

Dr. John Oswalt, Kings, Session 16, Part 3

1 Kings 21-22, Part 3

© 2024 John Oswalt and Ted Hildebrandt

If you have your Bible there, you can see verses 51, 52, and 53, which introduce us to Ahab's successor, Ahaziah. But that no more is said. I'll say a little more about this next time.

But this is this is the best evidence that the two books are a single book. Because we start the story of Ahaz here in book one, but we have to go over into book two to finish it. So, we're going to talk about Ahab's death.

Then, we mention Jehoshaphat's reign in verses 41 through 50. So they go out to battle. Now, here again, I just think, oh, dear.

Clearly, Ahab has been unsettled by Micaiah's words. And so he says, look, Jehoshaphat, why don't you go ahead and wear your royal robes? And I'm just going to dress up like a humble soldier. And Jehoshaphat says, excuse me if I'm mocking, but, Gee, that sounds like a good idea.

Yeah, I think I'll wear my royal robes. And so, the Syrians, the soldiers, have been told what we've got to have is Ahab. Get the king of Israel, get the king, cut off the head, and everything's going to be fine.

So don't go after anybody else. Go after the king of Israel. It tells us again that Ahab was not merely some non-entity.

He was. Having ruled for some 20 years, he was a competent king. And so they see this guy with royal robes on.

Oh, there he goes. Go, go, go, go, go. And then we're told Jehoshaphat cried out.

And they said, oh, it's not the king of Israel, and stopped pursuing him. How interesting. What did he cry out? I wonder if he cried out, help.

I don't know. Or maybe he cried out, I'm the king of Judah. We don't know.

But they said, oh, it's just Jehoshaphat. Forget that. Again, poor Jehoshaphat doesn't come off very well here.

And then this wonderful, wonderful line. But someone, this is verse 34, someone drew his bow at random. And it hit the king of Israel between the sections of his armor.

Just accidentally. There are three or four places like that in the Bible where clearly we are to understand this is the providence of God. But again, it just happened.

It just so happened. Friends, nothing just so happens. Now, apparently, Ahab was wearing a breastplate.

Normally, they didn't have any armor on their backs. It was just the breastplate was belted around their backs. But it seems as though he may have also been wearing chain mail.

The chain mail covers the front and back. But under the arm, it has a joint where the front and the back come together, and those were typically clipped in some way.

But there's nevertheless a space. So, it looks as though perhaps his arm is raised to hurl his spear. And that arrow comes in one place.

The one place that he's not protected. Oh, friends, don't get in a fight with God. Don't get in a fight with God.

There is no place where you will be protected. No place you can hide. Go with him.

Go for him, not against him. Now, the picture that we have here of Ahab, again, is a favorable one. He knows, I think, that he's dead.

But he says, wheel me out of the battle. Now, again, he looks just like a soldier. The Syrians don't know what they've done.

Wheel me out of the battle. All day long, the battle was raging, and the king was propped up in his chariot facing the Arameans. The rest of the Israelite soldiers knew who he was.

He may not have been dressed in a royal robe, but they knew who he was. And there he is on the hill. Standing up, they say, all right, all right.

Ahab is directing this battle. We're going to fight. Now, I say again, this is one of the marks of the Bible.

On the one hand, the Bible does not whitewash its heroes. Abraham, the man of faith, lies about his wife when the chips are down. David, the man after God's own heart, in a terrible moment of lust, takes someone else's wife.

But neither does the Bible tar its anti-heroes. If, on this last day of his life, Ahab stood up courageously and bled his life away, the Bible is going to report it. If an Ahab repents, the Bible is going to report it.

Why? Because the Bible is not Israelite propaganda. You see it again and again in scholarly articles these days. Oh yes, the Bible is just another piece of propaganda.

It's well written. It's interesting. But it just exists to puff Israel.

I say to you, as firmly as I can, hogwash. The Bible is not Israelite propaganda. Of course, of course, it's written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit by humans.

And it's going to reflect various human fallibilities. But it's still going to say what God wants it to say. And what he wants it to say here is, Yeah, Ahab may have made terrible choices.

But that doesn't mean he was just an absolutely hopeless, rotten, filthy being. No. And so, at the end of the day, he falls down dead and the army collapses as Micaiah had seen it.

The cry spread through the army. Every man to his own tent. Every man to his own land.

Go. Exactly. I saw Israel as sheep scattered on the mountains.

No shepherd. And so he died, and he was brought to Samaria, and they buried him there. They washed the chariot at a pool in Samaria where the prostitutes bathed.

Now, we don't know. As far as we know, prostitution, as it was in India, was a temple business. You didn't have just a red-light district as we might find in some of our great cities.

So, very possibly, this is where the Baal priestesses washed. And there they wash out Ahab's chariot. And the dogs are there to lick up the bloody water.

Don't fight with God. Then we come to Jehoshaphat. I've said to you before that this is, again, this is not a history of Israel and Judah where we get sort of equal coverage of all the events, trying to tell all the stories.

No, it's very selective. At this point, the main focus is on the northern kingdom. This is where the struggle between Baal and Yahweh is occurring.

This is where Elijah and Elisha's ministry is in full flow. So, although Jehoshaphat ruled for 25 years, as long as Ahab did, we only get these few verses about him

because that's not key to the story. Now, in Chronicles, Jehoshaphat is going to get a lot more treatment because Chronicles is interested in the spiritual life of the community and what a king did to promote the spiritual life, the worship, temple activities.

So, Chronicles gives a lot to that. But as far as the struggle between Baal and Yahweh, Jehoshaphat, tragically, was not that significant. He was a good man.

He did indeed try to lead his own kingdom in the ways of Yahweh. But, in terms of the struggle, his daughter-in-law was Ahab's daughter. So, Kings gives him relatively little treatment.

Now, I want you to notice verse 43. Now, keep your finger there and turn back to chapter 15. Chapter 15, verse 11.

And notice what is said of Asa. Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord as his father David had done. What's the difference between the two passages? Asa measured himself by David's standard.

Jehoshaphat measured himself by the standard of Asa. Again, I don't think that's accidental. Years ago, I made a bookshelf.

I very, very carefully measured the shelves. I measured the first one. I got it right down to the 16th of an inch.

Then, I used it to mark off the second shelf. And I used the second shelf to mark off the third. And I used the third shelf to mark off the fourth.

You know where this is going. That fourth shelf was a quarter-inch shorter than the first one. I'd forgotten to allow for the saw kerf, the amount of wood that the saw blade took off.

Asa measured himself by the standard, David. Asa was a good man. Now again, Chronicles is going to tell us that at the end of his life, he was not so good.

But overall, he was the man whose heart was for God. No ifs, no ands, no buts. Good man.

Good man. And Jehoshaphat measured himself by his dad. Was Asa a 16th of an inch off from David? I think that's the point.

I think that's the point. You've got to go back to the standard. Who is the standard for you and for me? It's Jesus.

Don't you dare measure yourself by me. Don't you dare measure yourself by the person who led you to Christ. These days, our hearts have been broken as we've heard about great Christian leaders who have fallen into particular adultery.

And we've been broken. And we've said, oh God. As an aside, when I hear those stories, I give thanks to Billy Graham, one who stood true all the way to the end.

Thank God for that. But don't measure yourself by Billy Graham. Don't you dare.

Measure yourself by the single standard, Jesus Christ. He's the one to whom we must compare ourselves. There's so much in this story that is interesting in these few verses.

Look at verse 44. Jehoshaphat was also at peace with the king of Israel. Oh yes.

Oh yes. Are there little asides like that in your life? Oh yeah. She also spent a whole lot of time at the mall.

Oh yeah. He wasted a lot of money on the lottery. Oh yeah.

No. I don't want any asides. It's flat out for him.

Now, the conclusion of the Jehoshaphat story is interesting because it doesn't quite adhere to the pattern. Look at verse 45. As for the other events of Jehoshaphat's reign, the things he achieved, his military exploits, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? Yes, that's the way the closing formula begins for every king after Solomon.

Then, typically, it goes right on with what we have in verse 50. Then Jehoshaphat rested with his ancestors and was buried with them in the city of David, his father, and Jehoram, his son, succeeded him as king. Those two verses normally go right together.

And if you look, for instance, at the end of Ahab, look at verses 39 and 40 of chapter 22. As for the other events of Ahab's reign, including all that he did, the palace he built and adorned with ivory, and the cities he fortified, are they not written in the book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel? Ahab rested with his ancestors and Ahaziah his son succeeded him as king. That's the normal pattern.

Here in Jehoshaphat, the normal pattern is broken. And once again, you say, well, okay, Oswald, give us the explanation. I can't.

But I simply want to say to you in your Bible study, be alert for things that break the pattern. Because if they do, I think we can say the author is calling attention to something. He's making a point.

So, what's the point here? What do we have between verses 45 and 50? He rid the land of the rest of the male shrine prostitutes who remained there even after the reign of his father, Asa. There was no king in Edom. A provincial governor ruled.

That's going to be significant in the third chapter of the second book. Now, Jehoshaphat built a fleet of trading ships to go to Ophir for gold, but they never set sail. They were wrecked at Eze and Geber.

At that time, Ahaziah, son of Ahab, said to Jehoshaphat, Let my men sail with yours. But Jehoshaphat refused. Really, three things being said.

Number one, he completed his father's work. Good for him. He was the ruler of Edom.

There was a provincial governor there. He built a fleet of trading ships, sort of building himself on Solomon's model, but they were wrecked. And Ahaziah said this.

Now, if you look at Chronicles, Chronicles tells us that, in fact, Ahaziah helped Jehoshaphat build those ships. And in the end, here's the point. Jehoshaphat said, wait a minute.

Okay, you helped me build them, but your men are not going to help me sail them. And they wrecked. I think what we see here again is this double-mindedness.

He did some really good things, but he was playing around with the enemy. And in the end, even when he says, okay, enemy, thus far and no farther, it still didn't work out. Spiritually sensitive, wanting God's way.

At the same time, I was trying to keep one foot in both camps. You can't do it. You say, well, no, wait a minute.

I'm not a preacher. I'm not an evangelist. I'm not a missionary.

I'm just an ordinary Christian. Yes. Yes.

Ordinary Christian. You need to make that flat-out commitment to God. It doesn't mean that you will necessarily become a preacher.

It doesn't mean necessarily you'll become a missionary or an evangelist. No, no. We make a mistake there.

Well, if I were really to sell out to God, I would have to become a professional Christian. No, no. If you were really to sell out for God, you would be a real Christian in the shop, in the home, in the field, on the road.

Don't try to keep one foot in both camps. Put both your feet on Jesus, live for him, and find what you are meant to be. God bless you.