

## **Virtual Vestry: The Death of Ahab**

### 1 Kings 22

Read also 2 Chronicles 18-19.

In the previous chapter, Ahab was told that the destruction of his family would not happen in his days. However, his days do not last that long. He makes war on Aram to get back Ramoth-Gilead and meets his end. We are introduced to the prophet Micaiah in this chapter, who Ahab hated because he didn't prophesy good things for Ahab. There is also a great deal of false prophesying going on as well.

### Verses 1-4

There are three years of peace. But then Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, who had allied himself to Ahab in marriage (2 Chron 18:1), comes to visit Ahab. When Ahab made a treaty with Ben Hadad at the end of chapter 20, he was supposed to give certain towns to Israel but apparently failed to give back Ramoth-Gilead. Ahab wants to know if Jehoshaphat will help him get back Ramoth-Gilead and Jehoshaphat agrees, offering armies and horses. Jehoshaphat's visit was a mistake though, and he is rebuked for this visit and the resulting war in 2 Chronicles 19:2.

One of the issues here is people making treaties with those who do not love God. Jehoshaphat is compromised here because Ahab wants him to go to war now that they have an alliance.

As Christians – should we be careful about the company we keep and the promises we make?

On the other hand, being exclusive also has its risks, i.e. Christian groups who become abusive and exclusive to the harm of group members.

To what extent should we be exclusive and to what extent should we be open and inclusive?

### Verses 5-9

Jehoshaphat suggests they first ask God about this war. Ahab brings out 400 of his prophets and they all say to Ahab to go to war and get back Ramoth-Gilead. Jehoshaphat is not happy with this though, as none of these prophets are prophets of the Lord. He wants a prophet of The Lord (Yahweh) to be asked about it. Ahab begrudgingly says there is one, Micaiah, but Ahab hates him because he never says anything good for Ahab. Ahab is focussed on hating the messenger rather than focussing on God and the message of God.

How do we avoid hearing only what we want to hear when we seek advice?

### Verses 10-28

Micaiah is called up (and the person who calls him warns him to tell Ahab it's okay to go to war). Meanwhile, while the two kings sit at the city gate dressed in their robes, a prophet called Zedekiah makes a pair of iron horns to demonstrate how Ahab will defeat the Arameans. It all seems very theatrical. However, when Micaiah arrives Ahab is keen to hear his words. Micaiah

sarcastically tells Ahab to go ahead and make war. Ahab gets mad and tells Micaiah to tell the truth.

Micaiah first gives the short version of the prophecy regarding Israel's defeat and tells Ahab to send the people home in peace. To which Ahab only complains that Micaiah only prophesies bad things for him. Micaiah continues, telling Ahab of his vision of God looking for a way to tempt Ahab into war so he can kill Ahab. This will be done when a lying spirit is sent to Ahab's prophets.

Ahab and his prophets are upset with Micaiah for what he says. Zedekiah in particular slaps Micaiah. Ahab has Micaiah sent off to prison until his return. To which Micaiah replies if Ahab returns then God has not spoke through him.

In verse 17, Micaiah first gives Ahab the opportunity to turn away from war, i.e. 'send them home in peace'. An escape hatch from impending disaster perhaps. Discuss.

Micaiah then says that God sends a lying spirit to tempt Ahab into war. What does this say about God, that God would 1) tempt someone and 2) use a lying spirit?

How do we know the difference between a lying spirit and a spirit of truth?

#### Verses 29-40

Ahab decides to wear a disguise into battle while Jehoshaphat wears his royal robes. The Arameans only want Ahab and at first chase after Jehoshaphat until they realise he's not Ahab and stop chasing him.

But then an Aramean soldier shoots off a random arrow into the Israelite army and hits Ahab through a gap in his armour. It then takes Ahab all day to die while the battle rages. Israels army, realising Ahab is dead, flees.

Given Micaiah's words in the previous verses, Ahab's death implies that things that look random might not be. Discuss.

#### Verses 41-53

The remainder of the chapter records that Ahaziah succeeds Ahab as king and was just as bad as his father, serving Baal.

Jehoshaphat seems to have earned his lesson about aligning himself with Israel. When Ahaziah asks if his men can set sail with Jehoshaphat's men, Jehoshaphat refuses. He apparently loses his ships to some disaster at a later date, but it's not connected to his refusal to sail with Ahaziah's men. He is furthermore described as a good king, following his father, Asa. Although he didn't get rid of all the idolatry in Judah.

Please make any comments about the reign of Ahaziah and/or Jehoshaphat?

What was the most significant thing you learned in this chapter?