



Ahab

Trapped By His Own Choices

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Overview:

AHAB WAS TRAPPED BY HIS OWN CHOICES

15 Ahab's story is told in 1 Kings 16:28-22:40. He is also mentioned in 2 Chron. 18-22; Micah 6:16.

The kings of Israel and Judah, both good and evil, had prophets sent by God to advise, confront, and aid them.

King David had a faithful friend in God's prophet, Nathan;

Ahab could have had an equally faithful friend in Elijah.

But while David listened to Nathan and was willing to repent of his sins, Ahab saw Elijah as his enemy. Why?

Because Elijah always brought bad news to Ahab, and Ahab refused to acknowledge that it was his own constant disobedience to God and persistent idol worship, not Elijah's prophecies that brought the evil on his nation.

He blamed Elijah for bringing the prophecies of judgment, rather than taking his advice and changing his evil ways.

Ahab was trapped by his own choices, and he was unwilling to take the right action. As king, he was responsible to God and his prophet Elijah, but he was married to an evil woman who drew him into idol worship.

Ahab consistently chose to follow the majority opinion of those who surrounded him, and that led to his death. It may seem nice to have someone encourage us to do whatever we want because advice that goes against our wishes is difficult to accept. However, our decisions must be based on the quality of the advice, not its attractiveness or the majority opinion of our peers. God encourages us to get advice from wise counselors, but how can we test the advice we receive?

Advice that agrees with the principles in God's Word is reliable. We must always separate advice from our own desires, the majority opinion, or whatever seems best in our limited perspective, and weigh it against God's commands.

King of Israel

1 Kings 16:29

And in the thirty and eighth year of Asa king of Judah began Ahab the son of Omri to reign over Israel: and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty and two years.

Marries Jezebel

1 Kings 16:31

And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him.

Ahab's evil wife, Jezebel, came from the Phoenician city of Tyre where her father had been a high priest and eventually king. Jezebel worshiped the god Baal. In order to please her, Ahab built a temple and an altar for Baal (1 Kings 16:32), thus promoting idolatry and leading the entire nation into sin.

Idolatry of Ahab

1 Kings 16:32-33

First he built a temple and an altar for Baal in Samaria. Then he set up an Asherah pole. He did more to arouse the anger of the Lord, the God of Israel, than any of the other kings of Israel before him.

Elijah challenges the prophet of Baal.

1 Kings 18:18-19

"I have made no trouble for Israel," Elijah replied. "You and your family are the troublemakers, for you have refused to obey the commands of the Lord and have worshipped the images of Baal instead.

Now bring all the people of Israel to Mount Carmel, with all 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah, who are supported by Jezebel."

Instead of worshiping the true God, Ahab and his wife Jezebel worshiped Baal, the most popular Canaanite god. Baal idols were often made in the shape of a bull, representing strength and fertility and reflecting lust for power and sexual pleasure.

Ahab brought 850 pagan prophets to Mount Carmel to match wits and power with Elijah. Evil kings hated God's prophets because they spoke against sin and idolatry and undermined their control over the people. With the wicked kings' backing, many pagan prophets sprang up to counter the words of God's prophets. But Elijah showed the people that speaking a prophecy wasn't enough. One needed the power of a living God to fulfill it.

He worshiped Idols as the Amorites had.

1 Kings 21:25-26

No one else so completely sold himself to what was evil in the Lord's sight as did Ahab, for his wife, Jezebel, influenced him.

He was especially guilty because he worshiped idols just as the Amorites had done—the people whom the Lord had driven from the land ahead of the Israelites.

Ahab was more wicked than any other king of Israel (1 Kings 16:30; 1 Kings 21:25), but when he repented in deep humility, God took notice and reduced his punishment. The same Lord who was merciful to Ahab wants to be merciful to you. No matter how evil you have been, it is never too late to humble yourself, turn to God, and ask for forgiveness.

Other wickedness of Ahab

2 Kings 3:2

He did what was evil in the Lord's sight, but he was not as wicked as his father and mother. He at least tore down the sacred pillar of Baal that his father had set up.

Although 2 Kings 1:17 says that Jehoram was king of Judah, 2 Kings 3:1 says that Jehoshaphat was Judah's king. As a king grew older, it was common for his son to rule beside him. Jehoshaphat, nearing the end of his reign, appointed his son Jehoram to rule with him.

Jehoram served as co-ruler with Jehoshaphat for five years (853-848 B.C.; he is mentioned again in 2 Kings 8:16-24). Joram, king of Israel, was Ahab's son and Ahaziah's brother (2 Kings 1:17). Both Ahab (1 Kings 16:29-22:40) and Ahaziah (2 Kings 1:2-18) served as kings of Israel before Joram.

2 Chron. 21:6

But Jehoram followed the example of the kings of Israel and was as wicked as King Ahab, for he had married one of Ahab's daughters. So Jehoram did what was evil in the Lord's sight.

Jehoram, the new king of Judah, married Athaliah, one of the daughters of King Ahab of Israel. She became the mother of Judah's next king, Ahaziah (2 Chron. 22:2). Athaliah's mother was Jezebel, the most wicked woman Israel had ever known. Joram's marriage to Athaliah was Judah's downfall, for Athaliah brought her mother's wicked influence into Judah, causing the nation to forget God and turn to Baal worship (2 Chron. 22:3).

Ahab Covets Naboth's Vineyard

1 Kings 21:1-4

Naboth, perhaps, had been pleased that he had a vineyard situated so near the palace, but the situation proved fatal to him; many a man's possessions have been his snare, and his neighborhood to greatness, of bad consequence.

Discontent is a sin that is its own punishment, and makes men torment themselves. It is a sin that is its own parent; it arises not from the condition, but from the mind: as we find Paul contented in a prison, so Ahab was discontented in a palace.

He had all the delights of Canaan, that pleasant land, at command; the wealth of a kingdom, the pleasures of a court, and the honours and powers of a throne; yet all avails him nothing without Naboth's vineyard.

Wrong desires expose men to continual vexations, and those that are disposed to fret, however well off, may always find something or other to fret at.

After hearing God's judgment (1 Kings 20:42), Ahab went home to pout. Driven by anger and rebellion against God, he had a fit of rage when Naboth refused to sell his vineyard.

The same feelings that led him to a career of power grabbing drove him to resent Naboth. Rage turned to hatred and led to murder. Naboth, however, wanted to uphold God's laws: it was considered a duty to keep ancestral land in the family. This incident shows the cruel interplay between Ahab and Jezebel, two of the most wicked leaders in Israel's history.

Naboth Murdered by Jezebel

1 Kings 21:5-16

When, instead of a help meet, a man has an agent for Satan, in the form of an artful, unprincipled, yet beloved wife, fatal effects may be expected. Never were more wicked orders given by any prince, than those Jezebel sent to the rulers of Jezreel.

Naboth must be murdered under color of religion. There is no wickedness so vile, so horrid, but religion has sometimes been made a cover for it. Also, it must be done under color of justice, and with the formalities of legal process.

Let us, from this sad story, be amazed at the wickedness of the wicked, and the power of Satan in the children of disobedience. Let us commit the keeping of our lives and comforts to God, for innocence will not always be our security; and let us rejoice in the knowledge that all will be set to rights in the great day.

Elijah Denounces Judgments against Ahab

1 Kings 21:17-29

Blessed Paul complains that he was sold under sin, Rom 7:14, as a poor captive against his will; but Ahab was willing, he sold himself to sin; of choice, and as his own act and deed, he loved the dominion of sin.

Jezebel his wife stirred him up to do wickedly. Ahab is reprov'd, and his sin set before his eyes, by Elijah. That man's condition is very miserable, who has made the word of God his enemy; and very desperate, who reckons the ministers of that word his enemies, because they tell him the truth.

Ahab put on the garb and guise of a penitent, yet his heart was unhumbled and unchanged.

Ahab's repentance was only what might be seen of men; it was outward only. Let this encourage all that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe the holy gospel, that if a pretending partial penitent shall go to his house reprov'd, doubtless, a sincere believing penitent shall go to his house justified.

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Jehoshaphat Makes a League with Ahab

1 Kings 22:1-14

The same easiness of temper, which betrays some godly persons into friendship with the declared enemies of religion, renders it very dangerous to them. They will be drawn to wink at and countenance such conduct and conversation as they ought to protest against with abhorrence.

Whithersoever a good man goes, he ought to take his religion with him, and not be ashamed to own it when he is with those who have no regard for it. Jehoshaphat had not left behind him, at Jerusalem, his affection and reverence for the word of the Lord, but avow'd it, and endeavour'd to bring it into Ahab's court.

And Ahab's prophets, to please Jehoshaphat, made use of the name of Jehovah: to please Ahab, they said, Go up. But the false prophets cannot so mimic the true, but that he who has spiritual senses exercised, can discern the fallacy. One faithful prophet of the Lord was worth them all.

Wordly men have in all ages been alike absurd in their views of religion. They would have the preacher fit his doctrine to the fashion of the times, and the taste of the hearers, and yet to add.

Thus saith the Lord, to words that men would put into their mouths. They are ready to cry out against a man as rude and foolish, who scruples thus to try to secure his own interests, and to deceive others.

Micaiah Predicts the Death of Ahab

1 Kings 22:15-28

The greatest kindness we can do to one that is going in a dangerous way, is, to tell him of his danger. To leave the hardened criminal without excuse, and to give a useful lesson to others, Micaiah related his vision.

This matter is represented after the manner of men: we are not to imagine that God is ever put upon new counsels; or that he needs to consult with angels, or any creature, about the methods he should take; or that he is the author of sin, or the cause of any man's telling or believing a lie.

Micaiah returned not the blow of Zedekiah, yet, since he boasted of the Spirit, as those commonly do that know least of the Holy Spirit's operations, the true prophet left him to be convinced of his error by the event.

Those that will not have their mistakes set right in time, by the word of God, will be undeceived, when it is too late, by the judgments of God. We should be ashamed of what we call trials, were we to consider what the servants of God have endured.

Yet it will be well, if freedom from trouble prove not more hurtful to us; we are more easily allured and bribed into unfaithfulness and conformity to the world, than driven to them.

Death of Ahab

1 Kings 22:29-40

Ahab basely intended to betray Jehoshaphat to danger that he might secure himself. See what they get that join with wicked men.

How can it be expected that he should be true to his friend, who has been false to his God! He had said in compliment to Ahab, I am as thou art, and now he was indeed taken for him. Those that associate with evil-doers, are in danger of sharing in their plagues. By Jehoshaphat's deliverance, God let him know, that though he was displeased with him, yet he had not deserted him.

God is a friend that will not fail us when other friends do. Let no man think to hide himself from God's judgment. God directed the arrow to hit Ahab; those cannot escape with life, whom God has doomed to death.

Ahab lived long enough to see part of Micaiah's prophecy accomplished. He had time to feel himself die; with what horror must he have thought upon the wickedness he had committed!

Ahab could not escape God's judgment. The king of Aram sent 32 of his best chariot commanders with the sole purpose of killing Ahab. Thinking he could escape, Ahab tried a disguise, but a random arrow struck him while the chariots chased the wrong king, Jehoshaphat.

It was foolish for Ahab to think he could escape by wearing a disguise. Sometimes people try to escape reality by disguising themselves—changing jobs, moving to a new town, even changing spouses. But God sees and evaluates the motives of each person. Any attempted disguise is futile.

Just as the prophet had predicted (1 Kings 20:42), Ahab was killed.

Prophecies against Ahab

1 Kings 20:42

And the prophet told him, "This is what the Lord says: Because you have spared the man I said must be destroyed, now you must die in his place, and your people will die instead of his people."

It is difficult to explain why Ahab let Ben-Hadad go, especially after all the trouble the Arameans had caused him. God helped Ahab destroy the Aramean army to prove to Ahab and to Aram that he alone was God.

But Ahab failed to destroy the king, his greatest enemy. Ben-Hadad was under God's judgment to die, and Ahab had no authority to let him live. For this, God told Ahab that he must now die instead. This prophet's message soon came true when Ahab was killed on the battlefield (1 Kings 22:35).

Ahab's sons murdered

2 Kings 10:1-8

Now Ahab had seventy sons living in the city of Samaria. So Jehu wrote a letter and sent copies to Samaria, to the officials of the city, to the leaders of the people, and to the guardians of King Ahab's sons. The letter said,

"The king's sons are with you, and you have at your disposal chariots, horses, a fortified city, and weapons. As soon as you receive this letter, select the best qualified of King Ahab's sons to be your king, and prepare to fight for Ahab's dynasty."

But they were paralyzed with fear and said, "Two kings couldn't stand against this man! What can we do?" So the palace and city administrators, together with the other leaders and the guardians of the king's sons, sent this message to Jehu: "We are your servants and will do anything you tell us. We will not make anyone king; do whatever you think is best."

Jehu responded with a second letter: "If you are on my side and are going to obey me, bring the heads of the king's sons to me at Jezreel at about this time tomorrow."

Now the seventy sons of the king were being cared for by the leaders of Samaria, where they had been raised since childhood. When the letter arrived, the leaders killed all seventy of the king's sons. They placed their heads in baskets and presented them to Jehu at Jezreel.

A messenger went to Jehu and said, "They have brought the heads of the king's sons."

So Jehu ordered, "Pile them in two heaps at the entrance of the city gate, and leave them there until morning."

This fulfilled Elijah's prophecy that not one of Ahab's male descendants would survive (1 Kings 21:17-24).

A false prophet

Jeremiah 29:21-22

Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, of Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and of Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, which prophesy a lie unto you in my name;

Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall slay them before your eyes;

And of them shall be taken up a curse by all the captivity of Judah which are in Babylon, saying, The Lord make thee like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire;

Life Application:

Ahab was a childish man who brooded for days if unable to get his own way. He took his evil wife's advice, listened only to the "prophets" who gave good news, and surrounded himself with people who encouraged him to do whatever he wanted.

But the value of advice cannot be judged by the number of people for or against it.

The enemy chooses for you to hear his voice, but those who follow the leading of the Holy Spirit shall have an abundant life.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

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