

LESSON 9

May 2, 2021

Unit III: Courageous Prophets of Change Speak Truth Boldly

DEVOTIONAL READING: 1 John 3:23–4:3a; Deuteronomy 18:19-22

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: 1 Kings 22:1-40

PRINT PASSAGE: 1 Kings 22:15-23, 26-28

Key Verse—Micaiah said, As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak. (1 Kings 22:14, KJV)

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Micaiah said, “As surely as the LORD lives, I can tell him only what the LORD tells me.”
(1 Kings 22:14, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Identify with Micaiah’s boldness in declaring the word of the Lord.
- Aspire to be like Micaiah when speaking the word of the Lord.
- Commit to tell those in power what the Lord has said.

KEY TERMS

Jehoshaphat (verse 18)—Hebrew: *Yehoshaphat* (yeh-ho-shaw-fawt’): “The LORD has judged”; king of Judah, son of Asa.

Micaiah (verse 15)—Hebrew: *Mikayehu* (me-kaw-yeh-hoo): “Who is like Yah?”; son of Imlah.

Truth (verse 16)—Hebrew: *emeth* (eh’-meth): firmness, faithfulness; right; “that which is true” (KJV)

INTRODUCTION

In the 1960s, the Caravans, a group led by the late Albertina Walker, recorded a gospel classic entitled “No Coward Soldier.” The lyrics remind the fainthearted that God does not want and cannot use any coward soldiers in His work. The song explains what it takes to be a courageous soldier in God’s spiritual army. God is looking for those who have what the Caravans called “holy boldness.” Holy boldness is the ability to respond to challenge and opposition with an unwavering commitment to God’s Word. Believers are frequently tempted to compromise, remain silent, or go along with the crowd in the face of conflict or disagreement. Those with the courage to stand boldly for what is right are often shunned, persecuted, or ostracized even within their faith communities. Most of the ancient prophets became victims of ridicule, mistreatment, or death because of their refusal to compromise their view of sin. God sent several prophets to call the people of Judah and Israel to repentance before He judged their apostasy and idolatry. The biblical prophets shared a common commitment to speaking the truth boldly and courageously despite threats of bodily harm. One of these was Micaiah, a lesser-known prophet of the Northern Kingdom during the reign of Ahab.

THE BIBLICAL CONTEXT

During the reign of Ahab in the Northern Kingdom there was war between Israel and Aram (Syria). With God’s intervention, Israel defeated Aram twice, proving God’s great power and might. Although Israel had dishonored God, God proved His faithfulness to His covenant promise to

never forsake them (see 1 Kings 20:1-34). A third war with Aram was planned after a coalition of twelve kings (including Ahab and Ben-hadad of Aram) repelled the advance of Assyria into their territory. Ahab seized this opportunity to continue Israel's war with Aram in order to reclaim one of its border cities. Ahab entered an alliance with Jehoshaphat and the Southern Kingdom because of the marriage of Jehoshaphat's son and Ahab's daughter. The alliance prompted Ahab to invite Jehoshaphat to join the military campaign against Aram. King Jehoshaphat agreed with the condition that they would consult God before going into battle. Ahab gathered four hundred prophets who were supposed to discern the will of God. The prophets' blind loyalty to Ahab aroused Jehoshaphat's suspicions about their genuine ability to give a true word from God. Jehoshaphat, in turn, asked for a prophet of the Lord, and Micaiah became God's spokesman for the occasion. He would prove to be a courageous prophet who was not afraid to speak the truth with boldness.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

"Thus Says the Lord"

(1 Kings 22:15-18)

KJV

15 So he came to the king. And the king said unto him, *Micaiah*, shall we go against Ramothgilead to battle, or shall we forbear? And he answered him, Go, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver it into the hand of the king.

16 And the king said unto him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but *that which is true* in the name of the LORD?

17 And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the LORD said, These have no master: let them return every man to his house in peace.

18 And the king of Israel said unto *Jehoshaphat*, Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?

NIV

15 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."

16 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?"

17 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.'"

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

To Jehoshaphat's credit, in this displeasing alliance with Ahab he had the integrity to insist on knowing God's will regarding the planned military attack against Aram. Meanwhile, Ahab was only interested in hearing "prophetic" voices that agreed with him. Jehoshaphat took his stance as a worshipper of Yahweh and sought to hear from one of the Lord's true prophets in Israel. Ahab sent for Micaiah, apparently the only man in Israel known as a prophet of the Lord. Because Micaiah spoke only the truth rather than flattery, his words usually displeased Ahab, who hated him. The messenger who summoned Micaiah on the king's behalf urged him to agree with Ahab's prophets and give him a favorable prophecy (see verse 13). Because Ahab was known for his childlike tantrums when he did not get his way, this messenger may have assumed that he was doing Micaiah a favor by preparing him for his meeting with Ahab. Micaiah's response was one of a true follower of God: "As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak" (verse 14). Micaiah was prepared to stand for truth, even if it meant standing alone. This was

proven by the fact that Ahab identified him as the only one in Israel who sought the Lord's will and boldly proclaimed it. Ahab asked Micaiah the same question he had asked his prophets, and Micaiah initially responded as they had (verse 15). The tone of his response must have revealed that his response was not to be taken seriously. Ahab demanded that he tell him the truth (verse 16). Sarcasm aside, Micaiah delivered the Lord's message to Ahab and it was not favorable for him or Israel. The Lord's message through Micaiah portrayed Israel as wandering sheep without a shepherd—a prediction of Ahab's death (verse 17). As he had done in the past, Ahab disregarded the message (verse 18). Ahab had become insensitive to God's Word and, therefore, forfeited any hope of a personal relationship with Him. It is obvious that some who profess to know Christ are guilty of refusing to listen to or are taking lightly what "thus says the Lord." Instead, they ridicule or persecute those who boldly teach and proclaim the Word without compromise. Since the beginning of time, God's formula for life with Him remains unchanged—obey and live, disobey and die.

What Do You Think?

What are the risks of seeking important advice from people who tell you only what you want to hear?

Ignoring the Truth

(1 Kings 22:19-23)

KJV

19 And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left.

20 And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner.

21 And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him.

22 And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so.

23 Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee.

NIV

19 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.

20 "And the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there?' One suggested this, and another that.

21 "Finally, a spirit came forward, stood before the LORD and said, 'I will entice him.'

22 "'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.'

23 "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."

God had given Micaiah a vision to substantiate his message to Ahab. The vision was not about the impending battle, but about the advice that Ahab and Jehoshaphat had received from Ahab's four hundred prophets. Micaiah saw the Lord sitting on His throne with His angelic armies assembled around Him (verse 19). The conversation Micaiah described as having taken place has been interpreted both figuratively and literally (verses 20-23). If it is taken literally, the lying spirit could not have been one of God's angels, but a demon or Satan himself. More important is the point of the vision's revelation. Ahab's four hundred prophets spoke with a lying spirit which would lead

to his death and defeat of his army in battle. Ahab had heard the truth from Micaiah and the choice was his. He chose to believe the lying spirit and inevitably sealed his own death warrant. God's Word is set before us daily; we must choose whether to receive and obey it.

What Do You Think?

What can cause us to become “dull of hearing”?

Truth Will Prevail

(1 Kings 22:26-28)

KJV

26 And the king of Israel said, Take Micaiah, and carry him back unto Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son;

27 And say, Thus saith the king, Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I come in peace.

28 And Micaiah said, If thou return at all in peace, the LORD hath not spoken by me. And he said, Hearken, O people, every one of you.

NIV

26 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

27 “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.’”

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

Those who are spiritually blind choose to disregard the Word of God to their own disadvantage. Ahab refused to repent and ordered that Micaiah be returned to prison (verse 26). Micaiah was to be retained and fed just enough to keep him alive until Ahab returned (verse 27). In response, Micaiah boldly declared that if Ahab returned safely from battle, then he would be proven a false prophet before the people (verse 28; see Deuteronomy 18:21-22). Micaiah challenged the people present to take note of his words and remember them. Ahab's death in battle would prove that God had spoken to Ahab and Jehoshaphat through him. Indeed, Micaiah was “no coward soldier.” The bold prophet was willing to face certain death for the reputation and truth of God and His Word. How does one grow to the level of Micaiah's spiritual commitment? The prophet's actions and attitude suggest that he was totally committed to God and to the ministry he had been given by the Lord. It takes bold, godly courage to stand against leaders who have fallen into error and disobedience. God speaks to and through those who know Him and His Word and enables them to stand boldly by the power of the Holy Spirit.

What Do You Think?

What are the possible consequences of telling an unpleasant truth to leaders who do not want to hear it?

A CLOSING THOUGHT

God is calling for those who will refuse to compromise and be “yes men” when it comes to His Word and His mission in the world. Micaiah stood against four hundred so-called “prophets” who would lie to keep the king's favor rather than offend him with the truth. Today's church is constantly challenged to remain true to what the Lord has said. There is an urgent need for spiritual

leaders with courage to follow Micaiah's example of boldness in speaking the truth despite the consequences.

YOUR LIFE

God expects every believer to have the courage to speak the truth. Doing so requires an intimate relationship with God and an understanding of His truth. Are you ready and willing to stand up and speak the truth without compromise or apology?

YOUR WORLD!

We live in a time when people would rather "go along to get along" than risk being persecuted, criticized, and ostracized for speaking the truth. This attitude has also affected the church. This lesson challenges us individually and collectively to commit to being the courageous voice that will always speak the Lord's truth even when it is unpopular.

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear Lord, we pray for boldness to stand for truth in every place that You send us. Help us to commit our hearts to doing Your will. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

CONCLUSION

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

When is our worship totally unacceptable to God? Isaiah will answer this question for us next week. Prepare for this study by reading Isaiah 29.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

(May 3-9, 2021)

Offering Hope for the Future

MONDAY, May 3	"Discipline the Immoral Person with Respect"	(1 Corinthians 5:1-5)
TUESDAY, May 4	"Uphold Justice for All Peoples"	(Exodus 23:1-9)
WEDNESDAY, May 5	"Seek and You Will Find Me!"	(Jeremiah 29:10-14)
THURSDAY, May 6	"Lip Service Is Not Enough"	(Mark 7:1-8)
FRIDAY, May 7	"Jerusalem Is Punished and Rescued"	(Isaiah 29:1-8)
SATURDAY, May 8	"Judah—Blind to God's Ways"	(Isaiah 29:9-12)
SUNDAY, May 9	"Israel Will Enjoy a Bright Future"	(Isaiah 29:13-24)