

Speaking Truth to Power

1 Kings 22:15-23, 26-28
SS Lesson for 05/02/2021

Devotional Scripture: 2 Cor 4:1-6

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Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Have you ever sought out counsel that would tell you what you want to hear, rather than truth, so that you could press forward with your own agenda? Herein is an important lesson we can learn from George Washington. As the first president of the United States, Washington had no precedent to follow when choosing the men who would shape his thinking and the new government. Wisely, Washington chose an eclectic group of people to fill cabinet positions and be his closest advisers. They were from different parts of the country, and they had different views on how the government should operate. Instead of choosing advisers exclusively from his state of Virginia, Washington chose to surround himself with people who had the same ultimate goals in mind. The varied opinions about how to achieve common goals helped President Washington make choices that were more informed and wiser. Unfortunately, Ahab did not make similar decisions. He surrounded himself with false prophets who told him whatever he wanted to hear. But this lesson focuses on the one prophet who refused to compromise the truth.

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).

Key Verse: 1 Kings 22:14

And Micaiah said, "As the LORD lives, whatever the LORD says to me, that I will speak."

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

22:1-4. For three years after the battle of Aphek (cf. 1 Kings 20:26-34) **there was no war between the Israelites and the Arameans.** However, **in the third year** (853 B.C.), shortly after Ahab and Ben-Hadad had fought Shalmaneser at the Battle of Qarqar, Ahab decided that he needed to **retake** the important city of **Ramoth in Gilead** from the Arameans who had taken it from Israel earlier. Ramoth was one of the chief cities of the tribe of Gad, 28 miles east of the Jordan and 15 miles south of the Sea of Kinnereth, almost directly east of Jezreel. To field an army large enough to defeat the Arameans Ahab asked **Jehoshaphat** the

king of Judah to ally with him against Ben-Hadad II. **Jehoshaphat** agreed for political reasons though he should not have done so for spiritual reasons; he was a godly king, faithful to the Lord.

22:5-7. **Jehoshaphat** wanted divine counsel from **the LORD** before he and Ahab embarked on their mission. Ahab apparently could not have cared less. But to satisfy Jehoshaphat, Ahab called for **the prophets, about 400** of them. These were evidently prophets of the Lord; Baal prophets would have been unacceptable to Jehoshaphat. But they were apostate prophets. They had no concern about obtaining and relating the true word of the Lord. Their desire was to give their king the kind of advice they thought he wanted to hear. This would please him and he would favor them. Their answer to Ahab's question somehow led **Jehoshaphat** to believe that they did not have the mind of the Lord. So he requested a **prophet** true to **the LORD** of whom they could **inquire** (cf. 2 Kings 3:11).

22:8-12. Ahab replied that there was **one man** of God remaining whom they could contact. However, that one always prophesied evil for Ahab and for that reason Ahab said he hated **him**. Obviously Ahab was more concerned about feeling good than he was about knowing the truth. **Micaiah**, like Elijah, was one of the comparatively few faithful prophets in Israel in that day. Urged on by Jehoshaphat's continuing interest in hearing from **Micaiah**, Ahab sent for him. Perhaps Micaiah lived in or near **Samaria** where this conversation took place. **The threshing floor** was usually an elevated area; it would have been a good place for Ahab and **Jehoshaphat** to prepare themselves for battle. **The gate** of the city was the most popular place to assemble, so a large crowd was gathered including the 400 **prophets**. One of these prophets, **Zedekiah** (cf. v. 24), had even fashioned some **horns** out of **iron** and claimed blasphemously that God had told him that the two allied kings with the horns would **gore the Arameans** to destruction. With this prediction **all the other prophets** agreed, adding their own optimistic promises of victory.

22:13-14. **The messenger who** was sent to get **Micaiah** urged him to **agree with the other prophets in giving an optimistic prediction. But Micaiah** told him that he would utter whatever words **the LORD** gave him regardless of what **others** might say. Like Elijah, Micaiah was prepared to stand alone.

22:15-16. **The king**, probably Ahab the host, **asked... Micaiah** the same question he had asked the other prophets (v. 6). Micaiah seems to have been familiar with this procedure; he had probably been through it several times before. His reply was sarcastic, though probably not delivered in a sarcastic tone which would have been inappropriate for a man of his character. Ahab recognized at once what **Micaiah** was doing. His own reply was equally sarcastic. He had probably never told Micaiah to **swear to tell him nothing but the truth** before, as he did not need to. But Ahab's saying that probably sounded good.

22:17-18. The time for sarcasm was over. **Micaiah** related the burden of the Lord in all its devastating simplicity and force. Micaiah said he had seen, perhaps in a vision, **all Israel scattered over the hills of Gilead like sheep without a shepherd**, wandering and in need of leadership. **The LORD** had told the prophet that **these** sheep had **no master**, obviously a reference to Ahab. After the shepherd would be killed in battle the sheep would return **home** without being pursued by the enemy, Aram. Ahab reacted to this sober warning offhandedly (v. 18; cf. v. 8), unwilling to consider it seriously.

22:19-23. **Micaiah** proceeded to explain the rest of what God had shown him, not about the battle but about the advice both kings had been receiving from the 400 prophets. He called on the two kings to **hear the word of the LORD**. Micaiah **saw... the host of heaven**, the angelic armies of God, assembled **around** God's heavenly **throne**. Whether the conversation Micaiah then described (vv. 20-23) actually took place in heaven or whether it was a revelation given in anthropomorphic terms to help Micaiah and his audience visualize what was taking place on the threshing floor before them, the point was clear to all: The 400 **prophets** spoke with a **lying spirit** (vv. 22-23) to deceive, and to lead Ahab to **disaster** in battle and to **his death** (v. 20). Micaiah, however, spoke the truth. The Lord had apparently permitted a "lying spirit" (i.e., a demon) to speak through the 400 prophets as a means of bringing **Ahab** to his death.

22:24-25. **Zedekiah** (cf. v. 11) certainly understood Micaiah's message as did everyone else. A slap **in the face** was a great insult (cf. Job 16:10; Lam. 3:30; Micah 5:1), greater than it is today. The false prophet brazenly or innocently claimed that he had not invented his prophecy himself but that it had been given to him by the Lord. Micaiah did not need to argue about whose prophecy had come **from the LORD** and whose had come from the lying spirit; time would tell. He was not trying to scare people when there was no real cause for fear. Zedekiah would **find out** who had the true word from the Lord when he fled **to hide in an inner room** (i.e., after Ahab had been killed the false prophets would flee in terror).

22:26-28. Ahab's reaction evidences the blindness and folly that overtakes those who disregard the Word of the Lord. Rather than repenting, as he had done previously (21:27), now hardened in sin to the point of insensibility, Ahab ordered that **Micaiah** be given to **Amon**, the city mayor, **and to Joash, the king's son**.

“King’s son” is apparently a title of a royal official and is not to be taken as the literal son of Ahab (cf. 2 Chron. 28:7; Jer. 36:26; 38:6). Ahab told Amon and Joash to **put** the prophet who had warned him of impending doom **in prison**. **Micaiah** had the final word, however, and it was another gracious but strong warning for Ahab, indicating that the king would not **return** from battle **safely**. The prophet also called on **all** present to remember his **words** for they would prove that **the LORD** had **spoken through** him when his prophecy came to pass.

22:29-33. Despite Micaiah’s warning Ahab, **the king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat**, his ally, **went up to Ramoth Gilead** to face Ben-Hadad II, **the king of Aram**. Perhaps Ahab suggested his plan to **enter the battle... disguised** (probably as a regular soldier or officer) out of fear for his life in view of what Micaiah had said. Jehoshaphat did not realize that this tactic would put him in greater danger until the battle began. He may not have been aware of Ben-Hadad’s anger against Ahab that led the king of Aram to concentrate his attack on **the king of Israel**. Ben-Hadad may have wanted to kill Ahab alone because he knew that without their king the soldiers of Israel would not fight effectively. Probably the fact that Ahab was now breaking his treaty with Ben-Hadad (cf. 20:34) angered the Aramean king too. Dressed in his royal attire **Jehoshaphat** became the target of the whole Aramean army. Under attack he **cried out** something that told the Arameans **he was not** the man they sought. Perhaps he cried out to God as well as to the soldiers since he trusted in and prayed to the Lord.

22:34-36. The manner in which Ahab was fatally wounded is one of many examples in Scripture of God using an incident that would have been regarded as accidental to accomplish His purpose. Ahab was injured by an arrow shot **at random**. The man who shot the arrow did not knowingly aim it at the chink in the king’s **armor**, but God directed him and guided the fatal missile to its mark. The king’s **chariot** was large enough to accommodate Ahab as he sat **propped up in** it to watch the battle until sunset. The reference to Ahab’s **blood** running down **onto the floor of his chariot** sets the stage for the later word about the fulfillment of the prophecy of Ahab’s death (v. 38). The battle broke up when Ahab died; Ben-Hadad had achieved his objective as the Israelites could not take Ramoth Gilead.

22:37-38. The body of Ahab was returned **to Samaria** where he was **buried**. Had he not repented earlier (21:27) Ahab would not have been buried at all (21:28-29). Ahab’s **chariot** was then driven around to an out-of-the-way **pool** where it was **washed**. Ahab was despised by God for his wickedness. The story of Ahab concludes with his **blood** being desecrated in the company of Samaria’s despised **prostitutes** and **dogs**. Ahab died as God had predicted he would (20:42; 21:19, 21).

22:39-40. In excavating Samaria archeologists discovered more than 200 **ivory** figures, panels, and plaques in one storeroom. Ahab used large quantities of ivory to beautify his **palace** in various ways. He also **fortified** several **cities in Israel**. In addition to the projects just mentioned, Ahab ruled capably in spite of the gross spiritual apostasy that characterized his administration. He was generally successful militarily because of his own native ability and God’s mercy on Israel. His alliance with Judah under Jehoshaphat began the first real period of peace between the Northern and Southern Kingdoms since the monarchy had split and it lasted about 30 years until the reign of Jehu began in 841. But in spite of Ahab’s other accomplishments his building a Baal altar and temple and encouraging Baal worship (16:32-33) weakened Israel as never before.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Truth Requested (1 Kings 22:15-18)

15 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!"

16 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?"

17 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."

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

Requesting personally desired guidance (15)

Guidance from friends (1 King 12:8)

8 But Rehoboam rejected the advice the elders gave him and consulted the young men who had grown up with him and were serving him.

Guidance from sinners (Prov 1:10-16)

10 My son, if sinners entice you, do not give in to them. 11 If they say, "Come along with us; let's lie in wait for someone's blood, let's waylay some harmless soul; 12 let's swallow them alive, like the grave, and whole, like those who go down to the pit; 13 we will get all sorts of valuable things and fill our houses with plunder; 14 throw in your lot with us, and we will share a common purse" — 15 my son, do not go along with them, do not set foot on their paths; 16 for their feet rush into sin, they are swift to shed blood.

Guidance from wicked sources (1 Cor 15:33)

33 Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."

Guidance from those whose desire it is to deceive (Eph 5:6)

6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.

Requesting truth (16)

Truth that can be rejoiced in (1 Cor 13:6)

6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

Truth that nothing can be done against (2 Cor 13:8)

8 For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth.

Truth that comes from rightly dividing the Word (2 Tim 2:15)

15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

Truth that brings people to their senses (2 Tim 2:24-26)

24 And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. 25 Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, 26 and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

Request denied by God (17-18)

Denied because God knows what's best (2 Cor 12:8)

8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.

Denied because sometimes it is the consequence of sins (2 Sam 12:16)

16 David pleaded with God for the child. He fasted and went into his house and spent the nights lying on the ground.

Denied because sometimes it takes more spiritual power (Mark 9:29)

29 He replied, "This kind can come out only by prayer."

Denied because of not knowing what to request (Rom 8:26)

26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

Denied because of having the wrong motives (James 4:2-3)

2 You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

Truth Reported (1 Kings 22:19-23)

19 Then Micaiah said, "Therefore hear the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left.

20 And the Lord said, 'Who will persuade Ahab to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?' So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner.

21 Then a spirit came forward and stood before the Lord, and said, 'I will persuade him.'

22 The Lord said to him, 'In what way?' So he said, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And the Lord said, 'You shall persuade him, and also prevail. Go out and do so.'

23 Therefore look! The Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, and the Lord has declared disaster against you."

Report from God the true King (19)

God is true King because He is God of Heaven and earth (Deut 4:39)

39 Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other.

God is true King because He is God of gods and Lord of lords (Deut 10:17)

17 For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes.

God is true King because all the earth and all it contains is His (Ps 24:1)

1 The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;

God is true King because He is over all and in all (Eph 4:5-6)

5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

God is true King because He is King of kings (1 Tim 6:15)

15 which God will bring about in his own time — God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords,

Report of a deceiving spirit (20-22)

Deceiving spirits taught by demons (1 Tim 4:1)

4 The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.

Deceiving spirits that lead away from devotion to God (2 Cor 11:3)

3 But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

Deceiving spirits who are servants of Satan (2 Cor 11:14-15)

14 And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. 15 It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

Deceiving spirits that work through evil men (2 Tim 3:13)

13 while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

Report of false prophets (23)

False prophets who lead people astray (Deut 13:12-15)

12 If you hear it said about one of the towns the Lord your God is giving you to live in 13 that wicked men have arisen among you and have led the people of their town astray, saying, "Let us go and worship other gods" (gods you have not known), 14 then you must inquire, probe and investigate it thoroughly. And if it is true and it has been proved that this detestable thing has been done among you, 15 you must certainly put to the sword all who live in that town. Destroy it completely, both its people and its livestock.

False prophets who deceive (Mark 13:22)

22 For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect — if that were possible.

False prophets from within (Acts 20:30)

30 Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.

False prophets who come in sheep clothing (Matt 7:15)

15 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.

Truth Rejected (1 Kings 22:26-28)

26 So the king of Israel said, "Take Micaiah, and return him to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king's son;

27 and say, 'Thus says the king: "Put this fellow in prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and water of affliction, until I come in peace.'"

28 But Micaiah said, "If you ever return in peace, the Lord has not spoken by me." And he said, "Take heed, all you people!"

Rejection of God's prophet (26)

Rejection that could bring disasters (Prov 1:24-26)

24 But since you rejected me when I called and no one gave heed when I stretched out my hand, 25 since you ignored all my advice and would not accept my rebuke, 26 I in turn will laugh at your disaster; I will mock when calamity overtakes you —

Rejection that is foolish (Rom 1:21-22)

21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools

Rejection that is also rejection of God (1 Thess 4:8)

8 Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.

Rejection that brings God's anger (Isa 5:24-25)

24 Therefore, as tongues of fire lick up straw and as dry grass sinks down in the flames, so their roots will decay and their flowers blow away like dust; for they have rejected the law of the Lord Almighty and spurned the word of the Holy One of Israel. 25 Therefore the Lord's anger burns against his people; his hand is raised and he strikes them down. The mountains shake, and the dead bodies are like refuse in the streets. Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is still upraised.

Rejection by seeking worldly peace (27)

Seeking worldly peace could bring destruction without notice (1 Thess 5:3)

3 While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

Seeking worldly peace is foolish (Prov 29:9)

9 If a wise man goes to court with a fool, the fool rages and scoffs, and there is no peace.

Seeking worldly peace leaves no room for God (Ps 10:4-6)

4 In his pride the wicked does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God. 5 His ways are always prosperous; he is haughty and your laws are far from him; he sneers at all his enemies. 6 He says to himself, "Nothing will shake me; I'll always be happy and never have trouble."

Seeking worldly peace is not like God's peace (John 14:27)

27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

Rejection warning (28)

Warnings that God may not respond (Prov 1:24-26)

24 But since you rejected me when I called and no one gave heed when I stretched out my hand, 25 since you ignored all my advice and would not accept my rebuke, 26 I in turn will laugh at your disaster; I will mock when calamity overtakes you —

Warnings about disobedience (Hosea 9:17)

17 My God will reject them because they have not obeyed him; they will be wanderers among the nations.

Warnings about refusing God's call (Matt 22:2-3)

2 "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. 3 He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.

Warnings about hearing and not doing (Matt 7:26-27)

26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

Summit Meeting in Samaria (1 Kings 22:1-28)

For the next three years, after the defeat of Ben Hadad and Syria, Israel enjoyed a time of peace. During this time, there was no war between Israel and Syria, and some believe this was the time when the two nations jointly fought against Assyria at the battle of Karkar. Opinions differ as to how successful the Assyrians were, though they claimed a great victory over Syria and its allies. This was also a time of peace between Israel and Judah, due at least in part to the alliance Ahab and Jehoshaphat formed, sealed by the marriage of Ahab and Jezebel's daughter, Athaliah, to Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram (2 Kings 8:18, 26-27; 2 Chronicles 18:1).

Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, came to visit Ahab at Samaria. Ahab was distressed that Ben Hadad had not returned the city of Ramoth Gilead as he had promised (see 1 Kings 20:34). Ahab believed he was justified in seeking to repossess Ramoth Gilead; after all, it was property that rightly belonged to Israel. Jehoshaphat offered to join forces with Ahab. I wonder whether Jehoshaphat really cared about Ramoth Gilead, or whether he simply seized the opportunity to finally crush Syria once and for all, and thus to eliminate this nation's threat to Judah's national security. For whatever reason, Jehoshaphat committed himself and Judah to the battle.

But the king of Judah seems to have some misgivings about this attack. Was this alliance with Ahab wise? Was it the will of God? It did not make sense to go into battle without consulting God. And so Jehoshaphat seems to place a last minute condition on his commitment: **“Let God’s will first be discerned, as on other occasions in the past”** (see 2 Samuel 5:19, 23-24). Ahab was glad to oblige. He assembled 400 prophets, and so Ahab asked them about the wisdom of his plan to attack Syria. Their response was unanimous and confident: Most certainly! Let the king attack. The “higher power” will be with them.

In the NET Bible, we find the term, **“the sovereign one,”** in verse 6. This nicely translates the Hebrew term *Adoni*, while distinguishing this reference to **“god”** from others. The term which specifically refers to the God of Israel is **“Yahweh,”** and is translated **“LORD”** in the NASB. The Hebrew term **“Elohim”** is more general, and although it is used of the God of Israel, it is also used of “gods” more generally. *Adoni* is the term used by Obadiah in 1 Kings 18:7, 10 to refer to Elijah. Ahab uses the term to refer to Ben Hadad when he surrenders to him in 1 Kings 20:4. It is clearly a “watered-down” term for God, the kind of term that could comfortably be used in reference to a “god” by false prophets. Speaking of false prophets, doesn’t the number (400) sound familiar to you? I must confess that it appears to me as though these “prophets” were “retreads.” I wonder if these are not the same 400 prophets of the Asherah, mentioned in 1 Kings 18:19. The 400 prophets of the Asherah did not seem to show up for the contest on Mount Carmel. And after the contest, they may have downplayed their former role, declaring themselves to be in “general practice.”

One thing is for sure—Jehoshaphat is not at all convinced by their performance, no matter how impressive it may have been. That is why he asks, **“Is there not a prophet of the LORD still here, that we may ask him?”** (verse 7). Ahab understands Jehoshaphat’s concerns exactly and responds that there is one prophet of the LORD available, but this fellow, Micaiah, always speaks contrary to the king’s plans. Ahab admits that he despises the fellow. Jehoshaphat cautions Ahab about speaking this way about the LORD’s prophet. And so Ahab reluctantly sends for Micaiah, certain that he will disapprove of his plan to attack Ramoth Gilead.

1 Kings 22:10-14 seems to describe a kind of intermission. These verses inform the reader that two things happened prior to Micaiah’s appearance before Ahab and Jehoshaphat. First of all, the 400 prophets, under the direction of Zedekiah, put on a more dramatic presentation, seeking to convince Jehoshaphat that this attack was the will of God (since they know that Ahab has already determined to go to war with Syria). Zedekiah brings out the visual aids. He employs a pair of iron horns to show how Israel and Judah will **“gore”** the Syrians. Second, as Micaiah is being brought to where the two kings are waiting, he is told what the other prophets have already indicated to be **“God’s will.”** He is urged to agree with the majority position for once. Micaiah responds that he must speak as God directs him.

If I am reading the text correctly, it is not Jehoshaphat who is doing the speaking, but rather the king of Israel. This is his “show,” and he is determined to convince Jehoshaphat that God wants them to go to war with Syria. And so Ahab asks Micaiah whether or not they should attack Ramoth Gilead. Something about Micaiah’s response troubled Ahab. Was it his lack of enthusiasm, or perhaps a tone of voice which conveyed, “All right, go ahead if you must—it’s what you’re going to do anyway.”? Or was it the fact that Micaiah’s answer was favorable? Micaiah’s prophecies were never favorable—ever! (22:8). The amazing thing is that Ahab chose to press the matter. Why didn’t he simply accept Micaiah’s prophetic response as a “Yes” and go on? Perhaps he knew that Jehoshaphat was not convinced, that he sensed something was lacking in the prophet’s reply.

For whatever reason, Ahab rebukes Micaiah for his response and insists that he speak the truth. What irony! Micaiah grants Ahab’s request. Would this king like to know what God thinks of this conflict? Micaiah has “seen” the shepherd smitten and the flock scatter. Let the king know that this battle will cost him his life. He will perish in the battle, and the troops will scatter. This proposed battle will be a complete failure.

Jehoshaphat was right there the whole time taking this conversation in. If the king of Israel was going to perish, and all the troops were going to scatter, what did this say to the king of Judah? This was a war he should avoid like the plague. There was no better time to “get out” than now. Let him withdraw his offer to support Ahab in the battle. These thoughts may have been going through Jehoshaphat’s mind when he heard Ahab say, “I told you so, didn’t I?” “I told you that this is what Micaiah would say.” And so, rather than acknowledging that his plan was not the will of God, Ahab took the words of Micaiah as reinforcing what he had already said in verse 8—Micaiah always prophesies disaster. Micaiah had performed as he had predicted. And so Ahab’s “prophecy” (that Micaiah will speak against his planned attack) is given more weight than Micaiah’s prophecy that the plan will fail.

Micaiah has much more to say. He’s just beginning to warm up. Ahab has done a most impressive job through his 400 prophets, who have all indicated that the attack on Ramoth Gilead will be a success. Now, Micaiah gives his own interpretation—a divine interpretation—of the 400 prophets’ endorsement of Ahab’s plan. Do

these prophets speak for God as they claim? No! And so Micaiah explains the role that they have played. They may not speak for God, but they are accomplishing God's purposes. God's intention is to bring Ahab down, to remove him as king of Israel. He has been rebuked often enough. Now it is time to remove him as Israel's king. The 400 prophets are "spirit-filled," but not by God's Spirit. They are being used by God to deceive Ahab, so that he will precipitate the very battle in which he is destined to die.

These are strong words, and Zedekiah gets the point. Micaiah claims to speak for Yahweh, while Zedekiah and his ilk speak by means of another spirit—the spirit of deception, a lying spirit—and thus deceive Ahab. Zedekiah's prophetic pride is offended. How dare Micaiah claim to have the Spirit of God, the "Spirit" which Zedekiah professes to possess. Zedekiah punctuates his words with a blow to the jaw of Micaiah, but God's spokesman is not silenced. He responds that Zedekiah will know soon enough who possesses God's Spirit, especially when he seeks to hide himself in an inner room (presumably after Israel's devastating defeat).

Ahab has had enough of Micaiah. He instructs that Micaiah be placed on minimum rations and held in custody until his return (victorious, of course). Micaiah accepts the challenge that is implied. In effect he says, "Very well, let this be the test. If you return, the LORD has not spoken through me. But if you perish in the battle and don't return, then let those listening take heed to what I say." Micaiah wants this to be a public challenge, not just a private matter. After all, Ahab and apparently Zedekiah are not going to survive to learn their lesson.

(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/13-life-and-times-elijah-prophet-ahab-buys-farm-or-payday-someday-1-kings-211-2240>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Today's passage illustrates the timeless struggle to relate to the truth properly. The individuals in today's lesson provide us with three stances that people exposed to God's truth can take. King Ahab is easily vilified due to his idolatry, miscarriages of justice, and antipathy toward God's prophets. However, whenever we find ourselves willfully in rebellion to the truth, we see shades of Ahab within our own spirits. When we find ourselves in this precarious state and are then admonished by concerned friends, we should realize that this is a form of God's mercy, even when their words challenge and inconvenience us (Proverbs 27:5-6). Yet we need to be alert to possible Ahab-like tendencies in others and be prepared to admonish those who clearly ignore God in their choosing of unholy paths. In Jehoshaphat, we have a case study of a person who desired to please God but lacked consistent, faithful follow-through. All believers, from senior ministers to occasional pew-fillers, can find themselves walking in this king's shoes. That happens when we are hesitant, for whatever reason, to execute a God-given plan. Any of us can find ourselves tempted as Jehoshaphat was. So when we encounter a fellow believer in a similar situation, the correct response is to offer encouragement and wise counsel. As a prophet, Micaiah was bound by the simple adage that he was only to preach the word that God gave him and not add or subtract from that word (compare Deuteronomy 4:2). We see Micaiah's ability to think and speak independently in the face of a hostile crowd of 400 false prophets, two powerful leaders, and a prevailing climate of wickedness. The prophet's outspokenness reminds us that speaking truth can result in very negative consequences. Micaiah was aware of this, but was still obedient to God. We can build a life centered on truth through the regular study of God's Word. That's how we discipline ourselves to hear the voice of the Lord and to obey that voice—one opportunity at a time. Many people today, as in Micaiah's day, prefer to question God's truth rather than their own sinful patterns. This isn't to say that doubt and confusion are never legitimate. But we must be aware of the possibility that sometimes our "confusion" over truth has the function of legitimizing ungodly behavior. We must echo apostle Paul's words, "Let God be true, but every man a liar" (Romans 3:4).

Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary

False Prophets - King Jehoshaphat, the ruler over Judah, and King Ahab of Israel decided to team up and go to war together against Ramoth Gilead. The false prophets in Ahab's court encouraged the two kings to attack: "God is with you/" they said.

God's Prophet - However, one spokesman for God, Micaiah, stood independent of the others. He committed himself to listen to God and repeat only what he heard. That's why King Ahab hated Micaiah. Whenever Micaiah delivered a divine message to the throne, he pointed out the king's evil ways and how God planned to deal with this wicked king. However, when Jehoshaphat heard about Micaiah's reputation, he insisted on hearing this prophet of God.

God's Truth - At first, Micaiah spoke sarcastically, mimicking and repeating the lies of the 400 false prophets. King Ahab then demanded for the prophet to tell the truth and nothing but the truth. Micaiah flatly reported the battle would end in defeat, and the king would die with his men. Further, the prophet declared he saw the Lord in His throne room with the host of heaven. One of the heavenly beings said he would be a deceiving spirit and convince Ahab to attack Ramoth Gilead. When Micaiah delivered this vivid picture, it enraged Ahab who ordered Micaiah to be jailed and fed only enough to keep him alive. Micaiah responded, if the king came back alive from the battle, he was a lying prophet. Sure enough, Ahab died in battle.

Courage from God - Micaiah's courage in the face of social pressure serves as a model for us, calling us to stand on God's truth. We must stand for God's Word and be committed to truth amid a society that continually promotes deceit and fabrication.