

You might remember that the last time we were together we were discussing how the prophet Micaiah had been called by King Ahab at the request of king Jehosaphat. This was done because Ahab had called 400 of his prophets to come in and essentially parrot what Ahab wanted, which was to go up against his enemies at Ramoth-gilead.

All of those prophets told him to go up because he would be successful. However, because Jehosaphat knew of the reputation of Ahab and his less than committed attitude toward the God of Israel he brings up to Ahab that there might be one more prophet who could give some additional information from the Lord.

Ahab had to concede that there was one more prophet but that he wasn't a very good prophet because he never spoke in favor of Ahab.

2 Chronicles 18:6-8 ⁶ But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not yet a prophet of the LORD here that we may inquire of him?" ⁷ The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of the LORD, but I hate him, for he never prophesies good concerning me but always evil. He is Micaiah, son of Imla." But Jehoshaphat said, "Let not the king say so." ⁸ Then the king of Israel called an officer and said, "¹Bring quickly Micaiah, Imla's son."

And so, Micaiah is called upon and told by the messenger to tell the king whatever he wanted to hear and essentially not rock the boat. Micaiah mockingly agrees, but when pushed by Ahab to tell the truth Micaiah says this.

2 Chronicles 18:15-24 ¹⁵ Then the king said to him, "How many times must I adjure you to speak to me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?" ¹⁶ So he said, "I saw all Israel Scattered on the mountains, ^aLike sheep which have no shepherd; And the LORD said, 'These have no master. Let each of them return to his house in peace.'" ¹⁷ Then the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?" ¹⁸ Micaiah said, "Therefore, hear the word of the LORD. ^aI saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing on His right and on His left. ¹⁹ "The LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab king of Israel to go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?' And one said this while another said that. ²⁰ "Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD and said, 'I will entice

him.' And the LORD said to him, 'How?' ²¹ "He said, 'I will go and be a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' Then He said, 'You are to entice *him* and prevail also. Go and do so.' ²² "Now therefore, behold, the LORD has put a deceiving spirit in the mouth of these your prophets, for the LORD has proclaimed disaster against you." ²³ Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came near and struck Micaiah on the cheek and said, "How did the Spirit of the LORD pass from me to speak to you?" ²⁴ Micaiah said, "Behold, you will see on that day when you enter an inner room to hide yourself."

Of course at this point king Ahab has had enough and commands his people to take Micaiah and put him in prison.

2 Chronicles 18:25-27 ²⁵ Then the king of Israel said, "Take Micaiah and return him to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king's son; ²⁶ and say, 'Thus says the king, "Put this *man* in prison and feed him sparingly with bread and water until I return safely.'"" ²⁷ Micaiah said, "If you indeed return safely, the LORD has not spoken by me." And he said, "Listen, all you people."

And this is the way it usually works with people when it comes to the truth. Those people who are willing to tell the leadership what they want to hear rise to the top but those who tell the truth are the one's who are brought low and considered to be trouble makers or worse.

But for Micaiah it makes little difference because he knows the Lord spoke to him and he would rather be ill treated at the hand of Ahab than to have to answer to God for not telling the truth. This is why it is always better to declare the whole counsel of God's truth than to pick and choose to remain popular with the masses and simply tickle the ears of those who don't want the truth.

So, who do you think Ahab and Jehosaphat listen to, the 400 or the 1?

2 Chronicles 18:28-29 ²⁸ So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah went up against Ramoth-gilead. ²⁹ The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "I will disguise myself and go into battle, but you put on your robes." So the king of Israel disguised himself, and they went into battle.

What is Ahab doing here?

He's essentially telling Jehosaphat to become a target while he, Ahab, is disguising himself so as not to be a target. And so, from a human standpoint Ahab is making sure that he will survive the battle. After all if he disguises himself then not even God will recognize him, just in case Micaiah was right, and he'll come through unscathed.

This is how amazingly deceived people can be. And so, the plans of Ahab will prevail against those at Ramoth-gilead.

By the way, why do you think Jehosaphat agreed to wear his robes so as to stand out like a peacock on the battle field?

Because he still trusted God. But notice what happens when the battle actually begins.

2 Chronicles 18:30 ³⁰ Now the king of Aram had commanded the captains of his chariots, saying, "Do not fight with small or great, but with the king of Israel alone."

What's happening here with the king of Aram?

Whatever was going on between Ahab and the king of Aram it seems to be personal. Notice that he tells his captains of his chariots to do one thing and one thing only. Don't worry about the ground troops, our troops will deal with them. Don't worry about taking out the commanders of Ahab. Your only job is to find Ahab and kill him.

Of course Ahab knew this, which is why he disguised himself as anyone but the king of Israel. And we can probably be quite certain that Ahab tried to sell Jehosaphat on the idea that by dressing in his royal robes he would get all the glory for the victory as the one who rode into battle with the Lord by his side.

I'm guessing that Jehosaphat wasn't that naïve, but none-the-less he agreed to do that. And here's what happens.

2 Chronicles 18:31 ³¹ So when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, they said, "It is the king of Israel," and they turned aside to fight against him. But Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him, and God diverted them from him.

So, Ahab was correct in his assessment of the situation. He knew that the king of Aram was gunning for him personally. He also knew that if Jehosaphat was decked out in full royal robes that the

enemy would misidentify him as the king of Israel. This is certainly a fool-proof plan by Ahab.

But what happens? When Jehosaphat sees the enemy, and keep in mind that chariots in those days were the equivalent of today's mobile armor, M1 Abram tanks, Bradley fighting machines; but when he sees this there's only one thing he can do and that is to cry out. And the assumption here is to cry out to God, because no one else is going to be able to deliver him.

And what does the Lord do?

2 Chronicles 18:31 But Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him, and God diverted them from him.

God intervenes in the affairs of men and does so with the express purpose of accomplishing His will in this case.

Does this mean that God overrides the free will of these enemy soldiers who want to kill the king?

You better believe it. God's will always trumps the free will of men when His will is to accomplish a particular thing, whether its protecting Jehosaphat or arresting us from utter destruction by taking our heart of stone and then miraculously giving us a heart of flesh as His Spirit causes us to be born from above.

It hearkens me back to the free will of Lazarus who has been dead four days in the grave.

By the way, what was Lazarus's will as he lay there in a cold tomb?

He didn't have a will because he was dead.

What was God's will for Lazarus while he lay in that cold tomb?

To bring him to life.

Was that unfair for God to impose His will on Lazarus?

We'll get a chance to ask Lazarus that question one day. But I can tell you with all joy I'm glad God's will trumped my will which was bent on destruction. And now in the case of Jehosaphat God comes to his aid despite the will of the enemy to destroy him.

How God diverted them we're not told but the word diverted in the Hebrew is an interesting one because it could also be translated allure or incite. And so, essentially like putting a shiny object in front of a child God gave them a reason to turn aside from Jehosaphat.

But in the process of diverting the captains of the chariots they are shown that the one they were pursuing was not the king of Israel.

2 Chronicles 18:32 ³² When the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, they turned back from pursuing him.

Again, what this shows is that God's hand is always involved in the lives of His people. But what's more encouraging to me is that Jehosaphat knew that Ahab was playing him and still makes a stupid decision to go into battle against the king of Aram knowing that God did not sanction it.

And as stupid a decision as that was God rescues Jehosaphat out of that stupid decision. Praise God!

I've made enough stupid decisions in my life and I can praise God that He either walked me through them or got them out of my way despite myself.

But back to Ahab. Here's a guy who had it all figured out. He'll put Jehosaphat in a position to where the troops of the king of Aram pursue him leaving Ahab safe. And to ensure that the enemy can't find him he disguises himself as a regular soldier who blends in with all the rest.

And by the way, this is a common way for officers to protect themselves. When we got involved in the 2nd world war many of the officers would actually take the stripes off of their shoulders or take steel wool to their helmets and scratch off the markings of their rank.

The same thing happened in Korea and Vietnam because they knew that enemy snipers would key in on the officers because they were the one's leading the troops. And the idea is that once you take out the leadership the followers of those leaders will be in disarray.

And so, Ahab, knowing that the prophet Micaiah has foretold his death is going to make sure that his prophecy doesn't come to pass.

He figures he's got a 400 in 1 chance of being correct that God will deliver him as long as he helps God by disguising himself since there's always that one chance that he's incorrect.

But when God speaks it's always a good idea to listen to Him and obey Him. Remember what the prophecy was from Micaiah.

2 Chronicles 18:19 ¹⁹ "The LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab king of Israel to go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?'

The Lord is saying that Ahab will in fact be enticed to go up to Ramoth-gilead for the express purpose of falling or dying on the battlefield.

And so, now that the captains of the chariots are drawn away by the Lord from destroying Jehosaphat it would seem likely that they would now be able to find Ahab and kill him, but Ahab has disguised himself and for all intents and purposes it would now seem unlikely that they would be able to distinguish him from any other soldier on the battlefield.

Well, this is obviously a problem for God. I mean how can God fulfill His promise of enticing Ahab to the battlefield to kill him if he has disguised himself? Well, it turns out that it's not a problem for God after-all.

2 Chronicles 18:33-34 ³³ A certain man drew his bow at random and struck the king of Israel in a joint of the armor. So he said to the driver of the chariot, "Turn around and take me out of the fight, for I am severely wounded." ³⁴ The battle raged that day, and the king of Israel propped himself up in his chariot in front of the Arameans until the evening; and at sunset he died.

Notice what happens here. A certain man drew his bow at random.

Now the question needs to be asked, did this man really draw his bow at random?

The answer is yes and no.

In what way is the answer yes?

He had no idea that his arrow was aimed in the direction of king Ahab. His job was to simply put arrows in the air toward his enemy. And this he did as fast as he could.

But how is the answer no in regards to his bow being drawn at random?

God directed this man to draw his bow in a particular direction with a particular pull and a particular release in a direction that would have his arrow land not just near the king but at a particular distance with particular angle and particular pull so that the arrow not only hit the king but hit him in the only place that would have been fatal, between the armor.

In fact, we're told that it was between the joint in the armor.

2 Chronicles 18:33 ³³ A certain man drew his bow at random and struck the king of Israel *in a joint of the armor*. So he said to the driver of the chariot, "Turn around and take me out of the fight, for I am severely wounded."

Armor in those days was constructed mainly of leather and bronze. The armor would have been designed in such a way where joints would have been primarily in the area of the arms, which would have allowed the soldier to raise his arms with a sword or bow only exposing just a few inches of his body to any potential danger.

In other words, for this arrow to have hit a vital spot that would have been deemed a severe wound in Ahab's own words, this arrow probably hit somewhere between the upper ribs entering into the upper chest through his arm pit.

The arrow would have a trajectory that would have been coming down at a steep angle since the archer would have probably been shooting his arrow at least at a 45 to 60 degree angle. By the time the arrow arrived at the target it may have been descending at about a 50 to 60 degree angle.

Keep in mind that even at a 60 degree angle the arrow also had to hit the target at such an angle that it hit a vital organ, either the lung or pericardium if entering the axilla or arm pit. For this to happen a second angle would have to be calculated so that it entered in a lateral position to the body. In other words, sideways to the body to enter into the lung or heart area.

And so, if you were to calculate these two angles, taking the distance and wind into consideration, you still couldn't be guaranteed any success with such primitive weapons. But we're

told that there was no calculation. The archer simply drew his bow at random.

How then is it possible that he would hit his target at such a distance, at such an angle, and do so with deadly accuracy?

Because God directed the arrow because He had already told Ahab that his fate was sealed through the prophet Micaiah.

2 Chronicles 18:22 ²² "Now therefore, behold, the LORD has put a deceiving spirit in the mouth of these your prophets, for the LORD has proclaimed disaster against you."

Nothing in heaven or on earth will keep the Lord from having His will being accomplished. Nothing.

Why should that be encouraging for a believer?

Romans 8:28-39 ²⁸ And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. ²⁹ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; ³⁰ and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. ³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us? ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? ³³ Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; ³⁴ who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. ³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." ³⁷ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

John 6:38-40 ³⁸ "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. ³⁹ "This is the will

of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. ⁴⁰ "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

We'll pick up here next week.