

THINKING SERIOUSLY ABOUT DEATH

“All day long the battle raged and the king was propped up in his chariot facing the Arameans. The blood from his wound ran onto the floor of the chariot, and that evening he died” (1 Ki. 22:35)

My late aunt died of lung cancer more than thirty years ago. As a chain smoker she would smile when she lit up a cigarette and say: “Well! Here is another nail in my coffin”. She was obviously thinking about death, but not seriously.

Ahab must have also thought about death many times. Not long before he died Elijah had killed 950 false prophets that ate at the table of his wife (1 Ki. 18:19 - 40). Obviously Ahab thought about death. Some time later, his wicked wife Jezebel put to death an innocent man named Naboth. Elijah confronted him about this and warned him that one day the dogs would lick his blood in the very place where they licked the blood of Naboth (1 Ki. 21:19). Elijah further warned that Jezebel, would be devoured by the dogs by the wall of Jezreel (1 Ki. 21:23). When Ahab heard these words “he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth, and fasted” (1 Ki. 21:27).

Obviously he seriously thought about dying, but apparently not seriously enough. Like most of us he concluded that his death would be “sometime” in the future. Of course Ahab knew he was going to die “sometime”. Everybody dies “sometime”. “Sometime”, however, is not “now”. “Now”, as the king of Israel, he had more important business to take care of. “Now”, unfortunately, the most important thing was not dying and meeting God, it was fighting against Ramoth Gilead.

As Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, was joining in the battle, he wisely wanted to “seek first” the counsel of the Lord. 400 prophets spoke with one voice that the “lord” would give them victory. Only one lonely prophet named Micaiah dared to disagree. He predicted that Ahab would die in the battle and Israel’s army would be scattered like sheep without a shepherd (1 Ki. 22:17, 28).

Now the thoughts of Ahab about his death must have ratcheted up a notch or two. The statistical balance of prophetic utterances, however, was 400 to 1 in his favor. Surely this one belligerent prophet had to be wrong! Just to be sure, however, Ahab took off his royal robes and disguised himself when he went into the battle (1 Ki. 22:30). What on earth was he thinking about?

As the battle raged an enemy archer drew his bow at random and his arrow struck Ahab in that small unprotected area between the pieces of his armor. “Now” Ahab had reason to think about death more seriously than he had ever done before. The Scriptures tell us that the king was “propped up” in his chariot all day long and didn’t die until evening. God granted him several hours to think real seriously about death. Dying is the easy part, what happens after death is the problem.

Not everyone, as you know, gets a few hours warning. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram died instantly for rebelling against God (Nu. 16:31 - 34). Uzzah died instantly when he touched the ark of the Covenant (2 Sam. 6:7). Ananias and Sapphira died instantly for lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:5 - 9). Ahab had almost all day to think seriously about dying and meeting God face to face. I hope he did! It was, of course, much easier to do “now”, while propped up in his chariot watching his blood make puddles on the floor, than it was while being pampered on his royal throne.

Remember! Everything written in the past was to teach us (Rom. 15:4). God didn’t have to record such vivid details of Ahab’s death, but he did! We need to learn something from Ahab. One obvious lesson is that it is not necessary to wait until the last few hours of your life to think seriously about death. **YOU CAN DO THAT NOW! NOW IS THE DAY OF SALVATION ((2 COR. 6:2).**

Jesus once told of a rich man who was blessed with a bumper crop. On the day he died he was planning to build bigger barns instead of planning to meet God. His neighbors may have thought him wise, but God called him a fool (Lk. 12:13 - 21). What will God call you?