

# **Ahab – The King Whose Repentance Was Too Little, Too Late**

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Without hearing the Old testament Reading, what would you have remembered about King Ahab? Probably very little.

Ahab is perhaps the most famous of the kings of the separate kingdoms of Israel. The son and successor of the evil king Omri, Ahab became a pioneer and champion of evil. Not content with king Jeroboam's golden calf cult, Ahab sponsored Baal and Asherah worship, introduced by his evil wife, Jezebel. Rituals of the Ball and Asherah cults involved detestable practices, including prostitution, homosexual prostitution, and human sacrifice of children.

Throughout king Ahab's reign of twenty-two years, Elijah was God's messenger to him. Elijah called for king Ahab to repent, over and over again. God blessed king Ahab with conquests over Syria twice, giving king Ahab an opportunity to repent. Although Ahab did eventually repent, it was too little too late. When he went to war the third time, God did not bless Ahab with a victory, but a defeat.

How did king Ahab become so evil? It happened when he disobeyed God by marrying Jezebel, a princess from Zidon, where paganism and its associated evil were rampant. Marriage to foreigners was forbidden by God because of the pagan connection. Jezebel was devious and wholly devoted to the evil of her upbringing. At her prompting, Ahab introduced her gods Baal and Asherah to Israel. Worship of the true God of Israel was outlawed.

Because of king Ahab's action, God sent Elijah to him to prophesy that there would be a famine, no rain or dew until Elijah said otherwise. Jezebel was furious and had Ahab to put Elijah to death. Elijah fled for his life and lived in exile under God's care for three and a half years.

At God's prompting, Elijah came out of exile and again confronted king Ahab. One of the most memorable accounts the included king Ahab was Elijah's challenge to the 400 prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel. You may recall that Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to a contest on whose God was the true God. The Ball prophets called upon their god, Baal, all day for fire to come down from heaven and burn the sacrifice on the altar. Nothing happened. When it was Elijah's turn, he asked that water be poured over the altar and sacrifice. When Elijah prayed, God answered with a lightening bolt that came from the heaven and consumed not only the sacrifice but also the altar and sacrifice and destroyed it all.

More could be said of King Ahab, but what we want to think about right now is this question, "Will God forgive someone after they have rejected him a lifetime?"

Certainly king Ahab had rejected the Lord God of Israel all of his life. When Ahab did repent, even though it was too little too late, God did withhold some of his judgment on Ahab. God was merciful.

So, will God forgive someone after they have rejected him a lifetime? Think about the thief on the cross. It wasn't until he was about to take his last breath that he asked to be remembered in the kingdom of God. Jesus said those immortal words, "Today, you will be with me in Paradise."

So, does that mean that we can wait until our last breath to repent and receive God's mercy? No! Who knows when you will take your last breath on this earth? Only God does. It would be foolish to wait in the

wishful thinking that you would be given an opportunity to repent at the very last and then receive God's mercy.

Why wait? Why live life without God's grace? It makes no sense. In fact, it is foolish. God wants us to enjoy the blessing of his mercy and grace every moment of every day in our life. That is why He sent Jesus into this world to die for us.

Repentance means to turn away from the path of evil and turn back to God – the path of righteousness. The path of evil will only lead to our eternal destruction and condemnation. The path of righteousness will always lead to life eternal.

King Ahab was given several chances to repent, but did not until at last when it was too little too late. God calls us to repentance today and everyday. Will you repent?

God's grace and love are ours through faith in Jesus Christ. May that grace and love abide in you tonight and everyday as the cross of Jesus is held before us to point us to the way of eternal life. Amen.