to maybe patch things up between the two nations, who had been enemies since the Northern Kingdom had split to worship the golden calves and Baal.

1 Kings 22:3 - "And the king of Israel said unto his servants, Know ye that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, and we be still, and take it not out of the hand of the king of Syria?"

Ramoth in Gilead was originally a city of refuge that belonged to Israel, but had been taken by Syria. Since it was adjacent both to Judah and Israel, Ahab hoped to convince Jehoshaphat to join him in retaking it.

1 Kings 22:4 - "And he said unto Jehoshaphat, Wilt thou go with me to battle to Ramothgilead? And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses."

Jehoshaphat is willing to join the effort. But going to war was not supposed to be at the king's initiative but only by direction from God.

1 Kings 22:5-6 - "And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Inquire, I pray thee, at the word of the LORD to day. Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall I go against Ramothgilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king."

The Targum says these were false prophets, either Jezebel's prophets of Baal - who also numbered 400 - or other prophets purporting to speak Yahweh's words as a concession to Jehoshaphat.

1 Kings 22:7 - "And Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might inquire of him?"

He recognized these prophets were bogus but didn't want to directly challenge Ahab.

1 Kings 22:8 - "And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the LORD: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so."

Jehoshaphat in effect says "nevertheless, let's hear him out."

1 Kings 22:9-10 - "Then the king of Israel called an officer, and said, Hasten hither Micaiah the son of Imlah. And the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah sat each on his throne, having put on their robes, in a void place in the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them."

Micaiah is being brought from out of the prison where he is being held. The contrast is between the prophet in chains standing before three kings enthroned in their accouterments of office and authority.

1 Kings 22:11-12 - "And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made him horns of iron: and he said, Thus saith the LORD, With these shalt thou push the Syrians, until thou have consumed them. And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramothgilead, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver it into the king's hand."

Micaiah's Mocking Response

1 Kings 22:13-14 - "And the messenger that was gone to call Micaiah spake unto him, saying, Behold now, the words of the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth: let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good. And Micaiah said, As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak."

Micaiah is advised to conform to what the other prophets were saying, if he knew what was good for him. Micaiah says he will only speak words that God gives him.

Like Paul:

- **Galatians 1:10** - "For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ."

- **1 Thessalonians 2:4** - "But just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts."

1 Kings 22:15 - "So he came to the king. And the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go against Ramothgilead to battle, or shall we forbear? And he answered him, Go, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver it into the hand of the king."

This is spoken as sarcasm - Micaiah didn't preface it with "thus saith the Lord" and Ahab recognizes this was said in derision of the other prophets.

1 Kings 22:16-17 - "And the king said unto him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the LORD? And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the LORD said, These have no master: let them return every man to his house in peace."

"sheep that have not a shepherd" - meaning Ahab as the "shepherd" would be dead.

So **1 Kings 20:42** was now to be accomplished, "thy life shall go for his life", but the other part, "and thy people for his people," was to be deferred to another time.

1 Kings 22:18 - "And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?"

Once again, the king is feeling victimized by one of his subjects.

Then Micaiah gets super serious and shares a vision:

1 Kings 22:19-23 - "And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left. And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him. And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so. Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee."

Micaiah invokes a picture of a higher king than these two sitting on their thrones. He has seen the King of Kings.

"and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left." - Like in Job when Satan comes before the Lord in his heavenly court. The angels at God's right hand and the fallen angels on his left. The rabbis speculate that this was the spirit of Naboth seeking revenge. But more likely it was Satan, the father of lies, who volunteered to lead these prophets astray.

Compare with the "evil spirit of the Lord" that was sent to trouble King Saul (**1 Samuel 16:14**), or the case of Judas:

- **John 13:27** - "And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly."

1 Kings 22:24-25 - "But Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near, and smote Micaiah on the cheek, and said, Which way went the Spirit of the LORD from me to speak unto thee? And Micaiah said, Behold, thou shalt see in that day, when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself."

Like Jesus at His trial (**John 18:22**), the prisoner Micaiah is struck on the cheek.

"thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide" - either through fear of the Syrians or of the populace, who would attribute the death of the king to the advice of him and the other prophets.

1 Kings 22:26-28 - "And the king of Israel said, Take Micaiah, and carry him back unto Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son; And say, Thus saith the king, Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I come in peace. And Micaiah said, If thou return at all in peace, the LORD hath not spoken by me. And he said, Hearken, O people, every one of you."

Micaiah was to be fed only enough to keep him alive until Ahab came back from the battle to possibly punish him more severely.

1 Kings 22:29 - "So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramothgilead."

Why did Jehoshaphat go along with the attack after hearing Micaiah's prophecy of doom? Micaiah had only prophesied defeat for Ahab and his army - not for Jehoshaphat. Or maybe Jehoshaphat felt that he had already agreed, and also felt whatever happened was inevitable and in God's hands.

Disguise

1 Kings 22:30 - "And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself, and enter into the battle; but put thou on thy robes. And the king of Israel disguised himself, and went into the battle."

This turns out to have been a wise decision for Ahab, since BenHaddad's army was instructed to hunt for him only. It perhaps was meant to also give more glory to Jehoshaphat, who would appear as the leader of the attack and thus would gain glory in a victory. But it also treacherously put Jehoshaphat in jeopardy.

The Septuagint version has Ahab telling Jehoshaphat to "put on *MY* robes."

1 Kings 22:31-33 - "But the king of Syria commanded his thirty and two captains that had rule over his chariots, saying, Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel. And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, Surely it is the king of Israel. And they turned aside to fight against him: and Jehoshaphat cried out. And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots perceived that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him."

The depiction of the battle in **2 Chronicles 18:31** says the Lord helped Jehoshaphat, and moved or inclined the hearts of the captains to depart from him.

The Death of Ahab

1 Kings 22:34-35 - "And a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, 'Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host; for I am wounded.' And the battle increased that day: and the king was stayed up in his chariot against the Syrians, and died at even: and the blood ran out of the wound into the midst of the chariot."

The Targum says the man who shot the arrow was Naaman, the general in the Syrian army (**2 Kings 5:1-27**) who later had dealings with the prophet Elisha.

1 Kings 22:36 - "And there went a proclamation throughout the host about the going down of the sun, saying, Every man to his city, and every man to his own country."

This was the fulfillment of Micaiah's vision (**1 Kings 22:17**).

1 Kings 22:37-40 - "So the king died, and was brought to Samaria; and they buried the king in Samaria. And one washed the chariot in the pool of Samaria; and the dogs licked up his blood; and they washed his armour; according unto the word of the LORD which he spake. Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, and the ivory house which he made, and all the cities that he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? So Ahab slept with his fathers; and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead."

"they washed his armour" - this is sometimes translated "where the harlots used to wash." because the Hebrew word for armor is from the root for harlot, or rather for the ornaments and jewelry used by harlots.

The rabbis said that women, who were harlots, washed here in Ahab's blood, mixed with water; and so Josephus writes that afterwards it was a custom for whores to wash in this pool; though some say two whores were painted on Ahab's chariot by the order of Jezebel to inflame his lust, and these were what were described as being washed.

Recap of Jehoshaphat's Reign in Judah

1 Kings 22:41-43 - "And Jehoshaphat the son of Asa began to reign over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel. Jehoshaphat was thirty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. And he walked in all the ways of Asa his father; he turned not aside from it, doing that which was right in the eyes of the LORD: nevertheless the high places were not taken away; for the people offered and burnt incense yet in the high places."

In **2 Chronicles 17:6** it says he actually did take away the high places and groves used for idolatrous worship. But high places in which sacrifices were offered to the Lord and where the Tabernacle had stood were retained, because the people venerated them as sacred from the time of the patriarchs.

See **1 Kings 22:44-45** - "And Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel. Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, and his might that he shewed, and how he warred, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?"

He made peace with Ahab and then also with his son Ahaziah.

1 Kings 22:46 - "And the remnant of the sodomites (*qādēš*), which remained in the days of his father Asa, he took out of the land."

These were male temple prostitutes dedicated to idolatrous worship.

1 Kings 22:47 - "There was then no king in Edom: a deputy was king."

So what? Well, to account for how Jehoshaphat could build ships in Eziongeber described in the next verse, which was in the land of Edom. Edom revolted in the days of Jehoshaphat's son and set up their own king (**2 Kings 8:20**).

1 Kings 22:48-49 - "Jehoshaphat made ships of Tharshish to go to Ophir for gold: but they went not; for the ships were broken at Eziongeber. Then said Ahaziah the son of Ahab unto Jehoshaphat, Let my servants go with thy servants in the ships. But Jehoshaphat would not."

Rocks near the harbor make it treacherous, and the ships were broken up and sank there. Because Jehoshaphat joined himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, he was reproved by the prophet Eliezer, and the shipwrecks were his punishment, according to **2 Chronicles 20:35**.

1 Kings 22:50 - "And Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father: and Jehoram his son reigned in his stead."

Ahaziah

1 Kings 22:51-53 - "Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned two years over Israel. And he 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 made Israel to sin: For he served Baal, and worshipped him, and provoked to anger the LORD God of Israel, according to all that his father had done."

And that's the end of the Book of 1 Kings