

The Deceiving Spirit

1 Kings 22:19-25

¹⁶ *The king said to him, “How many times must I make you swear to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the Lord?”*

¹⁷ *Then Micaiah answered, “I SAW all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd, and the Lord said, ‘These people have no master. Let each one go home in peace.’”*

¹⁸ *The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “Didn’t I tell you that he never prophesies anything good about me, but only bad?”*

¹⁹ *Micaiah continued, “Therefore hear the word of the Lord: I SAW the Lord sitting on his throne with all the host of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left. ²⁰ And the Lord said, ‘Who will entice Ahab into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there?’ One suggested this, and another that. ²¹ Finally, a spirit came forward, stood before the Lord and said, ‘I will entice him.’ ²² ‘By what means?’ the Lord asked. ‘I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets,’ he said. ‘You will succeed in enticing him,’ said the Lord. ‘Go and do it.’ ²³ “So now the Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours. The Lord has decreed disaster for you.”*

²⁴ *Then Zedekiah, son of Kenaanah, went up and slapped Micaiah in the face. “Which way did the spirit from the Lord go when he went from me to speak to you?” he asked.*

²⁵ *Micaiah replied, “You will find out on the day you go to hide in an inner room.”¹*

The Lord gave Micaiah two visions, both of which announced judgment to King Ahab. In the first vision, he saw Israel wandering hopelessly, like sheep without a shepherd, obviously a description of a nation without a leader (Numbers 27:15–22). Jesus used this image to depict the Jewish people without spiritual direction (Matthew 9:36). Ahab got the message: he would be killed in the battle.

¹ *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (1 Ki 22:16–25). (1984). Zondervan.

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The second vision explained how this would be accomplished: a lying spirit would give Ahab false confidence so he would enter the battle. That the God of truth should allow this lying spirit to accomplish His work can puzzle us. However, it's much like the situation when God permitting Satan to attack Job (Job 1–2), or when Judas was motivated to betray Jesus (John 13:21–30).

The scriptural principle is found in Psalm 18:26, "*With the pure You will show Yourself pure; and with the devious [crooked], You will show Yourself shrewd.*" God deals with people as a function of their character. Ahab was a consummate liar, and the Lord dealt with him according to his character.

God didn't lie to Ahab; quite the contrary, through the lips of Micaiah He told the truth and gave Ahab fair warning of what lay ahead. The fact that God warned Ahab *before the battle* clears the Lord of the charge of being guilty of his death. The reaction of Zedekiah proves that the four hundred false prophets didn't believe Micaiah either.

In his sinful reaction, Ahab ordered the true prophet to be taken back to prison and given bread and water, as if punishing the prophet would change his message. Of course, the test of a true prophet was (and is) the actual fulfillment of his words (Deuteronomy 18:17–22; Numbers 16:29), and Micaiah knew this. That's why his parting message to Ahab was, "*If you ever return in peace, the Lord has not spoken by me*" (v. 28)

A much greater mystery is why a godly man like King Jehoshaphat went into the battle at all and risked his life. How could King Jehoshaphat not discern what Ahab was doing to him? If Ahab had put a target on Jehoshaphat's back, he would not have made it any easier for the enemy to kill him! Of course, if he had died, his son would have taken the throne of Judah, and Ahab's daughter would have become the *Jezebel of Judah*! If Jehoshaphat's son had become King of Judah, Ahab could have united the two thrones and blended the Davidic line with his own line—what then would have happened to the Davidic covenant and the Messianic line?

Of course, God is sovereign in all things, and He protected Jehoshaphat, while at the same time allowing a *random* arrow to hit an opening in Ahab's armor and kill

him. Although Ahab was disguised, he was not incognito to God. Therefore, Ahab was killed, while Jehoshaphat, in his royal robes, was untouched.

The irony is that Ahab had set the king of Syria free when he should have destroyed him, and now the Syrians killed Ahab. Thus, Micaiah's prophecy was fulfilled, as were the prophecies of Elijah (1 Kings 20:42; 21:19–21).

Ahab's son, Ahaziah, took the throne of Israel and continued the evil ways of his father and mother (vv. 51–53). He reigned only two years, and his brother Joram (or Jehoram) succeeded him. The prophecy about the dogs licking blood on Naboth's property was finally fulfilled in the death of Joram (1 Kings 21:29; 2 Kings 9:25–26).²

The Conclusion to the Matter: God is sovereign!

Since the story of Job, people have been trying to make sense out of the seeming inequities and the often-inexplicable nature of things in this world—we still have no logical, consistent answer, except **God knows—so trust Him!** Of course, this mystery should not surprise us because we have trouble predicting the weather, much less understanding either the flow of history or even the complicated intrigue of our own lives.

Knowing that our God is sovereign in all things can give us both the faith and courage to live and serve in a world that is both cruel and wonderful: "*The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect. The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart to all generations*" (Psalm 33:10–11).

God has given us the privilege to make choices and decisions, and He does not force His will upon us! However, if He isn't allowed to rule, He will overrule regardless of our resistance, rebellion, or connivance. In accordance with the Model Prayer, God's will shall be done "*on earth as it is in heaven.*" He orders His universe by His power and wisdom without considering a consensus of His creatures.

² Wiersbe, W. W. (2002). *Be responsible* (p. 167). Victor.

We only have this capacity sense of moral freedom because God is sovereign. If God were less than sovereign, He could not bestow moral freedom upon His creatures because in our ungodliness, we would become a constant threat to His creation! (cf. A.W. Tozer)

At the same time, we must consider how longsuffering God is—to both the saved and the lost. For example, in 1 Kings,

- He allowed Jezebel to kill the prophets of the Lord, and
- He allowed Elijah to run away from his responsibility.

The greatest judgment God could apply to us would be if He allowed us to have our own way but then judged us to suffer the consequences of *our own way*, without relief.

When the news of the day surprises and upsets us, we should immediately pause and worship the eternal, sovereign God because He is never surprised, never caught unprepared, and never without a solution—He will always *cause all things to work together for good to those who love the Lord and are called according to His purpose* (Romans 8:28).

God's sovereign grace is His precious gift that keeps us from despairing depression to enable us with hope. The Book of 1 Kings reveals to us the **sinfulness** of the human heart, the **faithfulness** of our loving God, and the **blessedness** of being part of God's believing remnant.

Remember, before Jesus returns to set up His kingdom, conditions are going to get worse—a lot worse! Our challenge is to remember WHO we serve and resist the temptation to quit in discouragement. When such despairing conditions arise, we must remember that *responsibility* means “**our response to His ability**.”

God remains on His sovereign throne, and we are promised that we will join the heavenly multitude to sing the song of the overcomers: “*Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigns*” (Revelation 19:6).

How God Treats Us as We Treat Him

Our Posture Toward God	God's Response in Scripture	Key Verse
Merciful	Shows mercy	Psalm 18:25; Matthew 5:7
Blameless / Upright	Acts blamelessly toward us	Psalm 18:25
Pure in heart	Reveals Himself / grants vision	Psalm 18:26; Matthew 5:8
Crooked / Shrewd	Appears shrewd toward us	Psalm 18:26
Humble	Gives grace	James 4:6; Proverbs 3:34
Proud	Resists / opposes	James 4:6
Forgiving	Forgives us	Matthew 6:14–15
Unforgiving	Withholds forgiveness	Matthew 18:21–35
Generous	Gives generously	Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 9:6
Stingy	Measures sparingly	2 Corinthians 9:6
Draw near	Draws near	James 4:8
Distant / Resistant	Remains distant	Zechariah 7:11–13
Listen to God	God listens	Zechariah 7:13
Ignore the needy	God ignores cries	Proverbs 21:13
Obedient	Blesses	Deuteronomy 28:1–14
Disobedient	Disciplines	Hebrews 12:6; Deuteronomy 28:15