

Lesson 10: I Kings 22:29 - 2 Kings 1

Objective: Today we will see the fulfillment of one of Elijah's prophecies with the deaths of Ahab and Ahaziah, Ahab and Jezebel's son. We will see God's punishment on them for their sin, which is strengthened by their sin of idolatry. They are unwilling to seek God, unwilling to obey God. They believe they can do whatever they want to do without feeling any consequences. In this lesson, we will explore the importance of humility, repentance and obedience.

Review:

Last week we read about Ahab asking the prophets (at Jehoshaphat's request) if he should go to war with the Arameans over Ramoth-Gilead.

What do the first 400 prophets answer?

Jehoshaphat recognizes that these prophets are telling Ahab what he wants to hear, so he asks Ahab, "Is there no longer a prophet of the Lord here whom we can inquire of?" Ahab calls for Micaiah even though he hates him.

What does Micaiah warn of Ahab of? Does Ahab listen?

Read I Kings 22:29,30

What does Ahab tell Jehoshaphat? Why do you think he tells him this?

With all of his bravado, Ahab must have still been nervous that Micaiah might be right, so he tries to deceive the enemy (and God), probably thinking it will keep the prophecy from coming true. Once again, Ahab shows no concern for anyone besides himself. Jehoshaphat must have an idea of what Ahab is doing, but taking the subservient role again, he follows along.

Read I Kings 22:30-33

Who is the one person the Arameans want to fight?

Does Ahab's deception work? Why or why not?

At first, his deception does work! However, as soon as The Arameans attack, Jehoshaphat stops going along with Ahab's plan and cries out. The commanders are able to see that he is not the king of Israel, so they stop pursuing him.

Read I Kings 22:34-38

How does the narrator describe the way Ahab was hit?

"Someone" shoots an arrow randomly, and it strikes the king between the sections of his armor - one of the few vulnerable spots on his armor. This all seems very unintentional,

accidental; however, it fulfills a prophecy. God was not deceived by Ahab's trickery.

There are many stories in the Old Testament where coincidence seems to play a pivotal role in the story (for example: Esther and Ruth). These stories are filled with ordinary people just like this anonymous archer. He didn't have to be someone important to do something important, to fulfill God's will. (Goldingay, 2011)

The king tells his chariot driver to get him out of the fighting. He is still disguised enough that no one comes over to him, but he dies watching his people battle the Arameans. As he bleeds out in his chariot, soaking it with blood, he is unable to provide any leadership. Once again, we see God working in the events of history, through what could seem to be random acts.

Do you believe God is at work through the events of history today? The good and the bad?

How does the end of vs. 35 and vs. 36 fulfill Micaiah's prophecy?

Micaiah's prophecy in I Kings 22:17 - "I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd, and the Lord said, 'These people have no master. Let each one go home in peace.'"

How does vs. 38 at least partially fulfill Elijah's prophecy after Naboth is killed?

God tells Elijah in I Kings 21:19b “Then say to him, ‘This is what the Lord says: In the place where dogs licked up Naboth’s blood, dogs will lick up your blood - yes, yours!’”

At the end of chapter 21, Ahab repented and God said his judgement would be postponed until Ahab’s son. Why do you think this changed?

At the end of chapter 21, God’s declaration of judgment on Ahab spoke of his dying an early death. After Ahab repented and went around meekly, God relented. However, it seems that Ahab’s turning to God was shallow and short-lived. He went from repentance to being unwilling to listen to God’s prophet. He is more concerned with his own agenda than with anything else - including his fellow Israelites. Just as he is more concerned with making sure his horses have food during the drought (in chapter 18) than he is concerned with his people having enough to eat, he is more concerned with fighting the Arameans and gaining land back than he is with what will happen to his people after the battle.

In this story it seems that God’s relationship with people is dynamic and not foreordained. His purpose is worked out with the ways that people respond to him.
(Goldingay, 2011)

From last week’s study as well as this week’s study, what are some ways that Ahab tried to keep God’s prophecy from coming true?

He puts Micaiah in prison, hoping that would guarantee his safe return. Maybe he thought that if he silenced the man who declares God's word that it would stop the word from being fulfilled. He has Jehoshaphat dress like him, and he disguises himself thinking that would keep him safe. The one thing that Ahab could have done to keep the prophecy from coming true was not go to battle. But he was unwilling to do that.

Why do you think Ahab was unwilling to heed God's warning?

How can we better pay attention to what God wants us to do...or not do?

We are often tempted to follow our own desires, to do what we want to do, no matter the cost. It is easy to look at someone like Ahab and dismiss him as someone who is so evil that we cannot relate to him. However, in Ahab we can see some things that may remind us of ourselves, if we look closely enough. These stories about Ahab warn us not get so caught up in our own desires, our own greed that we follow a god of our own making rather than the one and true God.

Read I Kings 22:39, 40

What strikes you in these verses?

Ahab has had immense success - including building a place of ivory, fortifying cities, and winning battles; but he has an incredibly understated "obituary" here. Whereas we are often caught up in the "real life" stories of celebrities and royalty, devouring

entertainment or gossip magazines or watching stories on television about them, fascinated by their lives and their wealth, the narrator of Kings is not at all concerned with Ahab's wealth or power. He has pointed out many times how evil Ahab was. These two verses are not the obituary that a King would hope for.

Jehoshaphat: In I Kings 22:41-50, we get a summary on Jehoshaphat's rule of Judah. He walked in the way of his father just as Ahab walked in the way of his father. However, he did what was right in the sight of the Lord except he did not take away the high places.

Read I Kings 22:51-53

How was Ahaziah similar to his father and mother? Who does he worship?

Read 2 Kings 1:1-4

Who does Ahaziah ask for help from?

Not only is Ahaziah a worshipper of Baal but when he is hurt, he immediately turns to Baal! He tells his messengers to go and consult with the local manifestation of Baal in Ekron to see if he will get better. Ekron is 22 miles west of Jerusalem; Ahaziah is going out of his way to seek this god instead of Yahweh. The funny thing is that the narrator seems to deliberately distort Baal's name here...it should read "Baal-Zebul" which would mean "Baal the Prince" or "Exalted lord" or "Lord of the Heavens". (In the New Testament, this deity's name becomes one of the names for Satan - we see the name

“Beelzebul” used as a name for Satan, the prince of demons.) However, the narrator changes his name to “Baal-Zebub” which means “Baal the Fly” or “Baal the Pest.”

Suddenly, Elijah appears in our story again! **What is Elijah to tell the messengers of Ahaziah?**

Elijah points out that asking Baal for help instead of God, implies that there isn't a God in Israel to go to when you are sick, that Yahweh is of no earthly use. It is a radically apostate statement by the leader of a people who are supposed to be committed to Yahweh. (Goldingay, 2011)

Read 2 Kings 1:5-8

How do you think Ahaziah knew it was Elijah who met his messengers?

Read 2 Kings 1:9-15

Well, this is a strange story! Ahaziah sends a captain and a squad of 50 men to get Elijah to come down off of the hill he is sitting on. The Hebrew word used here is actually the same word that is used for “Mount” Carmel so this is likely a “Mount” not a hill (Keck, et al, 1999).

What “comes down” instead of Elijah? Does this remind you of another story we have studied?

Instead of Elijah coming down, a fire comes down from heaven and consumes the fifty

men just as the fire fell from heaven on Mount Carmel and consumed the altar. Ahaziah sends another squad of 50 men, with the exact same consequence.

Naturally, what does Ahaziah do next?

Ahaziah does not learn from his mistakes, from his father's mistakes or from recent history. We see in him the same lack of concern for his people that his father showed. However, the third captain does learn from history.

What is different with the third group that Ahaziah sends? Why do you think their lives are spared?

The third captain has learned from the mistakes of those who come before him, and he recognizes the power of Yahweh through Elijah. He humbles himself, begging Elijah for his life rather than commanding Elijah to come down.

Based on this story and the story of Ahab showing humility after the judgement at Naboth's vineyard, how important do you think humility is to God? Why do you think humility is so important to Him?

Read 2 Kings 1:16–18

Ahaziah trusted in Baal-Zebub (the "Lord of flies") to be the lord of life, but Yahweh remains the Lord of life. He gives life, and he takes away. In the end, the king was

unable to use his word to control Elijah but he does take orders from the prophet. The word of God comes true - God is sovereign.

How did Ahab and Ahaziah's violation of the first commandment "You shall have no other gods before me" affect their lives?

Worshipping other gods rather than Yahweh led them into lives of sin. We see clearly in the life of Ahab how sin gained an increasing hold on him and numbed his spirit to the truth of God (Foster, et al, 2005). Ahaziah was also so caught up in his worship of another god that he could not see clearly what was happening right at that time. He just kept repeating the same mistake over and over.

What kind of idolatry do we struggle with today?

Tim Keller writes in his book Counterfeit Gods some questions we can ask ourselves to think about what our idols are:

1. What do you think about all the time/daydream about? What do you **habitually** think about to get joy and comfort in the privacy of your heart?
2. How do you spend your money? Your money flows most effortlessly toward your heart's greatest love.
3. What are you really living for, what is your real - not professed - god? A good way to discern this is how you respond to unanswered prayers and frustrated hopes. If you respond with explosive anger or deep despair, then you may have found your idol.

4. Look at your most uncontrollable emotions - if you are angry, ask, "Is there something too important to me that I must have at all costs?" Do the same with deep despair, guilt and fear.

More questions: What do you really want and expect? What really makes you happy? Where do you look for power and success?

How can we turn our backs on idolatry to follow God completely?

Colossians 3:1-5 says, "Since then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry."

We must turn to God by setting our minds on Him - How do we do this? We must spend time in His word, in prayer, in His presence. And, we must obey. Obedience opens us up to God's transforming power - no sinner is beyond change! Even Ahab could have turned from evil and given his life over to God and been restored. We also can turn from habits of sin and build habits of holiness, and as we do this we will find that God turns our hearts more and more towards him. (Foster, et al, 2005)

If time, let's briefly look at one story of Jesus with his apostles that has an echo of 2

Kings 1 and reminds us of the transforming power of Christ.

Read Luke 9:51-56

The Jews in Galilee did not travel much, but they did regularly make one journey - a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. While they were on this 3-4 day journey, they would tell the story of the great journey of the Exodus and other Biblical stories, stories about kings and prophets, about God's dealing with Israel in the past. Luke has all this in mind as he tells us about Jesus' plans to go to Jerusalem to fulfill his exodus. (Wright, 2004)

We see here that Jesus has resolutely set out for Jerusalem, we know that he is on his way to the cross.

Who did not welcome Jesus?

A Samaritan village does not receive Jesus and his followers, which was not unusual.

What do James and John ask Jesus? Where do you think they got this from?

James and John want to call fire down from heaven to destroy the people. It is most certainly an echo of Elijah's answer to the officers sent from the king of Samaria, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men."

How do you imagine James and John felt at this time?

They seem to be full of pride, thinking they are in the same position as Elijah in the Old Testament. He could call down fire, why can't they? They are self-righteous and angry.

How does Jesus answer them? How do they respond?

Jesus rebukes them. We don't know how they responded verbally but they continue on with him, obeying him, not calling down fire.

When we read the gospels, we certainly see that the apostles are not men who knew all the right things, had all the right thoughts, did all the right things. It is evident to us that the apostles are like the Israelites and like us, often messing up. However, the transforming power of Christ made them into great men, men who obeyed God.

From what you know about James and John, how do you think their choice to follow Jesus and obey Him changed them?

These same two brothers, James and John, who want to call down fire from heaven to destroy a Samaritan village end up living and dying for Jesus. In Acts 12, we learn that James was the first apostle killed for his following of Jesus, put to death by Herod.

From following Jesus every day, learning what he wanted from them, learning to obey him, the apostles were able to keep following Jesus even after James' death. They did not try to retaliate.

John lived much longer and became known as the apostle who wrote about love. From what we know about John, it is difficult to imagine that he was once a fiery young man, ready for vengeance! He also writes often about obedience. In I John 2:3-6, John writes, "We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. Whoever says, 'I know him,' but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did."

Conclusion: It is impossible to overstate the importance of living our lives in obedience to Christ. When we put anything else before God, whether that is money, power, greed, nationalism, individualism, etc, we get confused and are unable to see what God wants from us. However, when we put God first and learn to obey Him in big and small ways, He can make us into the people that He wants us to be, a people given over to His purposes.