

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VILLA RICA, PCA

Ahab and Jehosaphat

By

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2 Chronicles 18:1-17 Compare 1 Kings 22

We talked last week about the sin of Ahab and Jezebel in arranging the murder of Naboth the Jezreelite and how God pronounced judgment on them.

In our scripture today -- which you can also find recorded in 1 Kings 22 -- we see Ahab reverting to his pattern of unbelief after he had a brief period of remorse and regret following the judgment word from Elijah.

In our scripture today we have a situation that can speak to us all. It deals with a portion of history in the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel about 850 years before the birth of Christ.

The one people of God suffered a division of the kingdom after Solomon's death. In our scripture today we see Judah in the south with Jehosaphat as king and Israel to the north with Ahab as king.

Jehosaphat was considered a good king. He followed the example of David in living a life of faith and in seeking to obey the Word of God. He removed the high places and the images. He was a Bible believing King and taught the people the Bible. We read in 2 Chron. 17:3-6: **³The LORD was with Jehoshaphat because he followed the example of his father David's earlier days and did not seek the Baals, ⁴but sought the God of his father, followed His commandments, and did not act as Israel did. ⁵So the LORD established the kingdom in his control, and all Judah brought tribute to Jehoshaphat, and he had great riches and honor. ⁶He took great pride in the ways of the LORD and again removed the high places and the Asherim from Judah 2 Chr. 17:3 -6 (NASB)**

We are not able to see the hearts of men as God does. No one can escape accountability or responsibility for his words and deeds. We all must stand before the Judge of all the earth and then shall each man have his own praise of God, according to his faith.

Undoubtedly, the man or woman who takes seriously the Word of God and who makes it his or her business to live by the Book, will prosper and be promoted by God. It is simply a benefit of faithful discipleship.

We learn from scripture that Jehoshaphat became allied with Ahab through the marriage of his son Jehoram to Athaliah the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel.

What a serious thing marriage is. Not only does it cause the two to become one it also binds together two families. How careful we ought to be to counsel our sons and daughters to marry in the Lord.

Now it may have been a natural desire on the part of Jehosaphat to be a friendly father-in-law. Apparently he had approved of the wedding. So he went down to visit his son in law's family at Samaria. And Ahab was very hospitable to Jehosaphat. He butchered many sheep and oxen for a feast. It was a friendly time for both families. Everyone enjoyed the barbecue. Perhaps this would be the beginning of a reunion of the northern and southern kingdoms. The two families getting together must have seemed promising for the future.

Well, wouldn't you know that Ahab saw this as a golden opportunity to thicken up this relationship and make a little profit at the same time. He had had his eye on Ramoth gilead. Ramoth gilead was possessed by the Syrians but Ahab claimed that it rightfully belonged to Israel. Jehosaphat had a famous name and had never been defeated in battle. He would be just

the force needed to assure a victory. So Ahab propositions Jehosaphat, Will you go with me to Ramoth gilead?

Without praying about it or even consulting his advisors Jehosaphat immediately replies, I am as you are, and my people as your people, and we will be with you in the battle.

That was a very hasty and unwise decision.

But see how affinity joined in marriage can soon lead to projects and enterprises together. We become associated with our partners in things we otherwise would not have been involved in. His son's marriage has now developed into a war alliance.

But Jehosaphat, being the man of faith that he was, would not go into battle without a word from the lord. He asks Ahab to join him in seeking the mind of the Lord. **Inquire, I pray thee, at the word of the Lord today.** Vs. 4.

Well, Ahab certainly wouldn't refuse that. After all, he considered himself a very religious man. As a matter of fact he had 400 prophets of Baal on his staff. They must have been a very impressive corps of advisors. So they are all called together. This is a very important moment. Ahab gets them all in front of their thrones and puts the question to them, **Shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear?**

These men knew exactly what to say. They already knew the situation. They had their ears to the ground and knew that Ahab had maneuvered Jehosaphat into a mutual assistance pact. Their part was to confirm the deal and reassure these kings that what Ahab wanted to do was the right thing to do. Their chief prophet had even prepared for the occasion by having a pair of horns made of iron. This was a great prop to reinforce his words before the kings. We read, and Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah said, **Thus says the LORD, 'With these you shall gore the Arameans until they are consumed.'** " 2 Chr. 18:10 (NASB)

That was the signal. All the other prophets backed up that word from their chief, And they all prophesied, saying, Go up to Ramoth-gilead, and prosper for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king.

But Jehosaphat just didn't feel right about this show. He smelled something phony about this display. These men just didn't ring true with him. But he didn't come right out and say what he was thinking. Instead he just said, **"Is there not yet a prophet of the LORD here that we may inquire of him?"** 2 Chr. 18:6

You know, a discerning seeker after the truth of God will know the difference between a man of God and a false prophet. Jehosaphat knew a true prophet when he heard one. These men were showmen, political appointees, royal sycophants who merely told Ahab what he wanted to hear. They knew his whims and pet projects; they knew his political aspirations and his thirst for lands and possessions. It wouldn't take a very smart man to figure out what Ahab wanted to hear preached in this instance.

There are honest people like Jehosaphat who really do want to hear the Word of God and then there are many who don't, like Ahab. Some people want the preacher to preach the Word no matter how it steps on them or others, the harder the better, but there are others who don't. Ahab wanted religion on his terms. He wanted an accommodating God, a God who would endorse whatever goals and aspirations he might have. A god who would look the other way when he indulged his lusts, a god who would flatter him and speak smooth words to him. Since God is not like that at all such people as Ahab manufacture a god to suit himself or herself. Ahab had his own brand of prophets. He could count on them to say just the right thing.

You all know about chameleons. They have a chemistry that enables them to change color and blend in with their background. They adapt themselves to the color of whatever they stand on. These false prophets were like that. They could adapt themselves to whatever the king wanted to hear. Zedekiah was

the color selector. He told them what to say and then all of them would say the same. It worked like a charm. Of course it was not the Word of the Lord, but then who is going to say otherwise?

Have you ever been to a circus and seen the trapeze artists perform. They are experts at their craft. There are men and women who are theological trapeze artists. They can stand on the platform of authority and claim to speak for God, and do a double summersault, catch the swinging trapeze swung out to them by a partner and catch it without falling into the net.

There is a theology today called neoorthodoxy that can adapt itself to every new situation by claiming that God has given new truth to cover that situation any way you want it covered -- they call that situation ethics. God can be switched around any old way you please to endorse anything you want to do. That suits the Ahab's of our day.

Ahab knew exactly what Jehosaphat was talking about when he asked if there wasn't another prophet besides these 400 phonies. He said, **"There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of the LORD, but I hate him, for he never prophesies good concerning me but always evil. He is Micaiah, son of Imla."** But Jehosaphat said, **"Let not the king say so."** 2 Chr. 18:7 (NASB)

You know, that's just the way a lot a people feel about preachers who preach nothing but the Word of God. They get uncomfortable in church when their toes get stepped on; their conscience begins to bother them. They get the idea in their head that the preacher is against them personally and they resent him for that. Or else they just out and out deny the truth of what the Word of God says. So they go find a church where there are smooth words and nice platitudes, the place where you get a comfortable feeling, a sort of Ahab coziness.

Now I want you to notice two things: first. After Ahab had complained about Micaiah, saying that he always had something bad to say about him or to him, that Jehosaphat said, Let not the king say so. In other words, don't say that! Don't blame it on the prophet. The Lord never speaks anything that is not meant for our good. If the Lord speaks to us about our sins and about the need to repent and obey him, that is a good thing. We can only please the Lord when we hearken to his Word.

Secondly, when the messenger goes to get Micaiah he tried to persuade him to make his message conform to the message of Zedekiah. He said, **"Behold, the words of the prophets are uniformly favorable to the king. So please let your word be like one of them and speak favorably."** ¹³But Micaiah said, **"As the LORD lives, what my God says, that I will speak."** 2 Chr. 18:12-13

Come on, Micaiah, get with it. Shape up. Join the majority vote. This thing is going just like the king wants it to go, so throw your support behind the 400 staff prophets.

What an opportunity for Micaiah to have ingratiated himself with Ahab and the college of false prophets. He could have secured his future that day by just siding with the Baal liberals. But this man has a true calling from God. He can't do that. He must speak the truth of God's Word. So **Micaiah said, "As the LORD lives, what my God says, that I will speak."** 2 Chr. 18:12-13

Ahab then asks at the mouth of **Micaiah** whether he should go up to Ramoth-gilead or not go up. The prophet says, **"Go up and succeed, for they will be given into your hand."**

¹⁵**Then the king said to him, "How many times must I adjure you to speak to me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?"**

Apparently the way the prophet Micaiah spoke, perhaps with a smile on his face, the king knew he was imitating his false prophets. He is saying, you don't really want a Word from the Lord, Ahab. You just want me to mouth the words you want to hear.

Well, Ahab sees that he is mocking the Baal prophets so he acts indignant. How many times do I have to tell you not to ever prophesy anything but the truth? In other words, Stop fooling around, Micaiah give it to me straight.

Isn't that the way many people are today? They say, oh, tell it like it is, preacher. Give me what you think is the truth. After all, I am a religious person. I resent your insinuation that I don't care about the Word of the Lord.

And so, with this sanctimonious statement by Ahab, Micaiah indeed does give him the Word of the Lord. Micaiah says,

**"I saw all Israel
Scattered on the mountains,
Like sheep which have no shepherd;
And the LORD said,
'These have no master.
Let each of them return to his house in peace.'**"

⁷Then the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?"

Please note that Ahab wasn't interested in what the Lord was saying. He is double minded. He is one of those who believe in free choice. He will believe what suits him. After all, he wanted a message suitable to his plans, but this message doesn't suit his plans. According to this message he had better stay home and not go into the battle. Had he listened to the word of the true prophet he would have spared his own life. But he does what he has always done. He blames the prophet for the message, attributing it to a secret resentment against him personally and thus he disregards the Word of the Lord.

Micaiah then gives a further word to Ahab that is very instructive for all of us. **(See 1 Kings 22:17-38 or 2 Chronicles 18:18-34)**

These passages tell us how God allows evil, ungodly men and even evil spirits to be instruments to bring to pass his holy purposes.

Ahab hated the message of Micaiah so he ordered that he be put under arrest and be fed sparingly with bread and water until he returned. Micaiah told him that if he returned God had not spoken his word.

Ahab thinks to defeat the Word of God should it happen to be true. So he disguised himself by taking off his kingly robes as he goes into battle. By doing this he makes Jehosaphat the likely kingly target of the Syrian soldiers. When the battle commences Jehosaphat sees that he is being singled out for an arrow cries out to the Lord and is spared. But an arrow shot at random by an unnamed soldier finds its mark in Ahab, thus fulfilling the Word of the Lord. And Ahab died and the dogs licked his blood from his chariot according to the Word of the Lord.

I ask that you examine yourself today. Ask yourself, do I receive the Word of God gladly and believingly or petulantly, even resentfully, smarting under it and somehow blaming the preacher if it isn't what I want it to be. The Word of God has some sharpness to it, some bite so that you are inclined to say, he never prophesies good of me but only evil?

We can hear the gospel and be offended by it. We can find fault with the preacher who preaches the whole counsel of God. We can resent the message that demands righteousness and holiness in an evil world and that tells of a judgment to come that will send the ungodly to a darkened lake of fire where the worm never dies and the fire is never quenched. Some folks just want a gospel that always promises blessings and prosperity, never judgment against sin.

Ahab represents all who are ambivalent toward the word of God. Let me ask you a personal question, Have you acknowledged your sin before the Lord and applied the Blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse

you? Have you confessed your sins and been willing to forsake them? Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord and promise by His grace to live as becometh a follower of Christ? This is the call of the gospel, my friend. This is the Word of the Lord to all men today. Repent of your sins and trust in Jesus Christ for your salvation today.

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