

Ahab's Final Battle with the Syrians

1 Kings 22:1-9

1 Kings 22:1-9 – *“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 in 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 as your people, my horses as your horses.” Also Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, “Please inquire for the word of the LORD today.” Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said to them, “Shall I go against Ramoth Gilead to fight, or shall I refrain?” So 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 may inquire of Him?” So the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “There is still one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the LORD; but I hate him, because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.” And 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!”

Background Notes for 1 Kings 22:1-9

1 Kings 20 is the record of two battles that the nation of Israel, under King Ahab, fought with Syria, under King Ben-Hadad. In both battles God graciously gave the victory to Israel, but even so King Ahab did not acknowledge the Lord. In fact, he wrongly made a treaty with the enemy, King Ben-Hadad, and granted him amnesty.

Ahab should have known better than to make a treaty with this pagan king. It appears that Ben-Hadad reneged on the treaty (v3). The city of Ramoth Gilead (in the territory of the tribe of Gad, on the east side of the Jordan River) was still in Syrian hands. So King Ahab decided to go out and regain his territory by fighting for it. He asked King Jehoshaphat of the southern kingdom of Judah to go with him. Jehoshaphat was one of the good kings of Judah, but he made a serious mistake by joining wicked King Ahab.

Jehoshaphat said to King Ahab, *“Please inquire for the word of the Lord today.”* Good King Jehoshaphat wanted to be sure that this battle was in God's will. So Ahab gathered 400 “prophets” together – false prophets - and asked them, *“Shall I go against Ramoth Gilead to fight, or shall I refrain?”* These false prophets all said, *“Go up, for the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king.”* Well, King Jehoshaphat was not convinced. He wanted to hear what a **real** prophet of the Lord had to say! So King Ahab reluctantly sent for Micaiah, a true prophet of the Lord.

Doctrinal Point for 1 Kings 22:1-9

The unbelieving world hates believers because of their message of truth.

“So the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, ‘There is still one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the Lord; but I hate him’”(v8). Now notice the reason: *‘Because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.’”* Ahab was trying to be “religious,” but he only wanted to hear what he wanted to hear. He hated Micaiah, because Micaiah spoke only messages of truth.

It’s the same way today. The unbelieving world hates believers because of their message of truth. In John 15:18 the Lord Jesus said, *“the world will hate you because it hated me.”* Why? Because the full message of truth includes God’s judgment on sin, and God’s judgment on sinners. And there’s only one way of escape - salvation in Christ - and the unbelieving world doesn’t want to hear that.

The unbelieving world hates believers because of their message of truth. We don’t try to be hated, but the unbelieving world does not like the message, and therefore the unbelieving world will hate believers.

Practical Application for 1 Kings 22:1-9

Don’t make foolish alliances!

Look at what good King Jehoshaphat said to wicked King Ahab, *“I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses”* (v4). What kind of talk is that for a godly king? It was wrong. In a parallel passage, 2 Chronicles 19:2, a prophet of the Lord confronted Jehoshaphat after the battle. He said, *“Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord? Therefore the wrath of the Lord is upon you.”* So there’s no question that Jehoshaphat made a foolish alliance. It was wrong.

What a lesson for us! In this chapter Jehoshaphat is a picture of a Christian who blindly, naively, and stupidly walks into a situation that the Word of God clearly has declared to be wrong. Don’t do it! Don’t make this alliance.

For example, many Christians have made foolish alliances with unbelievers in business enterprises, and have lived to regret it. Another example - a believer marrying an unbeliever is a foolish alliance. 2 Corinthians 6:14 says, *“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.”* The word of God is clear: Don’t make foolish alliances!

1 Kings 22:10-18

1 Kings 22:10-18 – *“The king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, having put on their robes, sat 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 Chenaanah had made horns of iron for himself; and he 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.”*

Then the messenger who had gone to call Micaiah spoke to him, saying, “Now listen, the words of the prophets with one accord encourage the king. Please, let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak encouragement.” And 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 Ramoth Gilead, or shall we refrain?” And he answered him, “Go and prosper, for the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king!” So the king said to him, “How many times shall I make you swear that you tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the Lord?” Then he said, “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 Jehoshaphat, “Did I not tell you he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?”

Background Notes for 1 Kings 22:10-18

Ahab and Jehoshaphat were dressed in their royal robes, and were sitting on thrones at a threshing floor by the gate of the city of Samaria (v10). The 400 false prophets all were telling Ahab exactly what he wanted to hear. One false prophet even did a dramatic skit! Ahab’s messenger told Micaiah, the true prophet, “Don’t rock the boat!” Ahab wanted Micaiah to say the same thing as the false prophets.

First of all Micaiah spoke with irony: “Why not? Go on up. You’ll be victorious!” Ahab detected the sarcasm and said, *“How many times shall I make you swear that you tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the Lord?”* So Micaiah told him the truth. “You’re going to lose the battle. Israel will be scattered like sheep that have no shepherd. And Ahab, you will lose your life in this battle.” Obviously Ahab didn’t like what he heard!

Doctrinal Point for 1 Kings 22:10-18

The unbeliever would rather feel good than hear the truth.

Ahab said to Micaiah, “Stop playing games with me; tell me the truth.” “Okay,” said Micaiah, “you want to hear the truth? Here it is. You’re going to lose the battle. You’ll be defeated. And you’ll lose your life.” Look at Ahab’s reaction. He

turned to Jehoshaphat and said, *“Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?”*(v18). In other words, “I don’t like the truth and I don’t want to hear the truth. I’d rather feel good!”

Sadly, that’s the ways it’s always been, and that’s the way many unbelievers think today. Unbelievers would rather feel good than hear the truth. In Isaiah’s day, the people said to the prophets, *“Give us no more visions of what is right! Tell us pleasant thing. Prophecy illusions.”* (Isaiah 30:10). They wanted to hear smooth things, or pleasant things - prophecies that were deceitful, or illusions.

The unbeliever would rather feel good than hear the truth. Many unbelievers go to church, but they don’t want to hear the truth. They want to hear what they want to hear – what will make them feel good. When the truth is preached that we are sinners, and without Christ we’re doomed to hell, these people switch churches. They go to a church where they can feel good about themselves. The unbeliever would rather feel good than hear the truth.

Practical Application for 1 Kings 22:10-18

Watch out for the world’s pressure to conform you to their way of thinking!

In verse 13 the messenger told Micaiah, *“Please let your word be like the word of one of them and speak encouragement.”* The false prophets wanted to pressure Micaiah into their way of thinking. “Don’t rock the boat, Micaiah! Say it our way!”

Well, the same thing happens today. The world, including the religious world, will try to pressure you into its own way of thinking. Romans 12:2 says, *“Don’t be conformed to this world.”* Or, as the J.B. Philips version puts it, *“Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold.”* Praise the Lord; Micaiah resisted the pressure of the world around him. And we must resist this as well.

Some Christians have not resisted. I could give you many illustrations of ways that the world has squeezed Christians into its mold, but here’s just one example. The world will always pressure Christians to be “politically correct.” Why do you think a number of Christians have accepted the theory of “theistic evolution” rather than Creation as described in Genesis 1? Christians who hold to the theory of evolution do **not** do so on the basis of evidence, because there is **no evidence** for evolution – it’s just not there! For various reasons - popularity, academic credibility, job success, pride, etc - these Christians have capitulated to the pressure. They have moved away from the clear truth of Scripture, and conformed to this world’s way of thinking.

Watch out for the world’s pressure to conform you to their way of thinking!