

## 2 Chronicles 18-19:3 • Making Unholy Alliances

### Introduction

When Jesus warned about the false prophets of the Last Days, He was not primarily warning about false religions or cults like the Moonies or the Jehovah's Witnesses or the Mormons. There is no doubt that the proliferation of such cults is in itself of some prophetic significance, but those are not the false prophets He was mainly warning us about. He's warning about those who would come into evangelical churches and try to seduce us. It is the internal enemies who are the most dangerous, and until we deal with the enemy within, we're not going to be in a position to deal with the one out there. The bottom line is that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of Holiness. There cannot be a unity of the Spirit where there is heresy and immorality.

<sup>1</sup>Now Jehoshaphat had great riches and honor; and he allied himself by marriage with Ahab.

<sup>2</sup>Some years later he went down to visit Ahab at Samaria. And Ahab slaughtered many sheep and oxen for him and the people who were with him, and induced him to go up against Ramoth-gilead.

<sup>3</sup>Ahab king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat king of Judah, "Will you go with me against Ramoth-gilead?"

And he said to him, "I am as you are, and my people as your people, and we will be with you in the battle."

### [Read v.1-3]

#### Q: What marriage is v.1 referring to?

A: Jehoshaphat arranged for his son Joram, who will be the next king of Judah to follow Jehoshaphat, to marry Ahab and Jezebel's daughter Athaliah. Such marriages between nations or kingdoms were seen as being a type of treaty or agreement between the two, something much more than just two people getting married.

#### Q: Why is this, in and of itself, a completely disastrous move both politically and spiritually?

1. Jezebel is the one through whom Baal worship takes over Israel and through whom much intrigue takes place. (Naboth's vineyard, Elijah, etc.) Athaliah her daughter is just like her and will do the same things and worse.
2. Upon the death of their son Amaziah, Athaliah will kill all but one of Joram's children and assume the throne of Judah herself for 6 years before being forcibly removed. Her spiritual influence over Judah will be horrific.
3. Jezebel wasn't actually a Jew but a Sidonian. A strict interpretation of God's Law concerning marriage would have prohibited not just this alliance, but this marriage.
4. God specifically commanded that to make such treaties with other nations is a violation of trust in Him as their God. The only covenant they were to have was the one with God. Such agreements, in God's view, sought the strength and protection of someone other than God.

**Point:** Although to this point Jehoshaphat has been faithful to the Lord and initiated sweeping reforms in the establishment of God's Word, here he has made a very serious mistake which did **NOT** conform to God's Word, most likely because he thought the bonds of a family connection could overcome the issues God's Word warned against. This mistake will not only be felt in his own lifetime, but for generations to come.

#### Q: What is Ahab doing in suggesting they take back a city from Aram?

A: Ahab is creating the illusion that they are on the same side, threatened by a common enemy. In the parallel account in 2 Kings 22:3, Ahab's exact words are, "Do you know that Ramoth-gilead belongs to us, and we are still doing nothing to take it out of the hand of the king of Aram?"

**Point:** False alliances begin as a reasonable sounding premise that because we're united on a particular cause, all of the other differences don't matter. It's usually worded that it's time to stop being divided, to put "petty" differences aside. False believers have a way of appealing to a single issue so that the myriad other differences will be overlooked. "**YOU'RE** against abortion, and **WE'RE** against

abortion, so let's unite our forces!"

**Q: Why might the suggested goal of re-taking Ramoth-gilead have been chosen by Ahab as a further enticement of getting Jehoshaphat interested?**

A: It was originally a Levitical city as well as one of the 6 original cities of refuge. It would have special spiritual significance to a man of faith like Jehoshaphat. However, it was also a store city and an administrative center in Solomon's time, so its wealth potential would be attractive to a man of sin like Ahab. The bottom line, however, is that Ahab's statement it belongs to "us" and what are "we" going to do about it, is incorrect, in that it is a city of Gad, which belongs to the northern kingdom of Israel and not to the southern kingdom of Judah. It really only "belongs" to Ahab. It's really **NOT** Jehoshaphat's problem.

**Point:** *False alliances have their own agendas, cleverly disguised with spiritual-sounding terms and rhetoric. They emphasize what they know appeals to you so that they'll get what they really want, which is almost always more money and power.*

**Q: How would you characterize Jehoshaphat's basic problem? What is his basic weakness?**

A: His comment that "I am as you are, and my people as your people" makes no distinction between them. He's bought into Ahab's "us" proposition. Although they share the same genetic heritage, they're at the opposite end of just about every other issue, particularly their spiritual beliefs and practices. Jehoshaphat is overlooking 99 significant differences in the belief that just the 1 commonality they share overrides it all and that, in the end, they're really not that different, when in fact they're opposites.

**Q: What is "smooth" in Ahab's choice of how to approach Jehoshaphat?**

A: Having established a family connection through the arranged marriage, Ahab throws a lavish party to make Jehoshaphat feel at ease.

**Point:** *False believers know how to ingratiate themselves without overtly showing their true colors. They know how to con and manipulate, one of the chief characteristics of Jezebel, who is the personification of Satanic seduction by false religion. False alliances are built on spiritual seduction. Remember, Satan comes as an angel of light, and so do his servants. (2 Corinthians 11:14)*

**Application:** *When we join with others because we have something in common, we are also providing approval of all the other things which we would never normally approve of. Our integrity lends them public credibility. It's not guilt by association, but rather guilt by cooperation or guilt by identification. When a good person takes the same platform as a heretic, or someone who is apostate or immoral, the good person is implicitly endorsing that person's ministry and allowing themselves to be identified with him. A vivid example is when a legitimate man of God accepts air time on the apostate TBN television network. He is giving them an air of legitimacy for all their other wrong activities and teaching.*

<sup>4</sup>Moreover, Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "Please inquire first for the word of the LORD."

<sup>5</sup>Then the king of Israel assembled the prophets, four hundred men, and said to them, "Shall we go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I refrain?"

And they said, "Go up, for God will give it into the hand of the king."

<sup>6</sup>But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not yet a prophet of the LORD here that we may inquire of him?"

<sup>7</sup>The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of the LORD, but I hate him, for he never prophesies good concerning me but always evil. He is Micaiah, son of Imla."

But Jehoshaphat said, "Let not the king say so."

<sup>8</sup>Then the king of Israel called an officer and said, "Bring quickly Micaiah, Imla's son."

<sup>9</sup>Now the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah were sitting each on his throne, arrayed in their robes, and they were sitting at the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets were prophesying before them. <sup>10</sup>Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made horns of iron for himself and said, "Thus says the LORD, 'With these you shall gore the Arameans until they are consumed.'"

<sup>11</sup>All the prophets were prophesying thus, saying, "Go up to Ramoth-gilead and succeed, for the LORD will give it into the hand of the king."

<sup>12</sup>Then the messenger who went to summon Micaiah spoke to him saying, "Behold, the words of the prophets are uniformly favorable to the king. So please let your word be like one of them and speak favorably."

<sup>13</sup>But Micaiah said, "As the LORD lives, what my God says, that I will speak."

### [Read v.4-13]

**Q: To Jehoshaphat's credit, he doesn't give in but asks that they first seek the Lord's counsel. How does Ahab address Jehoshaphat's concern?**

A: Ahab tries to deceive Jehoshaphat by bringing in false prophets so that it appears he is just as sincere and concerned spiritually as Jehoshaphat.

**Q: Are these the same prophets Ahab and Jezebel provided to challenge Elijah at Mt. Carmel?**

A: Those were prophets of Baal, which would never be acceptable to a God-fearing man like Jehoshaphat under these conditions. Ahab provides false prophets speaking in the name of the One True God.

**Q: Is it possible that Ahab is just making an honest mistake? Is he himself, perhaps, fooled by these false prophets?**

*But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.*

2 Timothy 3:13

While it's true that they experience a degree of deception their self, they are also conscious and keenly aware of the fact that they're perpetrating deceit.

**Point:** One of Satan's techniques is to always attempt to overwhelm with numbers. In Jeremiah's time, there were literally **THOUSANDS** of false prophets opposing him, but we know nothing of them today, yet know everything about Jeremiah the true prophet and God's message through him. Here the true prophet is outnumbered 400-to-1. False prophets will always tell you what you **WANT** to hear; a true prophet will tell you what you **NEED** to hear.

**Q: How do Ahab's feelings about the one, true prophet completely reveal his spiritual lack of character?**

A: His complaint is that "he never prophesies good concerning me but always evil". He is not willing to listen to the truth of God's Word should it convict him of sin, but only wants to hear whatever will provide self-justification for his own ways and desires.

**Point:** This is why they prophesy what they think we want to hear, because when it comes to God's Word, they only want to hear pleasing things themselves.

**Q: What is the contrast between Ahab and Jehoshaphat where the Word of God is concerned?**

A: Jehoshaphat (representing true believers) is not dissuaded by numbers. He wants to hear the truth even in the face of overwhelming numbers who are saying what they think he wants to hear. He'll take one man of truth over 400 who lie. On the other hand, Ahab (representing false believers) can't stand to hear the truth and always tries to drown the one voice of truth with hundreds of false ones.

**Point:** God's will and ways are shaped and discerned as measured against His Word. Just because a **LOT** of people advocate a direction or position does not mean they are automatically right.

*“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.*

*Matthew 7:13-14*

**Application:** Note how false believers do everything they can to suppress the truth either by persecuting a true messenger directly or by trying to overwhelm with superior numbers of false messengers. Have you noticed how often in the Bible and throughout history that God’s messenger is most often in the minority? How does this bolster the role and importance of the Word of God in the discernment between true and false messengers?

**[Read v.14-17]**

<sup>14</sup>When he came to the king, the king said to him, “Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I refrain?”

He said, “Go up and succeed, for they will be given into your hand.”

<sup>15</sup>Then the king said to him, “How many times must I adjure you to speak to me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?”

<sup>16</sup>So he said,

“I saw all Israel  
Scattered on the mountains,  
Like sheep which have no shepherd;  
And the LORD said,  
‘These have no master.  
Let each of them return to his house in  
peace.’”

<sup>17</sup>Then the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?”

**Q: What is the nature of Micaiah’s initial response to go ahead with their plans? How was this actually the right message from God?**

A: Some might interpret this as sarcasm, but it’s an example of what is always the first phase of God’s judgment against unfaithfulness: God ceases to correct.

**Application:** The reason that faithful Christians often have more problems than unfaithful ones is that it is the son whom God loves whom He corrects. When someone ceases to respond to His correction, He gives them over to their own will and ways. It’s like when God instructed the prophet Amos to name his son “Loammi” – “they’re not My people anymore”. God ceases to correct.

**Q: What further reveals to us the fact that Ahab is keenly aware of his own spiritual shortcomings?**

A: He knows that Micaiah is doing exactly what all his 400 false prophets are doing: telling him what he wants to hear instead of telling him the truth.

**Q: Why should a message about Israel being scattered “like sheep which have no shepherd” mean anything to Ahab?**

A: According to God’s direction, the chief responsibility of the kings of Israel were to act as a shepherd to the people. The message God is communicating to Ahab through Micaiah is that from God’s point of view, Ahab is not a real leader and that it would be better for them to forget about Aram or anything else and just go home.

**Q: What more do we learn about Ahab (representing false believers) in his response to God’s Word?**

A: It’s clear from Ahab’s response that he not only understands the message, but that he has no intention of responding to it. He **KNOWS** the truth but will not **PRACTICE** the truth.

**Application:** This is the second phase of God’s judgment on a backslidden people: He removes true leadership and replaces them with false. Leaders who are hirelings, pulpit politicians, theocrats – a wide variety of things, all of which fall short of being a shepherd.

<sup>18</sup>Micaiah said, "Therefore, hear the word of the LORD. I saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing on His right and on His left. <sup>19</sup>The LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab king of Israel to go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?' And one said this while another said that. <sup>20</sup>Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD and said, 'I will entice him.' And the LORD said to him, 'How?' <sup>21</sup>He said, 'I will go and be a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' Then He said, 'You are to entice him and prevail also. Go and do so.' <sup>22</sup>Now therefore, behold, the LORD has put a deceiving spirit in the mouth of these your prophets, for the LORD has proclaimed disaster against you."

<sup>23</sup>Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came near and struck Micaiah on the cheek and said, "How did the Spirit of the LORD pass from me to speak to you?" <sup>24</sup>Micaiah said, "Behold, you will see on that day when you enter an inner room to hide yourself."

<sup>25</sup>Then the king of Israel said, "Take Micaiah and return him to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king's son; <sup>26</sup>and say, 'Thus says the king, "Put this man in prison and feed him sparingly with bread and water until I return safely."'"

<sup>27</sup>Micaiah said, "If you indeed return safely, the LORD has not spoken by me." And he said, "Listen, all you people."

<sup>28</sup>So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah went up against Ramoth-gilead. <sup>29</sup>The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "I will disguise myself and go into battle, but you put on your robes." So the king of Israel disguised himself, and they went into battle.

<sup>30</sup>Now the king of Aram had commanded the captains of his chariots, saying, "Do not fight with small or great, but with the king of Israel alone."

<sup>31</sup>So when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, they said, "It is the king of Israel," and they turned aside to fight against him. But Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him, and God diverted them from him. <sup>32</sup>When the captains of the chariots saw that it was

### [Read v.18-22]

**Q: How would you characterize this third phase of God's judgment?**

A: He sends a deception.

*For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.*

2 Thessalonians 2:11-12

**Point:** *If somebody doesn't love the Truth of God's Word, they don't love Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." (John 14:15) If people don't love the Truth, they don't love Jesus. And the reason they don't love the Truth is because, in some way, they're taking pleasure in wickedness. Where you find "so-called Christians" who don't love the truth, it's because they're taking pleasure in wickedness and, in the end, God will send upon them a deluding influence that they may believe what is false.*

- Phase 1: God stops correcting.
- Phase 2: God removes real leadership.
- Phase 3: God sends a delusion.

### [Read v.23-27]

**Observation:** *Whenever Jesus confronted false influences, just like many of the Old Testament prophets, He always confronted them with the Truth from the Word of God. The actually "smiting" of a false messenger or false leader was left to God to be taken care of in His own time and manner. A visible sign of false messengers and false leaders is that they act in their own authority, exact immediate retribution, and never support their actions or decisions with God's Word but rely on everyone accepting the authority of their position. True believers never treat false believers the way they deserve, but always "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15). The false are always betrayed by their ill-treatment of others in the name of their position or alleged authority.*

### [Read v.28-34]

**Q: Why do you suppose that Jehoshaphat still went with Ahab?**

1. He had given his word and may have been reluctant to break it. There are biblical examples where giving one's word obligates you to follow through even when it turns sour, such as the Gibeonites trickery of Joshua.
2. It was, after all, a just cause. Ramoth-gilead **DID** belong to Israel and should be returned to its rightful owner.
3. Jehoshaphat may not have accepted Micaiah's message as completely overriding the 400 false prophets.
4. In these and other conjectures, the common root of the problem is not holding fast to God's Word in all matters.

[Continued on the next page.]

not the king of Israel, they turned back from pursuing him.

<sup>33</sup>A certain man drew his bow at random and struck the king of Israel in a joint of the armor. So he said to the driver of the chariot, "Turn around and take me out of the fight, for I am severely wounded." <sup>34</sup>The battle raged that day, and the king of Israel propped himself up in his chariot in front of the Arameans until the evening; and at sunset he died.

**Q: We've seen the 3 phases of God's judgments. But Ahab's own plans came in 3 phases as well. How would you characterize his first step?**

A: He wanted to obtain a credibility he couldn't get otherwise, to obtain the endorsement of a righteous man. It's the kind of thinking that goes like this: "If **HE'S** in on it, God will **HAVE** to bless us because he's such a good guy."

**Q: What do v.28-29 reveal as the second phase of Ahab's plan?**

A: He's looking for a fall guy. If things go wrong, Ahab will claim, "It's **HIS** fault". In this case, he's making Jehoshaphat the main target to deflect attention from himself in the hopes of coming out the victor on the other side.

**Q: And how does this result in the third phase of Ahab's plan?**

A: Jehoshaphat indeed becomes confused with Ahab and has become the target. Jehoshaphat allowed himself to be confused with Ahab and now he's a target when the arrows are flying.

**Application:** *False alliances are entered into on the part of false believers in order to...*

1. Gain credibility and protection they can never get on their own.
2. Establish a fall guy for their agenda.
3. Make someone else the target.

**Q: An arrow was the literal cause of Ahab's death, but what was the greater spiritual cause that this represents?**

A: From Ephesians 6:13 we know about the greater meaning of armor, and in particular about its largest piece, the "breastplate of righteousness". There was a "chink" in Ahab's armor, an indication of his weakness where righteousness is concerned.

**Point:** *Sin finds people out. It exploits the chink in their armor. This is why a false believer can never be our ally, because they'll never win. God won't use people like that and will eventually bring about their literal downfall to mirror their spiritual downfall.*

**Q: What saved Jehoshaphat in this instance?**

A: God's grace. God allowed Jehoshaphat, a normally righteous believer, to make a mistake and to recover from it. But according to every action Jehoshaphat took, he should have paid the penalty for this alliance.

**Point:** *It's very important to note that God **DID NOT** give Jehoshaphat victory, but only escape with his life. God did not reward his behavior, but because Jehoshaphat was still considered a "good son", provided a way to **CORRECT** him that he might learn from his mistake.*

**[Read 19:1-3]**

**Application:** *When you ride in their chariot, when you make alliances with false believers, you're going to get confused with them and make yourself a target. Nothing short of God's intervention will save you. This is really due to the fact that at the outset, if you'd measured the whole of their doctrines, practices, and activities, you would have concluded that although a very few of them may have aligned with your own, the rest overwhelmingly defined them as "those who hate the LORD". And you would have never entered into a personal relationship which ultimately led to a deeper commitment until no one could tell you apart from them.*

<sup>1</sup>Then Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned in safety to his house in Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup>Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him and said to King Jehoshaphat, "Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD and so bring wrath on yourself from the LORD? <sup>3</sup>But there is some good in you, for you have removed the Asheroth from the land and you have set your heart to seek God."

<sup>35</sup>After this Jehoshaphat king of Judah allied himself with Ahaziah king of Israel. He acted wickedly in so doing. <sup>36</sup>So he allied himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish, and they made the ships in Ezion-geber. <sup>37</sup>Then Eliezer the son of Dodavahu of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat saying, “Because you have allied yourself with Ahaziah, the LORD has destroyed your works.” So the ships were broken and could not go to Tarshish.

### **[Read 20:35-37]**

**Q: Towards the end of his reign, Jehoshaphat makes the same mistake again. Why is God’s response different this time?**

A: Jehoshaphat was supposed to have learned and applied the right lesson from his encounter with Ahab. Instead, he repeats it with Ahaziah and instead of correction, he experiences judgment.

**Point:** *The first time God rescues and rebukes; the second time God invokes judgment and he loses everything.*

### **Overall Application**

- *Should we join with, endorse, or even encourage someone or something just because it claims to be “Christian” or something from God? What are we supposed to do to tell the difference?*
- *Notice how for Jehoshaphat it began with something as “innocent” as a personal relationship? What are the Bible’s instructions regarding personal relationships with non-believers or even false believers? How are we supposed to interact with such people when they approach us?*
- *Have you ever watched “Christian” television and been struck with the thought that “something” is different about some speakers from others? Or perhaps the differences between speakers at a weekend seminar? Are you accepting that because one person has impeccable credentials that they **ALL** must be OK? What should you be doing to change this?*
- *Satan’s attacks from outside the church are the easiest to discern because they’re usually so blatantly in violation of God’s Word. Our devotion to His Word is the critical tool to prepare us for the much more difficult task of dealing with his attacks from within the church.*

*Please Note: Much of the material for this lesson is drawn from Jacob Prasch’s sermon, “A Chink in the Armor”, which can be found transcribed online [here](#) or purchased as a tape [here](#) from [Moriel Ministries](#). It’s highly recommended.*