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False prophets will arise

“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, in His right hand and on His left. 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. Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, ‘I will persuade him.’ 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.’ 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.”

1 Kings 22:19-23

A view of God’s throne room

Quite a few people tend to underestimate the importance of this chapter from First Kings, I think. It is not a well-known part of Scripture, although this is not rightly so. In fact, it is similar to the first – very well-known – chapters of the book of Job, since it grants us a view of heaven and of the throne room of God Almighty. For our teaching and admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come (1 Cor. 10:11), light is also shed on the role of Satan and his powers.

In the preceding chapter we read that “there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the LORD, because Jezebel his wife stirred him up” (1 Kings 21:25). This is a kind of final conclusion, there was no hope of any improvement. It is against this backdrop we are to understand the scene in the

heavenly throne room, where Ahab was delivered up to the powers of evil. Even these powers – “all the host of heaven” – fall under the sway of God’s authority, and the book of Job shows us that Satan cannot go a step further than God will permit him. Here however, God put them to work after Ahab had made his iniquity complete and in God’s government was going to be put aside. An evil spirit came forward and stood before the Lord (v. 21). For that matter, not all fallen angels enjoy so much freedom of movement, as is shown in the Epistle of Jude (v. 6).

Seduction and false prophecy

As we see in verses 22 and 23, God used a spirit of deceit, who was given power over the whole group of 400 prophets. Because all the prophets of Baal had been killed by the sword (1 Kings 19:1), these prophets presumably were “prophets of the LORD” (cf. v. 5). However, this group of prophets served king Ahab and in doing so, they had compromised themselves with him and his evil deeds.

How good to see there was still a prophet of the Lord left. He was like a lone witness, who prophesied only evil about the king, and therefore Ahab hated him. His name was Micaiah, the son of Imlah (v. 8). Micaiah was a prophet who sought God’s honor rather than the honor of men. His name means “who is like Jahweh?” The name Imlah has to do with fullness, to fulfill. The Lord will fulfill His word, but the question is whether He will be able to use us to this end. Micaiah the prophet faced Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah, and the large group of four hundred prophets who prophesied only good things about king Ahab. This false prophet, however, had a beautiful name. Zedekiah means: “my justice is Jahweh”. The meaning of Chenaanah seems to be *lowland*. But a beautiful name is not everything. Even a true believer is not immune against seduction. We always must be on our guard. False prophecy is quite contagious indeed. A mixture of truth and lies pleases the ear. We are living in the last days, in which many false prophets have gone out into the world. They might also adorn themselves with nice sounding names, like ‘latter day saints’, but the test for all of them is whether they confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh (1 John 4:1-6).

The false claim on the Spirit

When using this term we may have to think of those prophets who prophesy something like, “Peace, peace and safety” (cf. Jer. 6:13-14; 1 Thess. 5:3). They are prophets who prophesy for bread and who preach a prosperity gospel, or a

message of signs and wonders. They join the masses and manipulate them, deluding them with nothing else but a fata morgana. And they are not aware of the fact that judgment is on the doorstep, not only on theirs but on that of apostate Christendom as a whole.

This is what happened in the story we are dealing with now. On that very day Ahab fell in the battle against the Syrians, and the king entered Samaria *dead* (v. 37). Nothing remained of his dream about outward power, his dream of unity. Something similar will happen to the false Church that abandons the Word of the living God. In this chapter the prophet Zedekiah stressed his leadership of this particular group of prophets who identified with Ahab's fate – to their own shame, as would become apparent that very day. He shared Ahab's hatred of the true man of God. He struck Micaiah on the cheek and said, "How did the Spirit of the LORD pass from me to speak to you?" (v. 24, NASB). It is important to pay attention to the claim of this false prophet, because this is what we often hear in our time. Essentially it means that such people think they can dispose of the Spirit of God. Such people will contend that they are moving in or with the stream of the Spirit, they have His anointing, they perform miracles, they have a mighty healing ministry, etc. It is the same claim as Zedekiah's. But the Spirit of God is sovereign and does not link Himself to people who deceive and are being deceived (cf. 2 Tim. 3:13).

Things were not really looking well for Micaiah. He refused to sing along with the choir of the king's prophets and for that reason was thrown into prison. But the Lord was with him. Isaiah says of the Lord's Servant, "(...) I know that I will *not* be ashamed. He is near who justifies me" (Isa. 50:7-8; cf. Rom. 8:33-34). This same thing could be said of Micaiah as the Lord's servant. That very evening it became clear who was the real prophet of the Lord.

