

Is there Still a Prophet of God Among Us?

In 1936, King Edward VIII announced that he was about to marry an American woman who was twice-divorced. Because of the relationship between the monarchy and Church of England, a constitutional crisis occurred. King Edward had to abdicate the throne, he would no longer be king or royalty. A sad end to a foolish king. Our story today is found in I Kings 22 and it also demonstrates a sad end to a king's life who was very foolish in his decisions. This chapter comes at the end of King Ahab's life, a life filled with wickedness and rebellion against God. To better understand this passage, I think we should go back and see that there are 3 warnings to Ahab, including this last one in chapter 22. In I Kings 20:41-42 the text states, "Then he quickly removed the bandage from his eyes, and the king of Israel recognized that he was one of the prophets. He said to the king, "This is what the LORD says. Because you set a man free, whom I had devoted to destruction, it will be your life for his life and your people for his people." This unnamed prophet confronts Ahab because he spared Ben Hadad, king of Aram. Then in chapter 21 king Ahab with the help of Jezebel steals Naboth's vineyard and murders him. Elijah then confronts Ahab for this wickedness and pronounces judgment over Ahab, Jezebel and his entire house. And even though Ahab does repent, when we come to chapter 22, Ahab defiantly goes out to battle. And here another prophet, Micaiah, prophecies that all the king's prophets are liars and that destruction is coming to Ahab. It is a sad end to a life lived in rebellion against God.

And I think it is quite interesting that in the midst of this climax to Ahab's life, you have this battle between true and false prophecy. And here is what I would submit to you, the rebellion of kings produces false prophecy. Let me say that again, the rebellion of kings produces false prophecy. But even though this is the case, God's true prophet still tells the truth no matter the consequences. And we see the stark difference between a true prophet and those false ones on the king's payroll.

I Kings 22:1-28

Three years went by without any warfare between Aram and Israel. ²In the third year Jehoshaphat king of Judah went down to visit the king of Israel.

³ The king of Israel said to his officials, “Don’t you know that Ramoth Gilead belongs to us? But we have done nothing to take it from the king of Aram.” ⁴ Then he said to Jehoshaphat, “Will you come with me to wage war at Ramoth Gilead?”

Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, “I am like you. My people are like your people. My horses are like your horses.”

⁵ But Jehoshaphat also said to the king of Israel, “First seek the word of the LORD.”

⁶ So the king of Israel assembled the prophets, four hundred men, and he said to them, “Should I go up to make war at Ramoth Gilead or should I refrain?”

They said, “Go up, for the Lord will give it into the hand of the king.”

⁷ But Jehoshaphat said, “Is there no longer a prophet of the LORD here who can inquire of the LORD for us?”

⁸ Then the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “There is one man who could inquire of the LORD for us, but I hate him because he does not prophesy anything good about me, but only bad. He is Micaiah son of Imlah.”

Jehoshaphat said, “The king should not talk like that.”

⁹ So the king of Israel summoned one of his court officials and said, “Quickly bring Micaiah son of Imlah here.”

¹⁰ Now the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah were seated, each on his own throne, arrayed in their robes. They were sitting by the threshing floor at the entrance to the gate of Samaria. All the prophets were prophesying before them.

¹¹ Zedekiah son of Kena’anah had made iron horns for himself, and he said, “This is what the LORD says. With these you will gore Aram to death.” ¹² All the prophets were prophesying in this same way: “Go up to Ramoth Gilead and triumph, for the LORD will give it into the hand of the king.”

¹³ The messenger who was sent to summon Micaiah said to him, “Pay attention to the words of the prophets. With one mouth they are promising

good things to the king. Let your words be like the words of one of them and say something good.”

¹⁴ But Micaiah said, “As surely as the LORD lives, whatever the LORD says to me, that is what I will say.”

¹⁵ Then he came to the king, and the king asked him, “Micaiah, should we go up to make war on Ramoth Gilead, or should we refrain?”

He answered him, “Go up and triumph, for the LORD will give them into the hand of the king.”

¹⁶ Then the king said to him, “How many times must I make you swear that you will tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?”

¹⁷ Then Micaiah said, “I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains like sheep that have no shepherd, and the LORD said, ‘They have no masters. Each one should return to his home in peace.’”

¹⁸ Then the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “Didn’t I tell you that he does not prophesy anything good about me, but only bad?”

¹⁹ Then Micaiah said:

Now hear this word from the LORD.

I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and the whole army of heaven was standing around him, on his right and on his left.

²⁰ Then the LORD said, “Who will entice Ahab so that he goes up and falls at Ramoth Gilead?”

One spirit said this. Another one said that. ²¹ Finally a spirit came and stood before the LORD and said, “I will entice him.”

The LORD said to him, “How?”

²² He said, “I will go and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.”

Then the LORD said, “You will entice him successfully. Go and do it.”

²³ Now look! The LORD has put a lying spirit into the mouths of all these prophets of yours, for the LORD has decreed disaster for you.

²⁴ Then Zedekiah son of Kena'anah came up and struck Micaiah on his cheek and said, "Where is this pathway on which the spirit of the LORD has traveled from me to speak to you?"

²⁵ Micaiah said, "Listen to me. You will see it on the day you go into the inner room to hide."

²⁶ Then the king of Israel said, "Seize Micaiah and take him back to Amon, the administrator of the city, and to Joash son of the king. ²⁷ Then say, "This is what the king says. Put this man in prison and feed him nothing more than bread and water until I come back safely."

²⁸ Then Micaiah said, "If you ever come back safely, then the LORD has not spoken through me." Then he said, "Hear this, you people, all of you!"

So, what is going on here – well, Ahab is planning another Syrian campaign. Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, apparently is making a state visit to Ahab, king of Israel. It is likely because Ahab and Jehoshaphat had a marriage alliance, that Ahab invited Jehoshaphat to help him with his military campaign. So, Ahab asks Jehoshaphat, "will you help me wage war against Ramoth Gilead?" Jehoshaphat heartily agrees since they have an alliance. But remember, even though Jehoshaphat has aligned himself to a wicked king, he is a good and righteous king. The marriage alliance was certainly a mistake considering what happens here and later with Athaliah. Yet, Jehoshaphat is still a good king. So, he requests that they first seek a word from the Lord.

Well, ironically, that is no problem whatsoever for Ahab. He has plenty of prophets in his pocket. In this case, there are 400 of them. Do we really think Ahab was worried in the least about asking the prophets for a word. Likely not, these prophets were clearly yes-men. Prophets on the payroll to do whatever the king wanted in the name of God. So, instead of following what God says, it is the king's word that is followed.

Here is my question, do we still have these prophets today? Of course we do! When the prophets get the question from the king, what is their answer? "Go up, for the Lord will give it into the hand of the king." Now let's stop here a moment. These are supposed to be the spiritual leaders of the nation, but

instead they are a governmental rubber stamp. These prophets will approve anything the king says.

Do you remember Daniel chapter 2 when king Nebuchadnezzar asked his wise men to interpret his dream? The king becomes very angry with them when they do not interpret his dream. But then Daniel asks the king for time so he could interpret the dream. Why? What does Daniel do? He goes home, grabs his friends, and they pray for an answer. God then reveals the mystery to Daniel and he saves all the wise men. Do any of these so-called prophets in I Kings 22 request time or pray? No, they just give the king what he wants.

And now we come to an incredibly important verse in the chapter, verse 7. "But Jehoshaphat said, 'Is there no longer a prophet of the LORD here who can inquire of the LORD for us?'" That is a very strong statement! King Jehoshaphat immediately saw the hypocrisy and false religion on display. We must ask ourselves and be honest, don't we all want people who will just do what we ask no matter what. Of course, but that is not necessarily righteous. There are many people who placate to leaders – whatever they say goes. Well, when we put this in a spiritual context, it becomes very dangerous. Prophets of God are only to speak God's word! When you put God's authority behind decisions and words that are not his, there are consequences. Anytime a leader is making a decision, whether major or not, they should inquire of the Lord. And going to war certainly is a major decision. Our culture does not work the same way today as it did in Old Testament, but there are influences in the culture. There are people, religious or not, who influence major decisions. A wise king will surround himself with many counselors. But if they are like these false prophets, who just do what the king wants, sooner or later disaster will come.

The good news is there is more to the story. There is one prophet who will tell the truth. But of course, Ahab hates him. Why? Because he never prophesies good about Ahab. I wonder why? So, at the request of Jehoshaphat, Micaiah the prophet is called. Now, before Micaiah gets there, there is a very interesting throne scene in the text. Both kings are sitting on their thrones. And believe it or not, the 400 prophets are still prophesying. One of the prophets, Zedekiah, acts out a prophetic drama. He makes iron horns and prophesies that Ahab will gore Aram to death. And all the other prophet agree with Zedekiah, all are prophesying that the Lord will grant Israel victory over Ramoth Gilead. Many voices are saying the same thing, the only problem is, all

the voices are wrong, they are lying. God was not going to grant Ahab victory this time. In fact, his reign was about to end.

This scene reminds us of Elijah on Mount Carmel. When Elijah stood against not only the king, but all 400 prophets. Here we have something similar. Micaiah stands against Ahab and his 400 prophets. How does one man say something different than everyone else? Well in this case, Micaiah is the only true prophet, the one who is obedient to God's word.

So, as we come to verse 13 we find that a messenger tells Micaiah that all the prophets are prophesying the same thing – “with one mouth they are promising good things to the king.” And not only that, the prophet is told he needs to agree and say something good. In other words, fall into line, boy, say what everyone else is saying. And how does the true prophet of God respond to that mandate? He says, “As surely as the LORD lives, whatever the LORD says to me, that is what I will say.” And there it is – a very telling sign of a true prophet. If we speak for God, popular or not, we say what he says. This is not always easy, but essential if anyone is going to be called a spiritual leader of any caliber. Speak what God speaks, say what he says. Even if the entire world disagrees with you. Even if the Church doesn't agree, God is the authority.

I said this at the beginning but I will say it again. False prophecy abounds when kings are in rebellion against God. And there is no doubt false prophecy abounds today. But there are still true prophets of God, for God is still on his throne.

The prophecy of Micaiah has a lot of irony, he first prophesies like all the other prophets. He says, “Go up and triumph, for the Lord will give them into the hand of the king.” Now, it is likely this was said in a sarcastic tone, however, in a way, this too is the prophecy. When we get to the heavenly throne scene, in verse 20, the Lord asks, “Who will entice Ahab so that he goes up and falls at Ramoth Gilead?” But of course God does not lie, in fact, by the true prophet, he reveals what is happening. Ahab has the truth by Micaiah, and he can repent and not go to war.

Either way, Ahab knows the first word from Micaiah is a lie, even though that is exactly what all the other prophets said! The king tells Micaiah to tell him the truth. Are you ready for this, this is what the true prophet says:

Then Micaiah said, "I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains like sheep that have no shepherd, and the LORD said, "They have no masters. Each one should return to his home in peace.'" (vs. 17)

Then Micaiah said:

Now hear this word from the LORD.

I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and the whole army of heaven was standing around him, on his right and on his left.

²⁰ Then the LORD said, "Who will entice Ahab so that he goes up and falls at Ramoth Gilead?"

One spirit said this. Another one said that. ²¹ Finally a spirit came and stood before the LORD and said, "I will entice him."

The LORD said to him, "How?"

²² He said, "I will go and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets."

Then the LORD said, "You will entice him successfully. Go and do it."

²³ Now look! The LORD has put a lying spirit into the mouths of all these prophets of yours, for the LORD has decreed disaster for you. (vs. 19-23)

So, at this point Ahab has the truth – he can change, but he doesn't. His prophets are lying to him and he knows it. But what does the king do, he goes to war anyway.

We live in a day and time when evil kings rule, and certainly false prophecy abounds. But I want you to remember something – there are two kings in this story, a good king, Jehoshaphat, and an evil king, Ahab. If you consider for a moment the life of Ahab and how it ends, you should also consider that is not what God intends. In other words, it does not have to work out this way. Let's also consider the life of Jehoshaphat – in 2 Chronicles 17, the text tells us how the king sends out teachers to teach God's law in all the cities of Judah. This brought peace to the land. God greatly blessed Jehoshaphat because of his righteousness. In 2 Chronicles 19 we learn how Jehoshaphat appointed judges and reformed the judicial system. Then in 2 Chronicles 20 when an enemy comes against the king, he prays publicly asking God to save the nation. In this

moment of crisis, Jehoshaphat points the nation to God. And guess what happens? God delivers his people. No surprise there. In addition, in this story God sends a prophet to encourage the king and his people.

¹⁴The Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel, the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite from the descendants of Asaph. He was standing in the middle of the assembly. ¹⁵He said:

Listen, all Judah, all you residents of Jerusalem, and King Jehoshaphat. This is what the LORD says to you. Do not be afraid. Do not be terrified because of this huge horde, for the battle is not yours. It is God's. ¹⁶Tomorrow go down against them. Look, they are coming up by the Ascent of Ziz. You will find them at the end of the valley east of the Wilderness of Jeruel.

¹⁷It is not up to you to fight this battle. Just take up your position. Stand still, Judah and Jerusalem, and see that the victory of the LORD is with you. Do not be afraid. Do not be terrified. Tomorrow go out against them. The LORD will be with you.

¹⁸Then Jehoshaphat bowed down with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the residents of Jerusalem fell down before the LORD to worship the LORD.
2 Chronicles 20:14-18

Then if you go to verse 30, the text says, "Then Jehoshaphat's kingdom was quiet. His God gave him rest on every side." I point all of this out to show that things can be different. We can choose to do things God's way. Leaders can choose to repent and do things God's way. There are consequences for rebellion against God, but at the same time, there are benefits and blessings for obedience.

Now, my premise for today's sermon was that wicked and rebellious kings will produce false prophecy or false prophets. We can see this in our culture today. The deep wickedness and rebellion at the top is at an all-time high. So is false prophecy. Yet, there is still a voice from heaven. God still calls men and women to his prophetic office who will tell the truth and say what God says.

In the next couple of months we will have new leadership in our nation. My hope is this will bring righteousness, justice, hope and truth back to our nation. I don't know if we will get an Ahab or a Jehoshaphat, but I do know this – either way God will continue to call his true prophets to speak his true word.

Leaders can choose to listen to lies or the truth. God can restore our nation, things can be different.

In 1691 Philip Jacob Spener was invited to come to Berlin by Frederick III, who in 1701 would become Frederick I of Prussia. One of Spener's greatest achievements was the founding of Halle University in 1694. This project was funded by Frederick. Spener invited August Hermann Francke to teach at Halle and pastor Saint George Church. Francke taught Greek, languages and theology. Halle University became a center for academic and spiritual life. Francke also founded an orphanage and school for children. The curriculum was based on the Bible and students learned Biblical Greek and Hebrew. Francke also founded a school to train teachers, and he helped set up a Bible Institute. The Institute printed and distributed Bibles, published hymn books, prayer books, and other materials. The Prussian army had Halle trained chaplains which invited a spiritual tone to their military. And many Halle University graduates worked in Prussia's royal school, the Collegium Fredericianum.

Good kings and good people following Jesus Christ can still make a difference. King Jehoshaphat asked, "Is there no longer a prophet of the Lord here who can inquire of the Lord for us?" The answer is in fact YES! There are still prophets of God who tell the truth. The question for us is who are we going to listen to and how will we respond? Sometimes the crowd is wrong! Sometimes there is only one or a few telling the truth. But God still gives truth a voice and still gives leaders a choice.

Do we want an Ahab or a Jehoshaphat? Do we want truth and justice or wickedness? Is there still a prophet of God among us? And if so, what is he saying?