

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

1 KINGS 20-2

In 1973 on the Day of Atonement, Judaism's holiest day of the year, Syria launched a surprise attack on Israel. While Israelis fasted and prayed in their synagogues thousands of Syrian tanks rolled across the northern border, and into the Golan Heights. The aggression caught Israel completely off-guard.

At the war's outset there were only 188 Israeli tanks in the Golan Heights trying to hold off 2000 Syrian tanks. The Syrian troops outnumbered the Israelis 9 to 1.

The battle that followed was nothing short of miraculous. Legends were born and heroes made. It was obvious, God's providence led to Israel's victory.

One Israeli Lieutenant, Zvika Greengold, maneuvered his lone tank to single-handedly hold off an entire Syrian command. On the radio Zvika kept speaking of the "*Zvika Force*" – giving the Syrians the impression they were fighting an entire unit instead of his solitary tank. Once again, Gideon defeated the Midianites.

The war lasted for only three weeks - from October 6-26. During that that time Israel not only held off the Syrians, but drove to within 25 miles of Damascus.

Over the last 34 years the Syrians have maintained hostilities toward Israel.

This past summer Israel engaged in a 34 day war in southern Lebanon with the Syrian backed terrorist

organization, *Hezbollah*. The port of Haifa and other towns in northern Israel were hit by katyusha rockets. On our trip to Israel in December we drove through a couple of villages where you could see the damage.

Just this past week, several Israeli news reports warned of a Syrian military build-up on the border – similar to what occurred prior to the war in 1973.

The concern is that the Syrians are bringing in Scud-D rockets. They have a longer range, and would make virtually every town in Israel a target.

Hey, all this is to say, not much has changed in the last 2900 years. Israel and Syrian are still mortal enemies, and skirmishes continue to occur on their border.

This is the subject of tonight's chapters... conflict between Israel and Syria...

Chapter 20, "Now Ben-Hadad the king of Syria gathered all his forces together; 32 kings were with him, with horses and chariots." These 32 kings were probably tribal chiefs. "And he went up and besieged Samaria, and made war against it.

Then he sent messengers into the city to Ahab king of Israel, and said to him, "Thus says Ben-Hadad: 'Your silver and your gold are mine; your loveliest wives and children are mine.'" And that brave and courageous King Ahab, "answered and said, "My lord, O king, just as you say, I and all that I have are yours."

Ahab was a wimp. He was certainly no Zvika Greengold. The Israeli king gives in without a fight. "Then the messengers came back and said, "Thus speaks Ben-Hadad,

saying, 'Indeed I have sent to you, saying, "You shall deliver to me your silver and your gold, your wives and your children"; but I will send my servants to you tomorrow about this time, and they shall search your house and the houses of your servants. And it shall be, that whatever is pleasant in your eyes, they will put it in their hands and take it.'" Ben-Hadad wants more. He organizes a home invasion. His troops will enter Ahab's palace and take whatever they want.

Verse 7, "So the king of Israel called all the elders of the land..." Ahab finally gets some advice from his counselors. "And said, "Notice, please, and see how this man seeks trouble, for he sent to me for my wives, my children, my silver, and my gold; and I did not deny him." And all the elders and all the people said to him, "Do not listen or consent." It's time for Ahab to show a backbone - stop being spineless. Act like a king – not an invertebrate. Hey, *stand up to this guy!*

"Therefore he said to the messengers of Ben-Hadad, "Tell my lord the king, 'All that you sent for to your servant the first time I will do, but this thing I cannot do.'"

You can take my gold and "loveliest wives", but you're not going to ransack me and take whatever you want. Leave me some petty cash and a few ugly gals.

"And the messengers departed and brought back word to him.

Then Ben-Hadad sent to him and said, "The gods do so to me, and more also, if enough dust is left of Samaria for a handful for each of the people who follow me." Woe, Ben-Hadad was not in the mood to strike a deal. He wants it all.

“So the king of Israel answered and said, "Tell him, "Let not the one who puts on his armor boast like the one who takes it off." In other words, you got to play the game. Wars are not won with trash talk. No soldier ever died by getting gummed to death. *Let's see who's still standing with the battle is over.*

Verse 12 “And it happened when Ben-Hadad heard this message, as he and the kings were drinking at the command post, that he said to his servants, "Get ready." And they got ready to attack the city.” Battle drums are sounding...

“Suddenly a prophet approached Ahab king of Israel, saying, "Thus says the LORD: 'Have you seen all this great multitude? Behold, I will deliver it into your hand today, and you shall know that I am the LORD.'" In the Old Testament when you see the word “LORD” in all caps – know it’s the Hebrew word, *Yahweh*. Or in its Anglicized form it’s *Jehovah*. It’s the covenant name for the God of Israel.

Despite Ahab’s blatant idolatry God will show mercy and defend Israel.

“So Ahab said, "By whom?" And he said, "Thus says the LORD: 'By the young leaders of the provinces.'" Then he said, "Who will set the battle in order?" And he answered, "You." Then he mustered the young leaders of the provinces, and there were 232; and after them he mustered all the people, all the children of Israel - 7000.” This is funny. God promises Israel a military victory, but Ahab wants to know who’s going to organize the troops... and God answers him, “You.”

On occasion we have folks approach us with a need...
“Sandy, we should have a prayer meeting for our

missionaries... or an outreach to the homeless... or go witnessing in the neighborhood..." and I agree. But that's when someone asks Ahab's question, "Who will set the battle in order?" "Who'll organize the effort?"

And God says "You". Anybody can point out what we need to do. But are we willing to take responsibility for getting it done? Ahab knows the leadership a war effort will take, but he assumes someone else should step up and lead.

Here's a good rule to follow in the church, "It's okay to point out problems as long as you're willing to be part of the solution." And God answered, "You."

"So (the army of Israel) went out at noon." It was a shoot-out at high noon.

Meanwhile Ben-Hadad and the 32 kings helping him were getting drunk at the command post." Obviously, they were over-confident. Ben-Hadad thinks he can fight a battle and booze it up with his friends at the same time. This was poor leadership. War and whiskey are a good combination for defeat.

The young leaders of the provinces went out first. And Ben-Hadad sent out a patrol, and they told him, saying, "Men are coming out of Samaria!"

So he said, "If they have come out for peace, take them alive; and if they have come out for war, take them alive." Then these young leaders of the provinces went out of the city with the army which followed them. And each one killed his man; so the Syrians fled, and Israel pursued them; and Ben-Hadad the king of Syria escaped on a horse with the

cavalry. Then the king of Israel went out and attacked the horses and chariots, and killed the Syrians with a great slaughter.”

Israel wins a great victory - but one battle doesn't win a war. Ahab is warned to be ready to fight a second time... “And the prophet came to the king of Israel and said to him, "Go, strengthen yourself; take note, and see what you should do, for in the spring of the year the king of Syria will come up against you.”

In verse 23, Syria's military analysts assess the reason for their defeat. And they never mention the king's drunkenness. That's not what he wanted to hear...

“Then the servants of the king of Syria said to him, "Their gods are gods of the hills. Therefore they were stronger than we; but if we fight against them in the plain, surely we will be stronger than they. So do this thing: Dismiss the kings, each from his position, and put captains in their places; and you shall muster an army like the army that you have lost, horse for horse and chariot for chariot. Then we will fight against them in the plain; surely we will be stronger than they.”

And he listened to their voice and did so.”

Understand, the concept of localized deities were common in the ancient world. This was particularly true of Baal worship. There were different Baals - each with its own territory. Here the Syrians conclude the God of Israel must be Lord over the mountains. They figured He lacked jurisdiction over the flatlands. Thus, when they strike again it'll be in the plains. They'll stay out of the hills.

You'd think modern folks would see through the silliness of such an argument - but not so... We assume *that God is Lord over Sunday, but do as we please the other six days – that He governs the spiritual, but the secular is our domain - He cares how we act in church, but not how we conduct business or do politics – worship and doctrine concern Him, sex and entertainment He leaves to us...*

As a kid I was told not to run in church. Wait until you leave the sanctuary then you can run. As if God controlled what went on *inside* His house, but not *outside*.

Hey, God is not just God of the mountains. He is Lord over all of life!

Charles Spurgeon once wrote, “Many today think that God is a God of hills but not of the plains. They think God is a God of the past but not of the present. They think God is a God of a few special favorites but not of all His people. They think that God is God of one kind of trial, but not of another kind.” We're as foolish as the Syrians if we put limits on the scope of God's sovereignty and involvement.

Verse 26, “So it was, in the spring of the year, that Ben-Hadad mustered the Syrians and went up to Aphek to fight against Israel...” It's a retaliatory attack.

Aphek was located 11 miles northeast of Joppa in the Sharon Plain – west of Samaria. The Syrians want to fight on the flatlands – not in the mountains.

“And the children of Israel were mustered and given provisions, and they went against them. Now the children of Israel encamped before them like two little flocks of goats, while the Syrians filled the countryside.”

Hey, the Israeli army was outnumbered and overpowered.

“Then a man of God came and spoke to the king of Israel, and said, "Thus says the LORD: 'Because the Syrians have said, "The LORD is God of the hills, but He is not God of the valleys," therefore I will deliver all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am the LORD.'" God will show the world that He is the Lord of both the mountains and the plains – the peaks and the valleys.

“And they encamped opposite each other for seven days. So it was that on the seventh day the battle was joined; and the children of Israel killed 100,000 foot soldiers of the Syrians in one day.” This was a huge victory for Israel.

Imagine everyone in the Rose Bowl for a New Years' Day football game slaughtered on the battlefield. 100,000 casualties is massive carnage.

“But the rest fled to Aphek, into the city; then a wall fell on 27,000 of the men who were left. And Ben-Hadad fled and went into the city, into an inner chamber.”

Then his servants said to him, "Look now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings. Please, let us put sackcloth around our waists and ropes around our heads, and go out to the king of Israel; perhaps he will spare your life." Ahab had sought mercy from Ben-Hadad. Now the roles are reversed. And Ben-Hadad is hoping to receive more mercy than he showed.

“So they wore sackcloth around their waists and put ropes

around their heads, and came to the king of Israel and said, "Your servant Ben-Hadad says, 'Please let me live.'" And he said, "Is he still alive? He is my brother." They're both idolaters.

"Now the men were diligently watching closely to see whether any sign of mercy would come from him; and they quickly grasped at this word and said, "Your brother Ben-Hadad." So he said, "Go, bring him." Then Ben-Hadad came out to him; and he had him come up into the chariot.

So Ben-Hadad said to him, "The cities which my father took from your father I will restore; and you may set up marketplaces for yourself in Damascus, as my father did in Samaria." Then Ahab said, "I will send you away with this treaty."

So he made a treaty with him and sent him away." A huge mistake!

"Now a certain man of the sons of the prophets said to his neighbor by the word of the LORD, "Strike me, please." And the man refused to strike him.

Then he said to him, "Because you have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, surely, as soon as you depart from me, a lion shall kill you." And as soon as he left him, a lion found him and killed him." Obviously, the prophet was not *lying*.

"And he found another man, and said, "Strike me, please." So the man struck him, inflicting a wound." The prophet needed a black-eye. It was part of a ruse he was about to pull on the King of Israel. His injury was designed to make a point.

"Then the prophet departed and waited for the king by the

road, and disguised himself with a bandage over his eyes. Now as the king passed by, he cried out to the king and said, "Your servant went out into the midst of the battle; and there, a man came over and brought a man to me, and said, 'Guard this man; if by any means he is missing, your life shall be for his life, or else you shall pay a talent of silver.' "While your servant was busy here and there, he was gone."

Then the king of Israel said to him, "So shall your judgment be; you yourself have decided it." And he hastened to take the bandage away from his eyes; and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets.

Then he said to him, "Thus says the LORD: 'Because you have let slip out of your hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore your life shall go for his life, and your people for his people.'" Ahab shouldn't have struck King Ben-Hadad – not struck a deal. Ahab was God's instrument of judgment not peace. "So the king of Israel went to his house sullen and displeased, and came to Samaria."

One day, the new arrivals to heaven were being checked in by the charge-angel. He shouted, "Okay fellows, everybody who was a henpecked husband while on earth – and was bossed around by his wife - stand on the right side... And everyone who wore the britches in his family, stand on the left side."

The crowd shuffled around a bit until all the men, but one, were standing on the left side. One lone fellow was standing on the right side. The angel said to him, "All right, what makes you think you should be standing on the right side?"

The guy sheepishly answered, "Hey, this is where my wife

told me to stand.”

Several years ago there was a billboard on Highway 78 that promoted Virginia Slims cigarettes. A beautiful, but feisty young lady - with a cigarette in her hand - was deliberately blocking the path of her husband – resisting his movement.

The ad read, “Who cares who wears the pants?”

Let me say this clearly for modern ears to hear... **God cares who wears the pants.** In the home, and in the church, God desires husbands to lead, and wives to support and follow. Male headship is God’s idea for marriage and His kingdom.

Chapter 21 exposes a marriage where the wife wears the britches. Ahab is a weak husband – Jezebel a willful wife. It proves a horrible combination. The wimp and witch – a vacuum and vixen - combine to cause trouble in the house of Israel.

“And it came to pass after these things that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard which was in Jezreel, next to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria.

So Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying, "Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near, next to my house; and for it I will give you a vineyard better than it. Or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its worth in money." Chapter 21 proves that a greedy man never has enough. King Ahab is sovereign over a kingdom, *but what he really wants is the vineyard next door.*

But Naboth said to Ahab, "The LORD forbid that I should

give the inheritance of my fathers to you!" Ahab wants to buy it off Naboth, but this is his inheritance. It's all he has to pass down to his kids. Naboth says "no deal" - and Ahab pouts...

So Ahab went into his house sullen and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers." And he lay down on his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no food." Ahab is a big baby – a spoiled brat. What a wimp.

And it's when Ahab pouts that Jezebel takes over. A vacuum of godly leadership at the top gives the vixen a chance to work her mischief.

"But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said to him, "Why is your spirit so sullen that you eat no food?" He said to her, "Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite, and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if it pleases you, I will give you another vineyard for it.' And he answered, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'" Ahab is whining because He can't get what he wants.

"Then Jezebel his wife said to him, "You now exercise authority over Israel!" The NIV translates this as a question. "Is this how you act as king over Israel?"

She's being sarcastic. It's a put down to her husband. Jezebel was a wicked woman, but ever woman hates a wimp. Women want their husbands to lead.

It reminds me of the wife who shouted at her husband, "Are you a man or mouse? Go ahead and **squeak up.**" *Men, stand up and be loving leaders.*

She tells Ahab, “Arise, eat food, and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.” Men, take notice! A husband’s weakness gives his wife permission to ply her willfulness – and the results are a disaster.

Hey, I’m sure your wife is not a Jezebel. *Her ways* are far from wicked. But that’s just it God does not want your wife to have to resort to *her ways*.

God’s way is for you to lead. God wants the man to be head of his home.

Verse 8 “And (Jezebel) wrote letters in Ahab's name, sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters to the elders and the nobles who were dwelling in the city with Naboth.” She forges official documents. She lies in the name of the king.

“She wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth with high honor among the people; and seat two men, scoundrels, before him to bear witness against him, saying, “You have blasphemed God and the king.”

Then take him out, and stone him, that he may die.”

Again, the men who read these letters think their orders are coming from Ahab. *The king was a coward, but he wasn’t THIS corrupt...* Jezebel tells the elders of the city to plant “scoundrels” that will falsely accuse Naboth of blasphemy. Then they are to take him out and stone him - so Ahab can have his vegetable garden.

Verse 11 “So the men of his city, the elders and nobles who were inhabitants of his city, did as Jezebel had sent to them,

as it was written in the letters which she had sent to them. They proclaimed a fast, and seated Naboth with high honor among the people. And two men, scoundrels, came in and sat before him; and the scoundrels witnessed against him, against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, "Naboth has blasphemed God and the king!" Then they took him outside the city and stoned him with stones, so that he died. Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, "Naboth has been stoned and is dead." The dirty work had been done.

“And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, "Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead." So it was, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab got up and went down to take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.”

And evidently he does so without asking any questions. Surely, Ahab had to have wondered how Naboth died – or what role did his wife play in his death?

This is a horrible abuse of power – a White House scandal - *Vineyard Gate*. An innocent man is dead on trumped up charges... and it's traceable to the palace.

And as with many scandals it doesn't escape the public's attention for long. But it's not the Samaritan Post that breaks the story. God gives the scoop to Elijah.

“Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, "Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who lives in Samaria. There he is, in the vineyard of Naboth, where he

has gone down to take possession of it.

You shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: "Have you murdered and also taken possession?" ' And you shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: "In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick your blood, even yours." After a stoning the wild dogs lapped up the blood.

In the exact spot of Naboth's stoning, dogs will lap up the blood of Ahab.

"Then Ahab said to Elijah, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" And he answered, "I have found you, because you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the LORD: 'Behold, I will bring calamity on you. I will take away your posterity, and will cut off from Ahab every male in Israel, both bond and free.

I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, because of the provocation with which you have provoked Me to anger, and made Israel sin.' "And concerning Jezebel the LORD also spoke, saying, 'The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.'

From *Princess* to *Purina* was God's judgment on Jezebel. She'll experience a grizzly end, as will all Ahab's house. "The dogs shall eat whoever belongs to Ahab and dies in the city, and the birds of the air shall eat whoever dies in the field."

Verse 25 is a summary statement with some interesting insight. "But there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the LORD, because Jezebel his

wife stirred him up.” Jezebel was an extremely evil woman - but because Ahab succumbed to her influence God held him accountable.

The same is true for ever husband. Guys, I don't care if your wife is a bucking bronco and Brahma bull combined - **the buck still stops with the buck.**

The ancient Aztecs had a word for wife, “NAHUATL”. It means “**woman who owns a man.**” Is it any wonder Aztec society no longer exists? When men abdicate leadership and women rule, the family is weakened and society suffers.

Ahab also “**behaved very abominably in following idols, according to all that the Amorites had done, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.**”

Now if you've ever been suspicious of God's mercy the next few verses should extinguish your doubts. God has mercy even on a wicked man like Ahab...

“**So it was, when Ahab heard those words, that he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his body, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went about mourning.**

And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, “**See how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the calamity in his days.**” He spares him judgment in his lifetime. “**In the days of his son I will bring the calamity on his house.**” Ahab repents and God forgives... And if God shows mercy on Ahab, He'll show mercy on us.

Chapter 22 “**Now 3 years passed without war between Syria and Israel. Then it came to pass, in the third year, that**

Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went down to visit the king of Israel.” It’s been several chapters since there was any mention of the king of Judah, the southern kingdom... Jehoshaphat was a godly king.

“And the king of Israel said to his servants, "Do you know that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, but we hesitate to take it out of the hand of the king of Syria?"

So he said to Jehoshaphat, "Will you go with me to fight at Ramoth Gilead?"

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, "Please inquire for the word of the LORD today." Jehoshaphat wants to mend fences with Israel. With Syria in the north, Judah and Israel need to be united.

Jehoshaphat’s first inclination is to ally with Ahab, but before he gets any deeper he wants to check it out with God. This was a very smart move.

“Our way – even good ways - are not always God’s ways.”

“Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about 400 men, and said to them, "Shall I go against Ramoth Gilead to fight, or shall I refrain?"

So they said, "Go up, for the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king."

And Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not still a prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of Him?" Jehoshaphat realizes Ahab’s 400 prophets were just stooges. The king’s “Yes Men”. They were going to prophesy the party line.

They were sure to say what Ahab wanted to hear. But Jehoshaphat wants to know if there's a true prophet in Israel - a man who'll speak only God's Word?

“So the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "There is still one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the LORD; but I hate him, because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." Ahab hated him because he always spoke truth. “And Jehoshaphat said, "Let not the king say such things!"

Verse 9 “Then the king of Israel called an officer and said, "Bring Micaiah the son of Imlah quickly!" Ahab wanted to get this over with as soon as possible.

“The king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, having put on their robes, sat each on his throne, at a threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them.” And it was quite a show...

“Now Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah had made horns of iron for himself; and he said, "Thus says the LORD: 'With these you shall gore the Syrians until they are destroyed.'" And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, "Go up to Ramoth Gilead and prosper, for the LORD will deliver it into the king's hand."

It was common for Old Testament prophets to use props or visual aids in their prophecies. Jeremiah and Ezekiel were both known for these living parables.

But even false prophets employed these tactics.

Zedekiah comes into the palace prancing in with iron horns, telling the king to gore the Syrians. The other prophets chime in with the same message. Just goes to show a speaker can be an entertaining and innovative – *and be dead wrong*.

“Then the messenger who had gone to call Micaiah spoke to him, saying, “Now listen, the words of the prophets with one accord encourage the king. Please, let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak encouragement.”

The king’s messenger tries to prep Micaiah - for once, don’t rock the boat. Don’t be controversial. Blend in with the other voices. Go along with the majority.

We need a unanimous verdict... But listen to the prophet’s reply, “And Micaiah said, “As the LORD lives, whatever the LORD says to me, that I will speak.”

There are a lot of pastors and churches today that’ll tell you what you want to hear. But a true man of God will speak only what the Lord speaks.

“Then he came to the king; and the king said to him, “Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall we refrain?” And he answered him, “Go and prosper, for the LORD will deliver it into the hand of the king!” To Ahab’s surprise, Micaiah agrees with his stooges. And this raises some suspicion in his mind. So the king said to him, “How many times shall I make you swear that you tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?” Ahab is saying, “Micaiah, you have never agreed with these guys before, why are you agreeing now?”

In verse 17 the prophet tells the king what he's seen - his vision from God.

"Then he said, "I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd. And the LORD said, 'These have no master. Let each return to his house in peace.'" The vision implies is that King Ahab will die in battle.

"And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?" Ahab says, "There he goes again!"

Verse 19 "Then Micaiah said, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left. And the LORD said, 'Who will persuade Ahab to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?' So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner. Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, 'I will persuade him.' "The LORD said to him, 'In what way?'

So he said, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And the LORD said, 'You shall persuade him, and also prevail. Go out and do so.'

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

Micaiah was given a vision of God's throne, and *the discussion in heaven* was about *matters on earth*. Various spirits, or angels – both *faithful angels* and *fallen angels* were involved in a discussion. Job 1 teaches even – the former

archangel, Lucifer or Satan – the fallen angel himself - has access into God’s presence.

Evidently, so do his demons, and here one volunteers to spread falsehood. A “**lying spirit**” – a demon – is placed in the mouth of the false prophets.

Of course, just because God uses evil, it doesn’t make it good. *Evil is evil!*

But God is sovereign over all things – even the evil in the world – and He can use it for His good. God can even manipulate a lie to bring about His truth.

Verse 24 “**Now Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near and struck Micaiah on the cheek, and said, "Which way did the spirit from the LORD go from me to speak to you?"** His words are dripping with sarcasm. “**And Micaiah said, "Indeed, you shall see on that day when you go into an inner chamber to hide!"**”

So the king of Israel said, “**Take Micaiah, and return him to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king's son...**” He must’ve been a prisoner the time.

“**And say, 'Thus says the king: "Put this fellow in prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and water of affliction, until I come in peace."** But Micaiah said, “**If you ever return in peace, the LORD has not spoken by me.**” And he said, “**Take heed, all you people!**” Micaiah predicts that Ahab will never return home alive.

“**So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth Gilead.**” Why Jehoshaphat goes with Ahab we don’t know. He should’ve turned back. He knows

he's going out to fight a battle knowing he's on the losing side.

“And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "I will disguise myself and go into battle; but you put on your robes." So the king of Israel disguised himself and went into battle. Now the king of Syria had commanded the 32 captains of his chariots, saying, "Fight with no one small or great, but only with the king of Israel."

Ahab is treacherous. There's a bulls-eye on his back. The enemy has targeted the King of Israel. Ahab wears the infantryman's fatigues, but he tells Jehoshaphat to dress up in his royal robes. The enemy will shoot at Jehoshaphat - not him.

“So it was, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, "Surely it is the king of Israel!" Therefore they turned aside to fight against him, and Jehoshaphat cried out. And it happened, when the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him.”

But you can't fool God.

Verse 34 tells us, “Now a certain man drew a bow at random, and struck the king of Israel between the joints of his armor.” God took control of that random arrow and He supernaturally guided it to through a hole between Ahab's armor.

Ahab bled to death in his chariot, and guess what happened to his blood? After the battle someone was washing out his chariot when the dogs came up to lick up the blood. It all came down just as Elijah had predicted it would back in chapter 21.

“So (Ahab) said to the driver of his chariot, "Turn around and take me out of the battle, for I am wounded." The battle increased that day; and the king was propped up in his chariot, facing the Syrians, and died at evening.” Even after Ahab passed away he served as a symbol for Israel to fight on. Someone propped him up in his chariot to look like he was alive. When they saw the king it encouraged the men.

But Ahab’s “blood ran out from the wound onto the floor of the chariot.

Then, as the sun was going down, a shout went throughout the army, saying, "Every man to his city, and every man to his own country!" Israel retreated.

“So the king died, and was brought to Samaria. And they buried the king in Samaria. Then someone washed the chariot at a pool in Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood while the harlots bathed, according to the word of the LORD which He had spoken.” They washed Ahab’s blood from his chariot at the exact spot Naboth was stoned. While Ahab’s chariot got detailed - God fulfilled the details of the prophecy uttered in 21:19. Dogs drank up Ahab’s sinful blood.

Verse 39, “Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, the ivory house which 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 rested with his fathers.

Then Ahaziah his son reigned in his place.

Meanwhile down South... Jehoshaphat the son of Asa had become king over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of

Israel. Jehoshaphat was 35 years old when he became king, and he reigned 25 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. And he walked in all the ways of his father Asa.

He did not turn aside from them, doing what was right in the eyes of the LORD.

Nevertheless the high places were not taken away, for the people offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places.

Also Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel.”

“Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, the might that he showed, and how he made war, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?” Jehoshaphat was the king who believed in the power of praise.

He put the worship leaders in front of the soldiers and confused the enemy. He won a great victory over an enemy coalition. We'll study it in 2 Chronicles 20..

“And the rest of the perverted persons, who remained in the days of his father Asa, he banished from the land. There was then no king in Edom, only a deputy of the king. Jehoshaphat made merchant ships to go to Ophir for gold; but they never sailed, for the ships were wrecked at Ezion Geber.” A city of the Edomites.

2 Chronicles 20:35 tells us why the ships were wrecked. The same reason Jehoshaphat almost lost his life in battle with Ahab... The king listened to Ahab and dress in kingly clothes – and almost became victim of a double-cross.

This too, was a joint-venture with a wicked man - Ahaziah,

Ahab's son.

Ally yourself with corrupt people and you invite ruinous results. You put yourself in God's line of fire aimed at your partner. God warned Jehoshaphat, but the king refused to listen, and suffered ruinous consequences. His ships were sunk.

Evidently, in verse 49 the writer of 1 Kings speaks of a different occasion – a later occasion - where Jehoshaphat shows he's learned his lesson.

“Then Ahaziah the son of Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "Let my servants go with your servants in the ships." But Jehoshaphat would not.” “No way, Jose!”

Hey, enter a joint venture with a person who serves a different God, and holds to different values – and you'll get burned. Jehoshaphat made peace with Israel, but he avoided any future entanglements. *That's a good policy for us.*

“And Jehoshaphat rested with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the City of David his father. Then Jehoram his son reigned in his place.”

Verse 51 “Ahaziah the son of Ahab became king over Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned 2 years over Israel.

He did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father and in the way of his mother and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin; for he served Baal and worshiped him, and provoked the LORD God of Israel to anger, according to all that his father had done.”

Notice, though Ahab repented, and God had mercy on him – it was too late to save his son, Ahaziah. His father's idolatry was too ingrained in his son.

This is why parents need to live for Jesus while their children are young.

God will forgive you when you're an older parent, but the window of opportunity to influence your kids in godly ways may no longer be open later in life.