

Beware of Unholy Alliances

1 Kings 22:1-14; James 4:4

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Even those Christians who have a good reputation for faithfulness, undisputed integrity, and faithfully promote reformation may be led to compromise their testimony for Jesus Christ by unholy alliances.

Sometimes the pressure to conform to the call of unity seems too much to resist. Sometimes the desire not to be small or all alone any longer finally wins. Sometimes the temptation to be like everyone else pulls one into unholy friendships and alliances. God warns us all against fellowship with that which is unrighteous (2 Corinthians 6:14,17). To make friends with the world that will lure us from our love for Jesus Christ is to become guilty of spiritual adultery (James 4:4).

Godly King Jehoshaphat had a weakness in this area of unholy alliances, and it nearly cost him his life (as we shall see in a subsequent sermon). He was even rebuked by God through God's prophet for his unholy alliance with wicked King Ahab, and he did so again with the descendants of Ahab.

What about you? Are unholy alliances and friendships with the world leading you away from a holy friendship with Jesus Christ? The Lord warns you that you are setting yourself up for a big fall (as happened with Jehoshaphat). Dear ones, heed the Word of the Lord to you today, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord...."

The main points from our text this Lord's Day are: (1) Jehoshaphat Forms an Unholy Alliance with Ahab (1 Kings 22:1-4); (2) False Prophets Are Called to Rubber Stamp the Will of Ahab (1 Kings 22:5-12); (3) A True Prophet Reveals the Will of God (1 Kings 22:13-14).

I. Jehoshaphat Forms an Unholy Alliance with Ahab (1 Kings 22:1-4).

A. 1 Kings 22:1 tells us that it had now been three years since there had been war between Israel and Syria, dating back to when God delivered Israel from the overwhelming forces of the Syrians (1 Kings 20). Ben-hadad made at that time a covenant with Ahab that he would return all of the cities that Syria had taken from Israel (1 Kings 20:34). Three years later he still had not done so, for Ramoth-gilead had not been returned to Israel. Ramoth-gilead was a significant city in the tribe of Gad on the other side of the Jordan River, and was one of the cities of refuge.

B. We now see from our text that King Jehoshaphat of Judah made a royal visit to Samaria (the capital of Israel), and during that visit Jehoshaphat entered into an unholy alliance with Ahab (1 Kings 22:2-4).

1. Let us first consider the true greatness of Jehoshaphat as recorded in 2 Chronicles 17.

a. He sought the Lord and walked in His commandments He did not follow the religion of Baal as did Israel (verses 3-4).

b. He promoted reformation in Judah by taking away all the high places and groves (verse 6) dedicated to false gods.

c. He sent both his princes and the Levites throughout the cities of Judah to teach the people God's Law (verses 7-9).

d. The fear of the Lord fell on all of the kingdoms around Judah so that they did not attack Judah, and they brought tribute to Jehoshaphat in order to maintain peace with Judah (verses 10-11).

e. The kingdom of Judah prospered in every way under the leadership of this godly king (verses 12-13; 2 Chronicles 18:1). He did that which right in the sight of the Lord (2 Chronicles 20:32).

f. What a glorious legacy was Jehoshaphat's due to God's blessing and due to his faithfulness to the Lord (Proverbs 14:34).

2. However, Jehoshaphat had a sinful weakness that nearly led to his death—forming unholy alliances with the wicked. He nearly lost his life for this sin, and he incurred the stern rebuke of the Lord through God's prophet for his unholy alliance with Ahab (2 Chronicles 19:2-3). Jehoshaphat was not wise, but foolish in his establishing an alliance with the idolatrous king of Israel, Ahab. We cannot imagine that it was a fondness for idolatry and sexual perversion that drew Jehoshaphat to Samaria. Why did Jehoshaphat give his approval to form this unholy alliance in response to Ahab's inquiry (1 Kings 22:3-4)?

a. Perhaps Jehoshaphat went to Samaria to seek unity in church and state and to promote reformation there as he done in Judah (the two kingdoms were of the same blood and covenant in Abraham—they were one kingdom under David and Solomon).

b. Perhaps Jehoshaphat sought a military alliance with Ahab that would gain them both greater protection against mutual enemies.

c. Perhaps Jehoshaphat had already entered into an unholy alliance with the house of Ahab by way of the marriage of his son (Jehoram) to the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel (Athaliah) in 2 Kings 8:18.

d. Whatever the reason, the Lord gave His severe censure of this grievous sin which was even repeated by Jehoshaphat with Ahab's son (2 Kings 3:7).

e. Dear ones, no matter how you might strive to promote reformation in your life, family, church, and nation, if you are not careful about the alliances and friendships you establish, you are vulnerable to being outflanked by the enemy (1 Corinthians 15:33). If you crave and must have the approval of others, financial gain, the friendship of those who share not the same convictions of the truth, associations with organizations (whether pro-life, political, religious) that embrace not our scriptural and historical Terms of Communion, or courting relationships, you are being deceived that good will come from such familiar contacts (it is more likely that when it is your convictions that have been compromised that you will forsake them than that those who differ will forsake theirs). And do not think for a moment that you have to personally know the person for your convictions and character to be corrupted through music, sports, movies, business, or political stars that you simply follow and want to emulate.

II. False Prophets Are Called to Rubber Stamp the Will of Ahab (1 Kings 22:5-12).

A. Jehoshaphat first speaks and acts in this serious matter of an unholy alliance with Ahab, and then he seeks the will of God in the matter (1 Kings 22:5).

1. He only mentions things that unified him with Ahab that were of common origin and heritage, not union in doctrine, worship, faith, and life. This is not going to turn out well for Jehoshaphat, and it will not turn out well for us. Had Jehoshaphat first told Ahab that he needed to hear from the Lord concerning this matter, he would have avoided all manner of trouble in his life (and in his posterity that followed through the unholy marriage between the ungodly line of Ahab to the godly line of Jehoshaphat).

2. Dear ones, when you care not enough to seek out the will of God through His Word (Scripture, faithful Confessions etc., faithful preaching and teaching, faithful counselors), you are headed for a collision with the Lord. And when upon hearing the truth, you ignore it and do what you want to do or feel pressured to do (as did Jehoshaphat), beware of the dangers that await you. But if the Lord uses that collision in your life and mine to teach us in love and draw us in mercy unto Himself, we have by His grace alone avoided much more heartache.

B. After Jehoshaphat realized that he had not sought the counsel of the Lord in this alliance with Ahab, he requests that the word of the Lord be sought.

1. Ahab brings 400 false prophets to merely confirm what he wants to do.

2. What do we learn from these false prophets as to how they misled Ahab and Jehoshaphat? You cannot place your confidence in ministers to faithfully declare the word of the Lord simply:

a. **Because they claim to speak in the name of the Lord** and make a profession of faith (1 Kings 22:11; Matthew 7:21-23). How will you know false prophets, teachers, and ministers? You will know them by their fruit (Matthew 7:15-16; Jeremiah 23:34).

b. **Because there are many of them**—because they are in the majority (1 Kings 22:6). Many times in Scripture the minority is that which is clinging to the truth while the majority have forsaken the covenant of the Lord (Noah, Joshua and Caleb, Gideon and the 300, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, the prophets were always in the minority, Jesus and the apostles, the faithful witnesses and martyrs of Jesus Christ then and now). It is not mere numbers (surveys or polls) that determine the truth, but His Word.

c. **Because they are united and standing as 400** against 1 single prophet, Micaiah (1 Kings 22:12). To be united in standing for error is a greater means of deceiving the many. There is great blessing in being united in standing for one doctrine, worship, and government (per the Solemn League and Covenant).

d. **Because they are entertaining and innovative** (1 Kings 22:10-12). The enemy of our soul is clever, entertaining, and catches the eye of people by appealing to the sight and pleasures of man. But that has nothing to do with proclaiming the truth.

III. A True Prophet Is Called to Reveal the Will of God (1 Kings 22:13-14).

A. Jehoshaphat did not hear the voice of the Lord in the prophecies of the 400 prophets. He knew (by the influence and operation of the Holy Spirit) that something was not right—something was very wrong. He, therefore, asks, “Is there not here a prophet of the LORD besides these 400 prophets” (1 Kings 22:7)? To which Ahab begrudgingly replies that there is one prophet, Micaiah, but Ahab hates him because he never prophesies good about him (he never tells him what he wants to hear, he doesn’t tickle Ahab’s ear as do unfaithful ministers, 2 Timothy 4:3-4). Certainly Elijah had not prophesied good about Ahab. Ahab probably mentions Micaiah because he was in prison and readily available, whereas Elijah would be harder to find (1 Kings 22:26).

B. How does Micaiah reveal by the fruit in his life that he was a faithful prophet and minister of the Lord?

1. He was willing to suffer the wrath of the king in standing for the truth, for he was likely in prison when called (2 Timothy 3:12).

2. He did not tickle even the ears of a wicked and powerful king who could slay him at a mere whim. For this reason Ahab hated him. By flattering Ahab with what he wanted to hear, he could have avoided being taken back to jail. Those who are faithful to the truth are not usually popular with the masses or at times with even fellow Christians. Consider the testimony of faithful Samuel Rutherford:

We pray for the coming of his Kingdom, and praise him that the number of those that seek the Lord in Scotland are not diminished, but grow even under evil shepherds and lazy feeders; which is the lily among the thorns, though we go under the name of Protesters, separatists, hypocrites, unpeaceable, implacable spirits, are made as the filth of the world, and the off-scourings of all things: yea, troubled on every side (in the streets, pulpits, in divers Synods, Presbyteries, &c. more than under Prelacy) yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed" (*A Survey Of The Survey Of That Summe Of Church-Discipline*, "Preface").

3. Even after he was told how the 400 prophets had all agreed in their prophecy that Ahab would be victorious over the Syrians (1 Kings 22:13), Micaiah was faithful to the truth of the Lord even if he stood all alone (1 Kings 22:14), just as Elijah had done on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 17). Jesus tells us that the hireling that watches the sheep will flee when the wolves attack, but the faithful shepherd cares for and loves the sheep and will defend them (John 10:12-13). This are some of the fruit that we observe in the life of the faithful minister of the Lord, Micaiah, and in the faithful ministers of the Lord throughout history.

C. After having formed this unholy alliance with Ahab, Jehoshaphat felt he could not now back away from his association with Ahab. Even after he recognized that the 400 prophets did not speak the word of the Lord, but Micaiah did, Jehoshaphat did not stand upon the word of the Lord. Why? Perhaps he felt pressured by Ahab. Perhaps he was embarrassed because he had already given his word. Perhaps he thought this would bring war between Israel and Judah. Regardless, here we see the fall of a good man who foolishly entered into an unholy alliance, but was unwillingly to do what was right in the sight of the Lord.

1. Jehoshaphat through this alliance lost ground (not gained ground) in being able to bring reformation to Israel. When union with others to fight a common foe is not based upon a common agreement in the truth, it is an alliance that will fail. For how will you reprove their sins and errors if you joined knowing their sins and errors (but did not reprove them before such a union)? If you judge they will not listen to you when forming such a union, why should they listen to you after you have formed such a union? If you countenance their sins and errors at the beginning, will they patiently bear your reproof at the end? If you go with them one mile at the beginning, may they not expect you to go two miles later by way of compromise of the truth?

2. Not all business agreements with unbelievers are unholy—unless you have to compromise God’s truth and God’s commandments in order to maintain that alliance. Dear ones, love the Lord Jesus Christ and His truth more than any alliance that you believe would have some material benefit to you. Buy the truth and sell it not. The Lord Jesus gave His life for you. Take up your cross, deny yourself and follow Him. Have not fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them (Ephesians 5:11). You will never regret your union with Jesus Christ—your covenant with Him. For all eternity you will rejoice in that holy alliance.

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