

1 Kings 22

Written by K B Napier

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We all know that chalk and cheese are popularly quoted as opposites. Here, we see two kings as different as chalk and cheese – Ahab, who was one of the most wicked kings of Israel, and Jehoshaphat, one of the most righteous. The two combined forces against the king of Syria, but Ahab's continued wickedness did not bode well for him. His false prophets gave him bad counsel, and only one godly prophet gave true counsel... which Ahab rejected.

Strangely, the godly king accepted Ahab's judgment on the matter and went to war with him. Even today, mature believers can be caught in a trap and follow the beliefs and activities of wicked men. Perhaps Jehoshaphat was lax at that time, but it was a very odd decision to make. When we join with unbelievers in any activity we should always be aware of possible dangers and sin. Perhaps the king of Syria was a threat to both kings, but we cannot tell in this chapter.

Today, unfortunate alliances are made between rivals. At least none of them claims to be Christian. So, we can expect a level of sin coming from both factions even if their aims seem to be good. Bear in mind that God does not see anything coming from unbelievers as 'good'. They are only 'good' in the eyes of other unbelievers. True 'good' ONLY comes from God and is filled throughout by godly intent.

By following the counsel of his sycophant prophets, Ahab lost his life. We are told that his death was the end result of God's own prophecy about his life and death. When those who should obey God do not, the overall effect is one of sin and despair, with corrupt believers sinking into a worldly mess. Ahab ruled the very people of God and led them into depravity and godless worship of idols. For this he lost his life and his family was cut short. The same happens today, because God is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.

Note how Jehoshaphat either put to death or drove out the homosexuals in the land, because their presence was like a cancerous sore on the nation, keeping the whole body sick. We need such sound leadership today, but will not find it because of the laxity of Christians, who unwittingly are badly tainted by these wicked people.

Verses 1-5

1.

And they continued three years without war between Syria and Israel.

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2.

And it came to pass in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel.

3.

And the king of Israel said unto his servants, Know ye that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, and we be still, and take it not out of the hand of the king of Syria?

4.

And he said unto Jehoshaphat, Wilt thou go with me to battle to Ramothgilead? And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses.

5.

And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Enquire, I pray thee, at the word of the LORD to day.

An uneasy peace existed between Israel and Syria, and between Israel and Judah. In the third year of this peace Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, “came down” to see Ahab, the king of Israel. In reality he “went up” – Judah was in the south. Ahab asked Jehoshaphat if he would join him in going to war against Syria, to regain Ramoth, a city in Gilead (Ramoth-Gilead) a high fort and a Levitical city. It was also one of the cities of refuge, to the east of the river Jordan.

Jehoshaphat said that he would raise an army to match that of Ahab’s, but said that they ought to consult God about the matter, through the prophets and priests. The problem with this was that they followed the path of Ahab and paganism. They mixed this with belief in Jehovah. It is not unlike many churches today, who say they believe in God, but act in ways that oppose such belief. Christians do not bother much with doctrine or putting their beliefs into practice, and so churches worldwide are bereft of real godliness and God’s presence.

Verses 6-9

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1.

Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall I go against Ramothgilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king.

2.

And Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might enquire of him?

3.

And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may enquire of the LORD: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so.

4.

Then the king of Israel called an officer, and said, Hasten hither Micaiah the son of Imlah.

Ahab brought together 400 prophets, who were all superficially of God. He asked them if they should do battle against Syria, or to let the matter go. They immediately replied – go to battle, for God will make you victorious, though they had not received a word from God to that effect.

Jehoshaphat was not convinced (perhaps he was aware of the spiritual demise of these prophets) and asked if there was another prophet they could ask. Ahab replied that there WAS one prophet who was not invited – Micah. But, admitted Ahab, “I hate him”! Why? Because Micah never gave good news to him. Or, to put it another way, Micah only told him what God said. Because Ahab was wicked, any words from God were always gloomy and ‘evil’ (harmful to Ahab). Jehoshaphat was not deterred by this and asked to see Micah. Ahab called a court official to go and find Micah. (See Outline O-065 for a brief study).

Christians today tend to ignore teachers who do not say what they want to hear. I come across this obedience to selective knowledge many times a week, from those who insist I am ‘filled with

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hate' (because I refuse to accommodate their particular bad theologies)!

Verses 10-12

1.

And the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah sat each on his throne, having put on their robes, in a void place in the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them.

2.

And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made him horns of iron: and he said, Thus saith the LORD, With these shalt thou push the Syrians, until thou have consumed them.

3.

And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramothgilead, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver it into the king's hand.

The two kings each sat on their respective thrones, wearing their royal finery, in an empty space at the gate of Samaria. (As an historical note, it means that kings transported their thrones when travelling). There they listened to the various ramblings of the false prophets. One of them, Zedekiah, presented Ahab with iron horns that he had made, representing strength. Zedekiah then made a grave mistake, by saying *“Thus saith the Lord – the horns would push the Syrians back until they all die”*. These false prophets KNEW they were false, yet they spoke from ‘God’.

Today, charismatics use “Thus saith the Lord” as if it were confetti, knowing that God has not said anything. They use it to pretend they have authority when they do not, and the people believe them, even though what they say never comes to pass. God will one day judge them severely for such godlessness.

All the other prophets supported Zedekiah by agreeing. This kind of false teaching is vile, and God cannot let such lies carry on without judgment. The same warning is given to those today who think they can get away with making false declarations just to maintain their supposed

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authority and status. Those who listen to them are without excuse, for they show no spiritual discernment.

Verses 13-15

1.

And the messenger that was gone to call Micaiah spake unto him, saying, Behold now, the words of the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth: let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good.

2.

And Micaiah said, As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak.

3.

So he came to the king. And the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go against Ramothgilead to battle, or shall we forbear? And he answered him, Go, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver it into the hand of the king.

The messenger sent by Ahab to find Micah asked him to go to the palace. Trying to help Micah, he warned that all the prophets had said the same thing – go to war. He advised Micah to say the same thing, so the king would hear something good.

Micah was not interested – he would only speak what God told him to say. Modern preachers do not do that, especially if they are pastors. They coddle their fellow members and only say what is convenient and acceptable to the congregation. In the past I have heard this from a number of well-known figures in the Christian world. They say they do it because otherwise they would lose most of their members. I think you know what my response was, and still is! This kind of deception and lies is about keeping a salary and staying in the ‘good books’ of peers... something I find repugnant and unacceptable. It is why I have turned down at least three invitations to pastor various churches.

Micah went to see the king, and Ahab repeated what he asked the 400 false prophets. Micah, tongue in cheek, said ‘Go to do battle, for God will prosper you!’ Huge numbers of preachers

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and ministries act like this to protect their large incomes. Perhaps you can see the difference – my own ministry is next to penniless!

Verses 16-18

1.

And the king said unto him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the LORD?

2.

And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the LORD said, These have no master: let them return every man to his house in peace.

3.

And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?

Ahab knew what Micah was doing and became angry and impatient. ‘How many times have I asked you to only tell me what God says?’ Then, Micah dropped the sarcasm and told the king what God had REALLY shown him. He saw the Israelites roaming the hills like sheep who had no shepherd. Therefore, they must return to their homes and not go to war.

Then, Ahab complained! He KNEW Micah was only being sarcastic and so did not believe what he said the first time. THEN he demanded to know what God had REALLY said to Micah. But, when Micah told him what God had said, Ahab was furious! He turned to Jehoshaphat saying ‘Didn’t I tell you he would not tell me anything good, but would only give me bad news?’

Most paid pastors give only what their hearers want to hear. It keeps them in their salary and house and inflated expenses! They live in a ‘fuzzy’ fairyland of half-truths and deception, pretending to their guilty hearts and minds that all is well. They do it by using careful dualistic-language, which does not upset anyone, but is half-telling the truth. As most of their peers do the same thing, everyone gets along well. But, it is a life of lies and godless unreality and the congregation suffers spiritual starvation.

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Verses 19-23

1.

And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left.

2.

And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner.

3.

And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him.

4.

And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so.

5.

Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee.

After delivering the stark truth, Micah continued, repeating what God had told him: "Hear thou therefore the word of the Lord". This was the authentic word of God, not the fabricated word given by the 400 false prophets. 'I saw Jehovah sitting on His throne, with multitudes of angels surrounding Him. Jehovah asked who would go to deceive Ahab, so that he would die on the battle-field? The angels discussed the matter with God. Then, a spirit came before God and said he would deceive Ahab. God asked 'How will you do it?' The angel said he would cause all the false prophets to lie. God agreed with the idea and sent the spirit out to do his work.'

Micah then added – the Lord put a lying spirit into your prophets' mouths. It is God Who has

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spoken to your detriment.

This begs several questions. It means that God Himself caused the false prophets to lie. This appears to fly in the face of our understanding – that God does not cause people to sin. On the other hand, it shows us that when a man such as Ahab continuously defies Almighty God and lives in wickedness, God will send him a strong delusion, even when it leads to the person's death. Thus what God sends is not a lie but a preference for delusion that matches a sinful heart, giving the man what he wants to hear, as a severe judgment. The 'spirit' who put lies into the mouths of the prophets was a demon, not an heavenly angel. God did something similar to Job, when he allowed Satan himself to bring Job harm, but for a different reason. When we live without God, He will allow evil to permeate our hearts.

Verses 24-28

1.

But Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near, and smote Micaiah on the cheek, and said, Which way went the Spirit of the LORD from me to speak unto thee?

2.

And Micaiah said, Behold, thou shalt see in that day, when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself.

3.

And the king of Israel said, Take Micaiah, and carry him back unto Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son;

4.

And say, Thus saith the king, Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I come in peace.

5.

And Micaiah said, If thou return at all in peace, the LORD hath not spoken by me. And he said, Harken, O people, every one of you.

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Micah had shown up the 400 false prophets for what they really were, and their spokesman, Zedekiah, was full of venom and hit Micah on the face. 'Was the Spirit of God in me now I respond to your words?' Micah told him that the truth will soon become known when Zedekiah would try to hide from the enemy in a secret inner room. At that time, in his fear, Zedekiah would know that God did not speak in him as a false prophet.

Ahab, in his anger, ordered guards to take Micah away to come under the authority of the governor of Samaria, Amon, and Ahab's son, Joash. Micah would be put into prison for telling Ahab what he demanded to know! Micah was to be given bread and water, symbols of his punishment, until Ahab came to visit in a better frame of mind.

Micah, mindful of Ahab's doom, said 'Return – if you are still alive to do so. Jehovah has spoken through me... listen well, people of Israel, every one of you!' Micah wanted everyone to remember his words when Ahab died. In my own ministry I sometimes have to warn people, Christians and unbelievers alike. Thus far, over the years, all of those things I warned about have come true, proving that what has been said came from God.

Jehoshaphat asked Ahab to provide another prophet from God. But, when Micah disagreed with the 400, Ahab put him in prison and Jehoshaphat accepted the 'majority view'! He did not argue against the imprisonment of Micah! Humans are so fickle. Many Christians want to hear the "word of God", but when it disagrees with their personal ideas of what they think God should say, they reject it, and shun the preacher who gave the word. This is a continuous process that keeps Christians weak without knowledge, and bad pastors in their pulpits – they give the people what they want to hear, rather than what God wants them to know.

Verses 29-33

1.

So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramothgilead.

2.

And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself, and enter into the battle; but put thou on thy robes. And the king of Israel disguised himself, and went into the battle.

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3.

But the king of Syria commanded his thirty and two captains that had rule over his chariots, saying, Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel.

4.

And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, Surely it is the king of Israel. And they turned aside to fight against him: and Jehoshaphat cried out.

5.

And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots perceived that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him.

Ahab and Jehoshaphat went out with their respective armies to Ramoth-Gilead. It seems that Jehoshaphat's army was held back in reserve, for we only read of Ahab's role in going forth to battle. In an effort to deceive the enemy Ahab asked Jehoshaphat to wear his clothing, so that he would not be recognised... an odd and dangerous idea that Jehoshaphat agreed to!

The king of Syria, on the battle-field, set his army in array, with a strong command: don't bother with the opposing army – just get to Ahab and kill him. This is always a sound war strategy, to kill the leaders, so the army is left in confusion and can be beaten. (Yet, he did not issue the same command regarding Jehoshaphat)

The captains of Syria saw Jehoshaphat and, thinking he was Ahab, immediately gave chase. Obviously, the king's clothing and chariot were distinctive. When the soldiers came near, Jehoshaphat shouted out that he was not Ahab, and the charioteers turned back to the battle. They must have thought the king of Judah was only a minor figure.

Verses 34-37

1.

And a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out

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of the host; for I am wounded.

2.

And the battle increased that day: and the king was stayed up in his chariot against the Syrians, and died at even: and the blood ran out of the wound into the midst of the chariot.

3.

And there went a proclamation throughout the host about the going down of the sun, saying, Every man to his city, and every man to his own country.

4.

So the king died, and was brought to Samaria; and they buried the king in Samaria.

Then came a decisive moment – a bowman shot his arrow into the warring soldiers and it found Ahab “between the joints of the harness”. What we see is the same kind of action that killed king Harold at the battle of Hastings. An enemy bowman shot his arrow randomly into the seething crowd and it hit Harold in an eye, piercing his brain. Given the helmet Harold wore, this was an amazing result, but that one action changed the fortunes of the English army, which was beaten.*

(* I have visited the site of the Battle of Hastings and can conclude that the bowman probably used a crossbow. This is because Harold was on high ground and the enemy was shooting from below. For a bowman to avoid the nose and brow piece of the helmet he must have shot straight, as was possible with a crossbow. The usual path of a longbow arrow was in a high curve, allowing the arrow to fall downwards, making hitting a man in the eye almost impossible. Also, Harold would have been looking down the slope, so his eye would not be accessible to a falling arrow).

Similarly, the bowman shot his arrow randomly and it found Ahab, despite his disguise. The “joints of the harness” is reference to an opening between the breastplate and the leather thongs holding it to Ahab’s body armour, so the arrow hit him in the chest, to one side. Just as remarkable as the way the bowman’s arrow hit Harold through an opening in his helmet.

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Still conscious, Ahab ordered his chariot captain to turn away from the battle. The arrow did not strike him in the heart, but may have entered his lungs, for he was able to speak and remain on the edges of the battle, which increased in ferocity, until it finished at dusk. Then, Ahab died from his wound, his blood draining out into the chariot. A shout went out for all remaining soldiers, Israelite and Syrian, to return to their homes; the battle was over and Israel had lost.

The body of Ahab was taken to Samaria, where he was buried. If he had listened to the prophet he hated, he would have lived. But, his death was part of God's judgment upon him for not returning to true worship. Countless Christians today are in the same godless position, but in their shame and sin they do not recognise that God has judged them, and they loathe the words of genuine preachers and teachers, though their lives are the worse off for doing so; their low spiritual condition giving them no light on the matter.

Verses 38&39

1.

And one washed the chariot in the pool of Samaria; and the dogs licked up his blood; and they washed his armour; according unto the word of the LORD which he spake.

2.

Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, and the ivory house which he made, and all the cities that he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

A servant washed Ahab's blood from the chariot, in a pool in the city and, as prophesied, dogs licked at the blood on the ground. Other servants washed Ahab's armour. Ahab had a palace made primarily of ivory, but it was as nothing compared to God's demands. The rest of Ahab's life is found in the book of Chronicles.

God's judgments always stand firm and are never rescinded. Let this warn us all – so few Christians apply God's demands to their lives, thinking all is well!

Verses 40-45

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1.

So Ahab slept with his fathers; and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead.

2.

And Jehoshaphat the son of Asa began to reign over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel.

3.

Jehoshaphat was thirty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi.

4.

And he walked in all the ways of Asa his father; he turned not aside from it, doing that which was right in the eyes of the LORD: nevertheless the high places were not taken away; for the people offered and burnt incense yet in the high places.

5.

And Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel.

6.

Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, and his might that he shewed, and how he warred, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

Ahab's son, Ahaziah, then took the throne of Israel. Jehoshaphat began his reign four years into the reign of Ahab, aged 35, so was well established as ruler of Judah. He reigned for 25 years in Jerusalem, beginning about 914 BC.

Jehoshaphat was pious, one of the best kings of Judah. He obeyed God, but failed to remove

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the 'high places' in the land used by pagans, who continued to offer worship to false gods. We can be godly in our personal lives, but we should destroy all that is worthless and false, for otherwise it is like a poison filtering through the ground into drinking water. Sadly, most Christians think they can 'mix it' like this, ignoring (or amending) what God says and so endangering their spiritual lives, not realising that the effects of the poison are seen in their lives. I often see its effects.

Jehoshaphat made peace with the new king of Israel. We can read more of his life in the book of Chronicles.

Verses 46-49

1.

And the remnant of the sodomites, which remained in the days of his father Asa, he took out of the land.

2.

There was then no king in Edom: a deputy was king.

3.

Jehoshaphat made ships of Tharshish to go to Ophir for gold: but they went not; for the ships were broken at Eziongeber.

4.

Then said Ahaziah the son of Ahab unto Jehoshaphat, Let my servants go with thy servants in the ships. But Jehoshaphat would not.

In modern days, those sinful people who support homosexuals should again read of Jehoshaphat's decision to get rid of them from Judah. Many were allowed to stay by Asa, but this time they were banished or killed – the words imply either could be the case. 'Sodomite' mainly refers to male temple prostitutes, and, by association, also refers to those in the population who used them. Both were a blemish on the nation and had to be destroyed. These foul people worshipped Astarte (Venus) and so were automatically hated by God for their

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idolatry. God continues to hate homosexuals, and says they practice an abomination; they are to enter hell as everlasting punishment. This evil sin should not be allowed public acceptance or presence of any kind, but must be forced into darkened places, where evil belongs.

The text then moves to tell us there was no king in Edom, a nation descended from Esau, living south East of Israel. The Edomites were ruled by a deputy-king.

Jehoshaphat had ships built in Tharshish. There are several places of that name, but it is likely this one was close to, or on, the Red Sea, at Ezion-geber. The king sent these ships to Ophir, just as Solomon had done, to garner precious stones, foods and rich materials. When he heard about it, the new king of Israel asked Jehoshaphat if he could send his own sailors to accompany the men of Judah, but Jehoshaphat refused.

Verses 50-53

1.

And Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father: and Jehoram his son reigned in his stead.

2.

Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned two years over Israel.

3.

And 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 to sin:

4.

For he served Baal, and worshipped him, and provoked to anger the LORD God of Israel, according to all that his father had done.

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Jehoshaphat died and his account is found in the book of Chronicles. His son, Jehoram, then reigned over Judah for just eight years. Sadly, his wife was wicked, and was probably the one who again turned the people of Judah from God to the worship of Ba'al, overturning the good work done by Jehoshaphat.

The new king of Israel began his reign when Jehoshaphat had already been ruling Judah for 17 years, but only lasted for a mere two years – probably because he was an evil king like his father and like his mother, the evil queen Jezebel. Jeroboam, too, caused Israelites to sin. All this is against him and Ahaziah – God never forgets or allows sin to go unpunished. Ahaziah worshipped Ba'al, so he set himself up as an enemy of the Lord, amongst God's own chosen people. Are you an enemy of God?

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