

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

## Justice Served I Kings 22:1-39

**Intro:** The last chapter of II Kings is also the last we will see of old Ahab. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> passage in a 3-volume set of chapters that reveal Ahab's stubborn defiance to the Word of God. In **ch20**, because of Ahab's spineless moderation in opposition to God's Word, both he and Israel face destruction. In **ch21**, because of his heartless oppression of Naboth, Ahab's household will be exterminated. In **ch22**, because of Ahab's thick-headed stubbornness, he will lose his life. The lesson of these chapters is clear: those who choose to defy the Word of God court destruction. This is a long passage with plenty of exciting material so let's just jump right in.

**1-8** – This is 3 years after Ahab had let his Syrian captive Ben-hadad escape Yahweh's justice. Ahab let him go free with the promise of returning some real estate to Israel. Apparently, Ben-hadad failed to keep his promise or didn't follow through with it completely because Syria still controlled Ramoth-Gilead, an Israelite city that was strategically important because it set right on the north-south trade route that went from Syria to Egypt. Whoever controlled that city also controlled the trade route which meant they collected tolls from all the caravans. This city had been taken by the Syrians and Ahab is kicking around the idea of going over there and taking it back but he'll need some help.

Enter Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. From all accounts, Jehoshaphat was a godly man, which begs the question: what in the world is he doing rubbing elbows with the likes of pagan Ahab? It seems that while Jehoshaphat was a godly man, he wasn't particularly an intelligent man. He scored high in piety and low in sense. He had just stupidly married his son off to one of Ahab's daughters (Athaliah) in the hopes of bringing about a lasting peace between the 2 nations so now he has painted himself in to Ahab's corner. Of course, Ramoth-Gilead was important to Jehoshaphat too because it was only 40 miles away from Jerusalem. Those Syrians were too close for comfort.

Ahab asks Jehoshaphat if he would like to join Israel in regaining Ramoth-Gilead and you see his response in **4b**; which is a diplomatic way of saying,

“Sure, why not.” Note that it is only after he agrees to go with him that the king of Judah seeks to obtain the Word of Yahweh on the matter. Granted, at least he seeks it, but it usually better to seek God’s guidance before you make plans and enter into binding agreements. Of course, this is no problem for Ahab as he keeps plenty of prophets around for just such occasions. He asks his collection of clergymen if he should go out to battle and they all unanimously approve of the venture.

Jehoshaphat is not impressed. Maybe it was all too easy or maybe he smelled a rat. Regardless, he asks if there is any prophet of Yahweh to be called. Jehoshaphat wants to hear the real deal and he knows he hasn’t heard it. Who are these prophets? We know they’re not employed by Baal or Asherah temples because they speak in Yahweh’s name (11), claim to have Yahweh’s Spirit (24), promise Yahweh’s success (12) and believe they deliver Yahweh’s word (5). They were more likely prophets connected with the pagan Jeroboam cult that mixed the worship of Yahweh with bull worship. These prophets practiced prophesying as a trade, without any call from God and were constantly in the service of the various kings of Israel.

Regardless of who they were, they weren’t prophets of Yahweh in the way Jehoshaphat defined them. He wanted to hear from a bona fide prophet of Yahweh. “Do you have any of them still around?” Ahab’s response is blunt, “There’s still one guy but I hate him because he never has anything good to say about me!” Jehoshaphat’s response: No way! But Ahab was correct: Micaiah wasn’t a Yes-man looking to curry any royal favor nor did he sit around hoping the other 400 prophets would invite him to speak at their next prophecy conference.

Ahab hated Micaiah; rather, he hated the word that he spoke. He couldn’t stomach the bluntness of the word. Ahab wasn’t concerned if the word was true or false but only if it was supportive or not. “He never says anything positive about me.” Ahab considers Micaiah’s faithfulness to Yahweh’s word as contrariness. As bad as that is, what’s worse is that Ahab has spent most of his reign ridding his kingdom of Yahweh’s true prophets. Now, when he needs one, there’s still at least one! What a divine kindness that there is yet one man through whom Ahab has access to the truth. He is not totally cut off from the word of God!

Sadly, Ahab doesn’t see it that way. He doesn’t see the relentless

truthfulness of God's word as God's being stubbornly faithful to him by repeatedly telling him what he doesn't want to hear. As ridiculous as Ahab's problem with God's Word sounds to our ears, it's not that far from the stance of many modern congregations today. There are churches out there that advertise as one of their attractions a "non-judgmental atmosphere." What does that mean? Sure, we shouldn't go around condemning each other for our faults but that's a given in any body of believers. Does this "benefit" mean they will refrain from negative comments so as not to make anyone feel guilty – or, God forbid they should make anyone feel bad about themselves. How will God's Word be delivered in a church like that? How will the leadership ever hope to press home the clear Word of God in all its searing honesty? Maybe that will need to be sacrificed in order to maintain the non-judgmental ambiance. Ahab would be quite comfortable in that church.

**9-14** – So Ahab snaps his fingers and command Micaiah be brought before him (from prison). But notice the scene: 2 kings in all their royal regalia sitting on temporary throne at the gate of Samaria. Everyone knows it's a council of war. The 400 prophets go about spouting their heart-warming propaganda until one guy takes center stage in a Loki costume, iron horns and all, and acts out an ox-goring charade. Church is always fun when Zedekiah is there!

Don't assume Zed is some weird prophet from the Pentecostal fringe. OT prophets often combined symbolic actions with verbal declaration. Zed's not just horning in on the event; he's likely attempting to make a scriptural application. He may well have **Deut 33:17** in mind as his sermon text. This is part of Moses' blessing upon the Joseph tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh, the tribes that made up the core of the northern kingdom of Ahab's reign. Moses said these tribes will have horns like a wild ox with which they will push (gore) the peoples (enemies). Zed uses Moses' verb for to gore in his prophetic sermon to Ahab (**11**). He's not just talking out of his head; he has a scriptural basis for his prophecy! He's just applying the biblical text to a new situation. Surely the peoples Moses says will be gored includes these Syrians! Ahab should proceed because Zed has given him a slip out of God's promise box.

This is what Micaiah would be up against: 400 prophets, all saying the same thing with one employing symbolic action, using the prophetic formula of

“Thus says the Lord...” delivering a prophecy anchored in biblical promise with unanimous agreement all around. How could Micaiah dare bring any different word to this glorious party? At least that’s what the royal messenger was thinking as he escorted Micaiah from prison. Every party must have a pooper and Micaiah had the reputation of being #1! “Let’s not ruffle any feathers, just parrot the popular position all will be well.” Micaiah can recognize pressure when he hears it and his response is solemn and to the point (14).

Micaiah has just nailed something here that neither Ahab nor his messenger understands. They both assume that the prophet controls the word that they bring. Ahab’s comment in v8 implies that Micaiah didn’t have to always be so down-in-the-mouth; he could speak a kinder, gentler word if he wanted to. The messenger assumes Micaiah could agree with the other 400 prophets if he only would. They don’t understand a true prophet’s position: that they are in bondage to the Word of God. This means God’s Word is free and can’t be manipulated by kings or messengers or even fancy prophets with iron horns. Whatever word Yahweh gives to a prophet, that’s what the prophet must speak.

They’re not free to massage, shape, bend or pervert the word. The Word of God must be passed on as given. The true prophet is in bondage to the unchanging Word of God. The Word of God is free but the servant of God is in bondage to it. This truth applies as much to modern day pastors as it did to OT prophets of Micaiah’s day.

**15-18** – Micaiah shows up and, strangely enough, he agrees with all the other prophets! Yet, his response must have contained some sarcasm because Ahab immediately recognized this was a ruse. His response in **16** reflects that. It appears that this was the normal interchange between these two, Micaiah would tell Ahab what he wanted to hear and Ahab would demand the truth. Notice the strange contradiction in Ahab’s heart: he hates the truth, yet he insists on having it. He doesn’t want the truth in order to follow it but only to know it. In this story, Ahab hates the truth (**8**) he refuses the truth (**29**) and yet he fears the truth (**30**). This is the heart of the natural man: un-convicted, unconvicted.

Micaiah turns from sarcasm to somberness and tells Ahab the truth (**17**). This verse contains 2 sober truths: 1) If he goes up to Ramoth-Gilead, Ahab will die. 2) When Ahab is dead, Israel will have peace. There you have it

king! This is what Yahweh wanted me to tell you. Should you go up to Ramoth-Gilead? What do you think? Of course, why did Micaiah's message differ so much from the other prophets? Zed even had Scripture to back his prophecy up with! But, Micaiah had the direct word from Yahweh and old Zed overlooked the fact that the fulfillment of the entire blessing of Moses was contingent on Israel's faithfulness to Yahweh. He pulled his text out of context!

Why did Micaiah play prophetic games with Ahab? Isn't sarcasm a bit flippant for a true prophet addressing a king? But Micaiah's sarcasm was probably more sad than flippant. He spouts the party line in 15 for the simple fact that it doesn't make any difference what the word of Yahweh is, Ahab won't listen to it. Ahab has arrived at the place where it doesn't matter if Micaiah speaks truth, falsehood or gibberish. If Ahab is beyond following truth why should he have it in the first place? He may inquire of it as just a formality to placate Jehoshaphat but it will not change his mind or determine his path. God's Word has become irrelevant to him. Can you think of anything more frightening?

**19-23** – This explains why Micaiah can stand before the war council of 2 kings and all the courtiers and the 400 prophets and bravely give an opposing word. He can do this because he has been granted a glimpse into Yahweh's council room. Clearly, Yahweh's council is given in direct contrast to Ahab's in 10-12. Both depict royal scenes with kings upon their thrones. The 1<sup>st</sup> scene has 2 kings listening to cheerleaders challenge them to go on offense while in the 2<sup>nd</sup> scene, the sovereign King of all determines the way in which He will dispose of Ahab. Is there any question as to which king's decision will determine history? Not in Micaiah's mind.

Micaiah gives us some interesting insight into the behind-the-scenes workings of the spiritual world but time doesn't allow us to dwell on it right now. The text is clear enough: Yahweh is looking for viable options and volunteers to lead Ahab to his destruction. After several plans are submitted and rejected, a spirit steps forward with a winner, "I'll put a lying spirit in the mouths of his prophets." Yahweh says, "That'll do it" and sends him off to it. If the message wasn't clear enough, Micaiah adds a harsh summation, "the Lord has declared disaster against you."

I'll admit that nearly all of this is unsettling to our puny western theological

minds (but why would God...). Some may ask, “Is it not unfair for Yahweh to deceive Ahab?” That’s the wrong question. Apparently, you didn’t read the text. There is no deception because the Lord clearly and graciously tells Ahab exactly what’s going on: he’s being lured to his death by his own prophets! Yahweh candidly tells Ahab what He, Yahweh, is doing. Yahweh can’t be charged with deception when He clearly tells Ahab about the deception by which he is being deceived! God couldn’t be any more transparent with Ahab but the fact is it will make absolutely no difference; Ahab is beyond the point of heeding God’s word no matter how clear, full and detailed it may be. God’s word is nothing but a formality for Ahab.

**24-28** – Micaiah has spoken exactly what Yahweh has told him; exactly what Ahab wanted. What’s his reward? A smack in the mouth by old Iron Horns and thrown back in the slammer by Ahab with orders of meager rations! Ahab goes on to imply that he will return from Ramoth-Gilead safely and victoriously. Micaiah doesn’t stop – he declares that if Ahab returns to Samaria a living king then he himself is a false prophet. Here we see the servant of the Word suffering humiliation which means that the word of God also suffers humiliation.

Zed asks a critical question: “which way did the spirit of the Lord pass from me to you?” How could Yahweh’s spirit flit from me to you for you to deliver such a contradictory word? Zed is claiming to speak by the Spirit of Yahweh and insinuates that Micaiah is not. How does one know the authentic word of the Lord in this situation? How can we tell if a prophet speaks Yahweh’s true word? Can they just claim divine inspiration like Zed? Can they just say the Lord spoke to them? What if they speak in an authoritative tone? None of those prove anything. Micaiah has the solution: wait and see! The proof of the pudding is in the tasting. Time will tell!

This is essentially Micaiah’s answer to Ahab too. If you come back breathing and walking then you’ll know Yahweh hasn’t spoken by me. But if you come back in a pine box – or the floor board of your chariot – then everyone will know that Yahweh has spoken through me. Well, Ahab won’t know it but everyone else will. Micaiah willingly submits himself to the prophetic test. If a prophet speaks in Yahweh’s name and his prediction doesn’t come to pass, then Yahweh hasn’t spoken by that prophet (**Deut 18:21-22**). This wait-and-see approach, while biblical, offers no immediate vindication for the faithful prophet in the present, although we wish it would. Suffering and

isolation go with the prophetic turf. Some of God's finest prophets have been smacked in the mouth ([John 18:22](#); [Acts 23:2-3](#)).

**29-38** – So, Ahab appears to ignore Micaiah's warning but not completely. On the outside chance that there may be some truth in what Micaiah had said, Ahab decides to disguise himself when he goes into battle. Maybe just taking some simple precautions will outsmart divine providence! Like a dupe, Jehoshaphat agrees with Ahab's battle plan. Of course, Ahab couldn't have made it any easier for the enemy to kill Jehoshaphat if he'd put a target on his back. But, he was in the clear because the enemy can't kill what they can't identify, or so he thought.

Seemingly by chance, a regular Syrian soldier was simply sending ordinance downrange and just so happened to hit a hidden king precisely in a gap in his armor and royal blood began to drain into the bottom of Ahab's chariot. God's word comes to pass almost casually. God orchestrates the unintended actions of man to result in an exercise of His judgment. It's not the order of the Syrian king that disposes of Ahab but the decree of Yahweh, and that in the most "accidental" way. Ahab was covered all over with iron and brass but there is always a crevice through which God's arrow can find its way. That's the inerrancy of the word of God.

The battle is over; the king is dead, the scene shifts back to Samaria. Feral dogs roam the outskirts of the city looking for protein and harlots prepare for the evening shift. Some things go on, even when kings die. The author stresses the fulfillment of Yahweh's word. What Ahab tried to avoid, what the Syrian king could not accomplish, Yahweh has accomplished in line with what He has spoken. It was actually the fulfillment of prophecies from [20:42](#), [21:19](#) and [22:17, 13](#). A triple fulfillment to conclude 3 stories dealing with Ahab's failure under Yahweh's word. It looks like Micaiah will enjoy a supper of bread and water while Zed and the 399 prophets will be eating crow!

So the unnamed prophet in ch20 was right; Elijah in ch21 was right and Micaiah was right. All of this came upon Ahab according to the word of the Lord which He had spoken. The King of glory's word will come to pass. History is no accident; it is directed by the sovereign word that God has spoken. Both the unwilling and the unknowing fulfill it. If God's word is certain, and it is, then we know that His word of hope is as solid as His word of judgment. This means that [II Peter 3:13](#) is as certain as the judgments

against Ahab in I Kings. This truth might not resolve all your current personal problems – but it should certainly pour some concrete into the bottom of your pit. God’s Word is a solid rock that you can stand on no matter what the circumstances are in your life.

**39** – This verse is still speaking about the Word of God because the Word of God is not just what Elijah or Micaiah or others have declared; it’s also the written record that the author of this book had left us. Here, he tells us what he has omitted from his record. He has given no attention to Ahab’s royal achievements. If you’re interested in them, you can look them up somewhere else. By briefly mentioning these accomplishments, the author tacitly admits to Ahab’s greatness but then bluntly comments that he has included none of them. Why? Because they don’t matter!

The only thing that matters about Ahab, the only question that has any lasting consequence is how he stacked up beside the word and commandments of God. This is the issue of **Mt 6:33**, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you.” More often than not, the Word of God ignores the things we think are significant and it prizes the things we are quick to disregard. This verse is designed to leave our earthly success in tatters and lead us to repentance. “Only one life, t’will soon be past, only what’s done for Christ will last.” 😊