

FIRST KINGS

Chapter 22

Micaiah Prophecies Against Ahab

For three years there was no war between Aram and Israel. ² But in the third year Jehoshaphat king of Judah went down to see the king of Israel. ³ The king of Israel had said to his officials, “Don’t you know that Ramoth Gilead belongs to us and yet we are doing nothing to retake it from the king of Aram?” ⁴ So he asked Jehoshaphat, “Will you go with me to fight against Ramoth Gilead?” Jehoshaphat replied to the king of Israel, “I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses.” ⁵ But Jehoshaphat also said to the king of Israel, “First seek the counsel of the LORD.” ⁶ So the king of Israel brought together the prophets—about four hundred men—and asked them, “Shall I go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?” “Go,” they answered, “for the Lord will give it into the king’s hand.” ⁷ But Jehoshaphat asked, “Is there not a prophet of the LORD here whom we can inquire of?” ⁸ The king of Israel answered Jehoshaphat, “There is still one man through whom we can inquire of the LORD, but I hate him because he never prophesies anything good about me, but always bad. He is Micaiah son of Imlah.” “The king should not say that,” Jehoshaphat replied. ⁹ So the king of Israel called one of his officials and said, “Bring Micaiah son of Imlah at once.” ¹⁰ Dressed in their royal robes, the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah were sitting on their thrones at the threshing floor by the entrance of the gate of Samaria, with all the prophets prophesying before them. ¹¹ Now Zedekiah son of Kenaanah had made iron horns and he declared, “This is what the LORD says: ‘With these you will gore the Arameans until they are destroyed.’ ” ¹² All the other prophets were prophesying the same thing. “Attack Ramoth Gilead and be victorious,” they said, “for the LORD will give it into the king’s hand.” ¹³ The messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah said to him, “Look, as one man the other prophets are predicting success for the king. Let your word agree with theirs, and speak favorably.” ¹⁴ But Micaiah said, “As surely as the LORD lives, I can tell him only what the LORD tells me.” ¹⁵ When he arrived, the king asked him, “Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?” “Attack and be victorious,” he answered, “for the LORD will give it into the king’s hand.” ¹⁶ The king said to him, “How many times must I make you swear to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?” ¹⁷ Then Micaiah answered, “I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd, and the LORD said, ‘These people have no master. Let each one go home in peace.’ ” ¹⁸ The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “Didn’t I tell you that he never prophesies anything good about me, but only bad?” ¹⁹ Micaiah continued, “Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne with all the host of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left. ²⁰ And the LORD said, ‘Who will entice Ahab into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there?’ “One suggested this, and another that. ²¹ Finally, a spirit came forward, stood before the LORD and said, ‘I will entice him.’ ²² “ ‘By what means?’ the LORD asked. “ ‘I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets,’ he said. “ ‘You

will succeed in enticing him,' said the LORD. 'Go and do it.' ²³ "So now the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours. The LORD has decreed disaster for you." ²⁴ Then Zedekiah son of Kenaanah went up and slapped Micaiah in the face. "Which way did the spirit from the LORD go when he went from me to speak to you?" he asked. ²⁵ Micaiah replied, "You will find out on the day you go to hide in an inner room." ²⁶ The king of Israel then ordered, "Take Micaiah and send him back to Amon the ruler of the city and to Joash the king's son ²⁷ and say, 'This is what the king says: Put this fellow in prison and give him nothing but bread and water until I return safely.' " ²⁸ Micaiah declared, "If you ever return safely, the LORD has not spoken through me." Then he added, "Mark my words, all you people!"

22:1–12 Ahab, allied with the king of Judah (v 44), decided to retake Ramoth-gilead. (TLSB)

22:1 *three years.* See note on 20:1. (CSB)

no war between Aram and Israel. The annals of the Assyrian ruler Shalmaneser III (859–824 B.C.) record the participation of both "Ahab the Israelite" and Hadadezer (Ben-Hadad) of Damascus in a coalition of 12 rulers that fought against Assyrian forces at Qarqar on the Orontes River in 853. According to the Assyrian records, Ahab contributed 2,000 chariots and 10,000 foot soldiers to the allied forces. Assyrian claims of victory appear exaggerated since they withdrew and did not venture westward again for four or five years. (CSB)

Given the earlier antagonism between the two nations, this was unusual. (TLSB)

22:2 *Jehoshaphat king of Judah went down to see the king of Israel.* Perhaps to congratulate him on the success of the western alliance against the Assyrian threat (see notes on v. 1; 2Ch 18:2). (CSB)

In a third encounter with the Syrians, Ahab was to lose his life. Apparently, Ben-hadad did not return all the cities to Israel as he had promised (20:34). (TLSB)

22:3 *Ramoth Gilead.* Located near the Yarmuk River in Transjordan; an Israelite city since the days of Moses (see 4:13; Dt 4:43; Jos 20:8). (CSB)

City in tribal territory of Gad, one of three Transjordanian cities of refuge (Jsh 20:8). (TLSB)

belongs to us. Israel could lay claim to Ramoth Gilead also by virtue of the treaty concluded with Ben-Hadad a few years earlier (see 20:34), the provisions of which he had apparently failed to honor. (CSB)

22:4 *Will you go with me ... ?* Even though Ahab had just been allied with the Arameans against the Assyrians, now that the Assyrian threat was over he did not hesitate to seize an opportunity to free Ramoth Gilead from Aramean control. (CSB)

Friendly relations were cemented by the marriage of Ahab's daughter Athaliah to Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram (2Ki 8:18). (TLSB)

I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses. Jehoshaphat was later to be condemned by the prophet Jehu (2Ch 19:2) for violating the Lord's will by joining forces with Ahab. In this alliance, Jehoshaphat completely reversed the policy of his father Asa, who had entered into an alliance with the Arameans against Baasha of the northern kingdom (see 15:17–23). (CSB)

Political alliance naturally led to a military alliance, resisting a commonly hostile kingdom. (TLSB)

22:5 *First seek the counsel of the LORD.* Jehoshaphat hesitated to proceed with the planned action without the assurance of the Lord's favor (see 1Sa 23:1–4; 2Sa 2:1). (CSB)

22:6 *prophets.* No doubt associated with the paganized worship at Bethel (see notes on 12:28–29), they exercised their "office" by proclaiming messages designed to please the king (see Am 7:10–13). (CSB)

four hundred men. See numbers in 18:19; count may have had political or symbolic significance. (TLSB)

22:7 *another.* Jehoshaphat may be expressing doubt about these prophets, or he may have realized that Micaiah was not present to voice support. (TLSB)

Is there not a prophet of the LORD here ... ? Jehoshaphat recognized that the 400 prophets were not to be relied on (see Eze 13:2–3) and asked for consultation with a true prophet of the Lord. (CSB)

As the golden calves at Dan and Bethel were supposed to represent the God who brought the people "up out of the land of Egypt" (12:28), so there were prophets in Israel who professed to proclaim "the word of the LORD" (v 5). (TLSB)

22:8 *never prophesies anything good.* Ahab's assessment of a prophet depended on whether his message was favorable to him (see 18:17; 21:20). (CSB)

22:10 *gate of Samaria.* City gates could include a large, general assembly area or a marketplace (cf 2Ki 7:1). (TLSB)

prophesying. Hbr verb is translated "raved" in 1Sm 18:10; 1Ki 18:29. (TLSB)

22:11 *Zedekiah.* Evidently the spokesman for the 400 prophets. (CSB)

iron horns. A symbol of power (see Dt 33:17). (CSB)

One of the false prophets supplemented the spoken incantation with an action that was to magically produce the effect it portrayed. True prophets also acted out or pantomimed their message in order to make it more impressive (cf 2Ki 13:14–19; Jer 27:2; Ezk 4). (TLSB)

22:1–12 Ahab's false prophets encourage him to fight against the Syrian city of Ramoth-gilead. Many false prophets today would mislead us and rob us of the treasures of God's Word. The Holy Spirit gives us insight through the Word to see through all falsehood. In Scripture, we have all we need: Christ and salvation. • Your Word, O Lord, is a light for my path. Keep me in Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life. Amen. (TLSB)

22:13 *Let your word agree with theirs.* A bit of advice reflecting the view that all prophets were merely self-serving. (CSB)

22:15 *we.* A subtle shift (see v. 6) that seeks a favorable response by including Jehoshaphat as a co-sponsor of the enterprise. (CSB)

Attack ... for the LORD will give it into the king's hand. Micaiah sarcastically mimics the 400 false prophets (see v. 12). (CSB)

The king was suspicious. Perhaps Micaiah reflected Ahab's sarcasm in his answer. (TLSB)

22:16 *tell me nothing but the truth.* Micaiah apparently betrayed his lack of seriousness, and Ahab immediately recognizes this. (CSB)

The king was suspicious. Perhaps Micaiah reflected Ahab's sarcasm in his answer. (TLSB)

22:17 *like sheep without a shepherd ... These people have no master.* Using the imagery of shepherd and sheep (see Nu 27:16–17; Zec 13:7; Mt 9:36; 26:31), Micaiah depicts Ahab's death in the upcoming battle. (CSB)

A nation without a leader. (TLSB)

22:19 *I saw the LORD sitting on his throne.* A true prophet was one who had, as it were, been made privy to what had transpired in God's heavenly throne room and so could truthfully declare what God intended to do (see Isa 6:1; Jer 23:16–22). (CSB)

host of heaven. The companies of angels. (TLSB)

22:20–22 *entice.* What Micaiah saw was a visionary portrayal of the fact that when people “refused to love the truth and so be saved,” God “sends them a strong delusion” (2Th 2:10–11; see also the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, Ex 4:21). Chem: “The devil is properly the father of lying, but because he can do nothing unless God permits, Job 1:12, 1 Kings 22:22, therefore God says in Ezek. 14:9–10, ‘I have deceived him,’ in order that we may recognize that false prophets are a punishment for contempt, stubbornness, and ingratitude toward the truth” (*LTh* 1:197). (TLSB)

22:23 *the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouths of all these prophets.* Some view the lying spirit as Satan or one of his agents. Others have suggested a spirit of God who undertakes the task of a lying spirit (but see 1Sa 15:29). The Lord had given the 400 prophets over to the power of the lie because they did not love the truth and had chosen to speak out of their own hearts (see Jer 14:14; 23:16, 26; Eze 13:2–3, 17; see also note on 2Sa 24:1). (CSB)

your prophets. False prophets gathered by Ahab for advice. (TLSB)

22:24 *Which way did the spirit from the LORD go when he went from me to speak to you?* By this sarcastic question Zedekiah suggests that one prophet can be a liar just as well as another. (CSB)

False prophet Zedekiah ironically claimed exclusive possession of the Spirit. (TLSB)

22:25 *hide in an inner room.* Where Zedekiah will seek refuge (cf. 20:30). This will vindicate Micaiah's prophetic authority. (CSB)

Dark back room of a house. Micaiah prophesies an ominous event. (TLSB)

22:26 *Joash.* Descendant of Ahab, not the future king of Judah (2Ki 11–12). (TLSB)

22:27 Ahab didn't want the prophet's message to interfere with his alliance or with morale. (TLSB)

22:28 *in peace.* Or, "in safety." Micaiah's prophecy is now clear. (TLSB)

Hear. He calls the crowd to witness and remember this test of truthfulness (cf 18:30). (TLSB)

22:13–28 Contrary to the false prophets, Micaiah does not give Ahab a favorable prediction. For this, the king orders that Micaiah be imprisoned. God does not want us to be guided by what others may wish to hear or by the popular opinions of the day. Rather, our only sure guide through life is God's Word, which alone can make us "wise for salvation keep us through the Scriptures on the way that leads to eternal life in Jesus Christ. Amen. (TLSB)

Ahab Killed at Ramoth Gilead

²⁹ So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah went up to Ramoth Gilead.
³⁰ The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "I will enter the battle in disguise, but you wear your royal robes." So the king of Israel disguised himself and went into battle. ³¹ Now the king of Aram had ordered his thirty-two chariot commanders, "Do not fight with anyone, small or great, except the king of Israel." ³² When the chariot commanders saw Jehoshaphat, they thought, "Surely this is the king of Israel." So they turned to attack him, but when Jehoshaphat cried out, ³³ the chariot commanders saw that he was not the king of Israel and stopped pursuing him. ³⁴ But someone drew his bow at random and hit the king of Israel between the sections of his armor. The king told his chariot driver, "Wheel around and get

me out of the fighting. I've been wounded.”³⁵ All day long the battle raged, and the king was propped up in his chariot facing the Arameans. The blood from his wound ran onto the floor of the chariot, and that evening he died.³⁶ As the sun was setting, a cry spread through the army: “Every man to his town; everyone to his land!”³⁷ So the king died and was brought to Samaria, and they buried him there.³⁸ They washed the chariot at a pool in Samaria (where the prostitutes bathed), and the dogs licked up his blood, as the word of the LORD had declared.³⁹ As for the other events of Ahab's reign, including all he did, the palace he built and inlaid with ivory, and the cities he fortified, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel?⁴⁰ Ahab rested with his fathers. And Ahaziah his son succeeded him as king.

22:30 *disguise*. By this strategy he thought he could direct attention away from himself and so minimize any chance for fulfillment of Micaiah's prediction. (CSB)

Hoping to gain security, because higher rank usually attracts a more intense attack. (TLSB)

22:31 *thirty-two captains*. Syrian force apparently was made up of 32 divisions as before; this could represent regions of their nation. (TLSB)

except the king of Israel. If the leader was killed or captured, ancient armies usually fell apart (cf. vv. 35–36). (CSB)

22:32 One wonders why Jehoshaphat would go along with Ahab's scheme (v 30). (TLSB)

cried out. Either to the Lord in prayer or for reinforcements. (TLSB)

22:34 *at random*. Without aiming at any particular target. Events that appear to happen “by chance” (Lk 10:31) are not merely the product of blind fate; God causes them or allows them. (TLSB)

chariot driver. A war chariot normally carried two men—a fighter and a driver. Sometimes, it appears, there were three men, but the third seems to have been an officer who commanded a chariot unit (see 9:22; 2Ki 9:25; Ex 14:7; 15:4, where these officers are called lit. “the third”). (CSB)

22:35 *propped up*. Lest the troops become demoralized, he continued to fight. A fitting effort. (TLSB)

that evening he died. Fulfilling Micaiah's prophecy (vv. 17, 28). (CSB)

22:36 *Every man to his city ... his country!* Full retreat. (TLSB)

22:38 *dogs*. Cf 14:11; 21:23–24. (TLSB)

prostitutes. Ahab's blood tainted the water of the Pool of Samaria, where prostitutes customarily washed. Though not recorded in Elijah's prophecy (21:19), this desecration of his blood added to the disgrace of his death. (TLSB)

as the word of the LORD had declared. A partial fulfillment of Elijah's prophecy concerning Ahab's death (see note on 21:19). (CSB)

22:39 *the palace he built and inlaid with ivory*. Excavators of Samaria have found ivory inlays in some of the buildings dating from this period of Israel's history. Ahab's use of ivory in this way is indicative of the realm's economic prosperity during his reign. (CSB)

Luxuriously inlaid with ivory. (TLSB)

cities he fortified. Excavators have found evidence that Ahab strengthened the fortifications of Megiddo and Hazor. (CSB)

annals of the kings of Israel. See note on 14:19. (CSB)

22:40 *rested with his fathers*. See note on 1:21. (CSB)

Ahaziah his son succeeded him. For the reign of Ahaziah see vv. 51–53; 2Ki 1. (CSB)

22:29–40 Giving his royal robes to Jehoshaphat, Ahab disguises himself and goes into battle, where he is struck and killed by a “random” arrow. God's Word never fails; that includes His Word against wickedness and unbelief. Rather than trying to get around God's Word, flee to that Word, which includes the promises of grace and forgiveness in the crucified and risen Christ. • Merciful God, You shower down kindness and love every day. How can I ever thank You for all the undeserved goodness that comes my way? Amen. (TLSB)

Jehoshaphat King of Judah

⁴¹ Jehoshaphat son of Asa became king of Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel. ⁴² Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-five years. His mother's name was Azubah daughter of Shilhi. ⁴³ In everything he walked in the ways of his father Asa and did not stray from them; he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD. The high places, however, were not removed, and the people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense there. ⁴⁴ Jehoshaphat was also at peace with the king of Israel. ⁴⁵ As for the other events of Jehoshaphat's reign, the things he achieved and his military exploits, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? ⁴⁶ He rid the land of the rest of the male shrine prostitutes who remained there even after the reign of his father Asa. ⁴⁷ There was then no king in Edom; a deputy ruled. ⁴⁸ Now Jehoshaphat built a fleet of trading ships to go to Ophir for gold, but they never set sail—they were wrecked at Ezion Geber. ⁴⁹ At that time Ahaziah son of Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, “Let my men sail with your men,” but

Jehoshaphat refused. ⁵⁰ **Then Jehoshaphat rested with his fathers and was buried with them in the city of David his father. And Jehoram his son succeeded him.**

22:41–50 *Jehoshaphat*. Before continuing the history of Israel (2Ki 1–7), the author inserts a brief note of 10 verses about a contemporary on the throne of Judah (873–848 BC). Succeeding a father who did not hesitate to call in Assyrian aid against his northern rival (15:16–24), Jehoshaphat “made peace with the king of Israel” (v 44). This reversal of policy resulted in more than cessation of hostilities. Jehoshaphat fought side by side with two Israelite kings: with Ahab against the Syrians (vv 1–4, 29–36), and with Ahab’s son Jehoram against the Moabites (2Ki 3:4–8). (TLSB)

22:41 *Jehoshaphat ... became king of Judah in the fourth year of Ahab*. Appears to refer to the beginning of Jehoshaphat’s reign as sole king in 869 B.C. (see notes on v. 42; 16:29; see also Introduction: Chronology). (CSB)

22:42 *twenty-five years*. 872–848 B.C. The full span of Jehoshaphat’s reign dates from the 39th year of King Asa, when he became co-regent with his father (see note on 15:10; see also 2Ch 16:12). (CSB)

22:43 *The high places, however, were not removed*. See notes on 3:2; 15:14. (CSB)

22:44 *king*. Probably to be understood in the collective sense and as including Ahab, Ahaziah and Joram, all of whom ruled in the north during the reign of Jehoshaphat in the south (see note on v. 4). (CSB)

22:45 *military exploits*. See 2Ki 3; 2Ch 17:11; 20. (CSB)
annals of the kings of Judah. See note on 14:29. (CSB)

22:46 *male shrine prostitutes*. See note on 14:24. (CSB)

22:47–50 Jehoshaphat made frustrating efforts to regain territory and trade previously attained by Solomon. (TLSB)

22:47 *no king in Edom*. Suggests that Edom was subject to Judah (see 2Sa 8:14; 2Ki 8:20). (CSB)

22:48 *Ophir*. See note on 9:28. (CSB)

wrecked at Ezion Geber. The destruction of the trading ships was a judgment of God on Jehoshaphat for entering into an alliance with Ahaziah of the northern kingdom (see 2Ch 20:35–37). (CSB)

Kingdom, Jehoshaphat retained his independence at least to the extent of refusing Ahaziah’s help in a maritime expedition. Archaeological remains at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud have both Judean and Israelite features. (TLSB)

22:50 *rested with his fathers.* See note on 1:21. (CSB)

Jehoram his son succeeded him. For the reign of Jehoram see 2Ki 8:16–24; 2Ch 21. (CSB)

22:41–50 The inspired record briefly returns to the Southern Kingdom of Judah and the life and death of King Jehoshaphat, who, like his father Asa, did “what was right in the sight of the LORD” (v 43). Amid the many examples of godlessness and tragedy, God’s Word contains bright examples of those who followed Him. God’s mercy in the life of a fellow believer is a shining beacon that lights our way and strengthens our faith in the Lord. • God of our fathers, embolden us with the example of Your faithful people of old, that we may live bravely for Him who died and rose for us, and in whose name we pray. Amen. (TLSB)

Ahaziah King of Israel

⁵¹ **Ahaziah son of Ahab became king of Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and he reigned over Israel two years.** ⁵² **He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, because he walked in the ways of his father and mother and in the ways of Jeroboam son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin.** ⁵³ **He served and worshiped Baal and provoked the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger, just as his father had done.**

22:51–53 History of Ahaziah’s reign, summarized here, is continued in 2Ki. (TLSB)

22:51 *seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat.* 853 B.C. (see notes on vv. 41–42). (CSB)

two years. 853–852 (see note on 2Ki 1:17). (CSB)

22:52 *ways of his father and mother.* See 16:30–33. (CSB)

ways of Jeroboam. See 12:28–33. (CSB)

22:51–53 The closing verses of 1Ki record the two-year reign of Ahab’s son Ahaziah, who follows in his father’s footsteps, does evil, and angers God. Though 1Ki ends on a tragic note, we have seen that alongside God’s Law and judgment runs His message of the Gospel and forgiveness. His mercies, though rejected, never end but are new every morning. • Praise to You, the Almighty, the King of creation! With heart and soul we praise and glorify You for all You have done and continue to do for us. In Jesus’ name. Amen. (TLSB)