

FOUR ATTITUDES TOWARD TRUTH

(1 Ki. 22:1-40; 2 Chr. 18:1-34)

INTRODUCTION: If our lesson this morning illustrated the importance and value of truth, then our lesson tonight stresses the importance of our attitude toward truth. There is a story in the OT that illustrates four different attitudes toward truth. (1 Kings 22:1-40)

Background and Reading of Text

Our lesson takes place during the period of the divided kingdom, that is, when the tribes of Israel had been separated and ruled by different kings. Wicked Ahab was ruling in Israel, the northern kingdom and good king Jehoshaphat was ruling in Judah, the southern kingdom. Both of these kings were ruling during a time of war with the Syrians to the north. Read and comment on story.

Though there are many lessons to learn from this text, let's focus our attention on the attitudes that the various characters had toward truth. For in them we see an illustration of how different people approach truth.

AHAB HATED THE TRUTH

There are at least five things that clearly demonstrate that Ahab did not care about the truth

He decided what he wanted to do before he even consulted truth (1 Ki. 22:3).

He gathered the prophets together who would approve what he already wanted to do (1 Ki. 22:6).

He did not want to consult Micaiah, because he knew that the prophet would not tell him what he wanted to hear (1 Ki. 22:8).

When Micaiah at first told him what he wanted to hear (1 Ki. 22:14-15), he knew that it wasn't really the truth, because he said: "How many times shall I make you swear that you tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?" (1 Ki. 22:16).

But he didn't really want the truth and rejected the truth when Micaiah gave it to him, because it wasn't what he wanted to hear (1 Ki. 22:17-18).

Since Ahab wanted to believe a lie, God made it easy for him to do so (1 Ki. 22:19-23).

But God didn't give up on Ahab until Ahab had already given up on Him!

He soothed his conscience by getting rid of the messenger of truth (1 Ki. 22:26-27).

There are a great many people today who have the same kind of attitude toward truth that Ahab had!

They decide what they want to do before they even consult the truth that is revealed in God's word.

They find a preacher who will approve what they already want to do.

They refuse to even listen to anyone who will not tell them what they want to hear.

They reject the truth when it is presented to them.

If you want to believe a lie, God will make it easy for you (2 Th. 2:8-12).

But God will not give up on you until you have already given up on Him (Rom. 1:21-23, 24, 26, 28).

They often soothe their conscience by getting rid of the messenger of truth.

THE PROPHETS PERVERTED THE TRUTH

The truth was perverted in two different ways

Zedekiah and the other prophets were willing to tell the king what he wanted to hear to gain his favor (1 Ki. 22:6, 11-12). They loved popularity, peace, and harmony, etc. more than truth

The messenger who went to summon Micaiah pleaded with him to confirm the words of the other prophets, because he was more concerned about pleasing the king than telling the truth (1 Ki. 22:13).

Many preachers and teachers today are willing to tickle the ears of their hearers for the sake of popularity, peace, harmony, crowds, money, etc.

Paul warned Timothy that this kind of thing would happen (2 Tim. 4:1-4).

JEHOSHAPHAT WANTED TRUTH ON HIS SIDE

Unlike Ahab, Jehoshaphat did want to consult and consider the truth (1 Ki. 22:5, 7); but Jehoshaphat was only interested in truth if it supported what he already wanted to do,

Jehoshaphat had already decided what he was going to do before he suggested that they inquire for the word of the Lord (1 Ki. 22:4).

Now he would have been very happy to have been able to confirm his practice by truth; but he was unwilling to change his practice to conform to truth.

The Jews in Jeremiah's day were a lot like Jehoshaphat

They asked Jeremiah to pray to the Lord for them that He might show them the way they should walk (Jer. 42:1-3).

Jeremiah agreed to pray for them (Jer. 42:4).

The people promise to obey the Lord no matter what (Jer. 42:5-6). Jeremiah delivered Jehovah's message that He would bless them if they remained in the land, and He would punish them if they fled to Egypt (Jer. 42:9-22).

When Jeremiah delivered Jehovah's message, the leaders accused Jeremiah of speaking falsely (Jer. 43:1-3).

The people went down to Egypt despite God's will and despite their promise to obey (Jer. 43:4-7).

These people were willing to obey God as long as God told them what they wanted to hear

Many folks are like that today. They go to the Bible to find what they're looking for, rather than to look for what they find.

Illust. Mark Twain, a known unbeliever, was found reading the Bible on his porch. When asked what he was doing he said he was "looking for loopholes".

MICAIAH WANTED TO BE ON THE SIDE OF TRUTH

Ahab hated the truth. The prophets perverted the truth. Jehoshaphat wanted truth on his side. But Micaiah wanted to be on the side of truth; and there is a big difference

Richard Whately: "It is one thing to wish to have truth on our side, and another to wish sincerely to be on the side of truth." (*Essay on some of the Difficulties in the Writing of the Apostle Paul, No. 1. On the Love of Truth*)

Micaiah loved the truth, and he was willing to speak the truth regardless of the sacrifice, or the pain it caused, or the consequences (1 Ki. 22:14).

R. L. Whiteside: "Much is said about preaching the truth in love, and so it should be preached. But in love of what? The preacher should so love the truth that he will not sacrifice any of it nor pervert it, and he should so love people that he will not withhold from them even an unpleasant truth. He that does either of these things loves neither the truth nor the people. We frequently fool ourselves; we think we do this and so to spare the feelings of others, when it is our own feelings that prompt us. 'Preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.'" (*The Shively Messenger, 5/15/84, 24:9*)
Everything that Micaiah said and did was controlled by the truth

And he had to pay a price for loving the truth.

Zedekiah struck him and mocked him (1 Ki. 22:24).

He was imprisoned (1 Ki. 22:26-27).

Those today who love the truth, will speak the truth regardless of the sacrifice, or the pain it causes, or the consequences

Those who want to be on the side of truth will pay a price. That is just inevitable.

It means that we will not be as popular with the masses.

It means that we will not necessarily have large churches with which to associate.

It means that we will might lose the favor of our bosses and co-workers and lose economically.

CONCLUSION:

What is your attitude toward truth?

Are you like Ahab, who hated the truth?

Are you like the prophets, who perverted the truth?

Are you like Jehoshaphat, who wanted truth on his side?

Are you like Micaiah, who wanted to be on the side of truth?

Do you really want to be on the side of truth no matter what?

No matter what your attitude toward it, the truth is still the truth.

Ahab didn't really want the truth

The prophets perverted the truth

Jehoshaphat only wanted truth on his side

AHAB DIED just like Micaiah said he would!!! (1 Ki. 22:34-38)

Every time the truth is preached our hearts are revealed!

“In the past, the quality of gold or silver samples was determined by the use of a ‘touchstone,’ a hard, black stone such as jasper or basalt. The sample was rubbed against this touchstone and the resultant streak was compared to that made by a standard alloy. The ‘encounter’ of the sample with the touchstone said nothing about the touchstone -- it was what it was -- but it said everything about the sample.

“Truth is such a touchstone. You can tell a lot about a fellow by the way he reacts when confronted with reality. What a person does when he stands face to face with truth says volumes about his character, the kind of human being he has chosen to be. If we will not accept truth and adapt ourselves to it, we not only demonstrate our character to be inferior, we doom ourselves to the suffering that inevitably comes from living on the basis of illusion and error. A life built on unreality is not a good one. Truth is what it is, with or without our right response to it. but our response makes all the difference for us.” (Gary Henry, “Truth the Touchstone,” *Brass Tacks*, 2:3:2)

(This lesson based on a sermon shared by Kevin Kay)