

# Bible Questions and Answers



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**Fellowship**  
BIBLE CHURCH

# Question in 1 Kings 22



- ❧ In my daily reading of God's word, I have come across a passage that has always bothered/confused me. 1 Kings 22:19-23 talks about God looking to convince Ahab to go into battle and die. At first glance, this appears to be a direct contradiction to James 1:13.
- ❧ The reminds me of Job 1:6-12, where God has a conversation with Satan and allows evil to occur so that He may be glorified.
- ❧ Is the key verse found in James 1:14? Ahab obviously was drawn away from God and was able to be tempted.
- ❧ Is the scenario in 1 Kings and Job a vision to help us understand how God controls the heart of the king found in Proverbs 21:1?

# 1 Kings 22:19-23



<sup>19</sup> Then *Micaiah* said, “Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left.

<sup>20</sup> And the LORD said, ‘Who will persuade Ahab to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?’

So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner.

# 1 Kings 22:19-23



<sup>21</sup> “Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, ‘I will persuade him.’

<sup>22</sup> “The LORD said to him, ‘In what way?’

So he said, ‘I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.’

And the LORD said, ‘You shall persuade *him*, and also prevail. Go out and do so.’

# 1 Kings 22:19-23



<sup>23</sup> “Therefore look! The LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, and the LORD has declared disaster against you.”

# James 1:13-14



<sup>13</sup> Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.

<sup>14</sup> But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.

# Begin...



- ❧ Earlier 1 Kings 22:3-4 tells us the mindset of Ahab. Before he knows the events recorded in verse 19, he indicates a desire to go to battle.
- ❧ The circumstances seem to indicate that he was not going to inquire about this from the Lord until Jehoshaphat asked him to do so (v. 5). Again, he seems to be resolved to go to battle beforehand.
- ❧ He gathered his 400 false prophets and they agreed with him. They were “yes men” (v. 6).

# Need a True Prophet



- ❧ These false prophets weren't good enough for Jehoshaphat, so he asked in v. 7 for a better prophet.
- ❧ Ahab said yes, there was one, but he hated this prophet because he prophesied evil concerning Ahab. (I wonder why!)
- ❧ Micaiah was summoned (v. 9). While he was coming, the 400 prophets emphasized their "encouragement" to Ahab to go to battle and win (v. 10-12).



# A True Prophet



- ❧ In verse 13, Micaiah is warned that he should be a “yes man” like the others.
- ❧ He refuses to do that (v. 14). Good.
- ❧ In verse 15, hear the sarcastic tone of Micaiah’s voice. “Sure, go on ahead. No problem.”
- ❧ Ahab heard the tone and saw the body language and knew he needed to dig further. So he told him to tell the truth, which Micaiah was prepared to do (v. 16).

# Micaiah's Message



- ❧ In verse 17, Micaiah tells what is really going to happen. The battle will be lost.
- ❧ The LORD's saying "these have no master" is an allusion to the fact that Ahab, their master, would be killed. It would then be time to go home and re-consolidate with a new king.
- ❧ This was going to be the fulfillment of 1 Kings 20:42 and 21:19.

# Behind the Scenes



- ✧ Micaiah then gives an account in v. 19-23 of some heavenly deliberation about this situation. He was allowed to see what happened in heaven. A lying spirit (Satan, probably), came and gladly took up the role of persuader to get Ahab to go to his death.
- ✧ Note verse 20 “Who will persuade Ahab to go up, that he may fall?” and 23b “The LORD has declared disaster against you.” It was God’s decree that Ahab would die in accord with earlier prophecy, and not a natural death.

# Back to the Front Scene



- ❧ This was not acceptable news to the false prophets. Their leader, Zedekiah, hit Micaiah and spoke insolently to him (v. 24-25).
- ❧ Ahab put him in jail instead of listening to him (18, 26-28).
- ❧ The remainder of the chapter covers the awful events that unfolded after that. Read verses 29-53.

# “Successful” Mission



- ❧ The lying spirit had succeeded in his mission, even though God had given Ahab *every* opportunity to listen and repent.
- ❧ Jehoshaphat was present with him, representing the true kingdom of God (not apostate northern Israel).
- ❧ A true prophet of God was there, Micaiah
- ❧ He was given unprecedented access to what was going on in heaven.
- ❧ He was told that a demonic spirit was going to try to deceive Him.

# Stubborn Heart



- ❧ You would think that Ahab would be concerned at what he heard.
- ❧ But Ahab *still* went down the doomed path.
- ❧ He could have asked Micaiah what to do to truly repent.
- ❧ **Application:** You can know everything you need to know, but the evil in your heart can take you down paths that are self-destructive.

# Hardening of the Heart



- ❧ Ahab wanted to do what Ahab wanted to do. God used the evil already inside Ahab's own heart to doom him to destruction. God can do that two ways:
  - ❧ Passive hardening – just allow the evil that is already present to run its course.
  - ❧ Active hardening – remove restraints that allow the already present evil to go even farther afield.
- ❧ God could have used or permitted any number of methods to carry out His decree. He chose this method.

# Hardening of the Heart



- ☞ God says of Pharaoh, “**I will harden his heart**” or “**I have hardened his heart**” (Exodus 4:21, 7:3, 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17; see also Deut. 2:30; Joshua 11:20)
  - ☞ Active hardening, defined as above. God does not create “fresh evil” in anyone’s heart. There is enough there already.
- ☞ **Pharaoh hardened his own heart** (Exodus 8:15, 32; 9:34; see also 1 Samuel 6:6; 2 Chronicles 36:13)
- ☞ **Pharaoh’s heart was hardened** (Exodus 7:13-14, 22; 8:19, 9:7, 35)



# It seems that...



- ❧ God could have removed the restraint of Jehoshaphat asking for a consultation from the Lord.
- ❧ God could have told Micaiah not to go tell Ahab what He did.
- ❧ God could have allowed Ahab to just go the route that he had set his heart on from the beginning.
- ❧ But God actually put up some guardrails. God cannot therefore be blamed for Ahab's action.

# In fact...



- ☞ God did allow the evil persuader to do his desire.
- ☞ But God *also* sent a true prophet to reveal what was going on with the evil persuader. Ahab could have no possible excuse, as if God did something wrong.
- ☞ God allowed Ahab to accomplish his own downfall by his foolishness, but He also provided enough information to help him avoid going down the foolish path.

# Back to the Questions



- ❧ Is this a contradiction to James 1:13? As Bible believers, we know that can't be the case. But we can offer a further explanation.
- ❧ God was not tempted by evil Himself. He had pre-determined that Ahab was to die at Ramoth Gilead as punishment for sin. This is a question of method.
- ❧ Did God tempt Ahab to do evil? No. Ahab already wanted to do this act anyway.

# God Uses Satan



- ❧ Is it evil for God to use Satan? Evidently not, for He has done so throughout world history and will continue to do so.
  - ❧ Garden of Eden
  - ❧ Job's affliction...to teach about God's sovereignty.
  - ❧ Temptation of Christ
  - ❧ Tribulation
- ❧ Even Satan is God's servant. He cannot go beyond what God permits.

# What About James 1:14?



- ❧ Question: “Is the key verse found in James 1:14? Ahab obviously was drawn away from God and was able to be tempted.”
- ❧ I cannot say in general that going to battle to recover a city is evil.
- ❧ Even if it were a sin in this case, Ahab passed through the James 1:14 point in his thinking before Micaiah came onto the scene. God could not be blamed for that.

# About Proverbs 21:1



- ❧ “Is the scenario in 1 Kings and Job a vision to help us understand how God controls the heart of the king found in Proverbs 21:1?”
- ❧ Prov. 21:1 says, “The king's heart *is* in the hand of the LORD, *like* the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.”
- ❧ I believe the ‘vision’ was of events that truly occurred. It was not just a vision to help our understanding.

# About Proverbs 21:1



- ❧ How God controls the hearts of people is not by way of a form of fatalism or hard determinism.
- ❧ He wisely uses all the circumstances, means, people, and mind and will of the individual in a compatibilistic way in order to accomplish His intended end. This includes the depravity of one's heart.
- ❧ This is called “soft determinism.” God ensures that what He has decreed is done, but not in a way that constrains a person to operate against their will.

# Proverbs 21:1



- ☞ God didn't really have to "control" the heart of the king in this case. He just permitted circumstances to be arranged such that the final persuasion "put the nail in the coffin."
- ☞ Ahab had basically already built the coffin.
- ☞ Micaiah's prophecy just made Ahab more angry and he resolved to go ahead with the battle.
- ☞ Note that Satan was happy to volunteer. He is a murderer, and loves death and deception and division. More death makes him happy.



# Worshipping Together?



- ✧ Michigan Exec Order 2020-77: Consistent with prior guidance, neither a place of religious worship nor its owner is subject to penalty under section 20 of this order for allowing religious worship at such place.  
**No individual is subject to penalty under section 20 of this order for engaging in or traveling to engage in religious worship at a place of religious worship, or for violating section 15(a) of this order.**
- ✧ Red text is new. Much more clear.

# The Point



- ❧ The upshot of the above is that there is **no law** or ordinance against churches meeting in the State of Michigan. So there is no “submission” that we have to do to the governing authorities (1 Pet. 2:13-14).
- ❧ There is thus no conscience issue about civil disobedience.
- ❧ I have been saying this all along but the ominous “thou shalt not leave your home” statements have scared people into believing incorrectly about church meeting.
- ❧ I appreciate the governor’s clarification in the latest order.
- ❧ But the clarification is not praiseworthy, because it is her **duty** to protect religious liberty. That doesn’t disappear during a pandemic. We don’t thank her for doing **her job** in that way. She is just doing what is her duty to do.

# Why Now, Not Before?



- ❧ More knowledge than 2 months ago about the disease, its effects, how to mitigate, and how widespread it really is. Initial goals of “flattening the curve” have clearly been accomplished.
- ❧ The initial panic and fog is over.
- ❧ The shutdown could only ever have had short duration for churches. Church gatherings and associated worship are *absolutely essential* despite people’s well meaning idea, “just worship online!”

# Why Now, Not Before?



- ❧ I believe it is unwise to *prohibit* people from gathering if they feel the longing to do so for whatever reason. At some point it becomes a sin for us to make such a prohibition, and I don't want to go near that point.
- ❧ This does put the onus on individuals to make their own decisions. I believe that each one can do that. I do not have all the knowledge to make those calls for your life. So now you have the freedom to come or not come, depending on your wise analysis of things.

# Never Re-Open?



- ❧ As for those who think pessimistically that we should never re-open, you have succumbed to a state of mind that is not good. Your faith has weakened.
- ❧ The pandemic of 1918 (675,000 and maybe 100 million worldwide) was far worse. That is about 10x worse than at our own moment in history.
- ❧ The church still re-opened, some after only 1 month closed. And we had “business as usual” for the majority of the subsequent 102 years.

# Life Has Risks



- ❧ Accidents, non-communicable disease, communicable disease, terrorism, church shootings, deadly weather, persecution, bugs, bats, Asian giant hornets, and lions in the street (Prov. 26:13).
- ❧ There are always dangers that could keep you away from church if you were of a fearful mind.
- ❧ Coronaviruses were first ID'd in the mid 1960s. They are not going away any time soon, nor is this one.
- ❧ We shall have to live with it.

# Statistics



- ❧ Therefore, we have to take COVID seriously.
- ❧ Almost 1800 people died from flu in Michigan in 2017.  
2700 died from drug overdoses in that year.
- ❧ So far there are 4,343 deaths in MI attributed to COVID-19
  - ❧ I am aware of controversy about cause of death. Let us suppose that it is grossly over-estimated, by double.
  - ❧ That still makes it worse than a typical flu season in a year, but this has happened in about only *2 months, and counting*.
- ❧ For some people, this is very serious. For others, it is not.

# More Statistics



- ❧ In 2017, there were 26,594 abortions in Michigan. In a 2-month period, that would average out to about 4,432.
- ❧ Curiously, that number is just a bit higher than the number of deaths due to COVID-19 in 2 months.
- ❧ If the governor were truly serious about preventing death in the state, she would close the abortion business with her authoritarian powers.
- ❧ In 1992, there were 55,580 abortions. That is 9,263 every two months.



# COVID-19 Statistics



- ☞ If you are a resident in Michigan, you have a very small chance of getting COVID thus far.

$$45,646 / 9,987,000 = .46\%$$

- ☞ You have a much smaller chance of dying from COVID:

$$4,343 / 9,987,000 = 0.043\%$$

- ☞ Of course, the death rate is still calculated quite high:

$$4343 / 45,646 = 9.5\%$$

# Abortion Statistics



- ❧ If you are a baby in the womb whose mother uses the abortive services of an abortion clinic, your chances of dying are much worse: 100%.
- ❧ If you are a baby in the womb in Michigan:
  - ❧ 26,954 abortions in 2017
  - ❧ 111,507 live births in 2017
  - ❧ So  $26,954 / 111,507 = 0.2417$  = 24.17% chance of dying if you are in the womb.
  - ❧ That's twice the chances of dying than the worst death rate calculation for COVID-19.

# An Interesting Quote

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- ❧ They didn't just changed your behavior; they changed your minds. Overnight you began distrusting your fellow man and began trusting your government to keep you safe, to keep you informed, to trade your liberties for the false sense of security.
- ❧ You allowed your loved ones to die alone in a hospital under the mandate of "the greater good." You allowed business to shut down and people to give up their paychecks as they huddled in their homes under the mandate of "the greater good."
- ❧ There is no greater good than freedom, but they used fear to separate you, to isolate you. You believed it. You allowed it.