

266 Going with the flow?

We are told in I Kings 22 (and in its largely parallel passage in II Chronicles 18) how Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, rashly agreed to the request for military help against Syria made by Ahab, the grossly wicked king of Israel (v 4b).

Jehoshaphat, as a God-fearing man and king, urged that they should “enquire at the word of the Lord today” over this planned attack (v 5). No problem! - Ahab duly assembled his 400-strong gang of prophets, who gave the “thumbs-up” (v 6). But despite their mention of the Lord, these were not “prophets of the Lord” at all, as Jehoshaphat realised in his asking, “Is there not here a prophet of the Lord?” (v 7a). Ahab replied that there was still one, (not four hundred), Micaiah, “but I hate him” said Ahab (v 8), because he always prophesied evil towards him. Well, fancy that! – how dare he?!

Micaiah was summoned, and the messenger tipped him off as to what – if he had any sense – Micaiah should say to Ahab (v 13): basically “Go with the flow!”. We have Micaiah’s noble reply – “As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak” (v 14).

It was a scary scene for Micaiah, for Ahab and Jehoshaphat were sitting in their royal robes on their thrones “in the gate of Samaria”, with the 400 false prophets in attendance (vv 10-12). First Micaiah did indeed appear to “go with the flow” (v 15b), which, presumably from his manner and tone of voice, Ahab realised was being said as a joke (v 16), so – irony of ironies – he insisted that Micaiah was to speak only “that which is true in the name of the Lord” (v 16). Coming from Ahab that command was quite something!

Then Micaiah did just that, speaking of his having seen Israel being scattered upon the hills without a shepherd or master, and having heard the Lord’s instruction that every man was to “return to his house in peace” (v 17). He then spoke of the Lord sitting on His throne, (a far greater throne than the two thrones set before Micaiah now); with the Lord being surrounded, not by the 400 false prophets currently cavorting around Ahab and Jehoshaphat, but by “the host of heaven standing by him (the Lord) on his right hand and on his left” (v 19). What a scene! – and what a contrast between the reality of heavenly splendour and authority on the one hand, and the pompous, idolatrous behaviour of Ahab on the other.

Micaiah explained that the Lord “hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets” (v 23), on hearing which Zedekiah “smote Micaiah on the cheek”, demanding why Micaiah was so confident that he, rather than the others, had “the Spirit of the Lord” (v 24).

Ahab knew what to do with a man like Micaiah – off to prison with him, “and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I come in peace” (vv 26-27). What folly and contempt for God’s man and for God’s Word! Micaiah simply pointed out the obvious – “If thou return at all in peace, the Lord hath not spoken by me ... Hearken, O people, every one of you” (v 28). Shortly after we read those fateful

words – “And a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel” (v 34), and that was that, (vv 37-38).

As any news bulletin demonstrates, we are living in increasingly foolish, turbulent times, awash with falsehood on all sides. How the Lord seeks out His Micaiahs of today! Like so many prophets of Bible times and since, Micaiah was a man of good repute (eg Matthew 5.16 / I Thessalonians 5.22 / I Timothy 3.7), who was ever-attentive to the Lord, ready to do His bidding, and able to speak God’s Word with courage and clarity when called upon to do so.

Just so for us. We might get that smack in the face or that bread and water of affliction, but we won’t have been the first, and we won’t be the last so to suffer (eg, supremely, Luke 22.39–23.46; then eg Acts 7.57–8.4 / II Corinthians 6.1-10 & 11.23-27 / Philippians 1.27–30 / II Timothy 2.8-15 & 3.12 / etc ...).

Whatever the flow of topical, trendy opinions may be, today’s Micaiahs are entrusted with proclaiming the old, crucial words of Jesus – “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14.6).

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