

A KING IN DISGUISE

BIBLE TEXT : I Kings 22:1-40.

LESSON 305 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

1 Kings 22:1-40

¹ And they continued three years without war between Syria and Israel.

² And it came to pass in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel.

³ And the king of Israel said unto his servants, Know ye that Ramoth in Gilead *is* ours, and we *be* still, and take it not out of the hand of the king of Syria?

⁴ And he said unto Jehoshaphat, Wilt thou go with me to battle to Ramothgilead? And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, I *am* as thou *art*, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses.

⁵ And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Enquire, I pray thee, at the word of the LORD to day.

⁶ Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall I go against Ramothgilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for the Lord shall deliver *it* into the hand of the king.

⁷ And Jehoshaphat said, *Is there* not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might enquire of him?

⁸ And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, *There is* yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may enquire of the LORD: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so.

⁹ Then the king of Israel called an officer, and said, Hasten *hither* Micaiah the son of Imlah.

¹⁰ And the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah sat each on his throne, having put on their robes, in a void place in the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Without War

There were many battles between the Children of Israel and the Syrians. During the reign of Ahab, Ben-hadad, King of Syrians, was defeated. Then for a period of three years there was no war between the two countries. At this time of peace, Ahab began to plan how he could capture the city of Ramoth-gilead from the Syrians. Ahab felt that it belonged to the Israelites. Many years before, Moses had proclaimed Ramoth-gilead to be a city of refuge, east of the Jordan River (Lesson 139). The city of Ramoth-gilead was a part of the inheritance of Gad (**Deuteronomy 4:43** ³ *Namely, Bezer in the wilderness, in the plain country, of the Reubenites; and Ramoth in Gilead, of the Gadites; and Golan in Bashan, of the Manassites.*). This was the city that Ahab planned to take from the Syrians.

Ahab's daughter was married to Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat, King of Judah (**2 Chronicles 21:6** ⁶ *And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, like as did the house of Ahab: for he had the daughter of Ahab to wife: and he wrought that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD.*). Jehoshaphat went to visit Ahab, at which time Ahab killed sheep and oxen in abundance for a feast. Ahab was very kind to Jehoshaphat and his people. Then Ahab persuaded Jehoshaphat to go to battle with him to capture Ramoth-gilead.

An Agreement

Jehoshaphat agreed to go to war with Ahab. Jehoshaphat said, "I am as thou art, and my people as thy people; and we will be with thee in the war" (II Chronicles 18:3). This was a strange statement to make, for the two kings were really very different. In our studies of Ahab's reign we have learned that Ahab worshiped idols and that he did evil by working wickedness in the sight of the Lord (**1 Kings 21:20** ²⁰ *And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee: because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD.* **1 Kings 21:25** ²⁵ *But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.*). On the other hand, we read that Jehoshaphat sought the Lord, "walked in his commandments," and took away the groves of idol worship (**2 Chronicles 17:3-6** ³ *And the LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim;* ⁴ *But sought to the LORD God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel.* ⁵ *Therefore the LORD stablished the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presents; and he had riches and honour in abundance.* ⁶ *And his heart was lifted up in the ways of the LORD: moreover he took away the high places and groves out of Judah.*). Jehoshaphat strengthened himself against Israel. He put forces in the fenced cities and set garrisons in the land of Judah for protection. God blessed Jehoshaphat with riches and honour in abundance.

It was not only strange for Jehoshaphat to make an agreement of this kind with Ahab, but it was also wrong. We see how Jehoshaphat was influenced to do wrong because he associated with evil Ahab when it was not necessary. God had warned His people not to be friends with those who worshiped idols lest they would be made to sin against the Lord (**Exodus 23:33** ³³ *They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee.*). God had told them not to make a covenant with idol worshipers, for the idol worshipers would be a snare" (Exodus 34:12).

them.

¹¹ And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made him horns of iron: and he said, Thus saith the LORD, With these shalt thou push the Syrians, until thou have consumed them.

¹² And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramothgilead, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver *it* into the king's hand.

¹³ And the messenger that was gone to call Micaiah spake unto him, saying, Behold now, the words of the prophets *declare* good unto the king with one mouth: let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak *that which is* good.

¹⁴ And Micaiah said, As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak.

¹⁵ So he came to the king. And the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go against Ramothgilead to battle, or shall we forbear? And he answered him, Go, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver *it* into the hand of the king.

¹⁶ And the king said unto him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but *that which is* true in the name of the LORD?

¹⁷ And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the LORD said, These have no master: let them return every man to his house in peace.

¹⁸ And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?

¹⁹ And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left.

²⁰ And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner.

²¹ And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him.

²² And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go

A Snare

God expects His people today to keep themselves from evil companions. We find this instruction in God's Word: "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men" (Proverbs 4:14). The Psalmist said: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful" (Psalm 1:1). In the New Testament we are told, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (II Corinthians 6:14), and those who have done so — whether in business partnership, marriage, or unnecessary association — have found it to be a snare. To Jehoshaphat this agree-ment with one who hated God brought the wrath of God as well as a snare. Jehu, the son of a prophet, said to Jehoshaphat, "Shouldest thou . . . love them that hate the LORD? Therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD" (II Chronicles 19:2).

False Prophets

After agreeing to help Ahab, Jehoshaphat wanted to inquire of the Lord about the matter. Ahab sent for his false prophets, 400 of them. They assured the kings that the Lord would deliver Ramoth-gilead into their hands. Even though 400 said the same thing, Jehoshaphat knew that they were not true prophets of the Lord. If we really love the Lord and obey Him, He will show us, too, those who speak the truth and those who do not speak the truth: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31, 32). These were the words of the Lord spoken by David: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye" (Psalm 32:8).

Jehoshaphat asked if there was not a prophet of the Lord that would inquire for them. There was one man, named Micaiah, but Ahab hated him because he did not prophesy any good for Ahab. A true prophet could not speak any good of an evil man, but Ahab wanted to hear "good" instead of hearing the truth.

Obedience to God

A messenger went to get Micaiah. On the way he told the Prophet what the others had said. He tried to persuade Micaiah to speak like the others. Micaiah was a true Prophet. He could speak only the words which the Lord gave him. He said, "As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak." God's people are more concerned about pleasing God than they are that their actions and words are pleasing men. When the disciples of Jesus were questioned about their preaching, they said, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Dressed in their royal robes, Ahab and Jehoshaphat sat on thrones near the gate of Samaria. There they had heard the words of the false prophets. One of them, Zedekiah, had even given them a sign that they would be successful in the battle. He made horns of iron, representing honour and power, to try to prove his prophecy.

When Micaiah stood before the kings, he was asked the same question that the others had been asked. Micaiah gave them the same answer, but it must have been in a tone of voice that showed sarcasm and mockery. The king said that he wanted to hear nothing but the truth in the name of the Lord. Micaiah then gave them the message from the Lord. He said that all Israel would be scattered as sheep without a shepherd. Micaiah told them that the Lord said, "These have no master; let them return therefore every man to his house in peace" (II Chronicles 18:16).

Imprisoned

Ahab said to Jehoshaphat: "Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?" Micaiah told them that there was a lying spirit in the mouth of the false prophets, and that God had spoken against their plan. They did not like the words of Micaiah, the true message from God. They caused him to suffer for speaking the truth. Zedekiah spoke against Micaiah and hit him on the cheek. Ahab ordered Micaiah to be put in prison and fed only bread and water. As his parting words, Micaiah asked the people to witness, and said to Ahab, "If thou return at all in peace, the LORD hath not spoken by me."

Their Own Plan

Jehoshaphat had wanted to know what the Lord said about

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

²³ Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee.

²⁴ But Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near, and smote Micaiah on the cheek, and said, Which way went the Spirit of the LORD from me to speak unto thee?

²⁵ And Micaiah said, Behold, thou shalt see in that day, when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself.

²⁶ And the king of Israel said, Take Micaiah, and carry him back unto Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son;

²⁷ And say, Thus saith the king, Put this *fellow* in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I come in peace.

²⁸ And Micaiah said, If thou return at all in peace, the LORD hath not spoken by me. And he said, Hearken, O people, every one of you.

²⁹ So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramothgilead.

³⁰ And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself, and enter into the battle; but put thou on thy robes. And the king of Israel disguised himself, and went into the battle.

³¹ But the king of Syria commanded his thirty and two captains that had rule over his chariots, saying, Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel.

³² And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, Surely it *is* the king of Israel. And they turned aside to fight against him: and Jehoshaphat cried out.

³³ And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots perceived that it *was* not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him.

³⁴ And a *certain* man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: wherefore he said unto the driver of

their plan to capture Ramoth-gilead; but when he found out, he did not take heed. He should have inquired of God before he ever made the agreement with Ahab. There are some people today who will listen to the words of the Lord but they will not take warning from them. Some ask advice of their leaders, and then do as they please — contrary to that advice.

Ahab and Jehoshaphat prepared to go to battle. Ahab disguised himself but asked Jehoshaphat to wear his kingly robes, no doubt hoping to spare himself, and to expose Jehoshaphat, and thus to keep the words of prophecy from coming to pass.

The captains of the Syrians had orders to fight with Ahab, especially. In battle, they thought that Jehoshaphat was Ahab, so they surrounded him. Jehoshaphat cried out, and the Lord help him. The enemies realized that he was not Ahab, so they departed. Jehoshaphat almost lost his life because he was in Ahab's place. When a Christian wears the clothes of a sinner, and takes the place of a sinner, he is in a dangerous place. Only the mercy of God spared Jehoshaphat, and only God can avail for one who is in the wrong place.

No Place of Safety

No doubt Ahab thought that he would be safe in his disguise. But a disguise does not hide one from the Lord. Although the enemy did not know which one was Ahab, the Lord did. There had been many words spoken against Ahab and his evil deeds. Ahab had been reproved many times, and had had an opportunity to repent. Micaiah had warned Ahab that he would not return if he went to this battle. Ahab did not trust God or believe God. Ahab chose to believe the false prophets and to trust his idols. But the words of the Lord will come to pass.

This was Ahab's last battle. At random, a bowman shot an arrow which struck Ahab. He was seriously wounded and fell in his chariot. The driver of his chariot left the battle, and Ahab died at sunset. When the king was dead, the men were told to return to their homes. The people had no leader, so they were scattered. The prophecy of Micaiah came to pass: "I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd."

True Prophecy

The words of Elijah also came to pass at the death of Ahab. When Ahab went to possess Naboth's vineyard, Elijah was sent to deliver these words to him: "Thus saith the LORD, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine" (I Kings 21:19).

Naboth had been stoned to death outside the city of Jezreel where Ahab lived. Perhaps Ahab thought that the prophecies of Elijah and Micaiah could not both come to pass. Micaiah said that Ahab would not return from battle against Ramoth-gilead. Elijah said that the dogs would lick Ahab's blood in Samaria. God has spoken by both these men, and both prophecies came to pass. Ahab was slain in battle. He was returned to Samaria and was buried. When his chariot was washed by the pool of Samaria, the dogs were there and fulfilled the words of prophecy.

Mercy

In the Bible are some prophecies which have not yet been fulfilled. But they will come to pass. In the Old Testament we read: "The word of our God shall stand for ever" (Isaiah 40:8); and "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89). In the New Testament we read: "The Word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (I Peter 1:25). These were Jesus' words, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35); and "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matthew 5:18). The words of the Bible are true and they will come to pass. People may try to hinder and to hide, but what God has spoken He is able to do.

Some people try to cover their sins here but God knows about them because "all things are . . . opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:13). How much a person gains by confessing his life before the Lord rather than waiting until he stands before the judgment seat of God! If he confesses now, he will receive pardon; if he waits until judgment, there will

his chariot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host; for I am wounded.

³⁵ And the battle increased that day: and the king was stayed up in his chariot against the Syrians, and died at even: and the blood ran out of the wound into the midst of the chariot.

³⁶ And there went a proclamation throughout the host about the going down of the sun, saying, Every man to his city, and every man to his own country.

³⁷ So the king died, and was brought to Samaria; and they buried the king in Samaria.

³⁸ And *one* washed the chariot in the pool of Samaria; and the dogs licked up his blood; and they washed his armour; according unto the word of the LORD which he spake.

³⁹ Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, and the ivory house which he made, and all the cities that he built, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

⁴⁰ So Ahab slept with his fathers; and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead.

be no mercy. "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after" (I Timothy 5:24). The only way one can expect to receive mercy is to confess and forsake his sin. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper" (Proverbs 28:13).

No Profit

Jehoshaphat did not gain any good by his alliance with evil Ahab. He was influenced to act contrary to the words of God's prophecy. He almost lost his life because he was disguised as Ahab. While he was away with Ahab, Jehoshaphat could not rule his own people properly. He was accused of loving those who hated the Lord, and the wrath of God was upon him. So it is today that one does not profit when he chooses to take his own way rather than to obey God's Word and take the advice of God's ministers and the Bible.

The reward which a person will receive as he stands before God will depend upon the way he has lived here. If his life has been good, according to God's Word, his reward will be good. If his life has not been good, according to the Bible, his reward will not be good, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:23).

QUESTIONS

1. Who was king of Judah?
2. Why did he go to battle against the city of Ramoth-gilead?
3. What advice was given by Ahab's 400 prophets?
4. Who was Micaiah?
5. What was his prophecy?
6. Why did Ahab hate Micaiah?
7. Why were the kings disguised in battle?
8. Why was Jehoshaphat spared?
9. How was Ahab slain in battle?
10. What words of prophecy were fulfilled at Ahab's death?