

FPFWC Christian Development



Courageous Prophets of Change

May 2021

Spring Quarter

May 1, 2021

Lesson #1 –Speaking Truth to Power

Scripture Focus – 1 Kings 22:15-23; 26-28

ICE BREAKER –

1. How can pride (arrogance) destroy our life?
2. What are some proper ways to react to those who expect us to tell them what they want to hear rather than what they need to hear?

Key Verse: Micaiah said, As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak.—1 Kings 22:14

LESSON BACKGROUND

The role of the books 1 & 2 Kings is often misunderstood by the modern reader. Because they cover much of the same times and events as 1 & 2 Chronicles, we often read them as retelling the same story, slightly differently. (In fact, today's text has a parallel in 2 Chronicles 18.) While there is truth to this, the original readers of 1 & 2 Kings actually associated them with 1 & 2 Samuel; in the Greek version translated before Christ, these four books are known as 1, 2, 3, and 4 Kingdoms. And although it's natural to categorize these as books of history, we do well to remember that no book of the Bible seeks merely to give us a history lesson. Every book in the Bible intends to tell us something about God.

The Old Testament narratives, 1 & 2 Kings included, were passed down with the intention of revealing truth about the relationship between God and His people. These books were read by the Babylonian exiles, who had many deep and painful questions regarding the benefits of being chosen by God. Jerusalem's destruction and the exile of its people raised questions about God's sovereignty and love.

The books we think of as history address these issues by telling the story of God's people, picking up with the conquest of the promised land in Joshua and ending with the exile in 2 Kings. Collectively, the books tell the story of Israel's persistent rebellions against the terms of the covenant, divine judgment in the form of the curses prescribed in Deuteronomy 27–28, Israel's returns to God, and God's resulting mercy.

First Kings 22 opens by describing a conversation between two kings: Ahab of northern Israel (reigned 874–853 BC) and Jehoshaphat of southern Judah (reigned 873–849 BC). Before launching a joint military initiative, Ahab decided to consult his prophets to learn whether God would give him victory (1 Kings 22:10). Consulting God (or false gods) before battle was customary (examples: Judges 20:18; 1 Samuel 23:2; Ezekiel 21:21).

Ahab followed this practice, but he sought divine guidance from about 400 false prophets. These men were charged with discerning God's will while having no access to Him! Their counsel was united: God would grant victory in the expected battle (1 Kings 22:1–6). A favorable report, delivered from a unified front, would certainly convince the two kings of the veracity of their message!

But King Jehoshaphat was unimpressed by the verdict of the false prophets. Jehoshaphat's reign was characterized by religious reform and the suppression of idolatry (2 Chronicles 17:3–6). But he found himself in a compromised position because he had entered into a political alliance with the spiritually lapsed northern kingdom. In an attempt to do right, Jehoshaphat asked Ahab if he didn't have a prophet of the true God who could be consulted. Ahab admitted that Micaiah was such a prophet.

LESSON COMMENTARY

The messenger who went to summon Micaiah (v. 13) warned him that the other prophets were giving the kings a **favorable** report about going into battle. Their confidence resulted from the victories attained three years earlier, as well as the most recent victory against Shalmaneser III. But Micaiah did not have the same confidence. When the messenger warned him to speak favorably to Ahab, the prophet stated, **As the LORD lives, what the LORD says to me, that I shall speak** (v. 14). When Micaiah finally appeared before the two kings, he sarcastically agreed with the other prophets, saying: **Go up and succeed** (v. 15). But Ahab certainly detected something in Micaiah's voice or demeanor and demanded: **How many times must I adjure you to speak ... the truth?** (v. 16). Micaiah then told of a vision that he had been given, revealing Israel's utter defeat at the hands of the Arameans. **I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains** (v. 17). Again Ahab whined that this prophet never said anything good, **but evil**.

22:19–28. Micaiah then explained how his prophecy came about. He referred to a heavenly vision with **the LORD sitting on His throne**, an image of the Lord in royal command (cf. Is 6:1; Jr 23:16–20; Ezk 1:26–28), a startling contrast to the two kings sitting on their thrones (v. 10). In this heavenly vision the prophet described a dialogue between the Lord and **the host of heaven** (v. 19). The Lord asked, **Who will entice Ahab to go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?** (v. 20). Here **entice** means "to persuade or attempt to persuade." The Lord does not deceive people to accomplish His purpose. Micaiah's vision should be understood as the imagery of an ancient Near Eastern monarch seated upon his throne with his attendants and counselors around him. The Lord was not seated literally **on His throne** since He is an incorporeal spirit (cf. Jn 4:24), and as the One who is omniscient, He would not have required the input of other beings. The **deceiving spirit** is also unlikely to have been necessary for the sovereign God to accomplish something.

Instead, in this passage the **deceiving spirit** (v. 22) provides a theological "layer" between God and the false prophets. Because of the **deceiving spirit**, God is not depicted as directly causing the deceit Himself, though the writer of Kings clearly intended to indicate that He was superintending this situation (v. 23). In a

mysterious way, God governed and ordained this event without Himself producing it as the direct, immediate cause (since “He Himself does not tempt anyone,” Jms 1:13). Instead, He brought to fruition the episode as the “indirect,” “ultimate cause,” and the false prophets, who were responsible for their own moral deeds, are blamed for the guilt of their actions, not God.

The prophets and their words fed into the very thing that Ahab wanted to hear. But the vision was clearly made known to Ahab (vv. 17–23), and he had an opportunity to repent and do what was right before the battle. But Ahab refused to do so, choosing instead to put **Micaiah** in **prison**, and not be released **until I return safely** (v. 27). Micaiah had spoken the truth for the Lord; however, he suffered mistreatment at the hands of Ahab, and perhaps was left to die in prison because the prophet said, **If you indeed return safely, the LORD has not spoken by me** (v. 28). Ahab refused to listen and then marched to his death.

LESSON NUGGET – One of the ways God brings judgment on people is to give them over to their “sinful desires” (Rom. 1:24). This is exactly what happens to Ahab in this account! He chose to follow deceiving prophets, so God gave Ahab a deceiving prophet – even though he first gave Ahab the truth.

Sources: *Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary and Wiersbe Expository Outlines on the New Testament*