

BaptistWay Bible Series for April 13: Disturbing the bliss of deception

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Disturbing the bliss of deception

- 1 Kings 22:6-28

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When I was a student in Fort Worth, my wife and I would occasionally see a movie at the Omni Theater at the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History. The screen was inside a large dome and they began each feature with a brief clip of a helicopter ride over the city. If I allowed myself to focus solely on the center of the screen, it seemed like I was really flying over the city. I knew better. I knew that I was seated in an auditorium. I knew that it was dark outside (even though the filmed flight took place during the day). I knew that I shouldn't be worried about plummeting to the pavement hundreds of feet below. But the sensation was very convincing! I had to ignore a whole lot of clues in order to allow myself the bliss of deception.

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That seemed to be the case with the court of Ahab. Although his tune had changed somewhat since the days of Jezebel, he still hadn't fully come to grips with the fact that God was in control, not Ahab. He was allowing himself to be swept into the bliss of deception by sheer number: about four hundred so-called prophets continually telling him what he wanted to hear.

We're reminded yet again of Ahab's self-absorption with his comment regarding Micaiah: "He never preaches anything good to me, only doom, doom, doom." (1Kings 22:8 The Message) Some commentators conclude that the large group was attached to the idolatrous religious practice set up by Jeroboam (1Kings 13:33) since Jehoshaphat was quick to ask for a "prophet of the LORD". (1Kings 22:7) Four hundred men saying "attack" isn't enough for the King of Judah.

The atmosphere must have been almost intoxicating. The pressure to conform must have been unbelievably intense. Micaiah taken aside before meeting with the Kings to be given his "talking points" that should reinforce what has already been said. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople and Church Father (349-407) said, "We must not mind insulting men, if by respecting them we offend God." Perhaps Micaiah and Chrysostom would have been friends! As we look at the interchange between Micaiah and Ahab, it is necessary to understand the sarcasm involved. I wasn't there to hear the tone of voice. But Ahab's reaction to the lone prophet of the Lord conveys a wealth of information. Here was a man who did not fear the trappings of power. He was not intimidated by a gang of well-wishers hoping he would just get in line with them. This man

was willing to lay his reputation and his life on the line by speaking truthfully to the king.

The mark of a true prophet is recorded in Deuteronomy 18:21-22: “If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.” Michaiah echoes this sentiment when Ahab arranges for him to be imprisoned until the kings return. So certain is the prophet of his message that he tells the king he’s wrong. In an environment that invites, breeds, encourages blissful deception, the prophet of the LORD is surprisingly immune.

I remember reading about a study done on peer pressure. A student was brought into a room with other students and asked to participate in a simple “True/False” quiz. The questions would be read and students would relate their answers by raising their hands. The only hitch was that the room full of students had been coached to raise their hands for wrong answers some of the time. The findings were that a higher than expected amount of time found the participant raising his or her hand to go along with the crowd rather than be the only one to choose an answer (even when the answer was obvious). The challenge for believers today is the same one that Micaiah faced in front of the kings and the four hundred prophets: can we stand up for the truth even when we are the only one standing? Can we remain immune to the blissful deception? Can we allow God to determine our worldview rather than caving to the pressure?

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