

A Lucky Shot?

1 Kings 22:29-40; Isaiah 46:9-10

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Do you feel lucky or do you feel blessed? Your answer will determine much about your view of God and His involvement in this world. For when something favorable happens and one calls that “good luck”, and when something adverse happens and one calls that “bad luck”, it implies there is no rhyme nor reason, no divine plan nor purpose to what happens in the events of this world or in your life. Everything simply falls out by chance.

And yet is it just lucky that the sun rises and sets each day as it always has without exception? Is it just lucky that the law of gravity will keep your feet on the ground and that 2+2 will equal 4 today just like it did yesterday? Luck and chance do not control this world or your life, for there is an established divine order that exists and there are natural and moral laws which all men use every day and expect to use in the future.

If luck and chance ruled and controlled all that happened in this world, progress in knowledge would be impossible, for nothing would remain the same from day to day. What you learned yesterday would only be good for yesterday, because it could all change today. It would be like trying to make sense out of what I was saying if every five seconds I spoke a different language. It should be obvious to all by the light of nature that God has instilled in all people that the Lord God Almighty governs all and provides for all—not luck and chance (Isaiah 46:9-10).

In the previous sermon, we saw that God is sovereign over all evil—God controlled the lying spirit. Now we shall see that God is sovereign over all events that seem from a human perspective to be simply an accident—as the shooting of an arrow that lands between the joint of Ahab’s armor and leads to his death. The main points are: (1) Ahab Tries to Thwart God’s Plan (1 Kings 22:29-33); (2) God’s Arrow Finds Ahab (1 Kings 22:34-36); (3) Ahab Unwillingly Yields to God’s Plan (1 Kings 22:37-40).

I. Ahab Tries to Thwart God’s Plan (1 Kings 22:29-33).

A. Having rejected the word of the Lord through God’s prophet, Micaiah, and having received the word of the lying spirit that spoke through the false prophets, Ahab now heads to battle along with Jehoshaphat (1 Kings 22:29). But as Ahab prepares for combat with the Syrians, he runs by Jehoshaphat his own little scheme to prevent the word of the Lord from coming to pass (1 Kings 22:30). Ahab actually thought he could outsmart the sovereign, omniscient Lord God. And this is the deception that like a thick fog overwhelms the world so that mankind cannot and will not see the light of the truth that God is absolutely sovereign and that He sees all and knows all.

1. It is apparent from Ahab’s attempt to disguise himself as an ordinary Israelite soldier that the word of the Lord through Micaiah weighed heavily upon Ahab’s mind. Ahab may not have obeyed the word of the Lord, but he had not forgotten it (he feared it might be true). He thought he could overrule it (as many have thought they could do). To complete his wicked plan, Ahab actually convinced Jehoshaphat to wear his royal robes in battle. Again, we see how unholy alliances lead even the godly into ridiculous errors in which they cannot see the consequences of their foolish decisions. Unholy alliances are all about pleasing men rather than walking in faithfulness to the Lord, and they cloud your better more sanctified judgment.

2. How did Ahab convince Jehoshaphat to join him in this absurd scheme? Most likely Ahab appealed to Jehoshaphat's pride and vanity in appearing to give to Jehoshaphat the high honor of commanding and leading both armies of Judah and Israel into battle against the Syrians. Ahab's real purpose was to divert the attention of the Syrians away from himself in the fury of the battle and rather have the

wrath of the Syrians directed toward Jehoshaphat. In the event of Jehoshaphat's death in battle, Jehoshaphat's wicked son (Jehoram), who may have already become Ahab's son-in-law (married to Athaliah), would sit upon the throne of Judah, and Ahab and Jezebel could more easily see their idolatrous purposes realized in Judah through Jehoram. Jehoshaphat was blinded to his own vanity through this unholy alliance.

3. Here we see how vain and empty are disguises in attempting to hide from God or in seeking to overturn the will of God by doing our own pleasure in breaking God's commandments. We may say how foolish for Ahab to disguise himself. But do we disguise ourselves in covering over our unholy alliances and sins, acting as though we can fool the Lord? Ahab might disguise himself from the Syrians, but he could not pretend to be someone else so that God could not find him out. We do in effect the same thing if we put on the disguise of a godly man, woman, or child by acting one way in public and behaving more like an Ahab at home, at work, or with friends. You may deceive some, but you will not deceive the Lord God. If you don't want to live for the Lord, say so. But don't treat God as if He were a simpleton or a fool whom you can deceive. No pretense or disguise will avail to hide anyone from the all-seeing eye of the Lord now or on the Day of Judgment. Dear ones, there is abundant mercy upon those who beat their chest and confess their sin and look to the Lord for His forgiveness and grace, but there is none to those who live under the cloak of a mere outward Christianity.

B. The King of Syria (Ben-hadad) had his own plan to direct his forces at finding and attacking Ahab at all costs—a blitz (1 Kings 22:31).

1. So when the battle began, the Syrians saw Jehoshaphat clothed in royal robes (maybe even in Ahab's royal robes as a supposed honor from Ahab), and they pursued who they thought to be Ahab (1 Kings 22:32). But Jehoshaphat cried out and the Syrians turned back (sadly the Scripture doesn't say that he cried out to the Lord—again a consequence of his unholy alliance with Ahab—he even finds it difficult to cry out to the Lord when in danger—so will we when we have compromised our convictions and the truth of the Lord by entering into an unholy alliance to unite strength and to join forces in unity at the expense of the truth).

2. God in His mercy preserves Jehoshaphat from destruction at the hands of the Syrians, even though Jehoshaphat is in a sinful, compromised relationship (1 Kings 22:33). God's warnings to us are not to be hated, but to be thankfully received. How many times has the mercy of the Lord been shown to you and me when we were like Jehoshaphat here or like Jonah running away from the will of the Lord rather than to it? Dear ones, make not the mercy of the Lord an excuse to sin or to continue in sin, but make it an altar upon which to fall, hating your sin and clinging to the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. God's Arrow Finds Ahab (1 Kings 22:34-36).

A. Here an unnamed soldier in the Syrian army draws his bow and sends an arrow among the troops of Israel and Judah—not aiming at any particular person, but it strikes Ahab in that small, unprotected place between the joints of his armor where it gives to him a mortal wound (1 Kings 22:34). Ahab knew that he had been severely wounded by the amount of blood lost and now spilling into his chariot (1 Kings 22:35). He died that evening, and a proclamation went out to the hosts of Israel and Judah to flee to their homes (1 Kings 22:36)—a fulfillment of Micaiah's prophecy that they would be like sheep scattered without a shepherd (1 Kings 22:17).

B. Was this just a lucky shot or was it a divinely directed shot to its target? Was this a mere accident or what it the realization of God's stated purpose and plan? Clearly, it was no accident in as much as the word of the Lord had already been given with this outcome (1 Kings 20:42). From the soldier's perspective it was simply an arrow shot at random. However, from God's perspective there was no randomness, chance, or luck at all—it was God's decree and absolute sovereignty that guided that arrow to Ahab's body. Ahab's

disguise as a common soldier could not hide him from the arrow of the Lord.

1. You see, dear ones, not even events that man judges as accidents or calls “lucky” because they were not man’s intention or plan—not even such events are accidents in the world and universe of God’s absolute sovereignty. God has foreordained whatever comes to pass (Ephesians 1:11; Proverbs 16:33). Dear ones, nothing happens (from the least to the greatest, from intentional events done by man to unintentional events done by man) without God willing those events to happen; for He could prevent them from happening if He so willed it.

2. There is a heresy called Open Theism that teaches that God can change who He is as to His nature, attributes, and decrees, and yet remain God—He cannot deny Himself (2 Timothy 2:13)—He is unchangeable (Malachi 3:6). He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). God cannot limit His power and yet be the Almighty God (God does not call Himself “the half-mighty” or the “nearly almighty”). God asks Abraham, “Is any thing too hard for the LORD” (Genesis 18:14)? Nor can God limit His knowledge and yet be the God whose knowledge is infinite (Psalm 147:5). Either God is absolutely sovereign over all things (even over so-called “accidents” unintended by man) or He is sovereign over nothing. There is nothing taught in Scripture about a half-sovereign God—such a God is a false god of one’s own imagination and not the God of the Bible. Ahab plotted to have Jehoshaphat killed, but God had decreed that Ahab would be killed. Whose plan prevailed? And so it always is (whether it is something evil, something small or great, something hidden or open, something intentional or unintentional). It is not luck, or man, or Satan that governs this world—it is God Almighty—your Heavenly Father (Paul’s nephew hears a random conversation).

3. A random arrow (with no specific target in mind) can accomplish God’s purpose. Nothing is random to God. Nothing in your life is coincidental to God. I have used this brief story to demonstrate how nothing is so small, unintentional, or casual that it is of no consequence to God or governed by God. Even something as small as a nail could have brought down a nation.

For lack of a nail a horseshoe was lost;
For lack of a horseshoe a horse went lame;
For lack of a horse a rider never got through;
For lack of a rider a message never arrived;
For lack of a message an army was never sent;
For lack of an army a battle was lost;
For lack of a battle a war was lost;
For lack of a war a kingdom fell;
And all for lack of a nail.

4. This is one of the most comforting truths to the Christian that you will ever hear, but do you believe it—not simply profess it? Will the Lord who decrees all things and works all things after the counsel of His own will (Ephesians 1:11), not work out all things for your good, who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28)? Are you having a difficult time understanding how this situation or event in your life is for your good and God’s glory (whether it be the death of a loved one, a painful affliction, a bitter marriage, a betrayal, financial woes, wayward children, loneliness, isolation, persecution, etc.)? Will you trust your own fallible and limited understanding, or will you trust and cast yourself upon the altar of God’s infallible and unlimited understanding, love, faithfulness, and truth (Proverbs 3:5-7)? Is it really more comforting to believe there is no good plan for you, dear child of God, or to believe whatever happens, God, your savior and lover of your soul sits upon His throne governing all things for His glory and your good?

III. Ahab Unwillingly Yields to God’s Plan (1 Kings 22:37-40).

A. Ahab did not willingly say he would follow the plan of the Lord or submit to God’s will in the

word of the Lord given to him through Micaiah the prophet. And yet in spite of Ahab's rebellion against the Lord and in spite of Ahab's attempt to disguise himself from receiving the just judgment of the Lord, he unwillingly had to yield to God's plan (and so must we all). Ahab thought he was simply doing what he wanted to do in rebelling against the Lord, and yet he was being brought to judgment by the Lord. For not only did Ahab not return in peace (1 Kings 20:42), but his blood was licked up by the dogs (1 Kings 22:38; 1 Kings 21:19).

B. So is everyone who believes and acts as though they can outsmart the Lord, that they can disguise themselves before the Lord, that there will not be a day of reckoning for them. And yet those who rebel against the word of the Lord and will seek out their own pleasure rather than God's pleasure in coming to Jesus Christ and loving Him and endeavoring to keep His commandments will find (like Ahab) that they cannot mock God. God will not be mocked, for whatever a man soweth that shall he also reap (Galatians 6:7). But there is mercy with God to all who will come to Him, beating their chest and crying out to Him, "God be merciful to me a sinner." There is mercy to all who will trust Jesus alone for their salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved (Acts 16:31).

C. Dear Christian, if God is in control of everything, even the appointment of your death, why should you be anxious and worried about anything in life? Why should you be fearful? Your fears are swallowed up in His everlasting love, faithfulness, and absolute sovereignty. Nothing can separate you from the love that is Jesus Christ. That same absolute power that will bring the wicked to judgment will never bring you who are in Christ by faith alone into condemnation.

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