

## Dr. John Oswalt, Kings, Session 16, Part 2

### 1 Kings 21-22, Part 2

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And just as the story of Naboth's Vineyard demonstrates who owns this land and demonstrates that mere power will not do it, here's another story that demonstrates that God, not man, is the one upon whom we must depend and to whom we must turn. This is the story of Micaiah's prophecy. Now, if you look at the overhead projection or the PowerPoint projection here, you might think that's a balloon that he's holding up.

No, it isn't. It's a stop sign. Take it from me.

So, what's the story? Jehoshaphat is the king of Judah. His daughter-in-law is Ahab's daughter. Now, it's fascinating that throughout the story, she's often referred to as the daughter of Omri.

Remember, Omri is Ahab's father. But also remember, Hebrew has no word for granddaughter. If she's a female descendant, she's a daughter.

But why make that point, a daughter of Omri? Oh, I think it's tying this whole dynasty together. Like her father is a son of Omri, she is a daughter of Omri. Omri has set the path for this dynasty, and she's part of it.

So, there's an alliance between Jehoshaphat and Ahab. And in the book of Chronicles, Jehoshaphat is condemned for making that alliance, not in Kings. But the picture of Jehoshaphat in Kings is of somebody whose elevator doesn't quite go to the top floor.

He's depicted as a good man but maybe not very bright. And we're going to see how that plays out in this account. But we're also going to see that you don't have to be bright to be spiritually sensitive.

We'll come to that. So, Ahab says, Jehoshaphat, we need to go over across the Jordan River to the east and regain that great crossroads at Ramoth Gilead. We've talked about the geography of the land before.

And let me talk about that again for a moment. There are two great highways, one coming down from Damascus along the shore of Galilee, across through the pass at Megiddo, and down along the coast. The coast itself was swampy, so the road went between the highlands and the coast, going down to Egypt.

That's the king's highway. Excuse me, that's the highway of the sea. The other road comes up from the Gulf of Aqaba down here on the Red Sea along the edge of the desert, also up to Damascus.

This is the king's highway. Now, remember that historically, this region had been given to the three tribes, Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh. Here at Ramoth Gilead, a road came off, came up some way, we're not quite sure, through the valley and up to the port of Akko.

So that crossroads of Ramoth Gilead was vitally important. If you controlled that center, then you were in a position to control the trade of both routes. You could stop what's going north, and you could divert it this way.

So very important. And again, we're going to see it a little later in our story in a couple of weeks. So, Ahab says, look, Ramoth Gilead belongs to us.

It's in our tribal territory. So, it's wrong for the Syrians, the Arameans to own that. We're going to own it.

What do you think, Jehoshaphat? Jehoshaphat says, oh, absolutely. My horses are your horses. My men are your horses.

My chariots are your chariots. No problem. But let's consult a prophet.

Let's ask God whether he thinks this is a good idea or not. Ahab says, no problem whatsoever. I got 400 prophets.

Now, that number is kind of interesting. Back in chapter 18, we were told that there were 400 prophets of Asherah, the female fertility god or goddess. We're told that the prophets of Baal were killed after that event.

We're not told what happened to these others. So, 400 is kind of interesting. Well, they come, and they say, oh, oh, King Ahab, go forward in your power.

You will be victorious. You will trample your enemies. The Lord Yahweh will give it into the king's hand.

That's verse six. But Jehoshaphat asked, is there no longer a prophet of Yahweh here who we can inquire of? Huh, these guys are prophesying in the name of Yahweh. What's going on? In the ancient world, every king had a stable of prophets to look at the omens, to look at the stars, to look at the birds, to look at the entrails of a sacrificial animal, and to see, is this an auspicious day? That's a Latin word.

Is this an ominous day? Is this a day of good omens and good signs? Now, that's all connected with their understanding of reality. Why, if the sheep's liver is twisted, will the king be successful? Because sometime in the past, that happened. And everything that goes around comes around.

This was a very, very highly skilled profession. You had to be able to know that part of it, of course, was political. Was it likely that this king was going to win this battle? We better get the right omen, then.

Is it likely he's going to be beaten out? We better get the right omen. But these are professionals, highly trained, highly paid, and living on the razor's edge because they've got to tell the king what he wants to hear. I wonder if Jehoshaphat recognizes these as professionals.

These are guys in the pay of the king. Isn't there somebody who is not in the pay of the king? Who is simply going to speak for the Lord? I don't know. But as I said a few moments ago, you don't have to be terribly bright to be spiritually sensitive.

That's good news, folks. That's good news for me. That's good news for you.

You don't have to have an IQ of 180 to be able to recognize the king. The Lord is saying what he's doing and where he's going. Ahab says, well, yes, I've got one.

But he never says anything good about me. And Jehoshaphat says, oh, don't say that. Don't say that.

And so, they send a messenger to get Micaiah. Micaiah is told by the messenger. Now, look, all these other guys are given favorable omens.

You better not slip up here. And so, Micaiah, when he comes in, there they are dressed in their royal robes, sitting out on the threshing floor, the flat hilltop outside the gate of the city. All the people are gathered around, and the prophets are prophesying.

Zedekiah, one of these guys, son of Chenaanah, sounds very suspiciously like Canaan and has made a headdress with horns, sort of like we saw on TV here a few days ago. And he's running around butting the others and saying, this is the way you're going to accomplish your purposes. And Micaiah says, attack and be victorious, for the Lord will give it into the king's hand.

I wonder if he had a sarcastic look on his face. But whatever it was, Ahab says, look, say what you came to say. Okay, I'll say it.

I saw Israel scattered on the mountains like sheep without a shepherd. I see your army in total disarray because you're gone. They have no shepherd, and they are dead.

The king says, didn't I tell you he never prophesied anything good about me, but only bad. I don't want to know what God wants. I want God to verify what I want.

Oh, my friends, have you ever done that? I have. I made my plans, and then I've gone to God and say, now, God bless this, please. God is not your four-leaf clover.

God is not your rabbit's foot. He is God. The question is not what you want. What do I want? The question is, what does he want? But what happened? Where did all these where did all these other prophets get this supposed word from the Lord? So fascinating to me.

Micaiah doesn't say, well, they're just all lying. They all believe this. Why? Because God has put a lying spirit in them.

Now, I don't know about you, but I find that really uncomfortable. I don't like to think about God intentionally deceiving somebody. But I would refer you to Psalm 18, verse 26.

There, we read these words. Verse 25 to the faithful, you show yourself faithful to the blameless. You show yourself blameless to the pure.

You show yourself pure, but the devious, you show yourself devious. Wow. Wow.

We talked about this a bit before. We've talked about it in regard to hardening Pharaoh's heart—some of those kinds of issues.

The point is this. God does not do anything to us against our will. He doesn't make us do something we wouldn't normally do.

That's not what we're talking about. What we're talking about is God has made the world so that it confirms us in our choices. And that's what he's saying.

God will confirm you in your choices. Oh yeah, go right ahead. I don't know about you, but again, I've got to talk about myself.

I'm pretty good at hearing the voice of God say what I want it to say. Am I alone in that? I hope not. I want to go to Ramoth Gilead.

That's the right thing to do, isn't it? God? Yes, go ahead. That's very different from saying, God, I want to do what you want. It seems like going to Ramoth Gilead is the best thing, but I don't know about that, Lord.

What do you want? How different that is. God will confirm us in our hard-hearted ways. God will confirm us in our willfulness.

He will not physically stop us. That's a frightening word, but it speaks of the relationship to which you and I are called. It's not the heavy-handed, hard-hearted master who says, you will do this, or I'll smash you.

Nor is it the all-powerful human being who says, you're my God, and you exist to do what I want. Shell out, or I won't give you any food tomorrow. No.

No, we're called into a dialogue. A dialogue between the Lord of glory and the finest thing He ever made. You, a dialogue that is intended to be gentle and mutually satisfying.

How delicate, but there it is. And so Micaiah says, you made up your mind to go to Ramoth Gilead, and God has given you confirmation to do it. What you want to do, go ahead.

But let me tell you, you're not going to come back alive. What about you and me as we seek the will of God? Do I really want what God wants, or do I want what I want? Do you really want what God wants, or do you want what you want? And so he went. And he says, put Micaiah in jail and feed him with bread and water till I come back.

Interesting. Here's Ahab again. I think Jezebel would have just had Micaiah killed on the spot.

Shut him up. But Ahab still has that Yahwism in his past. Now, if he comes back, then Micaiah is a false prophet, and Micaiah is going to die.

But he's got just enough of a question. I say again, do you really want God's will or do you want him to confirm your will? Oh, friends, he will, but that won't be a good day.