

MICAIAH—LESSONS FROM A LITTLE-KNOWN PROPHET

By Dub McClish

Introduction

We call the twelve authors of the short prophetic books “minor prophets.” In actuality there **are** no minor prophets among those who have been faithful to God. Not all of God’s prophets wrote their messages for posterity and we know almost nothing about some of them except a brief mention of their faithful work. Among these little-known, non-literary prophets was Micaiah, concerning whom we have a scant twenty-one verses (1 Kin. 22:8–28; repeated in 2 Chr. 18:7–27).

He lived during the incomparably evil reign of Ahab and Jezebel over Israel, and he was contemporary for some time with the great Elijah (and perhaps with Elisha). The towering greatness of Elijah may explain why Micaiah receives such limited notice. The fact that this stalwart, unwavering man lived with so little historical note suggests the possibility that there may have been many others of his mettle of whom absolutely no historical record has been preserved. After all, there were still seven thousand faithful Israelites about this time who had escaped the notice of Elijah (1 Kin. 19: 14, 18).

The Occasion of Micaiah’s Message

The wicked and idolatrous Ahab invited Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, to join forces with him to capture the Syrian city of Ramoth-gilead (1 Kin. 22:3). Jehoshaphat suggested that they first inquire for a word from God about their plans (2 Chr. 18:4). Ahab gathered about four hundred hireling “prophets” whom he knew would say what their patron wanted to hear (vv. 21–22). With one voice they predicted a glorious victory. Jehoshaphat was not deceived and asked if there were not a prophet of Jehovah of whom they might inquire (1 Kin. 22:7). Ahab admitted that there was this Micaiah, whom he hated, “for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil” (v. 8). He had heard Micaiah’s message before and he did not like what he had heard! Nevertheless, lest he discourage his recently acquired ally, Ahab sent for the prophet of God.

Ahab’s messenger cautioned and counseled Micaiah to declare the same “good” message delivered by the four hundred hirelings. The spark of bold, unshakable courage almost leaps from the page in the prophet’s immediate reply to the temptation to compromise: “As Jehovah liveth, what Jehovah saith unto me, that will I speak” (1 Kin. 22:14). No wonder an evil man such as Ahab hated him. What can we learn from this brief account of this little-known spiritual hero?

Opposition to the Truth

Strong hatred and ruthless opposition are often the rewards of preaching and/or living the Truth. In fact, God's faithful servants will be despised by some in direct proportion to their faithfulness. Just so, It is entirely to the credit of any Gospel preacher that evil men hate him and seek to silence or destroy him! One's fidelity to the Son of God may often be measured by who his enemies are and by what they say about him. Micaiah's reverent statement is reminiscent of Peter's well-known charge: "If any man speaketh, speaking as it were the oracles of God" (I Pet. 4:2). No man has the right to speak anything in addition or contrary to the revealed will of God.

Worldlings are not the only ones who will exhibit opposition in the face of exposure and reproof. Lamentably, one's own brethren who do not want to feel the cutting edge of the Spirit's Sword will often behave in the same way. The Lord charged the Jews (His own people racially and religiously): "But now ye seek to kill me, a man that told you the truth, which I heard from God" (John 8:40). Paul, after strong words of correction to the Galatians, asked: "So then am I become your enemy, by telling you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16), implying that he anticipated as much. One who is determined to be true to God must be prepared for opposition and even hatred because of that very dedication.

The Truth is Objective

Micaiah was unconcerned with the extreme imbalance in numbers. The prophets of Ahab outnumbered him four hundred to one. He knew that even though four hundred men spoke the same lying message, it was no less a lie. He correctly realized that Truth and error are not decided at the ballot box or by the polls. He knew that one man united with God on the solid rock of His Word was preferable to and more powerful than four hundred men united with a king in error. He likewise understood that Truth is no less truth because only one man stands for it.

The nature of objective Truth, as opposed to subjective surmising, is herein illustrated. God's Word is objective—that is, it stands apart from men and their feelings, emotions, or thoughts. Subjectivisms arise from within man. Objective Truth does not change—it is the same everywhere, under all circumstances, for all men. A subjective approach to religion (in which men are encouraged to hold contradictory views, depending on their own emotions, feelings, experiences, imaginations, and moods), is, unfortunately, the popular philosophy of our time. A subjective approach destroys the very foundation of Truth and authority in religion and morals.

Our beloved nation is paying a woefully heavy price for adopting this ungodly and foolish thought-system.

God's Word is an objective standard in the same sense that a yardstick is an objective standard. It matters not how men feel about it, how many believe in it, or how many dispute it, it still stands out there as the stubbornly independent, immovable standard. Even if Micaiah had joined the subjective voice of the false four hundred, the objective Truth of God's message would not have been altered in the least. Thankfully, this great prophet had the courage and wisdom to stand upon the message he received from God. May we be as wise as he and take an unflinching stand on God's immutable Word, even if the entire world and most of the brethren decide to desert it!

Confusion of Good and Evil

Micaiah's experience demonstrates that what men judge to be "good" may be evil. Ahab rejoiced in what he called the "good word" of his prophets, while they were actually speaking an evil message of falsehood. It also demonstrates that what men call "evil" may actually be good. Ahab hated Micaiah because he always had an "evil" message for the king. However, the "evil" report in Ahab's judgment was really a benevolent warning to the king, rather than a hateful proclamation. So it is with God's message in every age. Most do not like its words of warning that speak of sin, guilt, the Second Coming of Christ, accountability, the Judgment, damnation, Hell, and such things. However, these are truly benevolent words of warning from a loving Creator and, like Micaiah, we must not cease to preach them just because some count them as evil, harsh, and hateful words.

Of Needs and Wants

We also see demonstrated in Micaiah that men do not always **want** to hear what they **need** to hear. Ahab did not **want** to hear Micaiah's message (even though he adjured him to speak the truth). However, he badly **needed** to hear that message from God. It would have saved his life had he heard it. Most men, Ahab-like, do not want to hear what they need to hear. If, as a child, I had had my choice between plain orange juice and orange juice layered with castor oil, I would have chosen it plain every time. However, my parents wisely (I presume!) administered some castor oil occasionally. We dare not decide what to preach or where to stand morally or doctrinally based merely on pressures brought by the world or by brethren concerning what they **desire** or **prefer**. Let us earnestly seek to determine what men **need** to hear, and then preach and teach it in the fear of God.

The old dodge, “We are answering questions no one is asking,” is totally beside the point. Did the people on Pentecost ask the apostles, “What shall we do?” (Acts 2:37) at the beginning of the sermon or at the end—after those men had provoked the question by preaching the Gospel? Most people, like them, do not know the right questions to ask. The job of Gospel preachers is to raise the questions people **ought** to be asking and then give God's answers to them. Micaiah preached the needed, albeit undesired, message before Ahab and his prophets.

Conclusion

Micaiah is truly one of the unsung heroes of the Bible! He was determined that, regardless of what Ahab did to him, he would not betray the Truth or withhold it, even if it meant death. This is the trademark of every faithful servant of God, but especially must it be of God's preachers. Micaiah knew that, whatever wicked Ahab did to him, God's Word would still stand. As one unknown writer stated: “The truth cannot be burned, beheaded, or crucified. A lie on the throne is a lie still, and truth in a dungeon is still truth.” Centuries later, in his last imprisonment (which likely eventuated in his execution), Paul echoed Micaiah's spirit: “. . . I suffer hardship unto bonds, as a malefactor; but the word of God is not bound” (2 Tim. 2:9).

All who preach (indeed, every Christian) would do well to commit Micaiah's words to memory and his convictions to conscience: “As Jehovah liveth, what my God saith, that will I speak.” Only if we faithfully follow this principle, even to die rather than abandon it, will we be given the crown of life (Rev. 2:10).

[Note: I wrote this MS and it originally appeared as an “Editorial Perspective” in the February 2001 issue of *THE GOSPEL JOURNAL*, of which I was editor at the time.]