

Lessons from Micaiah, the Unheralded Prophet

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Introduction

Just as there are several Jameses in the New Testament, there are several Old Testament characters named “Micaiah.” Although at least eight persons (including one woman) have this name, the subject of our study was a prophet in the Northern Kingdom of Israel under the evil king, Ahab. The Scriptural record of Micaiah is brief. All that we know about him is found in 1 Kings 22:8–28 and the parallel account (almost a word-for-word repetition) in 2 Chronicles 18:7–27. While we know less about him than about most other prophets, what we know of him is worthy of our careful study and close emulation.

The Historical Setting of Micaiah’s Work

Ahab ascended the throne of Israel at the beginning of the ninth century B.C., the seventh king of that secessionist kingdom. The kingdom of Israel was idolatrous as a matter of policy through the influence of its first king, Jeroboam (1 Kin. 12:25–33). However, idolatry found a real patron in Ahab. It was not enough for him to follow the abominable precedent of Jeroboam; his promotion of idol-worship would “lay Jeroboam in the shade!” His gravest error was in marrying Jezebel, the daughter of the pagan king of Sidon, whose very name was an expression of alliance with the idol-god, Baal. This additional unholy influence led Ahab to go beyond Jeroboam’s mere calf-worship. He built a temple and altar to Baal in Samaria and established groves to the goddess Asherah (1 Kin. 16:31–33). Ahab and Jezebel were truly dedicated idolaters! The sad inspired analysis of his twenty-two year reign is that he “...did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah above all that were before him” (vv. 30, 33).¹

Elijah, also a prophet in the Northern Kingdom, was the towering spiritual giant of this period (perhaps explaining why Micaiah, his contemporary, received such relatively scant attention). Immediately following the introduction of Ahab and Jezebel, the record introduces Elijah the Tishbite and his running feud with the evil king and queen. This continues throughout 1 Kings 17–19, with the climax of their several confrontations being the dramatic contest on Mount Carmel, ending with the slaughter of the 450 prophets of Baal. Shortly in time (and immediately in the sacred record) before Micaiah is introduced, Elijah confronted Ahab with his sin of murdering Naboth and seizing his coveted vineyard. In the course of this rebuke Elijah prophesied the death of both Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kin. 21:17–29). Elijah was yet alive after the death of Ahab (2 Kin. 1:1–4), so we know that both he and Micaiah were prophets in Israel in this same period.

Likewise, Elisha at least began his work in this same period (1 Kin. 19:19–21; 2 Kin. 2:4–14). We may summarize by saying that these days in Israel were marked by the consummate evils of Ahab and Jezebel on the one hand and the strong, uncompromising voice of a trio of faithful prophets of God on the other. Micaiah was the unheralded one among those three unshakable prophets.

There is yet another character in this historical setting that deserves some notice: Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. He is introduced to the Scripture reader in 1 Kings 15:24 as the successor to the throne of his father, the righteous reformer-king, Asa. He continued the reformation of his father and beyond that "...he walked in the first ways of his father David" (2 Chr. 17:3).

In spite of his general concern for God's law, he made at least one great blunder. He gave his son, Jehoram, to be married to Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel (2 Kin. 8:16–18, 26). This marital alliance eventually resulted in a major apostasy in Judah and likely explains the cordiality between Ahab and Jehoshaphat that led to their military alliance. Jehu, the seer, rebuked Jehoshaphat for helping Ahab as he returned to Jerusalem, in words that God's people of every age would do well to ponder: "Shouldest thou help the wicked, and love them that hate Jehovah? For this thing wrath is upon thee from before Jehovah" (2 Chr. 19:1–2). This condemning question forms a perfect Old Testament counterpart to such clear New Testament prohibitions of Ephesians 5:11 and 2 John 9-11. This piercing question relates to the "wicked" and the "haters of Jehovah" whether they are outside the church or in it.

The Immediate Setting of Micaiah's Prophecy

Micaiah made his appearance on the occasion of a visit by Jehoshaphat to Ahab's court. After lavishly "wining and dining" the king of Judah in Samaria, Ahab announced his desire to recapture Ramoth-gilead from Syria (2 Chr. 18:2; 1 Kin. 22:3). It had been three years since Ahab had last fought and conquered (by God's blessing) the Syrian army under Benhadad. In suing for peace Benhadad had promised the return of all the cities of Israel his father had seized, including Ramoth-gilead (1 Kin. 22:1; 20:34). However, Benhadad had reneged on his promise to restore this old city of refuge, and Ahab was ready to take it by force.

There is an interesting and helpful insight into Hebraic concepts and statements of time in this setting. 1 Kings 22:1–2 says: "And they continued three years without war between Syria and Israel. And it came to pass in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel." This clearly shows that "three years" and "the third year" have the same

meaning. John T. Hinds has correctly observed: “This is a divine comment on the different expressions used to describe the time Christ was in the tomb.”²

After announcing his intention to mount an offensive against Ramoth-gilead, Ahab urged Jehoshaphat to join forces with him, which he promptly agreed to do (1 Kin. 22:4; 2 Chr. 18:2–3). However, the king of Judah suggested that Ahab inquire for the Word of the Lord regarding the planned campaign. Ahab correctly understood him to be asking for a consultation with a prophet of God. Ahab went much further—he gathered about four hundred prophets and inquired of them whether to go up against Ramoth-gilead. These, however, were Ahab’s prophets, not the Lord’s (2 Chr. 18:21–22). These were not the prophets of Baal, for they had been slain at the great Carmel confrontation a short while before (1 Kin. 18:40). It seems most plausible that these were prophets pertaining to the calf-worship instituted by Jeroboam (1 Kin. 12:25–33). One thing is sure about them: they were hirelings, concerned only with speaking the message their patron wanted to hear—which is what they did.

Jehoshaphat suspected the insincerity of Ahab’s prophets and the dependability of their message of encouragement to attack Ramoth-gilead. He asked, “Is there not here a prophet of Jehovah besides, that we may inquire of him” (1 Kin. 22:7)? Ahab was apparently so anxious to have Jehoshaphat’s help that he brushed aside the implied insult to his four hundred court prophets. He admitted that there was yet another of whom they might inquire of Jehovah. Ahab called his name (Micaiah, the son of Imlah) and quickly added his own prejudice: “But I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil” (v. 8).

The Prophecy of Micaiah

In spite of his hatred of the prophet, to humor Jehoshaphat, he sent for Micaiah (v. 9). While awaiting the prophet’s arrival the monarchs dressed themselves in their royal robes and sat upon their thrones at the gate of Samaria. The four hundred prophets were crying their false prophecies before them. One of them, Zedekiah, became especially zealous, using improvised iron horns to demonstrate how he supposed Ahab would push the Syrians around.

Meanwhile, the king’s messenger had reached Micaiah’s quarters. Because Ahab knew exactly where to find the prophet and that after his prophecy he would be sent “back unto Amon the governor” for imprisonment (v. 26), some believe that Micaiah was in prison when Ahab sent for him.³ Upon approaching the prophet, the messenger cautioned and counseled him 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 immediate reply of Micaiah to the

temptation to compromise: **“As Jehovah liveth, what Jehovah saith unto me, that will I speak”** (v. 14, emph. DM). No wonder an evil man such as Ahab hated him! (it is entirely to the credit of any Gospel preacher that evil men hate him and seek to silence or destroy him.) Micaiah’s reverent statement is reminiscent of Peter’s well-known charge: “If any man speaketh, speaking as it were oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11). Mark it well: **no man has the right to speak anything contrary to the revealed will of God.**

Interestingly, when first questioned about the planned military operation, Micaiah repeated verbatim what the false prophets earlier told Ahab, urging him to pursue his plans and promising success (1 Kin. 22:15). However, Ahab recognized that Micaiah was mocking both him and his prophets and thus adjured him to speak the truth. He was likely sorry he made this demand! Micaiah told him he would meet with disaster and Israel would be left as sheep without a shepherd. Ahab then reminded Jehoshaphat of his evaluation of Micaiah: “Did I not tell thee that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil” (v. 18)?

Now Micaiah launched into his message in earnest, as if to say to Ahab, “All right, you wanted to hear the truth, you will hear it all.” The prophet then described a vision in which God revealed that He was seeking someone to entice Ahab to go up to Ramoth-gilead that he might fall there. The plan God approved to accomplish this end was for a “lying spirit” to speak through the king’s own prophets, encouraging the king to launch the campaign that would prove fatal to him. Notice how similar this vision is to the statement of Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:10–12:

And with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be judged who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Assuredly, this principle is still operative—both among those in the world who love not the Truth, but also among those of the same spirit within the church of God. When one sets his heart against the Truth, he will embrace—often with a passion—error and falsehood in its place. The eighteenth century English poet, William Cowper, caught the spirit of this truism in verse: “Hear the just law, the judgment of the skies! He that hates truth shall be the dupe of lies. And he that will be cheated to the last, Delusions, strong as hell, shall bind him fast.”

Micaiah’s startling and dramatic prophecy pointedly identified Ahab’s four hundred prophets as liars and false prophets. Feeling the sting of Micaiah’s words of exposure and perhaps fearing that the influence of the four hundred lying prophets might be damaged by it, Zedekiah (the fellow with the iron horns) seized the platform once more. He stepped forward and slapped Micaiah (when a false teacher cannot refute the Truth of the message, he often

attacks the messenger, even today), taunting him with the challenge to declare how the Spirit of the Lord had gone from him (implying, “If I do not have the Spirit of the Lord,” as Micaiah had charged) (1 Kin. 22:24). Adam Clarke wrote the following interesting paraphrase of this exchange:

This is an expression of as great insolence as the act was of brutal aggression. “Did the Spirit of the Lord, who rests solely upon me, condescend to inspire thee? Was it at this ear (where he smote him) that it entered in, in order to hold communion with thee?”⁴

We should not miss the picture of the meek strength of Micaiah in contrast with the pugnacious act and words of the false prophet, Zedekiah. Albert Barnes probably captured the scene accurately in his comments:

As Micaiah had been brought from prison (v. 26), it is probable that his hands were bound. The Prophet thus standing before the great ones of the earth, bound and helpless, bearing testimony to the truth, and for this testimony smitten on the face by an underling, whose blow he receives without either shame or anger is a notable type of our Lord before Caiaphas suffering the same indignity.⁵

Micaiah’s humble, but powerful, reply to Zedekiah told the false prophet that he would receive the answer to his question (and thus be forced to admit that he did not have the Spirit of the Lord) in the events that would fulfill the true prophecy. In fact, Micaiah warned Zedekiah that he would be running from closet to closet to hide himself in fear and shame when the falseness of his prophecy was manifest (v. 25).

With these words Ahab had heard and seen enough. He instructed his officers to take Micaiah away with cruel and denigrating orders: “Put this fellow in prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I come again in peace” (v. 27).⁶ Such was Ahab’s expression of disdain for and rejection of the message of God’s prophet. He was saying, in fact, that he would return in peace from the battlefield and prove Micaiah to be false and his own prophets to be true. Doubtless, he had a sorer fate than prison and the “bread and water of affliction” in mind for the prophet upon the anticipated victorious return! In his boastful prediction of victory against Benhadad, we see how quickly he had forgotten the one wise statement from his wicked lips inspiration has preserved. To the likewise boastful Syrian king he had cautioned three years before: “Let not him that girdeth on his armor boast himself as he that putteth it off” (1 Kin. 20:11). Ahab fell victim to his own wise counsel in his false optimism of victory.

Micaiah took advantage of one last moment to preach the Truth to Ahab as he was being led away: “If thou return at all in peace, Jehovah hath not spoken by me” (1 Kin. 22:28). Although these words were directed primarily to Ahab, they were intentionally spoken so that all of those present, and others who would hear of these things, could judge the truth of his words

by the outcome of the battle. The prophet spoke in the absolute confidence one can have only when he knows he is proclaiming words of truth! His challenge called for vindication of his faithfulness based on Moses' test of a prophet: "How shall we know the word which Jehovah hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of Jehovah, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which Jehovah hath not spoken" (Deu. 18:21–22).

The righteous prophet Micaiah is not mentioned again, but the outcome of the battle is recorded. Ahab was shot with an arrow that entered between the joints of his armor and he died a slow, agonizing death as the sun set on the day, the battle, and the king. Ahab was slain in battle and Micaiah's message was vindicated.

Some Practical Principles from the Life and Times of Micaiah

A Contrast in Auditors

There were two types of auditors, represented by Ahab and Jehoshaphat, respectively. Ahab had his hired prophets who would say just what he wanted to hear. He was the spiritual father of those rebels in Judah a century later, to whom Isaiah sternly wrote:

For it is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of Jehovah; that say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits, get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us (Isa. 30:9–11).

Ahab, in his hatred of Micaiah and of the Truth, is shown to be the arch-type of those described by Paul who "...will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:3–4). It needs to be emphasized that those who "rail against" God's messengers actually demonstrate their hatred of the Truth. It is always easier to destroy the messenger than it is to refute the message of Truth when one willfully rejects it. So it was with the Lord's enemies. Ultimately, the hatred of God's message is a hatred of God himself, the source of the message. To reject the Word of the Lord is tantamount to rejecting the Lord (John 12:48). I say it so as to be incapable of being misunderstood: those—whether in the world or in the church—who despise the faithful Gospel preacher who dares boldly proclaim the Truth are really expressing their enmity toward God.

Does not Ahab's complaint against Micaiah sound just like so many brethren who wickedly complain against faithful preachers today? "He's too negative." "He's always talking about problems." "He never commends us or says anything good about anybody." "He doesn't make me 'feel good' when he preaches." Now it is possible that these statements have been

and are true about some preachers, but my judgment is that they are more often a correct gauge of the heart of the hearer than of the emphasis of the preacher, as in Ahab's case.

How many "Ahab's" there are in the church right now! Some of them are compromising preachers. Some of them are spineless and unspiritual elders. Some of them are secular, materialistic, worldly-minded members who are determined to live as they please regardless of what pleases God. With one accord they echo Ahab concerning him who would dare preach the whole counsel of God in this permissive age: "I hate him for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." Like old Ahab, they never give a passing thought to humbly submitting to the Word of God in repentance. Such "Ahab's" are in control of many congregations of the Lord's people already and their number is growing.

The amazing thing about Ahab and his ilk in every age is that they willingly pay men to speak deception, lies, errors, or, at best, less than all of the Truth. The Gospel preacher who is determined to serve God at all costs will sooner or later encounter an "Ahab" (perhaps several of them) who will try to "buy him off" from speaking a message which exposes their error in doctrine or practice. It may be by means of offering some kind of material reward or by threat of being fired if their itching ears are not tickled, but it all adds up to the same thing. The ugliness and ungodliness of such a spirit in any age is clearly defined and amply demonstrated in old Ahab. What an abomination to God, a veritable stench in His nostrils, is such behavior! And what fools such men are in the eyes of all truth-loving men.

Jehoshaphat represents a different kind of auditor—one that was not content with the word of obvious hirelings. He knew that the words of the four hundred prophets were at least suspect, because of their being kept by Ahab. I doubt not the sincerity of Jehoshaphat in wanting to hear the word of the Lord concerning the planned battle. Upon hearing Ahab's appraisal of Micaiah, he even rebuked Ahab for saying such words of hate against God's prophet. At times it seems that few nowadays are asking with Jehoshaphat, "Is there not here a prophet of Jehovah besides, that we may inquire of him" (2 Chr. 18:6)? Do many elders ask this question of the preacher they are considering hiring any more? They are more likely to ask if he is a "good mixer," a constant visitor in the homes of church members, an accomplished promoter, one who always preaches positively, one who has at least a master's degree (not necessarily in Bible), one who is proficient in counseling, one who delivers only sweet 20 minute sermonettes that never offend the most sensitive listener, one who makes everyone "feel good about themselves," and, by all means, one who does not engage in the ugly business of calling names.

Thank God, there are still some elders who correctly place the priority on preaching the Word. This is emphasized in the pulpit, the classroom, the church bulletin, and in every other work of the congregation overseen by such men. Likewise, there are yet many faithful souls in many congregations that are hungry for the Truth. They will not tolerate hearing sweet pep talks containing little or no Bible, of enduring the promotion of all sorts of gimmicks and gadgets to draw crowds, and of high-pressure money-raising schemes to build new facilities that will rival those of a country club or a health spa.

I frequently receive calls and letters from brethren in various localities who are distressed over just such matters. They are crying for the whole counsel of God and are desperate to know what to do about these matters where they live. Their concerns to elders and preachers have fallen on deaf ears. Such, like Jehoshaphat, are justifiably suspicious of hiring prophets. How much these hirelings (and those who keep them) will be accountable for at the Judgment

Unfortunately, Jehoshaphat gave no heed to the true prophet when he heard him. It seems that he only “talked” strong convictions—he was not willing to act in harmony with them. Thus, although he correctly asked to hear the message from God, he had not the courage to act upon it. Jehu later justly rebuked him for aiding the evil Ahab (2 Chr. 19:1–2). He lent his aid in spite of the declared curse of God upon Ahab from God’s prophet. Curiously, there seem to be always some who cry loud and long to hear the Truth, but, who, like Jehoshaphat, when it is delivered, ignore it and go their own predetermined way in spite of it. All such ably demonstrate the need for the warning from James: “But be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding your own selves” (Jam. 1:22).

A Contrast in Prophets

The four hundred prophets who were first paraded before Jehoshaphat were the pawns of Ahab. They were in the fullest sense, politicians. They spoke just what their benefactor wanted to hear. They doubtless ever kept a finger in the air to see “which way the wind was blowing” and were quick to move in that direction. They were not God’s prophets; to Ahab, Micaiah correctly described them as “these thy prophets” (1 Kin. 22:23). These were surely not the last to try to dignify their own opinions, imaginations, and philosophies by claiming as their source a revelation or a vision from God. False prophets, false Christs, and false apostles all made their appearance in the first century (Mat. 7:15; 24:23–24; Rev. 2:2). Mohammed, the popes, Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy, Ellen G. White, Charles Taze

Russell, Oral Roberts, and all others of their ilk who claim a revelation from God since the close of the New Testament fit the mold of the four hundred.

Ahab's hireling preachers serve as arch-types of every man who has ever claimed to be a Gospel preacher, but who is so concerned with maintaining his popularity or preserving his position that he will deliver whatever "oracle" his pressure-sensitive elders or his pleasure-seeking and wealthy members demand of him. Such are also described by Paul: "For they that are such serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly; and by their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent" (Rom. 16:18). Men, if you've not got the spine and fortitude to preach the Gospel Truth when men hate you as well as love you for it, then be honest enough to refuse to let yourself be called a "Gospel preacher"—and find some other kind of work.

Learn from these four hundred hirelings the ugliness and folly of purchasing a pulpit, a position, a favor of whatever sort, at the expense of teaching error or withholding the Truth. The real and final rewards are not received on this earth and the final Rewarder is not the man or men who put groceries on our tables.

Micaiah belonged to no man or group of men. The Lord—not the king—was his employer and keeper. Therefore, as surely as Jehovah lived, so surely would he speak what Jehovah said to him. This meant he would speak no more, no less, but all the Lord's message. Here is found the motto, the motive, the modus operandi of every faithful prophet and preacher.

The faithfulness of God's truly dedicated servant is seen in the number of pressures Micaiah withstood:

1. The wrath of a king—who hated him, apparently already had him shut up in prison, and had the power to take his life—did not silence or intimidate him.
2. The earnest persuasion of the king's messenger to speak the same pleasing message as the false prophets did not seduce him.
3. The fact that his four hundred peers had already spoken a message with one voice that was utterly contrary to what he must speak did not influence him.
4. The verbal and physical assault of Zedekiah did not move him. His message was proved true by the events that followed.

However, his confidence in his message as the Truth of God was surely proved by the unshakable boldness he exhibited in spite of these powerful pressures at work, any one of which might have broken a lesser man. Micaiah stood erect while all these fierce pressures closed in upon him. He was a man who could not be frightened into retreat or compromise and

he serves as an extraordinary example of the dedication to Truth that God has always expected of his preachers.

Miscellaneous Principles Seen in Micaiah's Story

Strong hatred and ruthless opposition are often the reward of preaching the Truth. In fact, some will despise God's faithful servants in direct proportion to their faithfulness. Such a spirit will be seen not only from worldlings who do not want to be exposed and reprov'd. It will often be seen in one's own brethren who do not want to feel the cutting edge and keen point of the sword of the Spirit. The Lord charged the Jews (His own brethren): "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)? One who is determined to be true to God must be prepared for opposition and even hatred because of that very dedication.

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 spoke the same error, it was thereby no less error and no more the Truth. He correctly realized that Truth is not decided by majority vote. He knew that one man united with God on truth was preferable to four hundred men united with a king on 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 opinion—is herein illustrated. God's word is objective, that is, it stands apart from men and their feelings or human thoughts. The equation, $2+2=4$, is an example of an objective truth or fact. It matters not what men think about it, how many may teach that $2+2=5$, how sincerely they may believe that 5 is the correct sum of $2+2$, or even if all men reject the correct sum, the equation, $2+2=4$, stands inviolable because it is **objective truth**. So it is with objective truth in every field of human knowledge and experience, including religion. Subjectivisms arise from within man; they spring from man's own fickle feelings, opinions, and thoughts, and are thus fallible and ever-changing.

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 contradicting views, depending on their own emotions, feelings, imaginations and moods, as equally true, is the norm at present. This is exactly the road our liberal brethren who are insisting on a "new hermeneutic" are traveling. They take the Bible, even of its most explicit, exclusive, and clear statements, and say in effect, "I understand it one way, but my Baptist preacher friend in our Ministerial Alliance sees it differently. How I see it is 'truth' for me, but how he sees it is equally

'truth' for him." Another whines, "What was truth for people in the first century is not necessarily truth for us because they lived in a different culture." Such views destroy the very foundation of Truth and authority in religion by rendering every Word revealed by God as a mere subjective opinion.

Contrariwise, Micaiah understood (and we must understand) that **God's Word is an objective standard**, just as a yardstick is an objective standard. It matters not how men feel about it, how many believe in it, how men may pervert it, or how many dispute and reject it, it still stands out there as the **independent, immovable, immutable standard**. Even if Micaiah had joined the subjective voice of the hirelings, 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 Word he received from God. May we be as wise as he and take an unflinching stand on God's Word, "which liveth and abideth forever" (1 Pet. 1:23, KJV), even if all of the world and most of the brethren desert it.

Micaiah's experience demonstrates that what men judge to be "good" may be evil. Ahab rejoiced in the "good word" of his prophets, while they were actually speaking an evil message of error that, when followed, would lead to his defeat, dishonor, and death. This episode 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, that which was an "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, judgment, accountability, damnation, Hell, and such like. 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. The One Who loved men supremely spoke more of the final Judgment and the horrors of Hell than He did of the glories of Heaven. Was He thereby "unloving?" Was His message "evil?"

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 (in spite of his adjuring him to speak the truth). However, he desperately **needed** to hear that message from God. It would have saved his life had he heard it. Most men are still like Ahab—not wanting to hear what they need to and vice versa. If I had had my choice as a child between plain orange juice or 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 merely on the basis of pressures brought by the world or by brethren concerning what

they **desire** or **prefer**. Doubtless, Governor Felix and Drusilla **wanted** and expected to hear Paul say something that would satisfy their curiosity about his faith, but Paul delivered what they most **needed** to hear—a rousing sermon on “Righteousness, Self-control, and the Judgment to Come” (Acts 24:24–25). Let us earnestly seek to determine what men **need** to hear and preach it in the fear of God.

The old dodge, “We are answering questions no one is asking,” is totally beside the point. **Most people do not know enough about God, the Bible, sin and other critical subjects to ask the right questions.** Does anyone believe that the people on Pentecost would ever have asked, “Brethren, what shall we do” (Acts 2:37), if Peter had not brought them to the point of faith and the recognition of guilt by his sermon (vv. 22–36)? The job of Gospel preachers is to so preach the Word that men will know what questions they ought to ask, and then to give God’s answers to those appropriate questions when people ask 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 by perverting or withholding 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. He knew that whatever wicked Ahab did to him, God’s Truth 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).

We who preach must 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 the Lord give us the crown of life (Rev. 2:10).⁷

Endnotes

1. All Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.
2. John T. Hinds, *Annual Lesson Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Co., 1934), v. 13, p. 197.
3. Albert Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983), 2:2:222.
4. Adam Clarke, *A Commentary and Critical Notes* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1924), 2:476.
5. Barnes, *Ibid.*
6. Interestingly, Matthew Henry says that the expression, “bread of affliction and water of affliction,” means “coarse bread and puddle water.” *Matthew Henry’s Commentary* (Wilmington, DE: Sovereign Grace Publishers, 1972), 1:923.

7. I borrowed heavily for this MS from my chapter, "Micaiah: The Unshakeable Prophet," in *Living Lessons from the Prophets*, ed. John Wadley (Knoxville, TN: East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions, 1985), pp. 147–160. Used by permission.

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