

Ahab & Elijah (Part 2) 1 Kings 22 and 2 Kings 2

Ahab & Elijah (Part 2) Introduction

- Ahab the king and Elijah the prophet lived at the same time in the same place – the northern kingdom of Israel.
- Other than that, their lives could not have been more different.

- Ahab lived in an “ivory palace,” which has been unearthed in Samaria.
- The outside was covered with polished white limestone that would have shone like ivory in the sun. Inside were numerous ivory decorations.
- Yet his heart was in constant rebellion against God.

- Elijah lived a humble existence, at times running from Ahab, with little food, and wearing a coarse camel’s hair cloak.
- He walked closely with God and spoke clearly for God
- He is a prime example of what it sometimes takes to live for God when a society is in total rebellion against him.

- Ahab and Elijah were as different as two men can be.
- Their characters were very different.
- The trajectories of their lives were vastly different.
- Their lives also ended in very different ways.

- In a later time, the prophet Jeremiah would speak against false prophets.
 - See Jeremiah 23:21-22, 25.
- He could just as easily have spoken them in the days of Ahab.

Prophets and Kings 22:1-28

- 22:3 Ahab was concerned about Ramoth-gilead.
- Apparently Ben-Hadad, the Syrian king, did not give this town back as he promised (20:34).

- 22:4 Jehoshaphat was overall a good king of Judah.
- This is the first recorded instance of a king of Israel traveling to visit Samaria.
- They also entered a marriage alliance. Jehoshaphat’s son married Ahab’s daughter – which was a bad idea.

- 22:8 Political leaders tend to appreciate Christian leaders when the Christians approve of their policies. They reject or ignore who are critical.
- Still, one of our roles is similar to that of the prophets.
- We need not be belligerent, but neither can we give approval where God clearly does not.

- *The church ... is not the master or servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state. It must be the guide and the critic of the state, and never its tool.*
 - *Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968)*
- 22:12 It's amazing how **all 400** (!) of these prophets are in total agreement.
- When's the last time you heard 400 religious leaders give the same point of view at the same time?
- They claim to speak for the Lord, but Ahab seems to have them well trained.
 - *The truth of God is not necessarily what the majority think. The word from the Lord does not originate from people but from God himself.*
 - *Musa Gotom, Theological College of Northern Nigeria*
- 22:16 How many times? This indicates that Micaiah has prophesied numerous times before to King Ahab – and may have been equally sarcastic.
- 22:19-23 Micaiah's narrative is best understood as sort of a parable intended to illustrate a profound truth.
- Evil people and evil spirits can only operate within confined parameters.
- 22:19-23 Evil spirits will lie. False prophets will lie.
- God often uses their own tendencies against them.
- They operate within limits that the Lord keeps under his control.
- 22:19-23 Another case of something like this appears in Habakkuk – How could God use Babylon to punish Israel?
- Micaiah's message could have saved Ahab's life – if he had listened and humbly repented, as he did earlier in 21:29.
 - Also see Psalm 18:25-27

Ahab's Demise 22:29-40

- Israel was defeated and lost its king – just as foretold by an earlier unnamed prophet and Micaiah (22:20, 20:42).
- As Elijah predicted, dogs licked up Ahab's blood.
 - Compare 21:17-19 with 22:38.
- Ahab never realized that the best way to get God on your side is to listen to him.
- In other words, we have to get on his side.
- His word is true and we cannot change it.
- Alexander Maclaren called God's words of judgment against sin "*the very voice of infinite love pleading with us all.*"

Elijah's Departure 2:1-14

- 2:3, 5, 7 the sons of the prophets This group would have been something like a Bible college or a seminary.
- These prophets-in-training were probably under the instruction of Elijah and Elisha.

- 2:1-2, 4, 6 Elijah makes three attempts, at Gilgal, Bethel and Jericho, to persuade Elisha to leave him.
- Once before, when he hoped to die, he left another servant at Beersheba (1 Kings 19:3-4).
- 2:8 Elisha refused to leave him so they crossed the Jordan together.

- 2:9 a double portion of your spirit
- Elijah had little in the way of possessions, but he had a large endowment of God's Spirit.
- Elisha wants to be treated like his firstborn son and receive a double portion of the inheritance.

- 2:11 Elijah's departure is similar to Enoch's in the book of Genesis.
- In Genesis 5:24, it says, "Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him."
- 2:14 The parting of the waters indicates that the Lord has accepted Elisha as Elijah's true successor.

Ahab & Elijah (Part 2) Summary

- Elijah's ministry was nearly as important as that of Moses.
- When Israel was departing from the faith, Elijah reminded them of the covenant God made with their forefathers.
- At Mount Sinai (or "Horeb"), Elijah met with the Lord God of Israel – as did Moses centuries earlier.
 - (Compare Exodus 33:12-33 with 1 Kings 19:11-18).

- Elijah's significance is highlighted by the prophecy of Malachi that says he will return before the final end times
 - See Malachi 4:5.
- John the Baptist at least partially fulfilled that prophecy.
 - See Matthew 17:10-12 and Mark 9:11-13.
- Elijah personally appeared with Moses at the transfiguration.
 - See Matthew 17:1-7 and Mark 9:2-9.

- Ahab's life, by contrast, was a disaster.
- He and his wife go down in history as Israel's worst king and queen.
- Her death (2 Kings 9) is at least as gruesome as Ahab's.
- In Revelation 2, Jesus uses her name to characterize a woman who is leading people into rebellion.

- Ahab continued to resist the real prophets of God, right up to his dying day, thinking he could outwit the prophecy by dressing as a common soldier.
- Elijah was a better defense of Israel than all the chariots and horsemen they possessed.
- He fought against the idolatry which was Israel's truest enemy.
- Ahab's life ended on the floor of his chariot. He was lying there dead in a pool of his own blood.
- Elijah was taken up into heaven in a whirlwind, separated from earth by chariots and horses of fire.

Ahab & Elijah (Part 2) Conclusions

- As in the days of Ahab and Jezebel, there is a great demand today for a religion that makes us happy.
- God, by his very nature, is thought to give approval to our every desire.
- The popular Jesus is one that refuses to oppose us and fails to recognize the reality of human sin.
 - *There is a great craving today ... for a religion which shall adorn, but shall not restrain; for a religion which shall be toothless, and have no bite in it ... Popular Christianity is a very easy-fitting garment; it is like an old shoe that you can slip off and on without any difficulty ...*
 - Alexander Maclaren (1826-1910)
 - *... But a religion which does not put up a strong barrier between you and many of your inclinations is not worth anything. The mark of a message from God is that it restrains and coerces and forbids and commands. And some of you do not like it because it does.*
 - Alexander Maclaren (1826-1910)
- The real God, however, is the God of Elijah.
- The real Jesus is one who died for our sins.
- He takes us, along with Elijah, past the joys and sorrows of this life and directly into the life to come.
- But there is, in a sense, a cost to us as well.
- We can't selfishly stay in control of our lives and still keep them for life eternal.
- We have to give up ownership of ourselves and give our lives completely over to him.
 - See Mark 8:34-38.