

## Ahab's Last Battle: Ahab's Deception

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The Bible says about king Ahab of Israel: *"Surely there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the sight of the LORD, because Jezebel his wife incited him"* (1 Kings 21:25). What a terrible way to be remembered in history. God promised that Ahab's dynasty would be destroyed, and in 2 Chronicles 18 God told Ahab how his story would end.

**Summary:** We read how Ahab made peace with King Jehoshaphat of Judah, and how they conspired to go to war together against the Arameans. Ahab and Jehoshaphat called the prophets to tell them how the battle would go. The first prophets (led by Zedekiah) promised a victory. But Jehoshaphat wanted a real prophet (it is unclear what he saw false in the first prophets), and Ahab agrees to call his enemy Micaiah son of Imla to speak. Ahab explains to Jehoshaphat that Micaiah never has anything good to say. Micaiah's first message is one of victory, but when pressed by Ahab, he promises defeat and explains why the other prophets had a false message. For his honesty he is assaulted by the other prophet and imprisoned, while Ahab proceeds to his death.

There are three important lessons in this chapter. Each of these lessons corresponds to one of the people in the record. First, Micaiah teaches us that prophets have a degree of power to withhold the message they are given. Second, Ahab teaches us that sometimes God permits the unrighteous to be deceived. Finally, through Jehoshaphat we learn that we ought to be careful with whom we have association.

Micaiah tells us about a vision of heaven where God asked for and sent a deceiving spirit to the prophets to cause Ahab to be destroyed. This is one of seven or eight visions of heaven in the Bible. It is also important that it tells us about how God views those who are His enemies. Finally, we understand that sometimes being deceived is divinely ordained.

What does it mean to be an enemy of God? Ahab had angered God in the past (1 Kings 16:22) and was denied a great blessing from God (1 Kings 17:1). We need to understand this important point: Men who are in sin are enemies of God, and there is NO GREATER ENEMY THAN GOD. Even now men can become enemies of God and are God's enemy (James 4:4, Philippians 3:18).

In Job 1 and Luke 22 we see two examples that God often considers (and permits) testing or tempting of men. We need to understand that even now such conversation may take place for those who belong to God. If some is God's enemy, He may send a distressing spirit (1 Samuel 16:14). As well, God told the Israelites that He might send deceiving spirits to prophets to test the people (Deuteronomy 13:1-3). Today God tells us that He permits delusion (or delusional influences, perhaps spirits) to deceive those who have no love of the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12). He commands then that we must "test the spirits" to discern the truth (1 John 4:1-2).

**Application:** Being an enemy of God is a real and serious condition. We need to have a fear of being in enmity with God. If we are God's enemies, He will permit our deception. Consider this to include our deception to believing we are spiritually okay. This is why we must love the truth. To this end we are commanded to test every spiritual message. It is only a love of the truth will overcome.