

## **Ahab's Wasted Opportunities**

God is a God of abundant mercy. Certainly this is evident with Ahab, the king that one Bible paraphrase says, “broke all the records in doing evil” (cf. 1 Kings 16:30, 21:25). One would think that a man so wicked would be quickly “written off” and destroyed by God, but God routinely has ways of amazing and surprising us – especially where His willingness to forgive is concerned. Ahab reigned over the Northern Kingdom of Israel for 20 years. Consider many of the opportunities he wasted:

***He failed to learn from the legacy of earlier kings*** -- Two kingly dynasties had already fallen because of wickedness and idolatry, but that fact did not deter Ahab from nationalizing and institutionalizing the worship of Baal (1 Kings 16:31-32).

***He saw what happened when Jericho was rebuilt (1 Kings 16:34)*** – Just as prophecy had foretold, Hiel of Bethel laid the foundation of Jericho with the death of his firstborn and set up its gates with the death of his youngest son (cf. Joshua 6:26). Ahab and Israel were reminded that God always keeps His word.

***He endured a 3 ½ year drought (1 Kings 17-18:19)*** – Nobody could find Elijah the man of God while the streams and wells of Israel ran dry. Instead of humbling himself before God, at the end of the 3 ½ years all Ahab could say to Elijah was, “Is that you, O troubler of Israel?” (1 Kings 18:17).

***He witnessed the contest at Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18:20-46)*** – Not many people had ever seen a genuine miracle, but Ahab saw Jehovah's fire fall from heaven and consume Elijah's sacrifice, the wood, the stones and even the water in the trench around it (1 Kings 18:38). Rather than acknowledging God's power, Ahab's response was to go and tattle to Jezebel (1 Kings 19:1).

***God helped him defeat the Syrians twice (1 Kings 20:13-21; 26-30)*** – On two separate occasions, prophets of Jehovah told Ahab that he would defeat Ben-Hadad and his Syrian army (1 Kings 20:13, 28-29). On both occasions, God's word proved true. Why wouldn't somebody like Ahab listen to God's word at other times?

***He allowed the Syrian king to escape against God's warnings (1 Kings 20:30-43)***— Ahab was greedy and eager to expand his nation by treating with the defeated Ben-Hadad. When God's prophet rebuked Ahab, he went home sullen and displeased instead of repenting (1 Kings 20:43).

***He was condemned by Elijah after the murder of Naboth (1 Kings 21:20-22)*** – Perhaps Ahab thought that nobody would know what happened when he and Jezebel arranged to have Naboth murdered in order to take his field. Elijah informed him that God had seen and would punish him accordingly. This is the only time in Scripture that Ahab showed genuine remorse and repentance, and it is wonderful to note that God responded to Ahab's genuine signs of penitence (1 Kings 21:27-29).

***He was warned by Micaiah not to go to battle (1 Kings 22:17ff)*** – Ahab wanted the city of Ramoth-Gilead, so he consulted God’s prophet Micaiah. Micaiah told Ahab that he would die (cf. 1 Kings 22:17), and that he was listening to lying prophets if he went to battle anyway (1 Kings 22:23). Ahab could have heeded God and lived, but he chose to follow his vanity and greed to his own destruction.

God is patient and merciful with all, but His patience and mercy will one day give way to His justice (2 Pet. 3:9). Are you ready for His day of judgment (Acts 17:30-31)? **--JB**