

II CHRONICLES 17-18

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to II Chronicles chapter 17 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

In our last study we concluded with the death of Asa, King of the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

And Asa started out well, but in the end his walk with the Lord was hampered and it was illustrated by Asa becoming diseased in his feet, which led to his death.

Tonight we will begin looking at Jehoshaphat, who was the son of Asa and he is now the King in the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

As we will see, his life will cover the next four chapters of II Chronicles.

Jehoshaphat was a godly King, not perfect, but he loved the Lord and brought reform to the nation.

Now here's the thing. As you look at these men of God have you seen that they are not perfect, that they had problems, even David?

Then why in the world does God portray them as men of God if they were not perfect?

Because there are no perfect men!

We saw this played out for us as we went through I and II Kings. Those books give us a perspective from man, all the sins of the Kings, even the good ones.

Here in Chronicles, we see God's perspective you might say and He edits out most of the bad stuff and gives to us the highlights of these men.

And we can glean spiritual lessons from their lives to help us grow.

We can learn from the good they did and desire to follow after them and we can learn from the bad they did and desire to avoid those things in our lives!

With that as our background, let's begin reading in II Chronicles chapter 17, starting in verse 1 as we look at the life of King Jehoshaphat.

II CHRONICLES 17

VERSES 1-4

As I have said, Jehoshaphat was the son of Asa, who was a good King in Judah, but he did not finish his life well.

But Jehoshaphat walked in the ways of King David, and keep in mind that God uses David as the good standard to measure the Kings by!

And here in II Chronicles 17:2 we see something that is interesting. We are told that he strengthened himself against Israel, why?

Because they were a threat to Judah and he fortified certain cities to be ready in case of battle.

What a great lesson for us. In times of peace, in times when not much is happening, we should fortify our lives, spiritually speaking, because the battle will come and we need to be ready. We need to be strong in the Lord and the power of His might and not ours!

There are a few points here that show the heart of Jehoshaphat that I would like to expound on.

First of all, we are told that he walked in the ways of David and that was a good thing as I have said.

David loved the Lord and the passion of his life was to worship the Lord.

Secondly, he did not seek after the Baals or the false gods but sought the Lord!

I know, that is the way it should be and yet, how often idols get in our way of worshiping the Lord.

In Leviticus 19:4 the Lord told Moses to go and tell his people, **“Do not turn to idols, nor make for yourselves molded gods: I am the Lord your God.”**

There is the warning before they ever entered the land and when you study the history of the Jews, how often they went down this road of worshiping the false gods!

And the third thing is that Jehoshaphat did not follow in the ways of the Northern Kingdom of Israel but followed after the commandments of the Lord.

Keep in mind that at this time the Northern Kingdom of Israel had as their King, Ahab.

And both Ahab and his wife Jezebel were wicked, they introduced Baal worship, setup altars to worship Baal by, took care the priests of Baal and killed the priests of God.

They were the ***Demonic Duo*** of the Old Testament!

And the comparison is like night and day. Jehoshaphat and the Southern Kingdom of Judah followed the Lord and Ahab and the Northern Kingdom of Israel followed after the Baals.

May we be known for following the Lord in our own lives!

VERSES 5-6

When you read these verses there is an interesting contrast between King Solomon and King Jehoshaphat.

What do I mean by that?

Simply, they both had riches, they both prospered and were honored but Solomon focused on the riches, the prosperity, while Jehoshaphat focused on the Lord.

That is where he found joy and peace, in the ways of the Lord and that is where we will find true joy and peace, by focusing on the Lord, resting in Him and not in possessions.

Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, “**But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.**”

We tend to do just the opposite. We focus on all the material things first and then Jesus and then we wonder why we are not filled with joy, with peace. It is because our focus is wrong and we see here that Jesus is saying our focus must be on Him, and not to focus on the material things, which are temporary while He is eternal! Not only that, but He will supply our needs.

Let me ask you this. Are material things wrong?

No!

Are riches wrong?

No!

If God does bless you with riches, then don't be consumed with these riches, don't lose your focus.

I want you to listen to what David said because that should be our response to material blessings.

In Psalm 62:10 we read, “**... If riches increase, Do not set your heart on them.**”

In other words, don't let it go to your head! Don't put your trust in them; keep your focus on the Lord.

Remember what God told Abraham in Genesis 15:1, “**... ‘Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.’**”

Don't lose sight of that fact, that God is our shield and our reward, keep things in proper perspective.

Riches and material possessions can be taken away and sometimes very quickly, but the Lord can never be taken away!

That is the perspective we need to have as we focus on the Lord!

And also notice that Jehoshaphat removed the high places and the wooden images from Judah, which were idols and places for them to worship them.

Keep in mind that in those days people believed that the higher you were in elevation the closer you were to God!

So they built their pagan altars on mountain tops or raised platforms!

God prohibited the Jews from doing that because there was one place for them to worship God and that was at the Temple in Jerusalem. God wanted the worship to be pure and not deteriorate into what the pagans were doing!

This was probably not a popular thing for the King to do, but it was the right thing, and, in the end, the people came around and received what Jehoshaphat had done.

As we read on, I want you to see what this King did that was very important to the spiritual well-being of the people!

VERSES 7-9

Did you see what Jehoshaphat did here?

He sent out the leaders and the priests throughout the land to put on skits to entertain the people!

No, he did not do that.

Then maybe he sent them out to teach the *40 Days of Purpose* program throughout the land!

No, he did not do that either.

Well, maybe he sent them out to tell people that words have no meaning, and we don't really know what the Law says, but you just need to experience God anyway you want!

No, he did not do that either!

I wish more leaders and people would see this and apply this to their ministries and their own lives!

Jehoshaphat not only removed the idolatry from the land, which was important to do, but he also recognized that man does not live in a vacuum, and if you remove something from a person's life, you have to replace it with something else or they will return to their old ways, and maybe even worse than before.

As he removes the false worship, he replaces it with the true worship of God.

And the way he does this is by sending out leaders, sending out priests throughout the land to teach the people the Words of God, the Law!

You see, any person who is not walking with the Lord is in bondage to the things of this world, to the ruler of this world, Satan.

But, once you turn from those wicked ways, once you turn to the Lord, you are free!

It is as Jesus said in John 8:31-32 “... **‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’**”

But where does our faith come from?

How does our faith grow?

Not by programs but by the Word of God opened up to us by the Spirit of God.

Paul tells us in Romans 10:17, “**So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**”

And isn't it interesting how the Devil has gotten so many church leaders, so many pastors away from the Word of God, which will set the people free, which will help the people grow in the faith or come to the faith!

May we learn from what Jehoshaphat did, teaching the Word of God to the people!

In regard to what Jehoshaphat did, listen to what Morgan wrote, “*No better service can be rendered to the nation than that of proclaiming the Word of Jehovah to the people, in cities, towns, villages, and hamlets. By such proclamation the heart of the people may be turned to Jehovah, and so He be enabled to do for them all that is in His heart.*”

If we want to see our family, our community, our workplace, our state, our nation, our world turn towards the Lord, then it must begin with our own hearts and we must bring the Word of God to the people because God's Word is a love story of Jesus who came to take away the sins of the world.

If you negate the Word of God, then you lose the story!

Another writer put it like this. He wrote,

Asa was zealous . . . If you didn't seek Him you were put to death. Asa instituted national reforms, but they didn't last.

Asa *reformed laws*, but the people were not *informed* and *transformed*.

Jehoshaphat knew *changing laws* without *changing hearts* was a waste of time.

This is why he sent men out to read and teach God's Word.

He knew the Bible was the change agent. It convicts, and softens, and cleanses, and empowers . . . Only God's Word has the power to transform a man's nature and enlighten his mind.

Jehoshaphat knew if the people were taught God's Word they'd love God and want to obey Him. A change of heart would occur. This is still true today.

- Sandy Adams, II Chronicles 17

Absolutely!

And think about this. People today want to see revival and thus, they put together all kinds of programs to see revival break out.

But, as J. Vernon McGee said, ***“Until the church gets back to the Word of God, there will be no real revival. All movements in or out of the church will come to naught unless they are anchored in the Word of God. There are wonderful things that are happening today. Some are inside the church; some are outside the organized church. If they are rooted in the Word of God, revival will be the result”***

Now some may think that this is simplistic, just teaching the Word of God, but it is not.

How do I know for sure?

Because of the results that we see in the nation of Judah, the fruit that is born out of teaching the people the Word of God and that is given to us in the next verse.

VERSE 10

Why were the other nations fearful of the Southern Kingdom of Judah?

Was it because of their army we read about in verse two of II Chronicles chapter 17?

It was not the army that brought fear upon these other nations; it was as the Word of God was taught that other nations saw the power of God in the people's lives.

It is as Solomon wrote in Proverbs 16:7, **“When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.”**

That is what we are seeing here, a time of peace and prosperity. Even those nasty Philistines, who were a constant thorn in the side of the Jews, were subdued at this time.

And keep in mind that this was all a result, not of wars, but of people surrendering their lives to the Lord and then, **“... the fear of the LORD fell on all the kingdoms of the lands that were around Jerusalem.”** II Chronicles 17:10.

It is as Clarke wrote, *“Thus the nation became thoroughly instructed in their duty to God, to the king, and to each other. They became, therefore, as one man; and against a people thus united, on such principles, no enemy could be successful.”*

What a lesson for us to learn. To submit to one another in the fear of the Lord and what enemy can then come against us! ***NONE!*** (Ephesians 5:21)

May we bring the Word of God to people because that is where faith begins, that is where faith grows, that is where our victory is found!

VERSES 11-19

As we have read, the Southern Kingdom enjoyed a time of peace and prosperity - why?

They had this time of peace and prosperity because they were taught the Word of God.

Again, I know that sounds so simplistic, but it is true.

If the Word of God becomes part of our life, David, in Psalm 1 says that we will be like a tree planted by the waters, which give the tree life. We get our nourishment as we draw from the living waters.

And that is truly the key. Not just reading and studying the Word of God, but applying it to our lives, living out our faith!

Today many have tossed the Word of God away and replaced it with other things, like programs, activities, rituals, that will not give to you life, but will starve you to death.

Instead of finding strength you will become weak.

Remember what Paul said in Hebrews 4:12, **“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”**

Listen to how The Amplified Bible puts this verse, **“For the Word that God speaks is alive and full of power [making it active, operative, energizing, and effective]; it is sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating to the dividing line of the breath of life (soul) and [the immortal] spirit, and of joints and marrow [of the deepest parts of our nature], exposing and sifting and analyzing and judging the very thoughts and purposes of the heart.”**

In other words, as the Word of God is spoken, as the Word of God is read, as the Word of God is studied, it will cut right to the heart of the matter because it is living and is able to transform our lives through the power of God’s Spirit!

Jehoshaphat and the Southern Kingdom of Judah saw that firsthand and may we learn that lesson!

There is one more point that I would like to make here and that is found in verse 16, this man named Amasiah, who “**. . . willingly offered himself to the LORD . . .**”

Folks, you can't force people to offer themselves to the Lord. You can't make people serve the Lord because, if you do, then you have to force them to continue to do the work.

People that willingly offer themselves to the Lord you don't have to tell them to do things, you don't have to remind them to do things, they just do it because they love the Lord and their service is unto the Lord and not to man.

Man is only benefiting from the service, but the service is unto the Lord!

Spurgeon put it like this in regard to this man and what he did.

He wrote, “*Amasiah is a man of whom we do not know anything beyond this – he ‘willingly offered himself unto the Lord.’ There must have been a turning-point in his career, a time when first he knew the grace of God, which wrought such a change in him. There must have been a waking up to the feeling that God deserved his love and his life.*”

And I truly believe the same is true in our own lives, that we serve the Lord because we see His love, the grace that He has extended to us, and we can't help but serve Him!

There are a few principles regarding our service to the Lord, what we see in this man here.

Here is what a servant of God looks like,

- No one had to press him into service.
- No one had to seek him out for service.
- No one had to look after him once he had begun serving.
- No one had to lead him.

That should be the way we serve the Lord, because, as Paul tells us in Colossians 3:23-24, **“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.”**

In other words, Paul is telling us that the things we do in life; we need to give it our all, to do our best because we are serving the Lord.

We need to have that perspective in life because if we don't, our witness may be off!

Listen to what Spurgeon has to say regarding our service to the Lord, for many feel that they are not in ministry and thus, they are not serving the Lord.

That is wrong as Spurgeon wrote, *“There is no lawful occupation in which a man cannot thoroughly serve the Lord. It is a great privilege and blessing to be set apart to the work of winning souls; but we must never separate that work from all the rest of the callings of life, as though it alone were sacred, and all the rest were secular and almost sinful. Serve God where you are.”*

We are all in the ministry and we are serving where God has us, at least I hope you are serving!

May we willingly offer ourselves to the Lord for His service!

II CHRONICLES 18

VERSE 1

We have seen Jehoshaphat bring reform to the nation by removing the idols from the land.

We saw him bring reform to the land by bringing the Word of God to the people, teaching them the Law of God.

And then we read that he allows his son Jehoram to marry the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, this ***DEMONIC DUO*** of the Old Testament. Their daughter's name was Athaliah, and she too was just as wicked as her parents, and she almost wipes out the lineage of David.

To me this is one of those really confusing alliances, and maybe one of the strangest in the whole Bible.

Jehoshaphat, who was a godly King, teams up with Ahab who was one of Israel's most wicked Kings.

One reason I can come up with why Jehoshaphat would do this is that he was trying to heal the wounds between the two kingdoms. Maybe because they now were related by marriage, with their son marrying the daughter of Ahab, things would be better between them.

But just as oil and water don't mix, good and evil do not mix! And you never sacrifice truth and righteousness for the sake of unity!

Paul makes this point in II Corinthians 6:14-18 as he wrote, and this is from *The Amplified Bible*, **“Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers [do not make mismatched alliances with them or come under a different yoke with them, inconsistent with your faith]. For what partnership have right living and right standing with God with iniquity and lawlessness? Or how can light have fellowship with darkness? What harmony can there be between Christ and Belial [the devil]? Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? What agreement [can there be between] a temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God; even as God said, I will dwell in and with and among them and will walk in and with and among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My**

people. [Ex 25:8; 29:45; Lev 26:12; Jer 31:1; Ezek 37:27.] So, come out from among [unbelievers], and separate (sever) yourselves from them, says the Lord, and touch not [any] unclean thing; then I will receive you kindly and treat you with favor, [Isa 52:11.] And I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty. [Isa 43:6; Hos 1:10.]”

I think that is pretty clear. Yes, Jehoshaphat wanted to heal the wounds of these two nations, but the Northern Kingdom of Israel did not repent, they did not get right with God and thus, you can't unite under those circumstances because light and darkness do not mix!

And make no mistake about it, we see these alliances made with unbelievers and in the end, it is the believer that is hurt.

Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

The children's series VeggieTales has sold over 52 million DVD and VHS copies.

Bob the Tomato and ***Larry the Cucumber*** teach biblical values to kids.

The series became so popular it was sold to NBC and added to its Saturday morning kids programming. But it didn't take long for NBC editors to go to work.

Non-historical references to God and the Bible were sliced - even Bob and Larry's trademark ending - ***“Remember kids, God made you special, and loves you very much . . .”*** - is gone.

The vitamins were cooked out of VeggieTales.

The series' creator, Phil Vischer confessed, had he known how much the shows would change he wouldn't have signed on to the network deal.

Vischer sums it up this way, ***“VeggieTales is religious – NBC is not.”*** . . .

And when a Christian becomes entangled with a non-Christian in a legally binding relationship some kind of compromise is the inevitable outcome.

It happens when a believer and an unbeliever go into business.

It happens when a believer and an unbeliever get married.

It happens when NBC and VeggieTales partner together.

And it happened when Jehoshaphat joined forces with Israel.

- Sandy Adams, II Chronicles 17

Here is the problem. God has warned us not to do what he did with Veggie Tales, make alliances with the world.

Maybe he thought he could reach more kids this way, but, for whatever the reason, the world is not going to allow the Gospel message and the teachings of the Bible to go forward. They will edit it up so much that the message ends up being meaningless!

The warning was given by God to us; we just need to listen and obey!

VERSES 2-3

If you allowed your son to marry their daughter, you eventually had to go down and visit them and that is what we see here with Jehoshaphat, he is going to down to visit Ahab and Jezebel.

And they have this big feast for Jehoshaphat and his people and then Ahab asks him if he would help gain back the city of Ramoth Gilead. (I Kings 20:34)

Now this city that was in the hands of the Syrians was supposed to be returned with other cities by Ben-Hadad, the King of Syria. But, for whatever reason, Ramoth Gilead was not returned, and Ahab wants help in getting in back.

The amazing thing is that Jehoshaphat agrees to help in this battle, but why?

Maybe it was because Ramoth Gilead was only some 40 miles from Jerusalem and he felt it was safer to have Ahab control the city than the Syrians. That is possible.

VERSES 4-8

Yes, Jehoshaphat wants to help Asa out, he has pledged his allegiance to Asa and this battle, but he has one request and it is a good one.

Before they go into this battle they need to pray and see what the Lord wants to do and that is the best thing to do folks before you rush into anything, especially a battle! Instead of rushing ahead, make sure the Lord is with you in this.

And I think Jehoshaphat is having second thoughts about this battle, and maybe he can get out of it if the Lord tells him not to go!

After Jehoshaphat asks this of Asa, we see him gather together 400 prophets, and please understand that these false prophets were most likely not the prophets of Baal and Asherah, for Elijah destroyed those 850 prophets on Mount Carmel prior to this incident. (I Kings 18:19)

These 400 prophets were most likely the false prophets of the calf worship that Jeroboam had established.

Yes, Ahab had prophets, but they were not of God. These guys were yes men, that spoke only to please the King and when they used the name of God to speak, it was meaningless.

What do they say to the King about this battle?

They told the King that he should go into this battle because God would give them this victory.

That is not what God said, but what they said!

As you look at what these false prophets were doing, you might say that they were an ecumenical council, and I am not using that in a good way!

You see, we want everyone to be able to join together, we may have different views of God and how we get to God, but all roads will get you there, it just may take longer is the mentality and it is wrong.

The basis for unity must be in accordance with the Word of God. I don't care how good the cause is and don't put the Lord's name as a tag on what you are saying if it is unbiblical. That is what these false prophets were doing!

As Jehoshaphat hears these 400 false prophets tell the King that he should go into battle, Jehoshaphat asks if there is another prophet around, why?

I think Jehoshaphat recognized that something was not right, God had given him discernment, and he was looking for a true prophet of God and not a yes man.

So Ahab tells Jehoshaphat that there is one more prophet in the land, but he does not like him because he only says bad things about him. And I think that Ahab knew where to go to hear from a true prophet, but he was not interested in the truth, only to have his ears tickled.

And when people speak the truth, they are hated by the unsaved because it exposes their deeds, which are evil. They are very comfortable living in darkness. Even some Christians don't like to hear the truth, but they too want their ears tickled!

But Jehoshaphat sticks up for this prophet of God, rebuking Ahab for his harsh words against this man of God.

Remember how Paul warned Timothy about the last days, what it would be like.

In I Timothy 4:1-2 he wrote, **“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron.”**

And in II Timothy 4:2-5 Paul warned Timothy to, **“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”**

People don't want the truth because they can't handle the truth, they don't want to know that Jesus is the only way because then they are accountable to Him.

Thus, they find teachers who tickle their ears with fairy tales and are lulled into a spiritual sleep! What a sad statement that is but it is what we are seeing today!

One more point here.

How did they know where this prophet was located - because they went to get him quickly?

Probably because they put this troublemaker under some kind of custody or supervision, not yet in prison.

In II Chronicles 18:25 it speaks of Micaiah to be returned to Amon the governor of the city, and the idea here is that is where he came from but now, after he speaks to the King, he will be imprisoned as we will see!

VERSES 9-11

Here we see both these Kings, dressed in their Kingly robes, sitting before these 400 prophets so they could hear from them what the Lord wanted them to do.

Keep in mind that they are waiting for Micaiah to be brought before them, and as they are waiting, one of these guys, Zedekiah by name, grabs some horns and places them upon his head and started charging all around the room.

This was the first seeker friendly service on record! Just kidding, but he uses this visual aid to drive home the point you might say.

He puts these horns on his head and shouts that Israel will gore the Syrians. And what he was trying to show them was that Ahab and his men were going to push back and defeat the Syrians.

That is what **HE** was saying and not necessarily what **GOD** was saying.

Now, as Zedekiah finished his little skit, the rest of these prophets shouted in unity that Yahweh God was going to give them the victory.

It is interesting that they knew of Him, but they did not follow after His commands.

Why do I say that?

Because only the Levites were to be the priests, but Jeroboam kicked out the true priests and allowed anyone to become a priest, all they needed to do was buy their way into the ministry.

You see, you can say, "**Lord, Lord!**" all you want, but those words are meaningless if you don't do what the Lord has said, if you don't have a relationship with Him.

You can say that you believe in Jesus, but so do the demons and, of course, they are not saved. Your words are empty because you are not living what you say you believe and as Jesus said to those that just honored Him with their lips, “... **‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’**” Matthew 7:23.

Now keep in mind that there was still one more prophet to speak, and let’s see what he has to say regarding this battle and what these Kings should do.

VERSES 12-15

As this messenger of Ahab returns with this prophet of God, before they come to Ahab, the messenger warns him to speak only good to the King, just as the other prophets were speaking.

He even brought Micaiah the book *How to Win Friends and Influence People* to help him out!

Not really, but now why did this messenger say these things to Micaiah?

Because everyone knew that Micaiah spoke the truth of God, but they were not interested in the truth, they only wanted a positive message! They only wanted a feel-good message!

Nothing harsh, nothing judgmental, nothing that might convict the King. He told Micaiah to say what everyone else is saying!

Sound familiar?

It should be because that is what we hear today in many churches!

Let me say this. It is not always easy to speak the truth, but the heart of a true man or woman of God will always speak the truth. You see, our first responsibility must be to the Lord. We should not water down what we say or try to placate people, just speak the truth in love.

And I think that is the key, that we do it in love.

Now, just because we bring the truth in love does not mean everyone will receive the message, they may even get angry at what we say, and they may even get mad at us. But we can't change the message to make them feel good about living in sin, that is wrong and we are accountable!

That is what Micaiah is going to do, speak the truth even though it speaks of the coming judgment upon Ahab!

I kind of like what Micaiah does here. As he comes before these two Kings, he tells them, ***“Live long and prosper!”***

Not exactly, but he kind of said those words. He told them in regard to the question if they should go into battle or not, **“Go and prosper, and they shall be delivered into your hand!”**

Now we don't know the inflection in the voice of this prophet of God, but I'm sure it was sarcastic.

How do I know that?

Because the King picks up on this as well as all those who were there. But he was saying what the King wanted to hear, but the King could not just let that go for all knew this prophet was not speaking the truth.

And the King tells Micaiah, **“How many times shall I make you swear that you tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the Lord?”**

You see, Ahab did not want the truth; he only wanted Micaiah to speak in a convincing way. I think he spoke those words in a sarcastic manner!

Today we see people speak in the name of Christ all kinds of lies, but they speak in such a way as to convince the people.

That is what Ahab wanted, not necessarily the truth.

And now Micaiah is going to speak the truth of God to Ahab and Jehoshaphat!

VERSES 16-17

Well, it looks like Micaiah did not finish that book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People* because this prophet of God tells the King that he will be killed in the battle and that his men will be scattered like sheep without a shepherd.

Not a positive message, but it is the truth!

I guess it was positive because Micaiah was positive that this was going to happen.

Like I have said, Ahab did not want to hear the truth, for once it was spoken, he shuns the words of this prophet and said to Jehoshaphat that he is such a negative person. ***“He never says anything good about me.”***

The reason for that was simple. There was nothing good to say about Ahab!

Ahab was a wicked King who was leading the nation into Baal worship, away from the true and living God and instead of listening to the prophets of God, who were warning him, he listened to the false prophets, and it will cost him his life!

VERSES 18-22

Here is a very controversial passage and many people have great difficulty with what is said here. They can't understand how a holy and righteous God can send forth a lying spirit.

And are there lying spirits in Heaven?

First of all, we know what the Bible says about God, **“God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?”** Numbers 23:19.

God is not lying but it does say that He is sending a lying spirit out to Ahab and He will use these false prophets to deceive him.

Who is this lying spirit, where does he come from?

We have to understand that Satan and his demons, which are nothing more than fallen angels, still have access to heaven.

I realize that is hard to believe because we think they are in Hell, but that is totally wrong.

And I guess that destroys those faith teachers that say Jesus was in Hell three days and three nights being tortured by Satan. You see, Satan is not bound nor is his domain in Hell.

In Job 1:6 we read, **“Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.”**

I thought God did not have fellowship with Satan or any of his demons?

He doesn't!

Then what is going on here?

God can allow evil in His presence, but He cannot have fellowship with evil! And make no mistake about it, a day is coming when they will be cast from heaven but that has not taken place as yet.

It is not till the midpoint of the Tribulation Period that Satan and his demons no longer have access to God; they can no longer come before Him.

In Revelation 12:7-9 we read, **“And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”**

Is God being fair here?

It seems that He is the one causing Ahab to go down this path and be deceived by sending this lying spirit!

Let me be clear on this. God is not forcing Ahab to do anything that he doesn't want to do; God is totally fair. Ahab wanted to be deceived, and thus, God would give to him what he wanted, and God will accomplish this through this lying spirit!

Make no mistake about it; God gives all of us a choice.

Thus, if you reject the truth, you open yourself up to receive a lie, just as Ahab did. Ahab heard the truth, but he rejected it, and because of that he opened himself up to be deceived by the enemy.

In fact, we are told in II Thessalonians chapter 2 by Paul that those that reject the love of the truth, the salvation message, that God will send them a strong delusion, that they will believe a lie for they have rejected the truth. Because of that they will be condemned.

When you see what people believe today you can see the demonic lies they have opened themselves up to, because they have rejected the truth of God.

Here, God allows this demon to go to Ahab with these lies, for he rejected the truth.

VERSE 23

It is interesting how Zedekiah responded to what Micaiah said; he struck him on the cheek!

When false prophets are defeated, when what they have said is put down, they often respond with violence or violent words to put down the other person and that is what we see here!

And so, by his actions, Zedekiah is exhibiting the exact opposite of what a man of God should be.

How do I know that?

Because in James chapter 3 we are told that the wisdom that is from above, a godly wisdom is pure, it is peaceable, it is gentle, it is willing to yield, it is full of mercy, and it is full of good fruits.

Do you see the difference?

Wisdom from above is not characterized by force, but by love!

May love flow from our lives, the love of Christ!

How will Micaiah respond to this?

Let's read on and see!

VERSES 24-27

The false prophet, Zedekiah, struck Micaiah on the cheek and now King Ahab is throwing him in prison and giving him just a scant amount of water and bread.

And Micaiah makes a final plea by saying if Ahab does return in peace, then he is a false prophet, but Micaiah is confident in what the Lord has told him, and he will not see Ahab anymore!

VERSES 28-29

There are just some things that I don't understand, and this is one of them.

After hearing these words of Micaiah, I don't know why Jehoshaphat followed after Ahab, why he went into this battle.

God was telling him not to go, and Jehoshaphat did just the opposite, he went into battle anyway!

And it is not just that. What happens next is very strange. Ahab is going to disguise himself in this battle and he wants Jehoshaphat to wear his royal robes!

Maybe Ahab thought, ***“Hey, what if this prophet is right and they want to kill me? I don't want to die in battle. I am going to disguise myself and maybe they will shoot at Jehoshaphat!”***

For Jehoshaphat, he was like a man who had a giant bull's eye on his chest. And again, I can't understand why he agreed to this.

Ahab was setting him up to be a target and Jehoshaphat goes along with it!

The reason they would go after the King is that if you kill the King, the rest of the army will flee!

When you align yourself with the enemy, when judgment is coming upon them, if you join with them, you may be part of the casualties! That was what Jehoshaphat was doing!

VERSES 30-32

The King of Syria was smart. He knew that if you killed the King, his army would be scattered.

So he tells his men to focus on the King of Israel, to set your sights on him and destroy him.

Keep in mind that Ahab was wise in disguising himself and Jehoshaphat was foolish in doing what he did, making himself the target!

And all the enemy can see is this King in his royal robes and the command was to kill him!

Now as they enter the battle, Jehoshaphat recognizes that he is a sitting duck, and they are trying to kill him.

When Jehoshaphat sees what is happening, he yells out, ***"It's not me you're looking for, I'm not the guy! He is over there!"***

No, he didn't say that. You see, Jehoshaphat did not cry out to the enemy, he cried out to God, and it was God that spared his life.

How can I be so sure?

Because that is what we are told, **"The LORD helped him, and God moved them to turn away from Him."**

God is so gracious and merciful that even in our foolishness He protects us, but don't tempt Him. I think Jehoshaphat was doing what he thought was the right thing, but it wasn't and God is protecting him, his heart was right, his actions were not!

Like Jehoshaphat, we can try so hard to relate to the world that we are mistaken for the world.

We must be careful that in our desire to see people turn to Christ that we don't water down the message or lower our standards. That we don't compromise our faith.

When we do we diminish our light and we can dim it so much that they can't see Christ in us, but the world.

As James 4:4 says, "**Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.**"

James just lays it out there, if you are a friend of the world, then you are at war with God because the world is at war with God! And I am speaking of the world system, a system that is controlled by Satan. And if you doubt that, look at how this world system is promoting *SIN*!

VERSES 33-34

This tells me that nothing happens by chance, but all is ordained by God. This archer lets his arrow fly, not trying for any target in particular, and it strikes Ahab between his armor with a mortal wound.

Talk about your bad luck?

No, God is a good shot!

It is as Psalm 64:7 says, "**But God shall shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly they shall be wounded.**"

You see, you can't escape the judgment of God no matter how hard you try. Many, like Ahab, pretend to be something they are not.

Ahab dressed as a soldier, and many today dress like Christians, and outwardly they look good. But inwardly their heart is far from the Lord. You may fool others with your disguise, but you can't fool God and you can't escape His judgment.

Morgan wrote this regarding what men may do, ***"Men may secrete [hide] themselves so that other men may never find them; but when the hour of their judgment has come, God takes hold on some ordinary event and makes it the highway on which He comes to carry out His purpose. 'It just happened,' says the man of the world. 'God did it,' says the man of faith."***

If you have not accepted the free gift of God through His Son Jesus Christ, then it doesn't matter how good you look, you are lost in your sins, judgment is coming!

But as Paul said in Ephesians 2:8-9, **"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."**

For Ahab, he would have rather been like Micaiah in jail than in this chariot.

Yes, wicked men may prosper for a time, but men of faith prosper in the end!