

# SECOND CHRONICLES

## Chapter 18

### *Micaiah Prophecies Against Ahab*

Now Jehoshaphat had great wealth and honor, and he allied himself with Ahab by marriage. <sup>2</sup> Some years later he went down to visit Ahab in Samaria. Ahab slaughtered many sheep and cattle for him and the people with him and urged him to attack Ramoth Gilead. <sup>3</sup> Ahab king of Israel asked Jehoshaphat king of Judah, "Will you go with me against Ramoth Gilead?" Jehoshaphat replied, "I am as you are, and my people as your people; we will join you in the war." <sup>4</sup> But Jehoshaphat also said to the king of Israel, "First seek the counsel of the LORD." <sup>5</sup> So the king of Israel brought together the prophets—four hundred men—and asked them, "Shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?" "Go," they answered, "for God will give it into the king's hand." <sup>6</sup> But Jehoshaphat asked, "Is there not a prophet of the LORD here whom we can inquire of?" <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> So the king of Israel called one of his officials and said, "Bring Micaiah son of Imlah at once." <sup>9</sup> 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 to the gate of Samaria, with all the prophets prophesying before them. <sup>10</sup> 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.'" <sup>11</sup> 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." <sup>12</sup> 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." <sup>13</sup> But Micaiah said, "As surely as the LORD lives, I can tell him only what my God says." <sup>14</sup> 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 they will be given into your hand." <sup>15</sup> 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?" <sup>16</sup> 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.'" <sup>17</sup> The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Didn't I tell you that he never prophesies anything good about me, but only bad?" <sup>18</sup> Micaiah continued, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne with all the host of heaven standing on his

right and on his left. <sup>19</sup> And the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab king of Israel into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there?' "One suggested this, and another that. <sup>20</sup> Finally, a spirit came forward, stood before the LORD and said, 'I will entice him.' "By what means?' the LORD asked. <sup>21</sup> "I will go 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.' <sup>22</sup> "So now the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouths of these prophets of yours. The LORD has decreed disaster for you." <sup>23</sup> Then Zedekiah son of Kenaanah went up and slapped Micaiah in the face. "Which way did the spirit from <sup>a</sup> the LORD go when he went from me to speak to you?" he asked. <sup>24</sup> Micaiah replied, "You will find out on the day you go to hide in an inner room." <sup>25</sup> 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, <sup>26</sup> 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.'" <sup>27</sup> Micaiah declared, "If you ever return safely, the LORD has not spoken through me." Then he added, "Mark my words, all you people!"

**18:1–19:3** See 1Ki 22:1–40 and notes. To conform with his interest in the southern kingdom and Jehoshaphat, the Chronicler omits elaboration on the death of Ahab and his succession (1Ki 22:36–40) and adds the material on the prophetic condemnation of Jehoshaphat's involvement (19:1–3). (CSB)

**18:1** Not found in 1Ki 22. The verse enhances the status of Jehoshaphat by mentioning the blessing of wealth for his fidelity, and also sets the stage for an entangling foreign alliance condemned by the prophet in 19:2–3. (CSB)

*great riches and honor.* Reprise of the words of 17:5 and the themes of ch 17. (TLSB)

*allied himself with Ahab by marriage.* This marriage alliance to Athaliah, daughter of Ahab, resulted later in an attempt to exterminate the Davidic line (22:10–23:21). (CSB)

Such an alliance was common in the ancient world for political or financial reasons, but Jehoshaphat needed neither. The marriage of his son Jehoram to Ahab's daughter Athaliah (21:6) would bring disaster (22:10–12). (TLSB)

**18:2** The Chronicler further enhances the status of Jehoshaphat by noting the large number of animals Ahab slaughtered in his honor, a note not found in 1Ki 22. (CSB)

*went down ... Samaria.* Samaria is lower in elevation. (TLSB)

*abundance.* Impressive feast, perhaps to mark a political covenant. (TLSB)

*urged him.* Also not found in the parallel text. The Hebrew for this verb is often used in the sense of “inciting to evil” (e.g., 1Ch 21:1) and may express the Chronicler’s attitude toward Jehoshaphat’s involvement. (CSB)

**18:3–34** In the account of Jehoshaphat’s alliance with Ahab and their subsequent battle with Ramoth-gilead, the Chronicler deals primarily with the role of prophets. War oracles are often given through the prophets as mouthpieces of the divine warrior (cf 1Ki 12:21–24; 1Ki 20:13, 28; 2Ki 3:11–19; 6:12–22; 7:1–7; 13:14–20; 2Ch 20:14–19; Is 7:3–25; Jer 21). (TLSB)

**18:4** *seek the counsel of the LORD.* This request fits the Chronicler’s overall positive portrait of Jehoshaphat. (CSB)

**18:8** *Micaiah the son of Imlah.* Minority voice of truth. Cf 2Ki 17:13–15; 2Ch 36:16; Ne 9:26; Jer 25:4; 26:4–5; 28; 29:24–32. (TLSB)

**18:9–17** Battle of prophets ensues between Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah, leader of the 400, and Micaiah. (TLSB)

**18:9** *robes.* Ceremonial attire. (TLSB)

**18:14** *Go up and triumph.* Likely sarcastic. (TLSB)

**18:16** *return ... in peace.* Breaking the war alliance. (TLSB)

**18:18** *sitting on His throne.* Ironic contrast with v 9. (TLSB)

*host of heaven.* See note, Dt 4:19; cf Jb 15:8; Ps 82:1; Jer 23:18; Dn 7:10. The divine council ordinarily gathers the heavenly army to fight for Israel (Is 13:1–13; Jl 3:9–12; 2Ki 6:15–19; 7:6), but in this case the divine council plots against Israel and Ahab. (TLSB)

**18:20–21** *spirit ... lying spirit.* Demon. (TLSB)

**18:23–27** After he again encounters Zedekiah, Micaiah is imprisoned by Ahab, an act similar to Asa’s imprisonment of Hanani (16:10). (TLSB)

**18:24** *inner chamber.* Things would turn out so badly that even the king’s chief prophet would need to hide. See note, Am 6:10.

**18:26** We are never told whether Micaiah was released from prison. Ahaziah, Israel’s next king, notoriously followed his father’s evil ways (1Ki 22:51–53). Micaiah would have stood under Ahaziah’s judgment. (TLSB)

### *Ahab Killed at Ramoth Gilead*

**28** So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah went up to Ramoth Gilead. **29** 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. **30** Now the king of Aram had ordered his

chariot commanders, “Do not fight with anyone, small or great, except the king of Israel.”<sup>31</sup> When the chariot commanders saw Jehoshaphat, they thought, “This is the king of Israel.” So they turned to attack him, but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him. God drew them away from him,<sup>32</sup> for when the chariot commanders saw that he was not the king of Israel, they stopped pursuing him.<sup>33</sup> But someone drew his bow at random and hit the king of Israel between the sections of his armor. The king told the chariot driver, “Wheel around and get me out of the fighting. I’ve been wounded.”<sup>34</sup> All day long the battle raged, and the king of Israel propped himself up in his chariot facing the Arameans until evening. Then at sunset he died.

**18:29** The fact that Ahab disguises himself while directing Jehoshaphat into battle in royal regalia, thus making Jehoshaphat the logical target for attack, is consistent with Israel’s dominant position at this time. (CSB)

**18:31** *the LORD helped him. God drew them away from him.* Not found in 1Ki 22:32. However, some Septuagint (the Greek translation of the OT) manuscripts of Kings do contain the statement that “the LORD helped him,” suggesting that the Chronicler was following a Hebrew text of Kings that had these words. (CSB)

**18:33** *scale armor ... breastplate.* Because solid armor would restrict movement too much, ancient armor had gaps at relatively less vulnerable points (e.g., around the armpits and neck). (TLSB)