

# Micaiah and a God-Aimed Arrow

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There is the ever-present temptation when we come to the record given in 1 and 2 Kings to emphasize some phase of the life of Elijah. He dominates this era, and his life is rich in interest and in spiritual content. However, there is another prophet who is as little-known as Elijah is well-known. You may not be acquainted with him at all. I want to say this for him: He's in the major league with Elijah. Although he may not be as well-known as Elijah, he hit just as many home runs for God as Elijah did.

The difficulty with the prophet we are looking at is that every time he preached a sermon he was put in jail! The reason they put him in jail is that he happened to be the one man standing for God in the courts of Ahab, and what he said was always unfavorable to Ahab. As you know, a great many people do not like to have anything said that is unfavorable to them, and that was true of Ahab, king of Israel.

You will recall in the history of Israel the glorious reign of Solomon; but it concluded with the warning given to him that the kingdom was to be divided. Well, it *was* divided and there were ten tribes in the north and the one tribe, Judah (with little Benjamin), in the south. Israel and Judah were to walk their separate ways, but both were to go finally into captivity.

The very interesting thing is that at this particular moment in history we have Ahab, the king of Israel, in the north. He's the worst king they ever had – probably the worst king that any kingdom ever had. In contrast, we have in the south Jehoshaphat, king of Judah; and he is one of the very best kings they ever had. Normally these two kingdoms would have been farther apart than they ever were in their history, but at this time they were more closely allied. It was an abnormal alliance; it was an unnatural confederacy. The fraternizing of these two kings who were mutual antipathies seemed strange indeed.

The explanation is not difficult to find. Right down beneath the surface you find that Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, had married Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab, king of Israel. (She was to become known as the bloody Athaliah after she killed her grandchildren.) Here is a case when again the sons of God and the daughters of men had intermarried, and of course it wrought havoc. (We see the first occurrence of this in Genesis 6.) It always will bring havoc, at any time, under any dispensation, at any period in the history of this world, when the sons of God marry the daughters of men – that is, when the saved marry the unsaved.

Now these two men, Ahab and Jehoshaphat, are far apart in their thinking and in their relationship to God, yet you find them joining up.

Ahab had invited Jehoshaphat over for a visit. They're kinfolk now anyway, so it was natural to get together for a visit. And while Jehoshaphat was there Ahab evidently had planned to say at a particular moment, "We have lost Ramoth Gilead to the king of Syria. It's necessary for us to go and get it, and I'm just wondering, Jehoshaphat, if you'd like to join with me in going and rescuing this part of our nation. Would you join with me?" Lo and behold, Jehoshaphat agrees to it. He says, "Yes, I would be perfectly willing to join with you."

Now this man Jehoshaphat was God's man. As we see in the Book of Chronicles, one of the five revival periods took place during his reign. He had a heart for God, and he wanted to do the will of God, which is evident in the request he makes:

***Also Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "Please inquire for the word of the LORD today." (1 Kings 22:5)***

In other words, he said, “I’ll be glad to join with you, but I want to know what God’s will is in the matter. I’m wondering if you would bring the prophets in, and let’s find out what the will of God is.”

So this man Ahab had trotted in the paid preachers of the day.

***Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said to them, “Shall I go against Ramoth Gilead to fight, or shall I refrain?” So they said, “Go up, for the LORD will deliver it into the hand of the king.”*** (1 Kings 22:6)

They are saying, you see, the thing that Ahab wanted to hear.

This has always been a great danger and is the place to which the pulpit in America has come. Someone has said that the pulpit in America has become a sounding board instead of the voice in the wilderness crying out for God. It is saying the thing that people want to hear today. That is the tragedy of this hour in which we live.

These prophets who all eat at the table of Ahab know which side their bread is buttered on, and so they say the thing that Ahab wants to hear. They say, “Go on up to battle; you’ll win.”

Now this man Jehoshaphat is God’s man, and he has spiritual discernment. He knows that these four hundred prophets are not giving God’s message.

***And Jehoshaphat said, “Is there not still a prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of Him?”*** (1 Kings 22:7)

Jehoshaphat is wondering, “Couldn’t we get a really spiritually minded prophet that has the mind of the Lord and has the courage to declare it? Don’t you have a man like that?”

***So the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, “There is still one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the LORD....*** (1 Kings 22:8)

Thank God for the one man, but what a tragic hour – “There is yet *one* man.” There are four hundred men who are willing to please the king and *one* man willing to stand for God, and he names him; he is Micaiah.

Now here is his introduction. The kings have had dinner together, you remember, and now Ahab is introducing, as it were, their after-dinner speaker. How would you like an introduction like this: “But I hate him....” Ahab said, “Yes, there is one prophet here in the kingdom who speaks for the Lord, but I hate him.” And I tell you, the man who gives God’s Word will come in under the lash, the tongue-lashing, of those who do not want the Word of God today.

***...I hate him, because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil....*** (1 Kings 22:8)

You hear some people say today, “When I go to church, I want to be comforted.” I heard of a man who left a church that I was pastoring for the reason that he wasn’t being comforted. If what they tell me about his business is true, he doesn’t need comfort. He needs to be rebuked. May I say to you, my friends, in this hour we probably need something other than comforting words in America. Our nation has come to a place where people do not want to hear the things which have

to do with sin, the things which rebuke them within. They do not want the Word of God really turned upon their souls and upon their hearts and upon their lives.

So Ahab says, "I hate him." And actually that is the best compliment that Micaiah ever had. I heard some time ago a famous preacher in America say this, "I do not judge a man by the friends that he has. I judge him by the enemies that he makes. And if he has the right enemies, he's the right kind of man." We are known today not only by the friends we keep, but also we're known by the enemies that we make. I heard of a man the other day at whose funeral service the preacher said, "This man did not have an enemy." Well, when I was told that, I said, "I did not know that Mr. Milquetoast had died." He is the only one who could die without having an enemy. The best thing that you could say for Micaiah was that Ahab hated him. If Ahab had loved him, there would have been something wrong with Micaiah.

In our day there is a notion being circulated throughout America, and it's being called Christianity, that we're to love everything and that we're to love everybody. Even the secular press has had to call attention to the fact that America has lost its moral consciousness. Even the church has lost its conscience in America today and has no moral courage whatsoever.

I love this fellow Micaiah. In this day of compromise it is wonderful to see a man like this. In a day when it's peace at any price, in a day when men are compromising in every field – especially in politics and religion – it's wonderful to see this man stand out for God. And this is the man we're considering now, this forgotten prophet, Micaiah, who apparently spent most of his active ministry in jail. He would come out and give a message, and back to jail he would go. And that's where he was when he was summoned to appear before Ahab and Jehoshaphat.

Actually, Micaiah was the best friend Ahab ever had. If he had only listened to Micaiah, his life would have been spared; he would not have been killed in battle. But he did not listen. It reminds me of what Paul said to the Galatians: "Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" (Galatians 4:16).

Now will you notice this dramatic scene that is before us. To me this is one of the richest scenes you will find in the Word of God.

***The king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, having put on their robes, sat each on his throne, at a threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them.*** (1 Kings 22:10)

Here are these two sovereigns. One sits upon the throne of Judah, and the other sits upon the throne of Israel. Before them are four hundred prophets – the boys who are paid to say the nice things – going around smiling and saying to Ahab, "Go up, go up. You will win the battle. Everything will be in your favor. You go right ahead and do this." That's the scene.

Jehoshaphat, however, is puzzled. He is not satisfied with what these paid preachers are saying. A guard is sent over now to get Micaiah who is in jail. They keep him handy; they always know where he is when they *do* want a word from God.

On the way back the messenger says to him, "Now look here, Micaiah, you're just a killjoy here at this court; and you never say anything that puts you in good standing with Ahab. I want to suggest to you that you go ahead and agree with the prophets. They've all told the king to go against Ramoth Gilead and that God would give it to him. If you'll just join in the chorus there loud and lustily, it will put you in favor, and we won't have to bring you back to jail again." Listen to Micaiah:

***And Micaiah said, “As the LORD lives, whatever the LORD says to me, that I will speak.”*** (1 Kings 22:14)

Micaiah comes in now. These four hundred prophets are milling around, the two kings are sitting on their thrones, Jehoshaphat is a little puzzled, and Ahab says:

***...Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall we refrain?*** (1 Kings 22:15)

Now here is a man with a sense of humor. God has a sense of humor, friend, and His Word is filled with it. Here is an example. Micaiah looks about and sees what is going on so he mimics the prophets.

***... And he answered him, “Go and prosper, for the LORD will deliver it into the hand of the king!”*** (1 Kings 22:15)

And I think he begins to trot around with the other prophets.

Ahab knows this fellow, and he knows he is pulling his leg. He knows he has not yet given the message from God.

***So the king said to him, “How many times shall I make you swear that you tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?”*** (1 Kings 22:16)

“Quit kidding me, Micaiah. What is the message?”

Now Micaiah becomes serious, and he gives God’s message. Listen to it:

***Then he said, “I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd. And the LORD said, ‘These have no master. Let each return to his house in peace.’ ”*** (1 Kings 22:17)

It means that Ahab will be killed in battle. He, of course, is the master of his people. You would think that Ahab would receive this message and thank the prophet for giving him a word that would have spared his life. He should have been grateful to him. But notice his reaction:

***And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “Did I not tell you he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?”*** (1 Kings 22:18)

“He never says anything good to me. He always says things that are bad about me, and I don’t like it. I hate him!” That’s Ahab. Micaiah was the only one there who *did* know the truth and the only one there giving the truth.

Now the prophet does something that is, without doubt, one of the most masterly things you’ll find in the entire Word of God. It was a dramatic scene before, but it becomes doubly dramatic now. This man Micaiah uses satire, biting satire. He uses the rapier of ridicule, and it’s devastating. Listen to him as he gives this word that all Israel is to be scattered and Ahab is to be killed. Poor old Ahab has just said, “I told you so. That’s the thing he always says – bad news for me.” Then Micaiah gives a parable. (You remember that our Lord turned to parables only when

the people would not hear. Parables are for folk who will not hear God's Word. It is the way to elicit their interest and at least get the message to them.)

## **His Word is True**

Micaiah gives a preposterous parable; it's one of these parables by contrast. As you know, a parable is given to illustrate truth. In fact, the word *parable* is in the Greek *balo*, meaning "to throw," and *para*, meaning "by the side of." It means to throw or put down by the side of a thing something else to measure it. If you put a yardstick down beside the desk in front of me, that's a parable. It tells you how long it is. And so a parable is something that is put down by the side of something else to illustrate it. But at times it illustrates by contrast. The Lord Jesus gave parables like that. When the religious rulers began to turn from Him, He gave the parable of the unjust judge. He said that there was a widow who camped on his doorstep, and the unjust judge did not want to hear her case because she had no political power nor did she carry any vote in his community. But she stayed there and stayed there and stayed there some more until he had to hear her to get rid of her. Now do you think that God is an unjust judge and that you have to camp on His doorstep, that you have to plead and beg Him to do something for you? No. He is the opposite. It is a parable by contrast, you see.

Now notice the parable that Micaiah gives. I wish I could have seen this Jew as he gave it. I'm confident there was a gleam in his eye and a wry smile on his face. Here it is:

***Then Micaiah said, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left." (1 Kings 22:19)***

In other words, there is a special "board of directors" meeting called in heaven, with God as the chairman of the board.

***And the LORD said, "Who will persuade Ahab to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?" So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner. (1 Kings 22:20)***

Isn't that ridiculous? Imagine God calling a meeting of the board of directors in heaven and saying, "Now I've called you together in order to get some advice. A problem has come up that is too big for Me to handle. Ahab is to go to battle and be killed, but how in the world will I get him into battle? I just don't know what to do." And one spirit got up and said, "I think this." And the rest shook their heads and said, "No, that doesn't sound good." Another spirit got up and said something else. Everybody shook their heads and said, "No, that won't do either." Finally one little spirit got up with a suggestion that sounded like a good one. (I wish I had been there to ask Micaiah how a spirit stands!) But he was smiling all the time he was saying this, you see. I like the way Micaiah tells it:

***Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, "I will persuade him." (1 Kings 22:21)***

My friend, can you imagine God asking for advice? It is utterly ridiculous. Notice Isaiah 40:13; “Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, or as His counselor has taught Him?” God hasn’t been to school; no one has taught Him. God never asks anybody for advice. The apostle Paul exclaimed in Romans 11:33, 34:

***Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?***

Have you noticed that when our Lord Jesus Christ was down here in the flesh there were two things He never did? He never did appeal to His own mind as being the final place of decision for any action that He took. He never said to anyone, “I’m going to do this because I’ve been thinking about it all night and I’ve come to the conclusion it’s the best thing to do.” Every time He did something He said, “This is My Father’s will. I’ve come to do My Father’s will.” He never appealed to His own mind even when He was a man. And then the second thing: He never asked anybody for advice. He never called together His disciples and said, “Now, fellows, I’m in a quandary. Shall I go to Jerusalem or shall I stay here?” Never did He ask them that. There was one exception, I grant you, at the feeding of the 5,000. He turned to Philip and asked, “Where shall we buy bread?” But the Gospel writer hastens to add, “But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do” (John 6:6). The Lord Jesus never asked anybody for advice.

Oh, today, my friend, God is not asking for advice; down here He doesn’t need our advice. How many fine Christian organizations and movements that were started by godly men, led of God, have fallen into the hands of unspiritual men who are determined to have their way and are riding roughshod over the hearts and lives of multitudes? Oh, my friend, your way is not better than God’s way! God does not want your advice. He is not asking how to run His business. He is telling you and me what to do. God does not need advice!

However, Micaiah imagines Him in a board of directors meeting where God is puzzled and is getting information. Now Micaiah makes his point:

***Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, “I will persuade him.” The LORD said to him, “In what way?” So he said, “I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.” And the LORD said, “You shall persuade him, and also prevail. Go out and do so.” Therefore, look! The LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, and the LORD has declared disaster against you. (1 Kings 22:21-23)***

This is sparkling, striking, and startling satire. I do not know of a better way of calling the crowd of prophets there a bunch of liars than to tell this little story. That’s exactly what Micaiah is doing. He says that this spirit came from God as a lying spirit in the mouth of these false prophets.

Now Ahab doesn’t like it, of course. He wants to get rid of Micaiah.

***So the king of Israel said, “Take Micaiah, and return him to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king’s son; and say, ‘Thus says the king: “Put this fellow in prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and water of affliction, until I come in peace.” ’ (1 Kings 22:26-27)***

In other words, “Wait until I get back from the battle. I’ll take care of him for talking to me like that!” But Micaiah had the last word:

***But Micaiah said, “If you ever return in peace, the LORD has not spoken by me.” And he said, “Take heed, all you people!”*** (1 Kings 22:28)

In effect he said, “Listen. If you even come back here, Ahab, the Lord hasn’t spoken by me. And I don’t care about your hearing it because you’re not coming back, but I want these other people to hear it so they will know I was speaking God’s word to you.”

Well, the armies of Ahab and Jehoshaphat went to battle against the king of Syria. This man Ahab has a bag filled with tricks. He has persuaded Jehoshaphat to go into the battle on his side; and knowing the king of Syria is after him, Ahab says to Jehoshaphat, “You keep on your king’s robes, but I’ll change into a regular buck private’s outfit.” And he does that. It is a perfect disguise. There is not a way in the world for the king of Syria to know who Ahab is. The battle is joined and, I tell you, it is fortunate that Jehoshaphat is not killed in battle. He is almost taken, but he escapes by the skin of his teeth, and he returns like a whipped dog licking his wounds.

For awhile it looks as if Ahab will escape like the slippery eel that he is. It looks as if Providence is on his side, that the prophecy is wrong and Micaiah is to be confused and God mocked. But then something happens.

One fellow in the infantry of the enemy, equipped with bow and arrows, has one arrow left. *Well, he thinks, no use keeping it. I want my sergeant to think I was busy shooting the Israelites so I’ll get rid of this one.* The record puts it this way:

***Now a certain man drew a bow at random....*** (1 Kings 22:34)

He just pulled it. He didn’t aim at Ahab. King Ahab had on a regular soldier’s uniform; nobody knew who he was. And this soldier just pulls his bow at random and lets the arrow fly. But that arrow has Ahab’s name on it, and God had written it there.

My friend, we’ve heard a great deal about guided missiles in our day. This is a guided missile, and probably the first one. God was guiding this missile, and it reached its destination. It was a God-aimed arrow, and it found its way between the joints of the armor of Ahab and found its way to his heart. He was mortally wounded. He told his charioteer to take him out of battle, that he had been hit.

***The battle increased that day; and the king was propped up in his chariot, facing the Syrians, and died at evening. The blood ran out from the wound onto the floor of the chariot.... So the king died, and was brought to Samaria. And they buried the king in Samaria. Then someone washed the chariot at a pool in Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood while the harlots bathed, according to the word of the LORD which He had spoken.*** (1 Kings 22:35, 37, 38)

God, through Elijah, had already told Ahab this would happen because he had caused the death of Naboth so he could seize his property.

***...Thus says the LORD: “In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick your blood, even yours.”*** (1 Kings 21:19)



So the body of the king of Israel was brought back to Samaria. And they washed the chariot of his blood and the dogs licked it, just as God said it would come to pass – literally fulfilled. Now Ahab’s death probably was listed in the paper as being totally accidental, but in God’s record it was providential.

And today, without any apology at all, may I say that God is still using that method. And God never misses. The psalmist says: “But God shall shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly they shall be wounded” (Psalm 64:7). There is many a man today going through this world who says, “I’ve escaped so far. Everything that has happened to me has been good. I do not have to answer to God.” I say to you this day, there is an arrow that has already been shot from the bow in heaven with his name on it, and that arrow is the arrow of judgment when he will stand before Almighty God.

Sometimes even God’s own have an arrow shot at them. You remember the thing that Job said: “For the arrows of the Almighty are within me...” (Job 6:4). Job found, even as God’s man, that sometimes God wounds one of His own and brings him down to humble him.

But, my beloved, when the arrow of my sin was aimed, it went into Christ Jesus. Someone has said that we entered the heart of Christ through a spear wound. And the arrow of my sin wounded Him. The arrow of my sin put Him to death. Isaiah expresses it this way:

***But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; ... yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief....*** (Isaiah 53:5, 10)

He stepped in front of the arrow of God’s judgment that was intended for you and me in order that we might never have to come into judgment. We are passed from judgment into life.

And now the psalmist says something else:

***You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day.***  
(Psalm 91:5)

That arrow that is flying by day is the arrow that’s aimed at my sin. It has already found its mark in Christ. Therefore I need not be afraid of the arrow that flies by day.

Right now your sin is either on you or it’s on Christ. If you, by faith, receive Him, then He bears that sin for you. He becomes your Savior, and you will never have to come into judgment, but you are passed from death unto life. The arrows of God’s judgment fell upon Him.