

God's Presence and Mercy in the Story of King Ahab

I wanted to share something I've been reading and meditating on lately. It's about King Ahab, whose story we find in 1 Kings, from chapters 16 to 22. He was a king of Israel, also known as the Northern Kingdom, because of its separation from the Southern Kingdom, the Kingdom of Judah. He was considered one of the worst kings of Israel because of his numerous sins and idolatry. Among the things he did and is most remembered for are the theft of Naboth's vineyard ([1 Kings 21:1-16](#)) and marrying and following the advice of his wife Jezebel, who was also only known for her meanness and evil deeds. This is what people notice and remember when they hear Ahab's story.

Still, what I noticed recently while reading his story was God's role and how He approached Ahab. I think this is the most important thing we need to notice when reading biblical stories – the role of God and how he works, not only the example of godly men, which is also important, but if we look only at them, we can also easily get confused. The main example we should follow and what we should learn from the Bible is God's part and work. Still, the stories of men we find, right or wrong, positive or negative, are placed there as an example for us and a way to learn something from them.

What struck me and caught my attention was the moment when the Lord wanted to deal with King Ahab. He continually sent prophets to him to warn him of his wrongdoing. There were other kings who weren't as wicked as him, and they didn't, in a way, get that intention from God. The Scriptures at least don't show it. We know that God's desire is to warn each person of the danger of following the wrong path and its outcome. Still, when we encounter a profile such as that of King Ahab, our initial reaction might be that he least deserves to be warned and given an opportunity to repent. Still, God shows us the opposite. He constantly warns Ahab and sends prophets to him. During his

life, he encountered more than one prophet sent by God to deliver him a message. The main one was Elijah, with whom Ahab had to deal various times. This shows us that God's mercies and the way He looks at things are beyond what we can imagine. We know that Ahab didn't ultimately follow the right path and didn't stick with what God told him, even if there was a time he humbled himself and sought God. By that, we can say that he was "almost" there and that he had a chance to finish well if he had persevered in that attitude.

The passage below shows the moment when he humbled himself before God after being approached by the prophet Elijah, who rebuked him for his wrongdoing.

²⁰ So Ahab said to Elijah, "Have you found me, O my enemy?"

And he answered, "I have found *you*, because you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the Lord: ²¹ 'Behold, I will bring calamity on you. I will take away your posterity, and will cut off from Ahab every male in Israel, both bond and free. ²² I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, because of the provocation with which you have provoked *Me* to anger, and made Israel sin.' ²³ And concerning Jezebel the Lord also spoke, saying, 'The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.' ²⁴ The dogs shall eat whoever belongs to Ahab and dies in the city, and the birds of the air shall eat whoever dies in the field."

²⁵ But 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. ²⁶ And he behaved very abominably in following idols, according to all *that* the Amorites had done, whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel.

²⁷ So it was, when Ahab heard those words, that he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his body, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went about mourning.

²⁸ And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, ²⁹ “See how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the calamity in his days. In the days of his son I will bring the calamity on his house.” (1 Kings 21:20-29)

We see that God Himself testifies to Elijah about Ahab’s humility (v. 29). Even though this was a spark of hope in Ahab’s life, he didn’t finish his life well and failed because of his ongoing unrepentant attitude.

Still, we are not talking about Ahab here, but about how God, who is rich in mercy and in the opportunity He gives. King Ahab didn't choose that, but we know of cases where very wrong people also repented and began walking God’s path. One of them is Saul of Tarsus. We know him today as Apostle Paul, the one who wrote most of the epistles in the New Testament. Still, back then, few people would’ve believed he could change while persecuting and sending Christians to their deaths. He was among the worst. Still, God chose him and showed him mercy. The very man, Ananias, who was called by God to pray for Saul to regain his sight, initially refused and didn’t want to obey God’s voice (Acts 9:13-14). Why? Probably because in man’s eyes, Saul wasn’t deserving of it. Still, I believe that there were people at that time praying for their enemies just as Jesus commanded. At times, we do that because He commanded it, without fully realizing God’s mercy. Still, we need to keep doing it because He is pleased with it, and we also need to grow deeper in knowing and experiencing His love, which is long, deep, and high, and goes far beyond what we can imagine.

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