

(1 Kings) the End of King Ahab

by David Guzik

Ahab's sinful desire for Naboth's vineyard led to his downfall, but his repentance and humility led to God's mercy, but ultimately, his dynasty was judged and not spared.

Duration: 59:14

Scripture: 1 Kings 22:15

Topics: "Speaking Truth", "Faithful Obedience"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Micaiah, a prophet who was asked to give a message to King Ahab. Ahab was seeking confirmation from Micaiah and the 400 prophets about going to war. The 400 prophets all gave positive messages, but Micaiah had the courage to speak the truth, even though it was not what the king wanted to hear. Micaiah's message was mocked and he was even struck by another prophet, but he stood firm in his conviction that the Lord had spoken through him. The sermon emphasizes the importance of speaking the truth, even when it is unpopular or goes against the majority.

Transcript

As we begin tonight in 1st Kings 21, we remember what we saw last time we were together in 1st Kings 20. How God had miraculously delivered the northern kingdom of Israel from this threat from the Syrian army. Yet Ahab, the king of Israel, was unfaithful by not executing the king of Syria that had come against him.

And God therefore promised judgment upon him. If we remember, there were many anonymous prophets in 1st Kings chapter 20. And the last one was this very strange prophet who asked the other guy to hit him and all of that.

But we're beyond all that. Now we're in chapter 21. And really the theme of tonight is to see the end of Ahab.

I don't mean to spoil the story for anybody, but before we're finished tonight with 1st Kings, Ahab is going to be dead. And let's see how the judgment of God comes upon this very important Old Testament figure. 1st Kings 21, beginning now at verse 1. And it came to pass after these things that Naboth, the Jezreelite, had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, next to the palace of Ahab, king of Samaria.

So Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying, Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near, next to my house. And for it I will give you a vineyard better than it. Or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its worth in money.

But Naboth said to Ahab, The Lord forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you. The account here in 1st Kings 21 begins with a very straightforward, attempted real estate transaction. The king of Israel, again we're talking about the northern kingdom, the ten northern tribes.

The king of Israel, Ahab, wants a piece of land that's near his royal palace. He wanted it perhaps for a vegetable garden. And he was willing to trade land for it, or to pay for it.

He's being a very reasonable man in wanting to acquire this property. We're perhaps surprised by the reaction of Naboth in verse 3, where he said, The Lord forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you. I mean, if you're experienced in real estate transactions, usually one party doesn't come back by saying, The Lord forbid that I should do this.

Usually they say, Well, I'm not interested in the deal, or it's not enough money. But here he seems to have a very deep reaction against the idea of selling this. And this was for good reason, according to the law and the customs of Israel.

The reason why Naboth had such an emphatic no to this otherwise reasonable offer was rooted in the ancient Israelite idea of the land. You see, they believed that the land of Canaan, the promised land that they came into, was their inheritance from God. And it was parceled out to the individual tribes according to God's will.

Therefore, land in ancient Israel was never really sold. It was only leased. And that only under the most extreme circumstances.

I'll put it to you this way. Real estate offices in ancient Israel didn't do very good business. There wasn't a big turnover of land.

And therefore, that's why Naboth says, Well, listen, you know, you're the king. You're willing to give me money or another piece of land. But I am not interested at all.

This piece of land belongs to my fathers. It belongs to my ancestors, and it belongs to my descendants. It's not for sale.

Verse 4 So Ahab went to his house sullen and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him. For he had said, I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers. This seems so characteristic of Ahab.

You know, he seems to be like this spineless, pouting man who reacts this way when he faces any kind of adversity. Oh, I'm so depressed. Oh, it's so terrible.

He just seems like this kind of guy. And so it goes on here and it says, And he lay down on his bed and turned away his face and would eat no food. But Jezebel, his wife, came to him and said, Why is your spirit so sullen that you eat no food? He said, Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and said to him, Give me your vineyard for money, or else, if it pleases you, I'll give you another vineyard for it.

And he answered, I will not give you my vineyard. Then Jezebel, his wife, said to him, You now exercise authority over Israel. Arise, eat food, and let your heart be cheerful.

I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite. So you see this little baby of a man, Ahab, you know, he's sulking and crying because he can't have his little vegetable garden next to the palace. And he turns his face to the wall.

You know, it's like a little child pouting, you know, weeping. I'm not going to eat because I can't have my vegetable garden. You know, the poor man, he's a king.

He's lord over many, many pieces of land, but it's so characteristic to human nature. What is it that we most want in human nature? What we can't have. That's what we really want.

And that's made this acquisition of property all the more needful to the heart, to the soul of Ahab. And so Jezebel comes in and she comes in with, I'll whip you into shape, you weak man. What are you crying about? I'll give you this vineyard.

Don't worry about it, leave it to me. By the way, it says very interestingly there, it says, you now exercise authority over Israel. Is there any doubt who exercised the authority over Israel in this household? Right, it's very clear.

I mean, obviously it's Jezebel. She's the one exercising authority. She runs the palace of Israel.

So now in verse 8, And she wrote letters in Ahab's name, sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters to the elders and the nobles who were dwelling in the city with Naboth. She wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast and seat Naboth with high honor among the people. And seat two men scoundrels before him to bear witness against him, saying, You have blasphemed God and the king.

Then take him out and stone him that he may die. So the men of his city, the elders and the nobles, who were the inhabitants of the city, did as Jezebel had sent to them, as it was written in the letters which she had sent to them. They proclaimed a fast and seated Naboth with high honor among the people.

And then two men scoundrels came in and sat before him. And the scoundrels witnessed against him, against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth has blasphemed God and the king. Then they took him outside the city and stoned him with stones so that he died.

Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, Naboth has been stoned and is dead. I want you to notice something. We see who the main actor in this little drama is.

It's clearly Jezebel. Yet Ahab was clearly responsible as well. Because look at what it says there in verse 8. She wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal.

This shows that Ahab was in agreement with what Jezebel did and he had to know something of the plot. He just didn't have the courage or the hardness of heart or whatever you would say. He didn't have it within himself to carry it out.

But he was very, very glad that it was being done on his behalf. And on his behalf, Jezebel executed a wicked, wicked plan. First she said, proclaim a fast.

The idea here was that some sort of evil or calamity had come upon Israel and they had to find a scapegoat for the evil. They had to find a Jonah on the ship at sea, so to speak, right? Somebody who was responsible for the calamity. Oh, so proclaim a fast and have a meeting.

And when they proclaimed the fast and have a meeting, then these wicked men stand up after, may you notice, after seating Naboth with high honor among the people. Oh, it was a treacherous plan. First you seat him up with a place of high honor and then you destroy him with lies from the mouths of scoundrels.

And so they accused him. They said, Naboth has blasphemed God and the king. By the way, I find it interesting that Jesus was charged with just the same crimes.

Jesus was charged with blaspheming God and Caesar. And Naboth, just like Jesus, was completely innocent of the accusations and he was murdered without cause. But the stoning of Naboth over a piece of land for a vegetable garden shows how brutal and amoral the character of Jezebel and Ahab was.

I mean, they were amoral. They lacked morals. I would say too that 2 Kings 9, verse 26, you don't have to turn there, I'll just fill you in on this.

It indicates that the crime was even worse than this. It connected the murder of Naboth to also the blood of his sons. It's likely that even though our text doesn't tell us here, that hint from 2 Kings 9 indicates to us that the entire family of Naboth was murdered.

So that no heirs were left to claim the property, right? It would be one thing if you murdered Naboth, but if he had sons who could claim the property. So they didn't just kill Naboth, but his entire family, so that there were no heirs left. Verse 15, And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money, for Naboth is not alive, but dead.

So it was when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab went up and got down to take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite. This added evil to evil. Even with Naboth dead, the land did not belong to Ahab or to his royal house.

It belonged to the heirs of the family of Naboth. Ahab probably claimed the land as a royal right, because the crown of Israel had seized the land of an executed criminal. And so here, we see him almost like a little child.

Oh, I'm so happy, you know, I'm not looking towards the wall anymore. I'll eat my dinner now. I'm so happy I have my piece of land for the vegetable garden.

This is the sort of weak, sensually minded man that Ahab was. Well, as you might expect, God cannot allow such sin in Israel to go unaddressed. And we didn't see him in the last chapter.

1 Kings chapter 20 is filled with a succession of anonymous prophets. But now, almost sort of putting on his Superman cape again here, here comes Elijah back on the scene. Look at it here, verse 17.

Then the word of the Lord came to Elisha the Tishbite, saying, Arise, go down to meet Ahab, the king of Israel, who lives in Samaria. There he is in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone down to take possession of it. And you shall speak to him, saying, Thus says the Lord.

Have you murdered and also taken possession? And you shall speak to him, saying, Thus says the Lord. In the place where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick your blood, even yours. So Ahab ran out to go play with his new toy, his piece of land for the vegetable garden, the land that was gained by betrayal and lies and murders.

And instead of running into the land, he ran into the prophet of God. And so Elijah did what few other men had the courage to do. He boldly confronted this man.

Now listen, when you're Ahab, and when you've got a murdering assistant like Jezebel on your side, it's a fearful thing to confront Ahab, right? You might very easily end up just like Naboth. But Elijah did what few men had the courage to do. He confronted this wicked and brutal and amoral king and queen of Israel.

He pointedly charged them with the two crimes of both murdering Naboth and stealing his land. You have to admit that he certainly confronted him. He says there, right there in verse 19, Have you murdered and also taken possession? You did it.

Now, isn't that interesting? Couldn't Ahab say, It wasn't me. I didn't do it. It was my wife.

But God didn't look at it that way, did he? God looked at it as though Ahab was responsible. Now, why? Why was Ahab responsible? Well, first of all, simply because he was responsible. It was his seal.

It was his letter. He was in partnership with it. But there's another reason, a more overarching reason, we might say.

It was because God always looks at the husband as the head of the home. And the husband's responsible. He's the one who bears this guilt.

And so he said, You murdered. You took possession of this. And then he says, if you noticed it in verse 20, Now, this was a strong, and I should say startling prophecy.

But may I say, it was not fulfilled. Hold on. I'm not trying to be a heretic here.

This prophecy was not fulfilled. Because Ahab died in Samaria, and the dogs licked his blood there, instead of in Jezreel, where Naboth was murdered. This unfulfilled prophecy, where Elijah clearly says, Here in Jezreel, you're going to die, and the dogs are going to lick your blood here.

It didn't happen that way. He died, and the dogs licked his blood. We're going to get to it before we're done tonight.

The dogs licked his blood, but it happened in Samaria, and not in Jezreel. And this unfulfilled prophecy, I believe, has needlessly troubled some people. There's been a lot of explanations of this.

You know, it's wonderful to read through the commentaries, to get the explanations on things like this. Because some people say, Well, you know, Elijah didn't mean a specific place. He just meant a very general place.

And then other people say, Well, you know, Ahab died in his chariot, and his blood filled up the chariot, and they washed the chariot out in Jezreel, and there the dogs licked up his blood. Or other people say, there are pools or streams in Samaria that carry the water all the way to Jezreel. You know, all these elaborate explanations.

Listen, I just say, that this prophecy was not fulfilled, because as you're going to see in just a few minutes tonight, Ahab repented. Ahab expressed some genuine sorrow and repentance at the end of the chapter. And God relented from this judgment, and brought it upon Ahab's sons instead.

Now listen, this is a common phenomenon in the Scriptures, where there is an announcement of judgment. An announcement of judgment is almost always in the Scriptures an invitation to repentance. And often, though not always, at the repentance, God will relent in His judgment.

You see, when God announces judgment, our job isn't, Oh, I guess I'm going to be judged. Well, there's nothing I can do. Go ahead, God.

Whatever. No. When God announces judgment, our job is to get down on our knees and ask for forgiveness.

It is to repent. It is to plead for the mercy of God, and often He sends it. Now notice what the king says back to Elijah here, starting at verse 20.

So Ahab said to Elijah, Have you found me, O my enemy? Isn't that interesting? Now listen, he was living with his enemy. His enemy was his own wife. If he had the perception to see it, Elijah was the best friend he ever had.

But he says, Have you come to meet me, O my enemy? And he answered, I found you, because you sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the Lord. Behold, I will bring calamity on you. I will take away your posterity.

And I will cut off from Ahab every male in Israel, both bond and free. I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, and the house of Basha, the son of Ahia, because of the provocation with which you have provoked me to anger and have made Israel to sin. And concerning Jezebel, the Lord also spoke, saying, The dog shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.

The dog shall eat whoever belongs to Ahab and dies in the city. And the birds of the air shall eat whoever dies in the field. Wow.

Listen, it's bad enough to have your blood licked up by the dogs. Here he says to Jezebel that the dogs are actually going to eat her dead body. Well, it's a severe judgment.

But if you notice what he said there, he said, You sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the Lord. Therefore, I will take away your posterity and cut off from Ahab every male in Israel. Now, basically, what he's saying is your dynasty is over.

It's not going to last. Now, if we remember from some of our previous studies here, it's been the revolving door of dynasties in the northern kingdom, right? One comes and lasts a generation. One comes and lasts a few weeks.

And it's just a revolving door of dynasties. Where down in the southern kingdom of Judah, they stayed with the same family dynasty the whole time, the line of David. But in the northern kingdom, one dynasty would replace another and God is putting Ahab on.

Notice, your dynasty is going to be judged. It will not last. Now, I want you to notice something.

Ahab never really possessed that vineyard of Naboth. He held it. Maybe he had the legal title to it.

But can you imagine how sour the grapes were that grew in the vineyard of Naboth? There was no blessing on that place. I bet he was always frustrated with the vegetable garden that he wanted to grow there. And what's worse, the little section I read there ends with the idea of the dogs eating Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.

Though the prophet of judgment was focused against Ahab, it didn't forget Jezebel. Her end would also be disgraceful and terrible. So notice here now verse 25.

But there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the Lord because Jezebel, his wife, stirred him up. And he behaved very abominably in following idols according to all that the Amorites had done whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. You see, Ahab's sin was multiplied not only because of the sin itself, but because by his permission, his wife stirred him up to do it.

I don't know. There seems to be a scriptural principle here that isn't repeated very often, but at least in a couple places. That God holds husbands who follow their wives into sin into a special accountability.

Here we see it with Ahab and Jezebel, but in the Garden of Eden we also see it. In Genesis chapter 3 verse 17, God said to Adam, Because you have heeded the voice of your wife. Now please, that's no means anybody saying that it's wrong for a husband to listen to the voice of his wife.

Nobody's thinking that for a moment. But there is something wrong. There's something wrong in the Garden of Eden.

There's something wrong here in Samaria when Ahab, out of weakness, followed his wife into sin and promoted his wife into sin. He wasn't doing Jezebel any favors by letting her sin in the way that she was. He should have lovingly but firmly said, No, no, no, don't you get me that vineyard.

Don't you give me that plot of ground under any ungodly terms. No, if it's going to be ours, it's going to be ours from the Lord. But instead, Ahab wasn't like this and he sinned like the Canaanite people whom God had rejected from the land before.

Well, look now at verse 27. So it was when Ahab heard these words that he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his body and fasted and lay in sackcloth and went about mourning. And the word of the Lord came to Elisha the Tishbite saying, See how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself before me, I will not bring the calamity in his days.

In the days of his son, I will bring the calamity on his house. I think we have to be impressed here by Ahab. For all of his wickedness, Ahab received the prophecy of judgment exactly as he should have received it.

He understood that this prophecy of judgment was in fact an invitation to repent, to humble himself, and to seek God for mercy. And that's exactly what he did. Oh Lord, you say judgment's coming.

Well, I repent and humble myself before you. That's the good news about Ahab's repentance. You know what the bad news about it? Is that it seems to have been entirely superficial.

From the judgments of God that come upon Ahab in the following chapter, it seems that Ahab's repentance was real, but short-lived. And this is very possible. You know, it is very possible for a person to confess their sin, to turn their heart to the Lord, to repent, and to mean it completely for a moment.

But the problem is that they don't stay in that place. They don't stay in that place of repentance, so to speak. Three years later, Ahab was dead under the judgment of God.

And so, God answered his temporary repentance with a temporary reprieve from judgment. He says, though, because he has humbled himself before me, I will not bring the calamity in his day. God honored even the weak repentance that Ahab had to offer.

We have to say that if Ahab did not humble himself at all right here at the end of chapter 21, the judgment would have come upon him immediately. This shows that Ahab answered the invitation to repentance. By the way, there's no record of Jezebel's humility or repentance.

You can expect that she's going to get eaten by the dogs, just exactly like Elijah said. I think this is something wonderful that we should just think about momentarily before we go over to chapter 22. It shows us the character of God's mercy.

Can anyone in this room here tonight think of a less deserving person than Ahab? I mean, Ahab... Okay, maybe Jezebel. Maybe Jezebel is less deserving. But Ahab was an undeserving man, yet God showed him real mercy.

He was a real great sinner, but yet God answered and blessed him and showed him mercy in light of his humble repentance. The worst sinner should not disqualify himself from receiving God's mercy if that sinner will only come to God in genuine, humble repentance. Well, let's see how the story continues on here into chapter 22, verse 1. Now, three years passed without war between Syria and Israel.

Then it came to pass in the third year that Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, went down to visit the king of Israel. And the king of Israel said to his servants, Do you know that Ramoth and Gilead is ours, but we hesitate to take it out of the hand of the king of Syria? So 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 is your people.

My horses as your horses. Now, previously in 1 Kings chapter 20, the king of Syria promised to return certain cities back to the people of Israel. He did this because Ahab was willing to let him go when he could have executed him.

Apparently, this was a city that Ben-Hadad, the king of Syria, was supposed to return to Israel, but never did. And it was apparently also in a strategically important place. So, King Ahab is always looking for friends to fight with him in a battle.

King Jehoshaphat of the southern kingdom of Judah is visiting. He says, Will you fight with me? And the king of Judah says, Yes, let's go. What does he say? My people are as your people.

My horses as your horses. My cassas as your cassas. That whole thing.

Alright, verse 9. And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, Please inquire for the word of the Lord today. Now, can you imagine how Ahab must have felt when he said that? Hey, shouldn't we pray about this first? Jehoshaphat says. You know, it's an awkward thing when you ask an ungodly man to pray with you and something, and that's exactly what was going on here.

But anyway, the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about 400 men, and said to them, Shall I go up against Ramoth-Gilead to fight, or shall I refrain? And they said, Go up, for the Lord will deliver it into

the hand of the king. And Jehoshaphat said, Is there not still a prophet of the Lord here that we can inquire of him? So the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, There's still one man, Micaiah, the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the Lord. But I hate him, because he doesn't prophesy good concerning me, but evil.

Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say such things. Then the king of Israel called an officer and said, Bring Micaiah, the son of Imlah, quickly. So, again, you see this whole situation here? Let's pray before we go into the battle.

Okay, let's bring the prophets in. Now, when Ahab brought the prophets in, it seems like he brought in the prophets that were on the royal payroll, right? The prophets who were getting paid by the king. And isn't it funny? The prophets who were getting paid by the king had a way of always telling the king what he wanted to hear.

And so they come in, and what do they say? They say, Go up, for the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king. When Ahab gathered these prophets, they weren't faithful prophets to the Lord. They were prophets happy to please their king and to tell their king what he wanted to hear.

Jehoshaphat could sense this. He could smell it. He could probably see the looks on their faces.

These guys, they're just bootlickers. They're just, you know, they're not telling the truth here. Isn't there a real prophet of the Lord somewhere? Isn't there some guy who's not on your payroll, King Ahab, who can come and speak to us? And then he gives that classic line, Yeah, there is, but I hate that guy, because he doesn't prophesy good concerning me, but evil.

You can just think, Jehoshaphat thinks, Ooh, boy, Ahab, isn't that occlusive? Maybe he's the right guy. Ahab hated the messenger because of the message. Look, Ahab's real conflict wasn't with Micaiah.

His real conflict was with the Lord. But he focused his hatred against the prophet Micaiah. He was willing to listen to the king of Judah when he advised that he said, You should listen to this guy.

But he didn't like him because he didn't like the Lord. Really, to put it bluntly. So, verse 10.

Then the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, having put on their robes, set each on his throne at a threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria, and all the prophets prophesied before them. Now Zedekiah the son of Chennaniah had made horns of iron for himself and said, Thus says the Lord, with these you shall gore the Syrians until they are destroyed. And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramoth Gilead and prosper, for the Lord will deliver it into the king's hand.

Now, this illustrates, you can just picture it in your mind, this whole scene, there's the kings in their royal robes, and there's all the prophets, and there's all the attendants, you know, the posse or whatever all these royal people have around them. You know, they're people who carry, who are serving their every need. And so, they say, Okay, here's the prophecy, let's go.

You're first up, Zedekiah. You come on up. You prophesy, and it's, Well, thus says the Lord.

And they say, Well, here's the word from the Lord. Now, you should know, many commentators believe that these were pagan prophets representing pagan gods. You know, like Baal or Ashtoreth.

I don't think so. They never mention Baal or Ashtoreth here. I don't think that these were prophets of false gods.

I think that these were false prophets of the true God. And so, what did they do? They gave him the message that he wanted to hear. You have to love this guy, Zedekiah.

He preached quite a sermon. He made horns of iron for himself, and he says, Thus says the Lord, With these you shall gore the Syrians until they're destroyed. You can just see him.

Here's my iron horns. Put them on his head. You know, and he makes the, like a bull, you know, I'm a wild animal.

Here's Jehoshaphat and Ahab. Oh, what a fine sermon. Look, he's got props.

You know, he's got things. It's great. You know, it's the best sermon I've ever seen.

What an entertaining presentation Zedekiah had, right? You can be certain that every eye was on Zedekiah when he used the horns of iron to powerfully illustrate the point. And it was certainly persuasive to have 400 prophets behind him in the Amen corner. Amen.

Yeah. Hallelujah. Zedekiah, preach it, brother.

Oh, it's a great, great message. And everybody's impressed. But you know what the one problem was? It was a lie.

It wasn't true. Listen, I believe that it's good for the church to use technology, to use the horns of iron, right? You want to use the PowerPoint. You want to use the electronics.

You want to use the media. You want to use this and that. Great praise.

But listen, you better have the message to preach it with. Isn't that the case in many, many churches? Oh, they're in love with the horns of iron. The only problem is they're giving forth the same kind of message as Zedekiah.

It's a false message. And if it's a false message, I don't care how pretty your horns of iron are in presenting it. You need to have the right message first.

I'm sure it was a fine sermon that Zedekiah preached. But who have we not heard from yet? The guy that just got out of prison. Now, can you imagine what Micaiah looked like? You know, prison was not a nice place to be in.

They dig him up out of a dungeon. He's in rags. Look, verse 13.

Now the messenger who had gone to call Micaiah spoke to him saying, Now listen, the words of the prophet with one accord encouraged the king, Please let your word be like the word of one of them and speak encouragement. Micaiah said, As the Lord lives, whatever the Lord says to me, that I will speak. Then he came to the king.

And the king said to him, Micaiah, shall we go to war against Grandma Gilead or shall we refrain? I know. Again, I can't help it. Every time I read a Bible passage like this, it's like a movie in my head.

You have this whole scene, you know. There's the 400 prophets in their Amen corner. And there's Zedekiah sitting with the horns of iron right there on his lap.

He's all stoked because it's the best sermon he's ever preached, you know. And before two kings, too. And they're all whispering to Micaiah, Hey, you better say the right thing.

And they bring him in and he looks horrible. You know, his hair's grown down, big beard, a couple of flies buzzing around him. He's dressed in rags, a couple of chains and everything.

When he comes in the room, Ahab goes, Whew, what's that smell? Man, that... So they asked him, What are you going to say? Should I go up against Ramoth Gilead? Next verse. And he answered, Go and prosper, for the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king. Now, if you just stop right there, you say, well, he agrees with him.

But notice what he says next. Ahab. So the king said to him, How many times shall I make you swear that you'll tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the Lord? You see, this is what I'm trying to make you see.

There must have been something distinctive about the way Micah has said this. No doubt. When he said, Go and prosper, for the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king.

Everybody knew that he was mocking him. Everybody knew that he was being sarcastic. And then he said, Hey, go on your little journey.

Oh, it's going to be so blessed. Whew, have all the blessings of God there with you, Mr. King Ahab. And Ahab got so mad.

He goes, I told you to prophesy the truth. These 400 prophets, they just did the truth. What about you? And at this very, very dramatic scene, Micah had the courage to give a different message.

Listen, you can't deny that. It takes a lot of courage to stand in front of 400 prophets and two kings and tell the truth that nobody wants to hear. But King Ahab recognized the mocking tone of Micah's prophecy.

And he knew, excuse me, and he knew that it contradicted the message of the 400 prophets. So he demanded that Micah tell him nothing but the truth, which Ahab hoped and prayed with the same message as the 400 prophets. Now, look, this is one of the heaviest passages in the book of, let's just read it, verse 17.

And he said, I saw all Israel... It's almost as if he says, You want the truth? I'll give you the truth right here. 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. And the king of Israel said to Joseph, Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy good concerning me but evil? I told you. He's saying I'm going to die.

He's saying that the flock of Israel is going to be without a shepherd. I just knew it. He always does this.

You have to say, give credit to Ahab. He knew that Micaiah would tell him the truth. He knew it.

Now, verse 19. Then Micaiah said, Therefore, hear the word of the Lord. I saw the Lord sitting on his throne and all the hosts of heaven standing by on his right hand and on his left.

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. Then a spirit came forward and stood before the Lord and said, I will persuade him. The Lord said to him, In what way? So he said, I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of his prophets.

And the Lord said, You shall persuade him and also prevail. Go out and do so. Therefore, look.

The Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets and the Lord has declared disaster against you. King Ahab and the others at the royal court found it hard to explain how one prophet could be right and 400 could be wrong. So, Micaiah says, Well, let me explain to you how this works.

These 400 prophets, they're very spiritual men. It's just they're motivated by a demonic spirit, not by the spirit of God. It is possible that Micaiah was just telling a parable here when he explained the story, but it doesn't feel like it does it.

It feels like he's giving an actual prophetic glimpse into the heavenly scene of what happened behind the prophecy of these 400 men. He says clearly here that the angels were assembled on his right hand and on his left. Since the right hand is the place of favor, this may indicate that God spoke to the company of angels, both the faithful on his right hand and the fallen on his left hand.

Don't forget, Satan and fallen angelic beings have access to heaven still. Their access to heaven is not cut off until what we would say at some point during the Great Tribulation. That's a whole other issue to talk about.

But we just know from both the Old Testament and the New Testament that Satan and demonic spirits have access to heaven now. And so it wouldn't shock us that God would speak to an assembled group of angels, the faithful on his right hand, the fallen on his left. He said, I'm looking for a volunteer.

Who's going to put a lying word into the mouth of the prophets? Who's going to persuade them to go to the battle? And one of these fallen angels says, I'll do it. I love to speak lies. I love to lead men to death and nations to disasters.

Let me do it. And he said, I'll go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of his prophets. Now, you might stand back and say, whoa, whoa, whoa.

This is not fair of God. It's not fair of God to send or to allow a demonic spirit to go be a lying voice in the mouth of one of these ungodly prophets for the purpose of leading Ahab into the destruction that was appointed for him. It's not fair.

Let me ask you something. It's a situation like this. Here's Ahab seeking the Lord with all of his heart.

Oh, Lord, just show me Your will for Ramoth Gilead. Oh, Father, I just surrender it all to You. Would You please just speak to me and give me Your guidance? And right in the midst, while Ahab is seeking the Lord with all of his heart, God says, no, I'm going to send him a demon instead.

Is that how it works? Why did God send a lying spirit to these prophets to lead Ahab? Because that's what Ahab wanted. God sent Ahab exactly what his sinful heart wanted. Nobody can lay injustice at the door of

God for this.

Nobody can say that God was being unfair to Ahab or that he shouldn't have done it or that somehow God dirtied his hands with evil, not in the slightest way. God just said to Ahab, you want lying prophets? I'll send you some. You want to be told smooth words? You put my true prophets in prison like Micaiah? Then I'll give you ungodly prophets to listen to.

I hope you enjoy them. So look at the reaction here. Verse 24.

Now Zedekiah, the son of Janiah, went near and struck Micaiah on the cheek and said, which way did the spirit of the Lord go from me to speak to you? And Micaiah said, indeed you shall see on that day when you go into an inner chamber to hide. So the king of Israel said, take Micaiah and return him to Abnon the governor of the city and to Joash the king's son and says the king, put this fellow in prison and feed him with the bread of affliction and the water of affliction until I come in peace. But Micaiah said, if you ever return in peace, the Lord has not spoken by me.

And he said, take heed all you people. This is a great movie in your head, isn't it? Right? That's Micaiah, you know, breathing out the words of the lying spirit in the mouth of the prophet. And what does Zedekiah do to Micaiah? He comes over and he just clocks him with a punch to the face.

He responded the way a lot of people do when they're defeated in an argument. They respond with violence. And how did Ahab respond? Oh, it's a lying prophet.

Well, I can't listen to the 400 then. No, no, no. Ahab said, no, I'm going to pick this lying prophet, put this man in prison and you keep him on the smallest amount of food as possible until I come back in peace, until I prove him wrong.

And by the way, it says if you ever return in peace, those words that Micaiah shouted, that's how it is in the movie in my head, they're dragging him out of the courtroom and he's screaming it at the top of his lungs. If you ever come back in peace, the Lord has not spoken by me. And just as the doors are clanging by, take heed all you people! Clang.

And he's back in prison. You know, you wonder how Ahab and Jehoshaphat slept that night, right? Thinking it over. Gee, which one was the word from the Lord? Can I ask you a question? Do you have to be a genius of discernment to figure out which one is the word of the Lord here? But they thought about it and they go ahead.

Look at verse 29. So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, went up to Ramoth-Gilead 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.

It's easy to understand why Ahab went to the battle, even though certainly Micaiah's words were echoing in his head. He didn't want to prove Micaiah right. You know? He's saying, no, I'm going to survive this battle.

As a matter of fact, to make sure that I survive, I'm going to go into the battle disguised. I'm going to do everything I can to defeat this supposed prophet of God, Micaiah. And then you come to Jehoshaphat.

I don't know if this guy is just stupid or if he's really filled with faith. But when your partner king says, I'm going to disguise myself and go into battle, but here, here's your royal robes. You wear them.

I don't know. Jehoshaphat says, yeah, sure. He didn't wear my disguise.

He doesn't seem to say that. I don't know. It's a funny thing, this Jehoshaphat.

So he goes into battle. And well, verse 31. Now the king of Syria had commanded the 32 captains of his chariot saying, fight with no one small or great, but only with the king of Israel.

By the way, isn't that interesting? Didn't we see last time in chapter 20 that the king of Israel, the same king of Israel, had granted mercy to the king of Syria. Where's the mercy coming back? He should have dealt with him rightly the first time. Anyway, so it was, when the captains of the chariot saw Jehoshaphat, they said, surely it's the king of Israel.

And Jehoshaphat said, you know, maybe I should have wore a disguise. Therefore, they turned aside to fight him. And Jehoshaphat cried out.

And it happened, when the captains of the chariot saw that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him. They probably noticed, no king of Israel would be praying to God the way that Jehoshaphat was. It can't be him, he's praying.

So where's Ahab? And it happened, when the captains of the chariot saw that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him. 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's chariot, turn around and take me out of the battle, for I am wounded.

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. Then as the sun was going down, a shout went out through the army, saying, Every man to his city, and every man to his own country.

Well, the battle rages. Jehoshaphat finds himself surrounding. He cries out to the Lord.

By the way, 2 Chronicles chapter 18 tells us this event, and it tells us very clearly that Jehoshaphat cried out to the Lord, and the Lord heard his cry and protected him. But then we find this other thing that's very, very interesting. Actually, I would call it very, very wonderful here, where it says that this certain man drew a bow at random.

Did you see that? Verse 34. Certain man drew a bow at random and just let the arrow go. And where did that arrow go? Just flying through the air.

And not only did it hit Ahab, it hit him right at a crease in his armor. So it would get through and get him. That was no random arrow.

That was a sin-seeking missile. And God orchestrated. He orchestrated what seemed to be the events of pure chance.

Just some anonymous Syrian soldier draws that arrow and boom! I'll just shoot it. And it goes right to the heart, right to the body of Ahab. You know, there you think about Ahab.

He thought he had it figured out. He had his disguise. He had his plan.

He was going to defeat the prophet. He's probably already thinking of the time when he heads back and he goes into Micaiah and walks in and goes, well, looks like I'm back okay, Mr. Prophet, don't you think? But it didn't work out that way. He got hit by the arrow.

He starts bleeding to death and they prop him up in his chariot facing the Syrians. He's dying propped up in his chariot trying to inspire his troops. But when his death became known, the battle was over.

And so the word was fulfilled. Look here, verse 37. So the king died and was brought to Samaria.

And they buried the king in Samaria. Then somebody 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. Now 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? So Ahab rested with his fathers.

Then Ahaziah, his son, reigned in his place. The prophet Micaiah was found to be completely true to his word. And, might I say, the prophet Elijah, his word about the dogs licking up his blood in Jezreel was almost fulfilled.

You see, God relented from his original judgment against Ahab because he repented. But then Ahab's false repentance made a similar judgment come upon him as to what he had previously prophesied. And the word of the Lord which he had spoken was fulfilled.

I find it very interesting too that it says there, the rest of the acts of Ahab and all that he did, the ivory house which he built and all the cities which he built, are they not written in the book? You know, great reign, Ahab. You built an ivory palace. You built all these cities.

Congratulations, wonderful reign, King Ahab. Where did it get you now? He died in sin and rebellion against God. Well, now, we sort of come to the end of a section where for a long time we have had our focus on Ahab and Jezebel and the northern kingdom of Israel, right? We remember that before this, in the earlier chapters of 1 Kings, we would jump back and forth between a king of Judah and a king of Israel.

Now we're kind of back to that pattern. Look at here, verse 41. Jehoshaphat, the son of Asa, had become king over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab of Israel.

Jehoshaphat was 35 years old when he became king and he reigned 25 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Azuba, the daughter of Shelehi. And he walked in all the ways of his father Asa.

He did not turn his side 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. Also, Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel.

Now 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? And the rest of the perverted persons who remained in the days of his father Asa, he banished from the land. Then there was no king in Edom, only a deputy of the king. Jehoshaphat made merchant ships go to Ophir for gold, but they never sailed, for the

ships were wrecked at Ezion-Geber.

Then Ahaziah, the son of Ahab, said to Jehoshaphat, Let my servants go with your servants in the ship. But Jehoshaphat would not. And 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. Jehoshaphat's father Asa was a good king. And Jehoshaphat, his son, followed in his footsteps and did what was right in the sight of the Lord.

Now I know that that section that I just read to you is kind of long, but what I want you to know is the writer of 1 Kings actually summarized many of the remarkable accomplishments of Jehoshaphat. If you were to go to 2 Chronicles around chapter 17, you would see a much more detailed listing of the really wonderful accomplishments of Jehoshaphat's reign. There were many things that he did.

He sent teachers of God's word out to the entire kingdom. Priests and Levites out all over the kingdom to teach God's word to the people. He established a permanent military garrison along the northern frontier.

He trained and equipped a sizable army that was able to stop a rebellion that was going on in territories across the Jordan River. He placed Edom under Judean control, controlling an important caravan route to the south. God blessed his reign so much that the fear of the Lord came upon neighboring nations so that they did not make war against Jehoshaphat.

Jehoshaphat was also a very good administrator. He implemented judicial reforms and religious reforms. And do you remember that famous incident in the book of 2 Chronicles where the priests led the army of Israel praising God and it was the Levites praising God that won the victory for that day that the praise went first and it won the battle? That was under the reign of Jehoshaphat.

And so he was a good king. He did almost everything he should have. Yes, he didn't remove the high places.

He did a few things wrong. Overall, it was a very good, very godly reign. I think it's also interesting here to see this business in verses 48 and 49 about the shipping.

They had a disastrous shipping venture and it didn't work. They lost the ships. It was a great big disaster.

And yet, when he was invited to go on another shipping venture with the king of Israel, Jehoshaphat would not do it, much to his credit. He learned from his mistakes is another way to play. And so we look at this and we say, Oh, great, man, isn't it marvelous? Until you come to verse 30, excuse me, verse 50, where it said, Jehoshaphat rested with his fathers and was buried with his fathers, the city of David with his father.

Then Jehoram, his son, reigned in his place. Jehoram. That's where Jehoshaphat blew it.

Jehoram ended up being a wicked king. In addition, Jehoshaphat was at least partially responsible for it. Now, just give me a little preview to the next time we're together in 2 Kings chapter 1. But do you know who Jehoshaphat gave to his son Jehoram in marriage? The daughter of Ahab and Jezebel.

Not real smart. So, anyway, we'll get more into that in the future when we get into 2 Kings. Let's finish up with the last few verses here.

Verse 51. Now we're back up to Israel looking at the son of Ahab. Ahaziah, the son of Ahab, became king over Israel and Samaria in the 17th year of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah.

And he reigned two years over Israel. 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 sin. For he served Baal and worshipped him and provoked the Lord God of Israel to anger according to all that his father had done.

Ahab reigned 22 years. But his son only reigned 2 years. And judgment came upon the son because God relented on it coming against the father.

And the son earned and deserved that judgment all on his own. As it says there, 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. Considering the sinful ways of Jeroboam, Ahab and Jezebel, it's hardly possible to say anything worse about a king than to say he walked in their ways.

You know, I have to say, the book of 1 Kings ends on a very low note. We began this book with the most glorious king of Israel. The book begins with David, with the most wonderful king of Israel.

With the king of Israel that was so great that I believe, we can talk about it some other time, I believe that King David is going to rule over Israel in the millennial kingdom. That's how impressed God was with the reign of David over Israel. But we started with David in 1 Kings and now we end with Ahaziah.

Man, that's going from rich to poor. That's going from good to bad. That's going from strong to weak.

And this is the legacy of Israel's rebellion and not obeying the Lord. Well, thank the Lord that even in the midst of that, he brought up faithful prophets like Micaiah, faithful prophets like Elijah. We should endeavor to see whatever wickedness, whatever difficulty there is in our own present generation, even if we live in a generation that's a lot more like Ahaziah or Ahab or Jezebel than it is like David.

Nevertheless, we're going to stand for the Lord and be like Micaiah and be like Elijah. That's God's call for our lives. Let's pray.

Lord, we thank you for this book of 1 Kings and it's not a pretty story to see the decline of your people to where it begins with David and now it ends with Jehoram and it ends with Ahaziah. Lord, we pray that even as we sense that we live in an age much more marked by Ahab and Jezebel and Ahaziah than it is marked by Jehoshaphat or David. Lord, help us to be faithful and godly unto you.

Raise us up in whatever sphere you have for us, Lord, to be faithful prophets such as Elijah and Micaiah. Lord, not that we would boss people around or take authority in an unwarranted way over people, but Lord, simply that we would hear your voice and that we would speak it to others and that we would glorify you. Especially, Lord, help us with our fear of man.

We're so blessed to see men like Elijah and Micaiah who were not bound by the fear of man. Neither do we want to be. Thank you for the blessings that you bring us through your word.

Thank you for your goodness to us. In Jesus' name, amen.

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