

Elijah and Elisha Class 11
1 Kings 22

No Class next week. There will be dinner followed by our annual Thanksgiving Eve service and Communion.

Homework: Bring a story (brief story) of God's faithfulness from this past year. Remember, you bring the message to this service.

At this point, there is a congregational meeting scheduled for Wednesday, November 30 at 6:30 in the Sanctuary, for the purpose of starting the Discernment Process authorized by the Presbytery's Gracious Separation Agreement. Representatives from the Presbytery will be present and a 25% quorum is required to start the process. No vote will be taken but the process will be explained. So, on the 30th there will be dinner but no class, just the congregational meeting.

This chapter is one of the most unusual in all of Scripture because of the ethical questions it raises about God's character as well as what it reveals about the nature of prophecy and the role of the prophet.

Vv.1-5 The peace that was made after the battle at Aphek lasted three years. Though he had promised to relinquish the lands that had been taken by his father BenHadad did not do as he promised. At the same time, one of the cats (big powers) was on the rise (Assyria). Specifically, BenHadad held on to the land of Ramoth-Gilead near Elijah's home of Tishbe. Ramoth-Gilead was a strategic city which controlled a strategic trade route to Egypt and Africa going south and to Asia and Europe going north. Now a new voice joins the chorus of prophets condemning Ahab. Ahab solicits the help of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, to help recapture Ramoth-Gilead, from Syria, about 30 miles southeast of the Sea of Galilee. During these three years, all of these nations may have been preparing for the battle of Qarqar in 853 BC as Syria and Ahab fought together against

Shalmaneser of Assyria. The “Kurkh stele” claims a great victory for Shalmaneser but he does not advance his territory. Following this battle it may be that Ahab seeks help from Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat and Ahab are linked by marriage see 2 Chr 18:1. But the King of Judah does not want to proceed unless he has a word from the Lord.

Vv6-12 Ahab gathers his prophets for a war council to consider whether he should go to war with Syria again. Hearing all of Ahab’s prophets urge Ahab to go for it Jehosaphat is unconvinced. He seeks another opinion. Ahab says there is another prophet but he never says anything good for Ahab. While the kings wait for Micaiah, Zedekiah acts out a prophetic drama for them. He takes horns of iron to represent how Israel will gore the Syrians to death and all of the rest of the ‘prophets’ agree.

Vv.13-28 Micaiah prophesies against Ahab...he says that he can only speak as the Lord directs him see Deut 13:1-11; 18:14-22. Micaiah first says exactly what the rest have said. The kings don’t buy it and tell him to tell the real story. So he says he ‘sees’ Israel scattered like sheep with no shepherd. Shepherds were frequently used metaphorically in reference to kingship.

Then Micaiah says something which may disturb us about God’s character as he relates of God desiring to eliminate Ahab, whose death has now been prophesied twice. God seeks to entice Ahab to a battle in which he would die. It would seem that God wants to tell lies to Ahab. This is at least aimed at Ahab’s prophets for hire who say what he wants to hear. Second, it is difficult to call God the liar in the story when he announces, before Ahab goes to battle, that a lying spirit has been placed in the mouths of his prophets. But knowing, Ahab goes anyway. This text focuses on God’s sovereignty and awareness of everything and control of every situation. So Ahab has a chance to respond to the true prophet but does not.

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We also see Zedekiah strike Micaiah as the lone true prophet stands against the horde of Ahab's prophets and is scorned for his trouble. He warns Zedekiah that terror will be Zedekiah's teacher and Miciah is carted off to jail with only bread and water. Micaih again places himself under Moses' standards in Deut 18:21-22. If the words do not come to pass then he is not the Lord's prophet.

Vv.29-40 Ahab is killed in battle...Ahab disguises himself and allows Jehoshaphat to go to battle dressed as a king which will attract BenHadad's focus and it does. Just as it seems that Ahab's ruse has worked, a Syrian archer shoots an arrow 'at random' and it finds its mark and kills Ahab and he slowly bleeds out. When the army goes home, they park his chariot and the dogs come and lick up his blood just as Elijah had said.

Vv.41-50 Jehoshaphat is ally and king of Judah

The author takes up again the history of Judah and Jehoshaphat who was introduced in 15:24 as the son and successor of Asa. He reigns for 25 years. He is a good king though he does not do away with the high places. But he remains at peace with the northern kingdom of Israel. There was no king in Edom because Edom was, at this time, under the control of Judah. Because Jehoshaphat rules over Edom he has a port (Elath) on the gulf of Aqaba and builds a fleet like Solomon but does not benefit from them so that rather than days of glory these are days of humbling.

Vv.51-53 Ahaziah succeeds Ahab but only rules for 2 years and like his father is not a good king.

There will be a meeting in the sanctuary immediately following class to discuss recent actions by the Session concerning the Gracious Separation Agreement with the Presbytery. If you wish to stay and here the Elders' presentation you are welcome to do so. It will be a 1 hour meeting.