

**Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> November 22**

**Being clear about God's Word**

**1 Kings 22:1-40**

### **Micaiah Prophecies Against Ahab**

**22** For three years there was no war between Aram and Israel. <sup>2</sup> But in the third year Jehoshaphat king of Judah went down to see the king of Israel. <sup>3</sup> The king of Israel had said to his officials, "Don't you know that Ramoth Gilead belongs to us and yet we are doing nothing to retake it from the king of Aram?"

<sup>4</sup> So he asked Jehoshaphat, "Will you go with me to fight against Ramoth Gilead?"

Jehoshaphat replied to the king of Israel, "I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses." <sup>5</sup> But Jehoshaphat also said to the king of Israel, "First seek the counsel of the LORD."

<sup>6</sup> So the king of Israel brought together the prophets—about four hundred men—and asked them, "Shall I go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?"

"Go," they answered, "for the Lord will give it into the king's hand."

<sup>7</sup> But Jehoshaphat asked, "Is there no longer a prophet of the LORD here whom we can inquire of?"

<sup>8</sup> The king of Israel answered Jehoshaphat, "There is still one prophet through whom we can inquire of the LORD, but I hate him because he never prophesies anything good about me, but always bad. He is Micaiah son of Imlah."

"The king should not say such a thing," Jehoshaphat replied.

<sup>9</sup> So the king of Israel called one of his officials and said, "Bring Micaiah son of Imlah at once."

<sup>10</sup> Dressed in their royal robes, the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah were sitting on their thrones at the threshing floor by the entrance of the gate of

Samaria, with all the prophets prophesying before them. <sup>11</sup> Now Zedekiah son of Kenaanah had made iron horns and he declared, "This is what the LORD says: 'With these you will gore the Arameans until they are destroyed.'"

<sup>12</sup> All the other prophets were prophesying the same thing. "Attack Ramoth Gilead and be victorious," they said, "for the LORD will give it into the king's hand."

<sup>13</sup> The messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah said to him, "Look, the other prophets without exception are predicting success for the king. Let your word agree with theirs, and speak favourably."

<sup>14</sup> But Micaiah said, "As surely as the LORD lives, I can tell him only what the LORD tells me."

<sup>15</sup> When he arrived, the king asked him, "Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or not?"

"Attack and be victorious," he answered, "for the LORD will give it into the king's hand."

<sup>16</sup> The king said to him, "How many times must I make you swear to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?"

<sup>17</sup> Then Micaiah answered, "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.'"

<sup>18</sup> The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Didn't I tell you that he never prophesies anything good about me, but only bad?"

<sup>19</sup> Micaiah continued, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne with all the multitudes of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left. <sup>20</sup> And the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there?'

"One suggested this, and another that. <sup>21</sup> Finally, a spirit came forward, stood before the LORD and said, 'I will entice him.'

<sup>22</sup> “‘By what means?’ the LORD asked.

“‘I will go out and be a deceiving spirit in the mouths of all his prophets,’ he said.

“‘You will succeed in enticing him,’ said the LORD. ‘Go and do it.’

<sup>23</sup> “So now the LORD has put a deceiving spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours. The LORD has decreed disaster for you.”

<sup>24</sup> Then Zedekiah son of Kenaanah went up and slapped Micaiah in the face. “Which way did the spirit from the LORD go when he went from me to speak to you?” he asked.

<sup>25</sup> Micaiah replied, “You will find out on the day you go to hide in an inner room.”

<sup>26</sup> The king of Israel then ordered, “Take Micaiah and send him back to Amon the ruler of the city and to Joash the king’s son <sup>27</sup> and say, ‘This is what the king says: Put this fellow in prison and give him nothing but bread and water until I return safely.’”

<sup>28</sup> Micaiah declared, “If you ever return safely, the LORD has not spoken through me.” Then he added, “Mark my words, all you people!”

### **Ahab Killed at Ramoth Gilead**

<sup>29</sup> So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah went up to Ramoth Gilead. <sup>30</sup> The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “I will enter the battle in disguise, but you wear your royal robes.” So, the king of Israel disguised himself and went into battle.

<sup>31</sup> Now the king of Aram had ordered his thirty-two chariot commanders, “Do not fight with anyone, small or great, except the king of Israel.” <sup>32</sup> When the chariot commanders saw Jehoshaphat, they thought, “Surely this is the king of Israel.” So, they turned to attack him, but when Jehoshaphat cried out, <sup>33</sup> the chariot commanders saw that he was not the king of Israel and stopped pursuing him.

<sup>34</sup> But someone drew his bow at random and hit the king of Israel between the sections of his armor. The king told his chariot driver, “Wheel around and get me out of the fighting. I’ve been wounded.” <sup>35</sup> All day long the battle raged, and the

king was propped up in his chariot facing the Arameans. The blood from his wound ran onto the floor of the chariot, and that evening he died. <sup>36</sup> As the sun was setting, a cry spread through the army: "Every man to his town. Every man to his land!"

<sup>37</sup> So the king died and was brought to Samaria, and they buried him there. <sup>38</sup> They washed the chariot at a pool in Samaria (where the prostitutes bathed), and the dogs licked up his blood, as the word of the LORD had declared.

<sup>39</sup> As for the other events of Ahab's reign, including all he did, the palace he built and adorned with ivory, and the cities he fortified, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel? <sup>40</sup> Ahab rested with his ancestors. And Ahaziah his son succeeded him as king.

## **Matthew 7:24-29**

### **The Wise and Foolish Builders**

<sup>24</sup> "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. <sup>25</sup> The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. <sup>26</sup> But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. <sup>27</sup> The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

<sup>28</sup> When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, <sup>29</sup> because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

## Sermon: Being Clear about God's Word

[It would be good to have your Bibles opened at 1 Kings chapter 22 – let me pray before we begin]

### Intro

A question without notice: ***How important is God's Word to you?***

(pause)

Here's what God's Word says about itself from Hebrews 4:12:

*The word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

**In 1 Kings Chapter 22 – God's Word is front and centre – and from it - we can make some clear observations about God's Word**

### Context (1 Kings 20:42; 1 King 21:19; 1 Kings 22:1-5)

[Slide 1-Heading]

- The **context** is for the last 6 chapters we have been dealing with **bad King Ahab** who has repeatedly ignored **God's word and God's prophets**
- Just before we look at the **chapter** though

[Slide 1a-verse]

- Let's **remind ourselves** from 1 Kings 20:42 – what God's Word was to Ahab – when he **let Ben-Hadad** - King of Aram - **go free...**

*"This is what the LORD says: 'You have set free a man I had determined should die. Therefore, it is your life for his life, your people for his people.'"*

- And **let's remind ourselves** from 1 Kings 21:19 what God's Word was to Ahab when **Naboth** was killed

[Slide 2-verse]

*'This is what the LORD says: Have you not murdered a man and seized his property?' 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!'"*

- We pick up the story in v1 of chapter 22
- There's been **peace** between Aram and Israel for **3 years**
- Then **Jehoshaphat** – King of Judah – pays a **royal visit to Ahab** – King of Israel

[Slide 3 – The 2 Kings]



- In V3 – It **comes to Ahab's attention** - a city called **Ramoth Gilead** which belongs to Israel - has **never been returned** to them **by Ben-Hadad** – King of Aram – **as he promised Ahab** he would do - back in 1 Kings 20:34
- V4 – **Ahab wants to go to war to take back Ramoth Gilead** and asks Jehoshaphat to go with him in this battle – **Jehoshaphat agrees**.
- But Jehoshaphat comes up with a **novel idea** – in v5 – *“first seek the counsel of the Lord”*
- What a **great idea** – to see what God thinks
- A lesson for us to always seek God's guidance in prayer – **BEFORE we act!**

[Slide 4-heading]

And that brings us to our **first point** this morning – and it's a blindingly obvious point really – **God's Word is FROM God**

[Slide 4a-FROM God]

God's word is FROM GOD (1 Kings 22:6-23)

- Look at v6 – **Ahab wheels in 400 prophets** – and they **all agree** that King **Ahab should go in to battle** and that the **Lord will give the city** of Ramoth Gilead into Ahab's hands
- Who are these **prophets**?
- Well, they are not the **prophets of Baal** we met a couple of weeks ago – as they were **all killed on Mount Carmel**
- These **prophets claim** to speak **God's Words** – but v7 – **Jehoshaphat is not convinced** they are **speaking God's words** – Jehoshaphat is a **godly man** – and he **smells a rat**
- So, he asks *“Is there no longer a prophet of the LORD here whom we can inquire of?”*
- **Ahab answers** Jehoshaphat's searching question in v8 – *“There is still one prophet through whom we can inquire of the LORD, but I hate him because he never prophesies anything good about me, but always bad. He is Micaiah son of Imlah”*
- You see **Ahab knows his 400 prophets tell him what he wants to hear** – and not what God says! Whereas **Micaiah is the real deal** – and he always tells Ahab what God says! The fact that Micaiah's prophecies were never good – **might have something to do with Ahab always being bad!**
- **God's Word must come FROM God**

- Application: For us – it means - when we speak God’s word – **we must please God** – **not please people**. We don’t tell people what they want to hear (to make their itchy ears feel good); we **tell them what God’s word says**.
- We then have this **bizarre scene in v10** of the **two kings** in their **royal robes** – sitting on **thrones** – a real public picture of unity –at the **threshing floor** at the **gate of Samaria** for all to see – and **Ahab’s false prophets prophesying all Ahab wants to hear**
- And v11 – one of these false prophets – **Zedekiah** is **holding iron horns** he has made - and **prophesies to the King** that God says “*with these horns you will gore the Arameans until they are destroyed*”
- **Zedekiah’s words sound reasonable** – because back in Deut 33:17 - Moses had told Joseph’s tribe something similar that they would gore the surrounding nations with powerful horns. So, **Zedekiah’s words sound as though they are from God?**
- And besides all these **false prophets are in agreement** in v12
- Even the messenger who is sent to fetch the one true prophet Micaiah – v13- tries to convince Micaiah – to make sure his prophecy agrees with the 400 prophets of Ahab
- It’s like the messenger is saying – *‘I know you’re the real deal Micaiah but don’t make waves – you’ll go a long way if you play along with the King’*
- Pleasingly – **Micaiah replies** in 14 – *“As surely as the LORD lives, I can tell him only what the LORD tells me.”*

- You see **God's Word must be FROM God**
- And when Micaiah does arrive on the scene – it seems like at first, he's going to go along with the majority – when he says *“Attack and be victorious – for the Lord will give it into your hands”*
- But **Micaiah** is being **sarcastic**
- Ahab knows Micaiah is only telling him what he wants to hear and not telling him the truth – **this a routine they've been through before** – because Ahab says in v16 *“How many times [Micaiah] must I make you swear to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?”*
- So, **Micaiah tells it as it is** in v17 – he says he saw a **vision of Israel scattered like sheep without a shepherd** – and the **people have no master**.  
It's a **picture of what will happen to Ahab** – **he will be killed** and the **people will have no shepherd**
- Then in vv19-23 - **Micaiah offers us an explanation as to why Ahab's 400 prophets are dodgy**
- **Micaiah describes another vision** – this time of **Heaven** – where the **Lord is sitting on His throne** – with multitudes on his left and right – the **Lord asks the multitude** *“who will entice Ahab to attack Ramoth-Gilead and go to his death”*
- After various suggestions. **A spirit** (which it's fair to say is an evil or demonic spirit) [God allows evil spirits in his presence – but does not have fellowship with them]

says he will go out as a **deceiving spirit** and **put deceiving words in the mouths of Ahab's prophets** – and the Lord allows it!

- To paraphrase what Micaiah is saying to Ahab –Micaiah's saying: *'God has allowed your 400 prophets to be deceived by an evil lying demonic spirit from the devil (remember the devil is the father of lies!) -and the truth is Ahab you are going to die!'*
- Now before we accuse God of being unfair and deceiving Ahab
- We need to realize that **God is telling Ahab** – through Micaiah – **exactly what's going on** – God's saying *"you're being deceived Ahab"*
- Isn't it **ironic** that **Ahab knows his 400 prophets are dodgy** and that they are not telling him the truth – and he **knows Micaiah is telling him the truth** – but Ahab is still **going to ignore it anyway**.
- Application – Sadly, sometimes **it doesn't matter how many times people here God's Word – they will ignore it**
- Application - We must **be bold like Micaiah** and not be afraid to **speak the truth of God's Word** – even if it seems the majority are not in agreement with it.
- Application – We also need to **beware of false prophets** – people who profess to be speaking from God's Word – but may **misquote** – or **misrepresent God's Word**. The New Bible Commentary helpfully **describes the difference between true and false prophets** – *"there is only one difference between the true and false prophets – the true prophet speaks what YHWH God tells him to speak (like Micaiah) – the*

*false prophet speaks what he's paid to say, what he thinks he ought to say, and in some cases what he is satanically inspired to say*" – as for these 400 prophets – they were likely on Ahab's payroll, they said what they thought the king wanted them to say and they were most likely satanically influenced

- Sometimes it's **difficult for us to know if what someone says to us is true and from God** – especially if they say something will happen in the future. **We may have to park that prophecy on the shelf** – and **see if it comes true** (Deut 18:21-22)
- But we can also ask ourselves whether this person is leading people towards serving the one true God or leading people away from God?
- So that's the first point – **God's Word is FROM God!**

[Slide 4b-COSTLY]

- The second point is – **God's Word is COSTLY** – that's in verses 24-28

### God's Word is COSTLY (1 Kings 22:24-28)

- **Look how Zedekiah reacts** in v24 – **to Micaiah telling the truth** from the Lord
- Zedekiah reacts the way a lot of people do when faced with the truth – they think that personal insults or violence – **will somehow take the truth away** – they can't attack the truth – **so they attack the messenger**
- Even though Ahab wanted the truth – he can't handle the truth – and he won't believe the truth – so in v27 – **he sends Micaiah off to prison. Out of sight, out of mind.**

- Application: For us it means - we **may be persecuted** (slapped in the face – insulted – rejected by family and friends) **for speaking the truth about Jesus and speaking God’s Word**. But we must stand firm like our hero in the passage Micaiah – and like our ultimate hero - Jesus
- Application: Being a disciple of Jesus and standing for the truth – **can be lonely** – ask Micaiah?
- **God’s Word is COSTLY** – as Ahab is about to find out!

### [Slide 4c-CERTAIN]

- Our third point is – **God’s Word is CERTAIN** – look at verses 29-38

### God’s Word is CERTAIN (1 Kings 22:29-38)

- King **Ahab** and King Jehoshaphat went up to take Ramoth-Gilead – v29
- And **look how sneaky Ahab is in v30** – he says he will disguise himself but tells Jehoshaphat to wear his royal robes – **talk about trying to stich someone up!**
- But such conniving schemes can’t derail God’s Word – **God’s Word is CERTAIN!**
- And besides v31 – the King of Aram – Ben-Hadad has given orders to his 32 commanders to ONLY fight Ahab – the King of Israel
- And even when the chariot commanders come across Jehoshaphat in his royal robes – and are about to attack him – we find out in the parallel version of this story in 2 Chronicles 18 – that **when Jehoshaphat cries out – God hears his cry – and steers the Aramean soldiers away from Jehoshaphat – it’s divine intervention**
- Nothing can stop God’s word – Ahab will come to a sticky end - as **God said he would!**

- And sure enough - v34 – “**a random arrow**” from a “**random soldier**” – sets off like a heat-seeking missile and manages to find its way through Ahab’s sections of armour – and we are **left with Ahab dying and propped up in his chariot** – v35 – it’s all over by sunset for Ahab – and the army pack up their kitbags – and head home – v36
- Application – What we learn from this is: **What God’s word says will happen – will happen** (Isaiah 55:11). Ahab can put on whatever disguise he likes and imprison God’s prophet – but **God still punishes evil!**
- All those prophecies God made about Ahab – that we read at the start – **all came true** – as Micaiah said in v28 “*mark my words, all you people*” – and v38 “*the dogs licked up Ahab’s blood*” – **just as the Lord said they would!**
- You see - **we can trust God’s Word all the time!**
- Ahab and his prophets thought they controlled God’s Word – but God’s word controls all people
- We ignore God’s Word at our peril – **God’s word is CERTAIN.**

### God’s Word is PRIORITY (1 Kings 22:39-40)

#### [Slide 4d-PRIORITY]

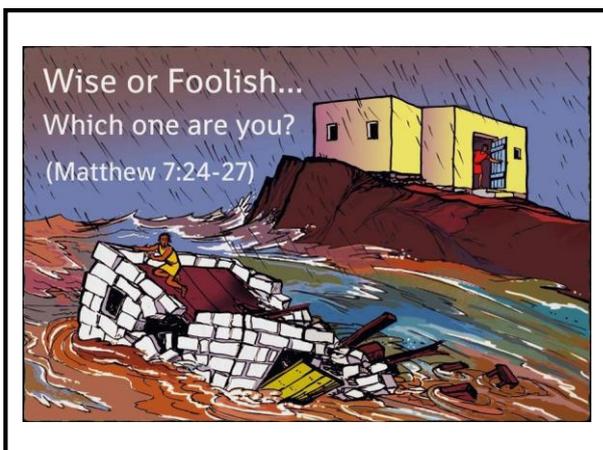
- Which brings us to our **fourth point** – **God’s Word is PRIORITY**
- Look at v39 – the writer of 1 Kings – says all the events of Ahab’s reign, all he did - his fancy building work – and the cities he fortified – **are written down elsewhere**
- Why doesn’t the writer of 1 Kings mention them?
- Because they don’t matter

- The **writer's priority** for the last few chapters has been **God's Word** and how Ahab has continued to ignore it – time and time again
- If we're interested in Ahab's palace and decorations – we can look in the Samarian Better Homes and Gardens – and if we're interested in his extensive city fortification programmes – we can look in the Samarian Grand Designs magazine
- Application: All the stuff we have done in our lives doesn't matter at our funeral – if we haven't believed that Jesus died for our sins to be forgiven and haven't believed He rose again to give us eternal life – we **won't** be going to Heaven!  
**Believing God's Word is PRIORITY**
- The only question the writer is interested in is "how did Ahab stack up beside God's Word?"
- Which bring us to **our response** this morning

### **Our Response (Matthew 7:24-29)**

- How do we stack up –to God's Word
- Let's look briefly at our **NT passage from Matt 7:24-29** – [[please turn there now](#)]

[Slide 5-Wise or Foolish?]



- In this short passage Jesus says there are **two types of people** – a **wise** person and a **foolish** person

- The **wise person** builds their life on the **rock-solid foundation of God's word** – the **foolish person** builds their life on **sand**
- **Ahab built his life on SAND** – the sand of false worship; the sand of a Baal worshipping wife, Jezebel, who manipulated and controlled him; the sand of false prophets discredited at Mount Carmel; the sand of ignoring Elijah and Micaiah, God's prophets; the sand of foolishly making treaties with the King of Aram; and the sand of going his own way, not God's way! Which leads to Hell!
- We must build our lives with **God's Word as our rock-solid foundation**
- To illustrate the point

*I came across this story as I prepared this week.*

*It was 1898 and Ben had left the East of America 8 years earlier to head out West to make his fortune. By now, he wasn't rich, but he had accumulated over 300 acres of good land and built a comfortable farm house on it. He grew wheat, corn, and all of his vegetables. He had managed to build his herd of cattle to over 200 head. One thing he lacked, was a lovely wife.*

*He placed an ad in the New York newspaper which said, "Wanted: A good woman willing to be a pen pal. Marriage is a possibility for the right woman." Before long, he began receiving letters from Molly. Their correspondence soon turned into love for each other. Now, here he stood on the platform of the Kansas City train station waiting to finally meet her.*

*When the train arrived, there were a lot of women getting off. Suddenly, he yelled, "Molly -- over here!"*

*She looked his way, walked over to him, smiled and held out her hand. He took it for a moment, then let it go. She said, "How did you know who I was?"*

*He then reached into the back pocket of his overalls and said, "From these letters." Molly said "But there are no pictures in them."*

*"Oh yes there are!" Ben replied "There are lots of pictures in your words."*

*Ben had spent hours reading every word -- looking for every little clue that would tell him who Molly really was. He had fallen in love with her words -- words that had painted her portrait.*

***God's precious word paints a vivid portrait of who He is. We as his bride should fall in love with His word so that we can then fall in love with Him.***

*[From: Many A Tear Has to Fall by Wayne Hudson, Padon Press]*

- How can we fall in love with God – if we **don't** read His word?
- How can we follow His Word and stand up for His Word – if we don't read it – and don't know it – and don't apply it –and don't share it - and don't put it into practice?
- **God's Word must be a priority in our lives**

Let's pray...

*Father God, thank you for your precious Word. Thank you for the certainty of your Word – and that your Word became flesh – in our Lord Jesus – and offers forgiveness and eternal life – to all who believe in your Word.*

*Help us to make your Word a priority in our lives; in Jesus Name, we pray. AMEN.*

### **Benediction (Isaiah 55:10-11)**

*<sup>10</sup>As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, <sup>11</sup>so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.*