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A look into heaven

Micaiah warns king Ahab

“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. 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 He said, You shall persuade him, and also prevail. Go out and do so. Now 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

In the heavenly throne room

The importance of this chapter from First Kings is sometimes underestimated, I think. It is not a very well known Scripture passage, but this is not right. It is in fact similar to the well known first chapters of the book of Job, because it also gives us a glimpse into heaven and the throne room of the Almighty. The role of Satan and his powers is also highlighted, to teach and warn us, on whom the ends of the ages have come (1 Cor. 10:11).

In the previous chapter we read that there was no king 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 conclusion, a summary of Ahab's life; there was no hope of improvement. It is against this background that we must understand the

scene in the heavenly throne room, where Ahab is finally delivered to the powers of evil. God also exercises authority over these powers, over all the heavenly armies – and the book of Job shows us that Satan cannot go any further than God allows. God engages these powers now that Ahab had filled up the measure of his sins and is being judged and set aside in God's righteous government.

Deception and false prophecy

An evil spirit stepped forward and stood before the LORD (v. 21). However, not all fallen angels have such freedom of movement, as the Epistle of Jude shows (v. 6). God made use of this lying spirit here, as we read in verses 22 and 23, and the spirit gained power over Ahab's entire group of four hundred prophets. I assume that these were supposedly prophets of the LORD (cf. v. 5). After all, the prophets of Baal had been executed with the sword (1 Kings 19:1). These prophets of Yahweh were still in the service of the wicked king, but by doing so they compromised themselves.

Fortunately, there was another prophet of the LORD. It was a loner, who only prophesied evil about the king. And because of that, Ahab hated him. It was Micaiah, the son of Imlah (v. 8). Micaiah sought God's honor, not the honor of men. His name means, "Who is like Yahweh." The name Imlah is related to 'fullness', 'fulfill'. The Lord will fulfill His word, but the question is whether He can use us to do so. The prophet Micaiah is here contrasted with Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah, and the large group of four hundred prophets, who spoke only favorably of king Ahab.

However, the false prophet also had a beautiful name, for Zedekiah means, "My righteousness is Yahweh." Chenaanah probably means: 'lowland'. A beautiful name does not say everything. Even a true believer is not immune to deception. We must be on our guard, for false prophecy is contagious. The blending of truth and falsehood caresses the ear. After all, we live in the last days, when many false prophets have gone out into the world. Perhaps they adorn themselves with beautiful names, such as "the latter-day saints." But the touchstone is whether they confess Jesus Christ as having come in the flesh (1 John 4:1-6).

Claiming the Spirit

Perhaps in this situation in 1 Kings 22 we should think more of prophets, who prophesy along the lines of: "Peace and safety, and no danger" (cf. Jer. 6:13-14; 1 Thess. 5:3). They are bread-eating prophets, and preach a prosperity gospel. They play on feelings; they join in with the masses. But what they are prophesying to us is a mirage. They do not realize that judgment on apostate Christendom is at the door. So it went here too, as soon became apparent. For that very day Ahab fell in the battle with the Syrians; and so the king entered Samaria dead (v. 37).

Nothing remained of the dream of power, and the dream of unity. So will it be in the end time with the false church, because it has abandoned the Word of the living God. The prophet Zedekiah profiled himself in this chapter as the leader of this group of prophets, who identified with the fate of the wicked king – to their own shame, as would become evident that very day. He shared Ahab's hatred of the true man of God. He struck Micaiah on the cheek and said, "Which way did the Spirit from the LORD go from me to speak to you?" (v. 24).

It is important to pay attention to the claims of this false prophet, because we can hear it today as well. At the heart of it is the belief that we can dispose of the Spirit of God ourselves. Such people claim to move in the flow of the Spirit. They have the anointing of the Spirit and perform miracles and signs, they have a mighty healing ministry, etc. It is a similar claim to that of Zedekiah. But the Spirit of God is entirely free. He does not bind Himself to evil men and impostors, who deceive and are being deceived (2 Tim. 3:13).

Things were not looking good for Micaiah. He did not join the choir of the prophets of the king. So he was thrown into prison. But God was with him. Isaiah says of the Servant of the LORD, "(...) And I know that I will not be ashamed. He is near Who justifies Me" (Isa. 50:7-9; cf. Rom. 8:33-34). This was also true of Micaiah as God's servant. During the course of that same day it became clear who was really God's prophet.

OudeSporen 2021

