

Israel's Troubler vs. The Inescapable Word (Part 3)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 28 January 2024

Preacher: Philip Copeland

[0 : 00] Thank you.

Well, we are turning now to our Bibles and to our reading for this evening. And we are reading in the first book of Kings, 1 Kings, and we've come to the very last chapter, chapter 22.

And this is one of the great dramatic stories of the Bible. A real favorite chapter.

And Micaiah, the prophet who stood alone to speak the truth of God to the king.

So last time we saw the terrible incident of the assassination of godly Naboth because the king wanted to take over his family inheritance, his vineyard.

[1 : 13] And just use it as a vegetable garden. And that man wouldn't give in. And so Ahab's wicked wife, Jezebel, had him assassinated and they took his land.

And the chapter ended with God confronting him with his wickedness. And certainly a degree at least of repentance. And then chapter 22 begins, for three years, Syria and Israel continued without war.

But in the third year, Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, came down to the king of Israel. And the king of Israel said to his servants, do you know that Ramoth Gilead belongs to us? And we keep quiet and don't take it out of the hand of the king of Syria.

And he said to Jehoshaphat, will you go with me to battle at Ramoth Gilead? And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, I am as you are. My people as your people.

My horses as your horses. And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, inquire first for the word of the Lord. Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about 400 men.

[2 : 23] And he said to them, shall I go to battle against Ramoth Gilead? Or shall I refrain? And they said, go up, for the Lord will give it into the hands of the king.

But Jehoshaphat said, is there not here another prophet? One of the Lord, whom we may inquire of? The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, there is yet one man whom we may inquire of the Lord. He said, Micaiah, the son of Imla. But I hate him. Because he never prophesies anything good concerning me, but evil. Jehoshaphat said, let not the king say so.

And the king of Israel summoned an officer and said, well, bring quickly Micaiah, the son of Imla.

And the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, were sitting on their thrones, arrayed in their robes at the threshing floor at the entrance to the gate of Samaria.

And all the prophets were prophesying before them. And Zedekiah, the son of Chaniah, made for himself horns of iron and said, thus says the Lord. With these you shall push the Assyrians until they're destroyed.

[3 : 34] And all the prophets prophesied so and said, go up to Ramothgilead and triumph. The Lord will give it to the hands of the king. The minister who went to summon Micaiah said to him, behold, the words of the prophets with one accord are favorable to the king.

Let your word be like the word of one of them. Speak favorably. But Micaiah said, as the Lord lives, what the Lord says to me, that I will speak.

When he come to the king, the king said to him, Micaiah, shall we go to Ramothgilead to battle or shall we refrain? And he answered him, go up and triumph.

The Lord will give it into the hand of the king. But the king said to him, how many times shall I make you swear that you speak to me nothing but the truth in the name of the Lord? And so he said, and here's the real truth.

I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains as sheep that have no shepherd. And the Lord said, these have no master that each return to his home in peace.

[4 : 50] The king of Israel said to Joshua, did I not tell you that he would not prophesy good concerning me but evil? And Micaiah said, therefore hear the word of the Lord.

I saw the Lord sitting on his throne and all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right hand and on his left. And the Lord said, who will entice Ahab that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one said one thing and another said another. Then a spirit came forward and stood before the Lord saying, I'll entice him. And the Lord said to him, by what means? And he said, I'll go out. And we'll be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, you are to entice him and you will succeed. Go out and do so.

Now, therefore, behold, the Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets. The Lord has declared disaster for you.

[5 : 53] Then Zedekiah, the son of Chennai, came near and struck Micaiah on the cheek and said, how did the spirit of the Lord go for me to speak to you? And Micaiah said, behold, you shall see on that day when you go into an inner chamber to hide yourself.

And the king of Israel said, seize Micaiah and take him back to Ammon, the governor of the city, and to Joash as the king's son. And say, thus says the king, put this fellow in prison and feed him with meager rations of bread and mortar until I come in peace.

And Micaiah said, if you return in peace, the Lord has not spoken by me. And he said, here, all you peoples.

So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, went up to Ramoth Gilead. And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, I'll disguise myself and go into battle, but you wear your robes.

And the king of Israel disguised himself and went into battle. Now the king of Syria had commanded the 32 captains of his chariots fight with neither small nor great, but only with the king of Israel.

[7 : 06] And when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, they said, it is surely the king of Israel. So they turned to fight against them. And Jehoshaphat cried out.

And when the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, they turned back from pursuing him. But a certain man drew his bow at a venture, says the old version, at random.

And struck the king of Israel between the scale armor and the breastplate. And therefore he said to the driver of his chariot, turn around and carry me out of the battle.

I'm wounded. And the battle continued that day. And the king was propped up in his chariot facing the Syrians. Until at evening he died.

And the blood of the wound flowed into the bottom of the chariot. And about sunset a cry went through the army. Every man to his city. Every man to his country.

[8 : 11] So the king died. And was brought to Samaria. And they buried the king in Samaria. And they washed the chariot by the pool of Samaria.

And the dogs licked up his blood. And the prostitutes washed themselves in it. According to the word of the Lord that he had spoken.

Now the rest of the acts of Ahab and all that he did. And the ivory house that he built. And all the cities that he built.

Are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? So Ahab slept with his fathers. And Ahaziah his son reigned in his place.

Amen. May God bless to us his word. Please have your Bibles open to that passage we read in 1 Kings 22.

[9 : 17] What will ultimately happen to those who persist in mocking and defying the word of the Lord?

What will ultimately happen to those who do that? Well this passage has the answer. Remember we're in the final main section of 1 Kings.

Running from chapter 20 to 22. And in these chapters the authors place together these three similar episodes. To form a kind of mini trilogy.

And in each episode we see Ahab. The man who was labelled rightly as being Israel's troubler. Coming up against the inescapable word of the Lord.

And friends so far there has only ever been one winner. Over the first two episodes we've seen over these last few Sundays.

[10 : 23] Ahab repeatedly failing to be the king. And the man that he should be. Repeatedly he's shown himself to be a real unbeliever. Who despises the Lord and his grace.

Now this is made evident from the way he behaves. From the way he lives his life. Hating the Lord's people. Abusing his power. For greedy gain.

And defying the Lord's word again and again. Now friends it is true that he did humble himself wonderfully at the end of chapter 21. Out of the blue.

Out of nowhere. But that didn't last long. And as we shall see in this chapter. He comes to the end of his time. So let's run through the chapter in five points this evening.

Firstly. In verses 1 to 8 we see hatred for the challenge of the word. Hatred for the challenge of the word. So in verse 1 we're told that Israel has enjoyed three years of peace with the neighbouring nation Syria.

[11:29] Probably due to the covenant that Ahab wrongly made back in chapter 20 with Ben-Hadad. The king of Syria at the time. But the peace will soon be shattered.

For in verse 2 Ahab. He has a state visit from Jehoshaphat. Who was the king of Judah at that time. Remember please at this stage in church history. The people of God were split into two kingdoms. In the north was Israel. Ruled over by Ahab. And in the south was Judah. Which was ruled over by the Davidic king. The king in the line of David. Jehoshaphat.

And so. We will learn more about this Jehoshaphat at the end of the chapter. Which God willing we will look at in two weeks time. But let me just say for now that Jehoshaphat.

He is a decent king. As Willie prayed. He is a good man for the most part. But at times. He seems to seriously lack sense. He also seems to seriously lack the ability to say.

[12:32] No. No I am not doing that. Which means that he will get into compromising entanglements. As we shall see. Anyway in verse 2.

Jehoshaphat and Ahab. They meet together. And all of Ahab's servants are there too. And in verse 3. Ahab turns to his servants. And he pours out his agenda.

Verse 3. Do you not know that Ramoth Gilead belongs to us? He says. And we keep quiet. And do not take it out of the hand of the king of Syria.

Now what Ahab says here is actually true. Ramoth Gilead did belong to Israel. It had been taken from Israel in the past. And now Ahab wants it back. And in verse 4.

Having poured out his agenda. He then turns. Seizes the opportunity to Jehoshaphat. The king of Judah. And he says. Will you help us? Will you join forces with us?

[13:32] In our quest to go and claim back our land. And without a moment's hesitation. Without thinking. There's a lot of kings in this book. Who never think. They never pause.

Without a moment's hesitation. Jehoshaphat says. I am as you are. My people are your people. My horses are your horses. In other words. Oh yes.

Friends. Jehoshaphat should never have done this. In fact. Later on. When you go home. Read 2nd Chronicles 19. And you will see that the Lord actually. Rebukes Jehoshaphat.

For this. Alliance that he makes. Because clearly. Ahab is a king. Who hates the Lord. And hates his word.

Which is what we see in verses 5 to 8. In verse 5. Having already made his vow. To support Ahab. Jehoshaphat asks Ahab. To inquire the word of the Lord.

[14:31] On this matter. If only he had done that earlier. But anyway. This is no problem for Ahab. Because Ahab retains. His own.

Private prophets. His prophets. For just such occasions. And in verse 6. He gathers all of these. So called prophets together. There's about 400 of them.

There's a lot of prophets. On Ahab's payroll. And he asks. Oh prophets. Shall I go up to Ramoth Gilead. And fight against it. Or shall I refrain.

Tell me. What does the Lord. Say about this. And all of these. State employed prophets. They all reply. Oh yes. Definitely. Go for it. Go for it our king.

You can do it. For the Lord. Will definitely give it. Into your hand. And having seen these. 400 prophets. Jehoshaphat is standing there. Going.

[15:28] Yeah. Okay. And he goes to Ahab. And says. Ahab. Is there perhaps. Just maybe perhaps. One other prophet of the Lord. Whom we may inquire.

Jehoshaphat. Can smell a rat. And it turns out. There is. Another prophet. Please look at verse 8. Ahab says. There is yet one man. By whom we may inquire.

Of the Lord. Micaiah. The son of Imlah. But I. Hate him. And the. Hebrew here is emphatic. Like I. Hate him.

For he never. Prophesizes. Good. Concerning me. But evil. Ahab clearly. Loves his 400 prophets. In verse 6.

He calls on their services. Without a moment's hesitation. Why? Well. Because. Whilst they claim. To speak the Lord's word. In reality. They just.

[16:24] Tell the king. What his itching ears. Want to hear. Their job is not to challenge. But to affirm. And to cheerlead. To the king. His plans.

And his propaganda. But Micaiah. Is totally different. The king. Hates this man. Seriously. Hates this man. Because actually.

Micaiah. Is a true prophet. Of the Lord. Who proclaims. The true word. Of the Lord. To the king. The true word. That so often. Clearly. Has challenged Ahab.

Convicted Ahab. And called on Ahab. To repent. Well please notice. In verse 8. That Ahab's fixation. Is not actually.

Upon what is true. And what is false. He couldn't really care. Less about what is true. And what is false. He just wants to know. What is supportive. And what is non-supportive. If that's what he's bothered about.

[17:19] And so all that Ahab sees. In Micaiah. Is not someone bringing to him. The life-giving word. Of the Lord. That is so graciously. Calling him to repent. And find life. Before it's too late.

Rather all that he sees. In Micaiah. Is a judgmental. Contrarian. A nasty piece of work. Who is personally. Against the king. A difficult man.

Who says difficult things. About how Ahab. Wants to live his life. And rule his kingdom. And friends. As Christ's church today.

Those who have been tasked. With proclaiming the word of God. To the world around us. We must not be surprised. If we too encounter. This Ahab like mindset.

From the lost world around us. Friends. Not everyone will respond to us. By rejection and hostility. It's wonderful isn't it. That the gospel is powerful.

[18:15] We will see people. One for the Lord Jesus. But. It is also true. Is it not. That in our society today. There will be many. Who will hate us.

Simply because. As a church. We take the word of God seriously. And we speak it. We're even prepared. To speak it to power. We even speak.

The bits of the word. That are deeply challenging. And convicting. Some people in our society. Will hate us. Because they hate the word.

Because they hate the one. Who has sent that word. The Lord himself. Many people would much rather. The church just affirm them. In their lifestyles.

And in their choices. Never calling on them to repent. And to turn to Jesus. For forgiveness. And to learn the ways of life. And of course.

[19:10] Friends. We the church. Also need to be very careful. That this Ahab like mindset. Doesn't weed its way in here. Amongst us. For this same Ahab like attitude.

To the word. It really could overtake us. Is that not what Paul. Says in 2nd Timothy 4. Listen to what he says. Speaking about the church. The time is coming.

When people will not endure. Sound or healthy teaching. But having itching ears. They will accumulate for themselves. Teachers to suit their own passions.

And will turn away from listening to the truth. And wander into myths. Friends. Ahab would love a church. Where the Bible is not taken seriously.

And instead we just skip over the challenging bits. And look at the bits that make us feel better.

Ahab would love a church. Where the preachers don't seek to apply. The gospel of the Lord Jesus.

[20:06] His lordship to the whole of life. And we never touch on the difficult issues of the day. Like abortion. Ahab would love a church.

Where we never walk away. Feeling convicted. Or feeling filled with godly grief. That's meant to lead us to change. Ahab would love a church.

That says you are just fine. The way you are. May the lord help us. To shun. This Ahab mindset. At all cost. Well secondly.

In verses 9 to 14. We see. Huge pressure. To compromise the word. Huge pressure. To compromise the word. So in verse 9.

Ahab. He gets one of his servants. And he says to the servant. Please go. I want you to go now. Leave here. And summon Micaiah. Bring him here. And in verse 10 to 12.

[21:02] Notice. The author doesn't follow that servant. Who's going off to summon Micaiah. Instead. The author chooses to stay. Within the royal court. What happens in verse 10 to 12.

We are told. Happens in the royal court. And the reason the author does this. Is because he wants us to see. The huge pressure. That Micaiah. Was about to face. Huge pressure.

Let's just unpack this vivid scene. In verse 10. We're told that both the king of Israel. And the king of Judah. Are sitting on their thrones. In their array of robes. They are dressed to impress.

And they're so intimidating. Seated where they are. To show off their power. And their status. And in front of these kings. Up on their thrones. In all their intimidation. There is a sea.

A sea of 400. Prophets of Ahab. All of them. Claiming to speak from the Lord. They do claim to be from the Lord. These prophets. And what do they say?

[22 : 06] Again. They repeat that same refrain. Oh king. Go up to Ramoth Gilead. The Lord will give you the victory. Go for it. In fact. In verse 11. We're told about one of the prophets.

Called Zedekiah. He had turned up that day. Prepared. He brought with himself. Some special props. That he had made. Beforehand. These two iron horns.

Maybe I should have brought two of these tonight with me. And brought them in. But. Anyway. As time went on. Zedekiah. What he does is. He puts these horns up at his head. Like this. As though he's a massive ox.

A powerful beast. And he starts walking around. And he starts prodding into people. Goring into them. As though he's this wild ox. With power. And he says. Thus says the Lord. There's the prophetic formula.

Thus says the Lord. With these you shall push. Or literally. You shall gorge. The Syrians. Until they are destroyed. Now Zedekiah may well have actually been referring to.

[23 : 03] Deuteronomy 33 verse 17. Look it up later. Deuteronomy 33 verse 17. For in that passage. Way back in church history. Moses had blessed.

Some of the Israelite tribes. That constituted the heart and the core. Of the northern kingdom. In Ahab's time. And in that passage. Moses says. These tribes.

That were under Ahab's rule. Have horns. Like those of a wild ox. And with them. They shall gorge. Same word. The peoples. In other words.

Zedekiah has been very very sneaky here. He's backing up his message. With scripture. These prophets. Look and sound.

Legit. And that is the scene in the royal court. That Micaiah is about to walk into. He's about to walk in here. Can you imagine. The pressure he must have faced.

[23 : 59] To come in here. And speak a message. That contradicted all of that. Can you sense the heavy pressure. To compromise. The truth. To ignore it.

And to just instead. Repeat and rehash. What these 400 prophets. Were spewing out of their mouths. Well in verse 13. Suddenly.

We rejoin the king's messenger. And at this point. The king's messenger. Has found Micaiah. And he's now bringing him. To stand before Ahab. In that royal pressure cooker.

And look at what the servant says. To Micaiah. In verse 13. He says. Behold the words of the prophets. Prophets with one accord. Are favorable to the king. Let your word be like the word of one of them.

And speak favorably. Now you could read that as a hostile threat. You could be saying. Look you better. You better fall in line here. You better say what all these other prophets are saying.

[24 : 56] And speak well of our king. Or else. Or you could read this sympathetically. As though this man is trying to make life easier. For Micaiah. However way you read them.

They are not good. This is yet more pressure. Being heaped on the Lord's servant. Not to speak the Lord's word. To compromise the truth.

And Micaiah recognizes that right away. And that's why in verse 14. He fires back this reply. He says. As the Lord lives. What the Lord says to me.

That. I will speak. What the Lord says to me. That I will speak. Here Micaiah. Shows that he knows something.

That neither Ahab. Nor this royal messenger knows. And that is the fact that Micaiah. Is a servant of the word of the Lord. He can only speak. What God tells him to speak.

[25 : 50] It's not his place to tamper. Or manipulate. Or change. Or contradict the word. Both Ahab in verse 8. And this messenger. In verse 13. Clearly assume otherwise.

They think that the prophet. Can somehow control. The word of the Lord. They think Micaiah. Just doesn't need to be such a prophet. Of doom and gloom. He doesn't have to speak. Such

challenging things.

If he wanted to. He could speak favorably of us. Do us a favor. As one commentator says. These men do not understand. Micaiah.

Is in bondage. To the word of the Lord. The word is the master. He is the servant. And the word cannot be manipulated. By kings.

Or messengers. Or prophets. Or anyone. It must be passed on. As given. And that is what we will see Micaiah doing. Very bravely.

[26 : 47] In the next scene. As he enters. The intimidating royal court. He resists. The huge pressure. To compromise. Recognize. The word. And our friends.

In the church today. We don't have prophets today. As I said this a few Sundays ago. For the Lord has given us. His complete. And final word. Right here. Friends.

The closest thing that we have. To prophets today. In the church. Are those who are called to be. Pastor teachers. Those men. Tasked. With proclaiming. And applying.

The word of the prophets. And the apostles. To the church. And the world today. Now those of us. Who have this responsibility. In the church. We need prayer. We need the Lord.

To help us. To have the same clarity. And resolve. As Micaiah does here. Especially. In the years ahead. Let me just ask you this.

[27 : 42] To think about. Have you ever wondered. What will life be like. For the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Scotland. In ten years time.

What will it be like. In fifteen years time. What will it be like. In twenty years time. Friends. I think it's fair to say. That if Scotland. Carries on. In its current trajectory.

Things will be. Much much harder. For faithful preachers. And teachers. Of the word of the Lord. And so therefore. Things will also be.

Much much harder. For the church families. That they belong to. So friends. Let's pray. That as we face. Intimidation.

And pressure. That the Lord. Will embed. The words of verse 14. Into us. Wouldn't it be wonderful. If we made verse 14. One of our mission statements. Let's pray the Lord.

[28 : 38] Sears it upon our hearts. And our minds. That all those. Who are. And will be. Pastor teachers. In Scotland. Across all the nations. Today. They will not cave.

To pressure. To compromise the words. But will speak. What the Lord. Has entrusted to us. And will speak. With boldness. And with great faithfulness.

Well thirdly. Verse 15 to 23. We see. A heart calloused. To the word. A heart calloused. To the word. So in verse 15.

Micaiah arrives. And Ahab. Is about. Asks him. About operation. Ramoth. Gilead. Now what Micaiah does. Is. He initially.

Starts to ape. To imitate. The 400. Yes men. Prophets. Who've been repeating. Their message. And Micaiah does this. In a very. Sarky tone. Very sarcastic tone.

[29 : 35] Verse 15. He says. Oh yes. Oh yeah. You go up. Go up. Up in triumph. Yeah. The Lord will definitely. Give that place. Over to you. In victory. And immediately.

Ahab knows. Micaiah. Is not being truthful. And in verse 16. He replies. How many times. Must I keep on. Putting you. On oath. That you not.

Speak to me. Anything but the truth. In the name of the Lord. In other words. Friends. This incident. Is not a one-off. This has actually. Happened like this. Many times before.

This situation. Has repeated itself. In the past. And in verse 17. Like. So it seems. All the many times before. Micaiah.

Then moves away. From sarcasm. To sobriety. And he tells Ahab. The truth. Look at verse 17. He says. I saw. All Israel.

[30 : 28] Scattered on the mountains. As sheep. That have no shepherd. And the Lord said. These have no master. Let each return. To his home. In peace.

In other words. The word of the Lord. Says that Ahab. Is going to be wiped away. The king is going to die. That's the metaphor. Of sheep without a shepherd. It's people without a king.

Israel will no longer. Have Ahab. As their shepherd. And master. And just notice. The biting implication. That's stated there. He says. When Ahab. Is wiped away.

The people will have. Peace. Peace. What a scathing word. That is. Now we will look at. What Micaiah says. In just a moment.

What he says next. Because he goes on. But before then. Let's just ask. Why is Micaiah. Playing these. Prophetic games. With Ahab. Why the initial sarcasm. In verse 15.

[31 : 25] Well I take it. That Micaiah. Replies the way he does. In verse 15. Because he knows. The reality. Of Ahab's heart. It is a heart. That has become. Completely calloused.

And hardened. To the truth. Even if he hears it. He's not really. Going to listen to it. Ahab. Only ever seeks out. The word of the Lord. As a mere formality.

Like he's doing. In this chapter. Or in the past. It seems. He sought out. The word of the Lord. In order to know. How he can manipulate it. Which is what he does. At the end of this chapter.

But Ahab. Has never sought. The word of the Lord. From Micaiah. In order to tremble. Before it. In order to hear it. And obey it. And to let it. Shape and master his life.

And direct his path. That is why Micaiah. Responds with the initial sarcasm. Because he knows. Actually. No matter what he says. Even if he tells Ahab.

[32 : 19] The truth. Ahab. Is not going to obey it. Like so many times before. For the word of the Lord. Has become so utterly. Irrelevant to him.

And friends. I don't think I conceive of anything. More alarming. Than that. Is that not alarming? Well what else does Micaiah proclaim to Ahab.

In verse 19 to 23. In these verses. The prophet tells Ahab. That whilst he's been holding his own. Pompous little royal court scene.

In verses 10 to 13. Actually at the same time. There was an immeasurably greater. Royal court scene. Taking place. Having a far greater meeting.

And that is. In the Lord's royal throne room. In the heavenly places. In the unseen reality. Please look at verse 19. Micaiah says.

[33 : 19] Therefore hear the word of the Lord. But I saw the Lord. Sitting on his throne. And all the host of heaven. Standing beside him. On his right hand. And on his left.

And what Micaiah is. Describing here. Is the same thing. That we see. A glimpse of. At the beginning of the book of Job. Where the Lord. The true king of the universe. The king of the cosmos.

Gathers together. His if you like. Heavenly cabinet together. As a heavenly cabinet meeting. And reporting to him. Are all of these. Hosts of heaven. What appear to be.

These powerful. Spiritual beings. Some translations. Refer to them as. Angels. And it is clear. That the Lord. Sovereignly. Rules over. All of these. Hosts of heaven.

And he uses them. To govern. And run the cosmos. And in verse 20. The Lord asks. All of this. Heavenly cabinet. Before him. Who will entice Ahab.

[34 : 17] That he may go up to fall. At Ramoth Gilead. Who will go up and lure Ahab. In other words. To his death. Now various ideas are kicked about.

I love that point. They have a discussion. Until verse 21. One spirit comes forward and says. Me. I will do it. I will go and entice Ahab.

I will go and be a lying spirit. In the mouth of his 400 prophets. And having heard this. The Lord replies. Yes. Very good. Very good.

That's what you're to do. Go and entice him. Deceive him. And you shall succeed. Go out and do so. And in verse 23. Having. Unpacked all of that.

To. Ahab's. Royal courtroom. Micaiah. Then really lands his application. And he says. To everyone in that room. That's facing him. All of these 400 prophets.

[35 : 16] All of them. They are liars. The Lord. Has put a lying spirit. In all of their mouths. For in reality. The Lord has declared disaster for you. Ahab.

That's what's coming. My friends. I wonder what you make of that. And that might kick up a lot of questions for you. But it's important. That we don't get sidetracked. From the main point of the passage.

Age. Some of you might even hear this. And think. Well is this not unfair of the Lord. To deceive Ahab. Friends. If that is what you're thinking. Then you need to read the passage again.

Because you've missed the plain fact. That the Lord actually does not deceive Ahab. For the Lord clearly tells Ahab. What he's doing. Through Micaiah. Yes. The Lord can't be charged with deception.

When the Lord clearly tells Ahab. About the deception. By which he's deceiving him. No. The Lord couldn't be clearer. Or more transparent. With the king.

[36 : 14] He's saying. These 400 prophets. Don't listen to them. They're not to be trusted. And although the Lord. Has put this deceiving spirit. In their mouths. The Lord is also here.

Giving Ahab. A chance. To repent. Again. Yet another gracious. Warning. Another chance to turn. But yet again.

Ahab treats the word of the Lord. As something totally irrelevant to him. Not for one second. Does he show any concern. About the vision Micaiah has proclaimed.

His heart. Is so calloused. So hardened. It shows that he is well beyond the point. Of heeding. And obeying the word of the Lord. And friends.

As Bible people today. I think this should be a sobering word. To his own. As we gather here. Week in and week out. As we gather together. It is possible to come along here.

[37 : 12] Seeking the word of the Lord. And yet at the same time. Actually becoming more. And more calloused to it. Friends. When we come here. Do we really come.

To encounter the Lord's word. In order to tremble before it. In order to let it master us. And transform us. Into Christ's likeness. Or are we coming here.

As a formality. Simply keen to know. What the Bible is all about. To top up our head knowledge.

Whilst always bypassing our hearts. We aren't really interested.

In coming here. To tremble before the Lord. And to surrender to its claim. Over our hearts. Friends. Because the Lord will not tolerate. Such Ahab like treatment.

Of his word. As we shall see. Well fourthly. And briefly. In verse 24 to 28. What do we see?

[38 : 09] We see the humiliation. Of carrying the word. The humiliation. Of carrying the word. Well Micaiah. Was true to his word.

In verse 14. And he spoke. All that the Lord. Had given him to say. He did not compromise. For one second. He showed himself. To be faithful. A faithful carrier.

Of the word. And what does he get in return? Painful suffering. And humiliation. In verse 24.

Zedekiah seems to have. Put down his props.

He's not got his horns anymore. And what does he do? He quietly walks forward. To Micaiah. He stands right before. And then he accuses Micaiah. Of being a false prophet.

Who's spoken lies. Verse 24. He says. How did the spirit of the Lord. Go from me. To speak to you. In other words. Who do you think you are?

[39 : 04] You're not the one speaking. From the spirit of the Lord. Micaiah. I am. So shut up. In verse 27. Ahab commands his troops. To come.

And take Micaiah. And throw him in prison. To be clamped in chains. And thread this prison diet. Just full of arrogance. And defiance.

In verse 27. Ahab says to Micaiah. Keep him locked up in there. Until I return from Ramoth Gilead. In peace. He was saying that.

Not just for his soldiers. But also as a provocative rejection. Of Micaiah. He's saying. You really think I'm going to die? I'll be back soon. You wait.

Now is Micaiah disturbed by any of this? Remarkably no. For he clearly is a man who trusts in the word of the Lord. He knows. That the Lord will vindicate his word.

[40 : 02] Which also means that he will inevitably vindicate Micaiah. The one who has carried his word. And that is why Micaiah continues to speak out with such boldness.

Even after being pounded in the face. And taken off to prison. In verse 25. For example. After Zedekiah strikes him. Micaiah says. All right.

Just you wait. Just you wait Zedekiah. Time will tell which of us has really spoken by the spirit of the Lord. And which one of us is telling lies. Just you wait.

A day is coming. When you will desperately be hiding away. Fearing for your life. For you will be exposed. Just you wait. Also in verse 28.

In response to Ahab's arrogance. Micaiah says. If you return from Ramoth Gilead in peace. The Lord has not spoken by me. And of course the implication is.

[41 : 01] If Ahab dies. It is a clear sign. That the Lord really has spoken by Micaiah. And as the end of verse 28 says. All the peoples will come to know the truth.

And be warned. And friends. As we look at Micaiah here. We find that yet again. We get glimpses of a greater prophet of the Lord. Who was to come centuries later.

Like Micaiah. Like Micaiah. This prophet was utterly faithful to his Lord and God and Father. In heaven. In all areas of his life. Never failing to speak his challenging truth.

Wherever he went. And like Micaiah. He too faced. Brutal suffering. Far worse suffering. In John chapter 18.

After being wrongly arrested. He was struck across the face. Like scum. And he was accused of speaking evil lies. And yet this prophet also endured all of the darkness that was poured over him. [42 : 03] Knowing that he must first suffer. Go the way of the cross. Before entering into his father's glory. And being vindicated. And friends.

As the church of the Lord Jesus Christ today. We are called to follow that same pattern. That is the only way to go in the Christian life. There is no other way. But the hard way.

The pattern of life displayed in Micaiah. The pattern of life displayed in the Lord Jesus. Is the path we are called to follow. Now friends. If we ever find ourselves suffering as a church.

Or as individuals. Simply because we've been a real faithful witness to Jesus. Not just being well thought of by the world. But actually speaking out the truth. And being hated for it. Remember friends.

If that happens to you. You have not done anything wrong. Actually that is a sign that you are faithfully following. The crucified Lord. Whom you are united to.

[43 : 02] Don't despair if that is your lot. Remember one day. All those who have suffered for the word. Will be vindicated. Forever. Well fifthly and finally.

In verse 29 to 40. We see how certain. How certain. The word is. How certain. The word is. So in verse 29. We are at Ramoth Gilead.

At last. Both Jehoshaphat and Ahab are there. With all their troops ready for battle. In public. Ahab has been bold as brass. About rejecting the word of Micaiah.

But hang on a minute. Privately. He does seem to be starting to have a little bit of the jitters. He does seem nervous. And in verse 30. He comes up with a plan that he thinks will keep him safe.

If Micaiah's word proves to be true. And that the Lord is out to get him. Just look at verse 30.

Please. And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat. I will disguise myself and go into battle.

[44 : 07] But you wear your robes. And the king of Israel disguises himself. And went into battle. Goes to show you just how arrogant this man is.

You see the arrogance here? He thinks if Micaiah's word turns out to be true. If the Lord really is planning on using the Syrians to wipe me out. What I'll do is.

I'll fool the Lord. By simply dressing up as someone else. Yeah that will trick the ruler of the universe. That will teach the Lord to threaten me. Again.

More mockery. More ridicule. Of the Lord and his word. And in verse 31. The king of Syria has his own battle plan it seems. What the king of Syria does.

Is he calls the captains of his chariots together. His top soldiers. And he says. Don't you go looking and fighting after. And killing lower ranked soldiers. No, no, no.

[45 : 05] I've got a plan for you. I want you to go right for the jugular. I want you to hunt down. And execute Ahab. King of Israel. He is your target. And with that battle commences.

Verse 32. The Syrian chariots. Do as they're ordered. And they start to hunt down. The man they think is Ahab. He's certainly dressed up like Ahab.

And they're about to come and kill him. When they discover. It's not Ahab. It's Jehoshaphat. I told you his foolish alliance. Would nearly cost him his life. Well having realized it wasn't Ahab.

The Syrian soldiers draw back from Jehoshaphat. The king of Judah. And they carry on their search for the king of Israel. But they have no joy.

For Ahab's disguise works. It fools the Syrians. However friends. It could not fool the eyes of the Lord.

[46 : 06] And suddenly in verse 34. In the midst of this battle that's raging on. And the spears. And the weapons flying everywhere. And the blood. And the gore. The focus of the text. Zooms right in on one individual.

Just one random Syrian foot soldier. He's not even named. No big deal. Just a random foot soldier. And this random foot soldier. Just picks up an arrow casually.

Sticks it in his bow. He picks a random target ahead of him. And he lets fly. And this arrow goes flying at this random target. Who just so happens to be.

Ahab incognito. And where does the arrow hit? Just by chance. Just look where it happened to land. It landed right in between. One of the tiny little cracks.

In between the segments of his big armor. Ahab is struck. And knowing that he'd been hit. Ahab commands his chariot to about turn.

[47 : 06] To get out of the battle. And go to a place where he could sit. And watch things unfold. And as he stays there. Where he's propped up against his chariot. Clearly wounded.

And as the day goes by. He bleeds. He bleeds. He bleeds. All over his chariot floor. Until evening comes. And he dies. In verse 36.

In verse 36. The battle is over. Those still alive go home. Verse 37. King Ahab's body is brought to Samaria. And buried there. But just look at the chilling detail of verse 38.

It says. They washed the chariot. That's Ahab's chariot. By the pool of Samaria. And the dogs licked up his blood. And the prostitutes washed themselves in it.

According to the word of the Lord. That he had spoken. What Ahab had tried to avoid. What the chariot captains of Syria. Could not achieve.

[48 : 08] The Lord brought to pass. In line with what he had spoken. And actually friends. Verse 37 and 38. They depict the fulfillment of three distinct prophecies. That we've seen.

Over this little trilogy. In chapter 20. Think of that nameless prophet of the Lord. Who said at the end of the chapter. That the Lord would strike him down. Well then just flick back to chapter 21.

Verse 19. 21 verse 19. The prophet Elijah. After all of that wicked injustice done to Naboth. The prophet Elijah says.

21.19. Thus says the Lord. Have you killed and also taken possession? And you shall say to him.

Thus says the Lord. In the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth. Shall dogs lick your own blood? And that's what happens. Naboth's blood was licked up by dogs outside of the city.

[49 : 07] And that's what happens here. Outside of the city. With the blood of Ahab. And of course. The other word that was fulfilled. In chapter 22. The prophet Micaiah.

Is seen to be. The true prophet. Who announced the Lord's word. That has been fulfilled as well. Friends. How certain and sure. The Lord's word is.

The word of the king of the universe. Will come to pass. You see for the writer of. One and two kings. History is not an accident. It's not chaos rambling on.

But rather it's something that is directed. By the word of the Lord. And the word of the Lord uses the willing. And the unknowing. To fulfill that mighty word.

Well friends. Just as we close. Let me say two things. About this. By way of implication. Firstly. This chapter. And this final scene. It assures us.

[50 : 08] That the Lord. Will not let his word. Be mocked forever. Friends. The Lord will eventually. Sweep away. All those. Who have set themselves. Against him.

And his word. The Lord's word. Is certain. And sure. And he has promised. That they will be. A great day of reckoning. A day where he will judge.

Everyone. The living. And the dead. And he has proven. That he will do that. By raising his son. The judge. The living word of God.

From the dead. Our friends. On that day. The Bible says. That all those. Who have lived like Ahab. They will face. The consequences. For the way. They have taken. And so this chapter.

Pleads with us. To flee to the Lord. Now. As we heard this morning. To turn. Flee to the Lord. For life. For forgiveness. And receive the Lord's mercy.

[51 : 09] But secondly. The fact that the Lord's word. Is so certain. And sure. It should actually. Also. Utterly thrill the hearts. Of all those who love him. Should it not? Especially those.

Who like Micaiah. Have suffered. Terribly. For him. And his word. For if the Lord's word. Is certain. Then we know. That the words. Lords. Of the words.

Sorry. The Lord's words. Of hope. Are just as solid. As his words. Of judgment. For as the Lord. Has promised. That a day is coming. When his perfect kingdom. Of justice.

And life. And goodness. And glory. It will be established. On earth. And all those. Who've trusted. In his word. All those. Who have built their lives. Upon that solid rock.

They will be vindicated. They will share. In his glory. And live with him. Forever and ever. So friends. Let's be sure. That we are building. Our lives. Upon that rock.

[52 : 05] And let's be sure. That we are willing. To boldly. Stand for that word. And speak out that word. Even if it costs us dearly. For in the end. It won't really cost us anything.

So amen. Let's bow our heads. And we'll pray together. Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Our gracious heavenly father.

We praise you. That your word is sure. And certain. So Lord help us. Help us to shun the way of Ahab. And to instead build our lives upon your word.

And to boldly defend and proclaim your word. Even if it costs us dearly in this life. Please help us. Our dear heavenly father.

We pray. In Jesus name. Amen.