

1 Kings 20

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[0 : 00] Chapter 20, let's go to 1 Kings chapter 20. I forgot to put my mic on. I told the guys upstairs I would stay behind the podium. We'll see how well that works. But it is good to be gathered together with you.

The 20th chapter is a rather long one, but we are going to read it in its entirety. Okay, we'll go through all 43 verses. You'll see why in just a moment. We need to read it in context, and we need to keep it combined so that we can understand it as one setting.

We're just continuing to make our way through Scripture, and we've gotten to this point. With the chapter, it seems to kind of be out of place, but hopefully we'll understand its place in just a moment. But let's open up with a word of prayer.

Lord, we're so thankful. Thankful for the day you've given us. Thankful for the opportunity we have of coming together. God, we thank you for every moment of fellowship which we can enjoy. We thank you for the grand privilege it is to come together with brothers and sisters in Christ midweek, to be encouraged through the studying and reading of the Word of God.

So, Lord, we pray as we open it up, Lord, that we would see the historical writing, but we would also understand what it shows us about you. We would understand what it shows us about ourselves, Lord, and your interactions with your people.

[1 : 19] God, we just ask that you be glorified and honored, and Christ would be exalted in our presence tonight. We pray for those in the back that are working with the youth and the children. We pray as always that in all things and in all ways Christ be magnified.

Lord, help us to love you more. Help us to follow you closer, and we ask it all in Christ's name. Amen. Okay, the 19th chapter has dealt exclusively and entirely with Elijah and his discouragement.

And really, if you remember in the 18th chapter, Elijah goes up on Mount Carmel to prove to everyone else that God is God. And then coming into the 19th chapter, God takes him to Mount Sinai to prove to Elijah that he indeed is still God.

because even though things did not work out the way that Elijah wanted or anticipated or was praying that they would work out, he gets discouraged, but God is still in control. He affirms this to Elijah, and he affirms it to him by manifesting his presence.

The 19th chapter is a very awesome chapter in that it shows us the initiative of God that Elijah went and took. You say, well, Pastor, I thought you were in the 20th chapter. I am. Stay with me. We have to get it in context, right?

[2 : 31] Because we want to see what God is doing here. So we understand Elijah gets to press those up. His hand goes and lays up under a juniper tree or broom tree or whatever your translation of Scripture calls it.

Just as a side note, the juniper tree in Scripture is not the juniper tree that we have in existence today. So no one really knows what kind of tree it is. So it's just a tree.

He's under a tree, and he's there, and he is just says, It's enough. Just let me die. I'm no greater than my fathers who went before me. So he just says, I'm not doing any good. And God takes him up on a mountain, manifests himself to him, shows him his glory, his splendor, his might, and then speaks to him in the calmness of the moment, and then reminds him, I still have people.

There's a number of people that God tells him on Mount Horeb. I want you to catch on to that because you're going to see that same number in just a minute. Not the same people, but the same relevance. And God tells him, I have 7,000 people who have not bowed the knee nor kissed the altar of Baal.

So I have people. I have my people present. And it ends with the commissioning of Elisha. In that passage, Elisha is told to anoint three people.

[3 : 41] Of the three people that Elisha is commanded to anoint, he only anoints one of them because he anoints Elisha, pours the remainder of his life into Elisha.

Elisha will anoint one, and then Elisha's servant will anoint the other. The people that Elisha does not anoint is the king that would bring judgment upon Ahab and the king who would replace Ahab. So what we would expect to find, I say all this because we're about to read the chapter, when we turn to the 20th chapter, would be the replacement of Ahab. But that's not what we find.

We don't see that. We would expect to find, okay, God has already said these kings are going to judge him, these kings are going to, because he's rejected what has happened on Mount Carmel. He has seen evidence, and the fire came down, and the altar is consumed, and the prophets of Baal are slain, and he doesn't repent, and he's an unrepented individual.

We would expect him to be replaced immediately. But we don't see that. But rather, we see what is recorded for us in the 20th chapter. So if you'll stay with me, we'll read it in its entirety, and then hopefully we'll gain some insight from it.

[4 : 54] Now, when Ben-Hadad, king of Aram, gathered all his army, and there were 32 kings with him, and horses and chariots, and he went up and besieged Samaria. Samaria is the capital city of the northern kingdom, Israel.

He went up and besieged Samaria, and fought against it. Then he sent messengers to the city of Ahab, king of Israel, and said to him, I know I'm reading, but I just want to see, you've been paying attention in the last couple of weeks.

Samaria is the capital, but what's the name of the city of Ahab? Jezreel. There you go. Thank you. So, Jezreel, Jezebel. So, he's not living in the capital city, which is kind of an odd thing, right? So, anyway, so he, then he sent messengers to the city of Ahab, king of Israel, and said to him, Thus says Ben-Hadad, your silver and your gold are mine. Your most beautiful wives and children are also mine.

And the king of Israel replied, It is according to your word, my lord, O king. I am yours, and all that I have. Then the messengers returned and said, Thus says Ben-Hadad, Surely I sent to you, saying, You shall give me your silver and your gold, and your wives and your children.

[5 : 54] But about this time tomorrow, I will send my servants to you, and they shall search your house, and the houses of your servants, and whatever is desirable in your eyes, they will take it in their hand and carry away.

Then the king of Israel called all the elders of the land and said, Please observe and see how this man is looking for trouble. For he sent to me for my wives and my children and my silver and my gold, and I did not refuse him.

All the elders and all the people said to him, Do not listen or consent. Then he sent to the messengers, or said to the messengers of Ben-Hadad, Tell my lord the king, all that you sent for to your servant at the first I will do, but this thing I cannot do.

And the messengers departed and brought him word again. Ben-Hadad said, sent to him and said, May the gods do to me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria will suffice for handfuls for all the people who follow me.

Then the king of Israel replied, Tell him, Let not him who girds on his armor boast like him who takes it off. When Ben-Hadad heard this message, as he was drinking with the kings in the temporary shelters, he said to his servants, Station yourselves.

[7 : 00] So they stationed themselves against the city. Now behold, a prophet approached Ahab, king of Israel, and said, Thus says the Lord, Have you seen all this great multitude? Behold, I will deliver them into your hand today, and you shall know that I am the Lord.

Ahab said, By whom? So he said, Thus says the Lord, by the young men of the rulers of the provinces. Then he said, Who shall begin the battle? And he answered, You. Then he mustered the young men of the rulers of the provinces, and there were 232.

After them he mustered all the people, even all the sons of Israel, 7,000. They went out at noon, while Ben-Hadad was drinking himself drunk in the temporary shelters, with the 32 kings who helped him.

The young men of the rulers of the provinces went out first, and Ben-Hadad sent out, and they told him, saying, Men have come out from Samaria. Then he said, If they have come out for peace, take them alive, or if they have come out for war, take them alive.

So they went out from the city, the young men of the rulers of the provinces and the army which followed them. They killed each his man, and the Arameans fled, and Israel pursued them, and Ben-Hadad, king of Aram, escaped on a horse with horsemen.

[8 : 06] The king of Israel went out and struck the horses and chariots, and killed the Arameans with a great slaughter. Then the prophet came near to the king of Israel and said to him, Go, strengthen yourself and observe and see what you have to do.

For at the turn of the year, the king of Aram will come up against you. Now the servants of the king of Aram said to him, Their gods are gods of the mountains, therefore they were stronger than we. But rather let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we will be stronger than they. Do this thing, remove the kings, each from his place, and put captains in their place, and muster an army like the army you have lost, horse for horse and chariot for chariot.

Then we will fight against them in the plain, and surely we will be stronger than they. And he listened to their voice and did so. At the turn of the year, Ben-Hadad mustered the Arameans, and went up to Aphek to fight against Israel.

And the sons of Israel were mustered and were provisioned, and went to meet them. And the sons of Israel camped before them like two little flocks of goats. But the Arameans filled the country. Then a man of God came near and spoke to the king of Israel and said, Thus says the Lord, Because the Arameans have said, The Lord is a god of the mountains, but he is not a god of the valleys, therefore I will give all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am the Lord.

[9 : 21] So they camped one over against the other seven days. And on the seventh day the battle was joined, and the sons of Israel killed of the Arameans one hundred thousand foot soldiers in one day.

But the rest fled to Aphek into the city, and the wall fell on twenty-seven thousand men who were left. And Ben-Hadad fled and came into the city into an inner chamber. His servants said to him, Behold now we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings.

Please let us put sackcloth on our loins and ropes on our heads, and go out to the king of Israel.

Perhaps he will save your life. So they girded sackcloth on their loins and put ropes on their heads, and came to the king of Ezra and said, Your servant Ben-Hadad says, Please let me live.

And he said, Is he still alive? He is my brother. Now the men took this as an omen, and quickly catching his word, said, Your brother Ben-Hadad. Then he said, Go bring him. Then Ben-Hadad came out to him, and he took him up into the chariot.

Ben-Hadad said to him, The cities which my father took from your father I will restore, and you shall make streets for yourself in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria. Ahab said, And I will let you go with this covenant.

[10 : 29] So he made a covenant with him, and let him go. Verse 35. Now a certain man of the sons of the prophets said to another, By the word of the Lord, Please strike me. But the man refused to strike him.

Then he said to him, Because you have not listened to the voice of the Lord, behold, as soon as you have departed from me, a lion will kill you. And as soon as he had departed from him, a lion found him and killed him. Then he found another man and said, Please strike me.

And the man struck him, wounding him. So the prophet departed and waited for the king by the way, and disguised himself with a bandage over his eyes. As the king passed by, he cried to the king and said, Your servant went out into the midst of the battle.

And behold, a man turned aside and brought a man to me and said, Guard this man. If for any reason he is missing, then your life shall be for his life, or else you shall pay a talent of silver.

While your servant was busy here and there, he was gone. And the king of Israel said to him, So shall your judgment be. You yourself have decided it. Then he hastily took the bandage away from his eyes, and the king of Israel recognized him that he was of the prophets.

[11 : 30] He said to him, Thus says the Lord, Because you have let go out of your hand the man whom I devoted to destruction, therefore your life shall go for his life, and your people for his people.

So the king of Israel went to his house, sullen and vexed, and came to Samaria. Samaria. 1 Kings chapter 20. Long chapter. I appreciate your patience, but I want you to see here.

Hopefully we find application. We find some truth of what's going on, but we also find application in this. I want you to see the gracious involvement of a sovereign God. The gracious involvement of a sovereign God.

What's going on in the 20th chapter? We remind ourselves that when we open up scripture, we are not reading the full history of mankind as it has completely in all its entirety happened, but rather we are reading the history of God's interaction with his people.

So we have the parts of history that God wants us to see, and we have them for a reason. We see a historical event that is a number of historical events that are taking place before us, but these are matters which God has concerned himself enough through his spirit to pen for us, and for us to read it and understand.

[12:41] So it behooves us to want to gain information as to why are they here. Really what we see in this 20th chapter is a grand display of grace by sovereign God.

God has already clearly manifested his presence in the showdown on the mountain with the false prophets of Baal.

Judgment upon Ahab for his unrepentant behavior, for his continued idolatry, therefore is readily available.

God has given proof and manifestation of his existence, and now Ahab is without excuse because of the judgment that is pending upon him.

Elijah has declared the word of God. Not only has the rain felled for three and a half years, then the fire fell down from heaven, and then rain came at the sound of Elijah's voice.

[13:43] Everything, all these manifestations, these sign gifts that were given. If you remember, Elijah introduced a new series of prophecy, that is, it was more than just the word of God.

It was the word of God joined with the manifestation of the power of God. So prior to this, you have prophets show up, and they deliver a word of God, and the word of God comes true. With Elijah, he declares a word of God, and then the deeds of God are done to validate the word which he spoke. Think the book of Acts, based on everything they heard and saw. They believed in Jesus Christ. So God has validated that word. So now Ahab is really without excuse for not repenting.

God's judgment could have fallen at that moment, and it does. In the 19th chapter, we understand what he tells Elijah is, this king is going to serve as my instrument for judgment. This one will replace Ahab. But then we have this kind of pause in what we expect to find, that Ahab will be replaced.

He hasn't repented. And we see God manifesting himself even greater through the 20th chapter. And in his grace, he's giving opportunity.

[14:53] Now, in his sovereignty, we have to acknowledge that God knows Ahab will not repent. But in his grace, he's given the opportunity so that there is no excuse for the judgment that will come.

We look at this. This is something that is consistent throughout Scripture. This is something that we find being repeated over and over again, even with the construction of the ark. And we see just from, you know, the 10 plagues in Egypt, all of these things that come about time after time after time again.

God is slow to anger, as Scripture reminds us. And loving kindness is extended, and he is faithful to his plans. And we enter into this chapter, and we see that it's really much more than just a battle between the Arameans and the Israelites.

What's going on is that God is using this battle to show Ahab that he is God. And we're reminded of that over and over again in Scripture. So when we see his involvement, I want you just to see three things, three ways that he is intimately involved in this historical event, but he's also involved in each of our lives.

Number one, we see God overcomes the odds that are against us. God overcomes the odds. The Arameans are borders, share borders with the northern kingdom of Israel, and we're a constant threat.

[16:15] Ben-Hadad lived his rule out by really calling your bluff. He was a man that liked to give threats and liked to issue threats and would kind of force you through verbal agreements to really surrender to him.

We see this in the fact, we don't know how long he besieges Samaria, but we know they besieged Samaria. And then he reaches out to Ahab and says, Well, this is what I'm going to do. And when

Ahab says, Okay, you can have my wives, you can have my children, you can have my gold, you can have my silver, there's no resistance found there.

He refers to him as Lord. He kind of says, Okay, you can have whatever you want. Well, that doesn't suffice for Ben-Hadad. He wants to go a little bit further. He says, Well, we're going to plunder your houses too. And what he was trying to do is to make Ahab his servant.

Okay? He had to force his probably what was going on in Samaria was so circled and so kind of camped against there that they had been besieged so long, matters were getting very dire.

So as king, he was going to give up what he could so that the people would live. Ben-Hadad wants to go a little bit further. He says, Oh, well, we're going to come to your houses and we're going to plunder everything. Then we see that Ahab calls the elders.

[17:24] It says he calls all the elders to him. Now, I want you to notice what's not going on here. He talks to the elders and the elders say, Don't do this. That's too far. We're going too far. Don't do this. But we never see Ahab calling out or consulting a prophet or a priest or the Lord.

Now, we'll see it later on with this final battle in which Ahab dies. We'll see it. But it's when the northern king, the northern tribe and the southern tribe unite.

The southern king comes up and joins with him and they go to fight the Arameans the last time. That's where that random man drew a bow at random and shot it at random. And it went through the link of an armor and hit a random man who happened to be Ahab.

And he died, right? Because even the arrows are guided by the Lord God of heaven. Then a prophet speaks. But up to that point, Ahab is not asking anything of the Lord.

Now, we pay attention to that because while he's consulting the elders, which is a good thing, God had ordained that there would be elders throughout the land of Israel. And evidently, even after they split, they maintain that practice. Ahab is seeking wisdom, but he's not seeking the Lord.

[18:34] And I love the line, Don't let him who puts on his armor boast like the one who takes off his armor. I kind of like that proverb. It kind of resonates. But he gives that proverb back to him and it makes Ben-Hadad a little bit upset.

He enrages him a little bit. He says, okay, we're going to have war now. So we understand now these are the insurmountable odds. Because Israel doesn't have this standing army and they don't have anywhere near what the Arameans have.

He maybe has gotten a little bit ahead of himself. He's taken the counsel of the elders, but the Lord is not involved in any of these decision makers. This is just a decision he makes on his own. But we notice that when he gets to that point, because God allows it to get to that point, it tells us in the 13th verse, now behold, a prophet approached.

Now a prophet of the Lord comes to Ahab and has a word from the Lord. This is not Elijah. This is not Elisha. Now this is probably a prophet of the school of the prophets that was started from Samuel and kind of fostered with Elijah and Elisha.

So this is just a random prophet. We don't know his name. We don't know who he is. But he comes with the word of God. And he comes delivering this reality that God is watching this.

[19:45] And in his sovereignty, he actually is allowing this. Because now that these odds are so great, Ahab has kind of got upset. And, you know, he could have surrendered and given up the things of his personal belongings. But then the elder said, don't let that happen.

All of this falls within the sovereignty of God. Because it's put Ahab in a place where it is insurmountable. He cannot, in physical reality, overcome the Aramean army.

He just can't do it. He doesn't have the forces. He doesn't have the strength. And God lets him get to that point so that he could give this word. And the word is, I will deliver them in your hand today so that you may know that I am Lord.

That's grace. Right? God doesn't have to do this. Ahab hasn't consulted. He hasn't prayed. He hasn't asked.

He hasn't worshipped. He hasn't done anything. God has permitted this insurmountable odds to be stacked against him to the point where he realizes he's in over his head, to say the least.

[20:47] And now this prophet comes. And God says, this is something I'm going to do so that I once again can manifest the reality that I am Lord.

He's going to use these circumstances that Ahab knows cannot happen. To manifest the reality of who he is and to further it along, Ahab asked the prophet, he says, okay, well, who should go first?

And he says, the young men of the province. The young men of the province and first kings, you need to understand what that means. That means the people who are not trained in warfare. Okay? So go get people who have never had any boot camp.

Go get people who have never been trained in warfare. And they're going to go first. There's 262 of them. I mean, that should be enough. Right? They're going to go before you first. And then he says, well, who's going to initiate the, or 232, excuse me, I gave them 30 more than I should have.

Right? There's 232 of them. And they're not trained. They're untrained. They're going to go ahead of the army. And then Ahab says, okay, well, who's going to start the battle? God says, you're going to be on the offensive.

[21 : 51] You're going to be the one who initiates the battle with the 232 untrained men. But don't worry. There's 7,000 soldiers behind you.

Now, 7,000 should all of a sudden pique your interest because he's just told Elijah that he has 7,000 prophets. Right? And 7,000, these are not the same 7,000. So the 7,000 prophets he has are not the 7,000 soldiers that are fighting in the battle.

But what God is doing in his word, I think, is he's showing us that with 7,000 soldiers, he can overcome a grand army. Think what he can do with 7,000 prophets. If he can do this with 7,000 soldiers who are being led to battle by 232 untrained soldiers, if he can defeat a skilled army that is as large as the Arameans and has 32 kings, which is just a grand coming together of a bunch of small kingdoms, if you will.

So it's not like big forces, there's a lot of small kingdoms who came together for a union there. And he's going to fight them. He's going to defeat them. He's going to do it in great fashion. It's going to be a slaughter.

If he can do this with this battle, if he can overcome these odds, think what he can do with 7,000 prophets. This should remind us when Jesus tells us the church is going to stand and fight against the forces of darkness and the gates of hell will not be able to prevent it.

[23 : 13] Right? He can't resist it. So we are the offensive. And at times it looks as if we are greatly outnumbered. And if you have an honest conversation with yourself in this world, we are outnumbered because there are many who take the broad path.

And there are few who walk in a narrow way. And there are few who find that narrow gate. And we are outnumbered. And we are, it says, on the offensive. And those with us seem to be a lot less than those who oppose us.

But the reality is God is a God who overcomes all odds. And he is showing this to Ahab to remind him that he is Lord.

Capital L, capital O, capital R, capital D. That is Yahweh, covenant God. He is using these circumstances to remind him of who he is. Quite often in our life, God does the same thing. He allows overwhelming odds. He allows circumstances that seem so impossible that God does things in the most unlikely of ways. Not only does he give him this great battle that he has to fight, he wants him to do it with unskilled soldiers.

[24 : 16] And he wants him to do it with a really small force. We've seen God do this before. And God always shows himself to be true. God, again, is the initiative here. He takes the initiative.

He is the initiator. Don't lose that. I'm telling you, this is something we would almost have to close our eyes to it in Scripture to not see that. Okay?

God is always the initiator. We'll see it Sunday morning. I know you kind of, I think this is the thing, one of those, these are one of my convictions.

To tell you to preach from convictions. These are one of my convictions. These are one of my, this is a big rock issue for me. It doesn't have, I mean, I can fellowship with people who do, who don't see this, but it's a big rock issue in my life.

That God is the initiator in all things. It tells us, we'll see it in 2 Corinthians, that it was God who reconciled us to himself. We'll see that Sunday morning.

[25 : 14] He reconciled us to himself. Again, he did all the work. Right? It's God who approaches Ahab here and says, I'm going to win this battle. And I'm going to do it to show you who I am.

But he doesn't stop there. So you see, God overcomes the odds. The second thing that we notice is that God overpowers the powerful. Because that was just the first battle. And this same prophet comes back to him after he wins that battle.

Just so that he realizes, because God in his grace stays very involved here in all the affairs. It tells us, and when we come down to verse 22, then the prophet, that's the wording there. It means that same prophet who came to him before the battle comes to him after the battle and says, Okay, now you've got to get ready because Ben-Hadad is coming back at the first of the year. And he kind of, God is continuing to lead Ahab here. And he's making preparations in advance. So Ben-Hadad goes home. He's a little bit upset there. But don't worry. His people come back to him and say, Well, the problem is you had kings in the place of where captains should have been. [26 : 11] So all the kings were in the temporary shelters drinking themselves drunk. You should have had captains. You needed military people there. So replace all your kings and put captains there. So get rid of the kings. Put the captains in place.

Then rebuild your army. And then they say this crazy thing. The God of Israel is the God of the mountains. He's not the God of the valleys. So if you fight them in the valley, we'll overcome them. From the Aramean point of view, that makes a lot of sense. Because they have chariots and the nation of Israel does not. Chariots don't do so good in the mountains. They do a lot better in the valleys. So they say they're God. And this is kind of historical things. People think gods are kind of confined to certain areas. He's not the God of the valleys. That's kind of where they mess up. And we understand it in just a minute. Because God was already a step ahead of them.

He had already sent the prophet back to Ahab and said, hey, they're coming back. So then they go to Aphek. Aphek is a valley. It is a flat plain there where the Arameans should have done better. But it tells us at the turn of the year, Ben-Hadad mustered the Arameans and went up to Aphek to fight against Israel.

[27 : 10] And the sons of Israel were mustered. And it says in verse 28, Then a man of God, this is a second man of God. Then a man of God came near and spoke to the king of Israel and said, here we go.

God still in his grace. This is the next year. He comes back to him with a second man and says, hey, you're going to win this battle too. And the reason you're going to win this battle is because I'm going to prove to the Arameans that I'm not a God confined to the mountains. But I'm also the God of the valley. I'm the God of all things and all places of all times. But he says, I'm going to give them this great slaughter. And he says to Ahab, so that you may know. Don't lose the reality of that. God keeps saying, so that you may know. So that you may know that I am Lord. God keeps saying, so that you may know that I am Lord. For seven days face to face with this battle. And then they come together and they kill 100,000 soldiers in one day. The powerful.

[28 : 35] And they flee and they go into the city of Aphek. And 27,000 remain and a wall falls on them. Because God overpowers the powerful.

And he's showing them, I am the Lord. Don't lose that reality. That as they're sitting there, a small two flocks of goats looking at this grand army. Realizing they are more powerful than us. There's no other reality in their mind. That the only way we win this battle is not by brute force. Or not by outsmarting them. It has to be the Lord God. And God shows it to them and does it for them. It is an amazing battle that takes place. God again is manifesting himself to them. And he overpowers the powerful. Yet in spite of all this. In spite of all this. Ahab not only doesn't repent.

[29 : 37] That when all is said and done. He doesn't even give credit for where credit is due. Because when the servants of Ben-Hadad come out.

Ahab never acknowledges the reality that God won the battle. He never admits it. He never says it. He's silent. Again, in all of this.

It is a prophet. It is a prophet. It is a prophet. It is God reaching out. It is God manifesting himself. It is God taking the initiative. Ahab's heart is hardened.

And he is not acknowledging, admitting, or repenting of any of these things. Which gets us to the last thing. Not only can God overcome the odds against us. Not only does he overpower the powerful.

God overrules the rulers. Ben-Hadad knows he's defeated. I mean, if he thought he got away with 27,000 people.

[30 : 34] And when they got into the city. And the city wall fell on them. Then all of a sudden the reality sets in. And he kind of locks himself in the inner room of the city. Some of his servants say, well, we've heard about these kings of Israel.

They're gracious kings. Let us reach out to them. And so they gird their loins with sackcloth. And they put a rope around their neck. It's a sign of submission. And we're going to be your servants. You can lead us as slaves. Now you need to understand. We're not here to talk about or to defend God's goodness. We're not here to do that.

Because the fact that God is good is settled in scripture. So we have to acknowledge the reality of God's goodness. And the things that make us scratch our heads. We have to say, okay, well, I don't understand it.

But I'm not God. When the nation of Israel comes into the promised land. Book of Joshua. And then even into the book of Judges. They were allowed to make covenants with people that were distant from them.

[31 : 35] So God anticipated that his people would be on the offensive. And when they went out to battle. And they fought against a city that was a distance away from the land of Israel.

They would besiege it. Remember God says, don't cut the fruit trees down. Don't destroy the trees. Don't destroy the land. You're going to eat from that. They could enter into covenants there. But for any nation that bordered them.

They were not to enter into a covenant. They were to be considered to utter destruction. And it's not that God is just being mean. It's that God is trying to maintain the holiness of his people.

Understanding that his people would be more influenced by those near them. Than they would be by those far from them. And they would take on their practices. And we're not talking about genocide here. Because we would have to say that we don't know the sins of the Arameans. And all the people and the things that they had done. And we're not in God's place. They had been judged. God had already pronounced judgment upon them. Beginning all the way back from the book of Genesis and moving on. And their judgment has just now come.

[32 : 43] And so God was very clear and said, do not enter into a covenant with the nations that border your land. Aram bordered Israel.

And they refer to him as your servant Ben-Hadad.

And the reason he refers to him as my brother. And the reason he refers to him as my brother is because he's saying, he's not my servant. We're equal. We're going to coexist in equality.

So they saw this as an omen and brought him out. He calls him up into his chariot. They enter into a covenant. You read it. It's there. What happens. So Ahab enters into a covenant with Ben-Hadad. And from all political purposes, it looks like a good covenant. Because there's a Ben-Hadad that precedes this Ben-Hadad. That was probably just the royal name of the kings of Aram.

[33 : 44] And this man's father had taken some of the cities of the nation of Israel and said, I'll give them back to you. And he said, and you can come set up business in my land. And you can expand your economic influence.

And you can grow from my people as well. So it seemed like, politically at least, a good alliance. He entered into this covenant and he let him go. Then we are introduced to the third prophet.

And this, again, if we ever wanted to doubt the holiness of God, we see it here amongst the prophets. Where the one prophet goes to the other prophet and gives him a word from the Lord and says, strike me.

And that prophet says, I'm not going to strike you. And he said, God told you to strike me. And so since you're not going to obey the word of God, when you leave here, a lion will meet you and kill you. And a lion met him and killed him.

And our natural reaction goes, man, that's unfair. Really? This is a man who had dedicated his life to studying the holiness and reverence of God. And was seeking to hear a word from God.

[34 : 47] School of the prophets. He gets a word from God. He didn't understand the word of God. Didn't agree with the word of God. And decided he didn't want to obey the word of God. God says, okay. I mean, if the word of God is strike me, then strike me.

I give credit to the next one. He goes up to him. And I'm sure he saw the lion kill him and says, strike me. Okay, I'll hit you. I mean, I'm sure he hit him with all of his might. Right? Right? He

wounded him. The wording there is that he wounded him severely.

And he disguises himself. We think Nathan going to David. Sits along the way and poses as one who has been into the battle. Puts himself in the position of Ahab.

I was given a man. I was told to guard the man. I got busy here and there. I was told that if I didn't guard the man, then my life would be given for his. Or it's 75 pounds is the equivalent. 75 pounds of silver I'd be given for him.

And I was busy. And then here and there I was going everywhere. And then I look and the man's gone. And Ahab says, well, you've pronounced your own judgment. Your life or his life or give 75 pounds of silver. And then he removes his bandage.

[35 : 47] And evidently, Ahab at least could recognize the prophet. Because he realized that he was of the school of the prophets. And it says, the Helotamus says, why did you let Ben-Hadad go? See, God had given the enemy of his people into the hands of Ahab.

Ahab desired more of an economic agreement rather than walking in faithful obedience to the Lord. What should have been a victorious ride home ends up in verse 43.

So the king of Israel went to his house sullen and vexed. Why? Because he knew from that day on the period of grace was over.

Now he was under the judgment of God for the remainder of his life. Friend, listen to me. Sovereign God is a gracious God who is intimately involved in the lives of his people.

But he will not be ignored or neglected or cast off.

[36 : 54] What happens to Ahab is Ahab's fault. Because God gave ample opportunity. God manifests himself, displays himself, and reveals himself.

Paul takes these same realities and puts them in the book of Romans. And says that all men are without excuse. Because the God that judges the world is not a God who is just a distant God who put it into motion and left it there and said, See if you can figure it out.

He is a God who has revealed himself in a number of ways. So much so that Paul says that the creator may be made known by his creation.

That man is without excuse. Now do I believe that creation reveals enough so that we may come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ? I don't believe that. I believe you have to hear the word of God and respond to the word of God.

But I do believe that man is without excuse because God has given enough illumination to the reality of who he is. And therefore God is just in his judgments.

[38 : 06] Just as he is just in what happens to Ahab. Because he is sovereign. But he is involved. He manifests himself. He extends grace.

The God of scripture is a gracious God. He is a God that if you perceive history and you look back, that he manifests his presence over and over and over again.

And the call to his people is just to acknowledge it and to respond to it in obedience. He's doing it in our lives today and he does it through the life of every one of his people for his glory.

So that his people may know. Have you ever thought about that? I'm wrapping up. Of all the religions in the world. Of all the religions.

Of all the lowercase g gods that exist. Christianity is the only one that has a God that is so concerned that people may know. That he takes the initiative to reveal himself without a doubt.

[39 : 12] So do you world religions? They're seeking, searching, hoping, praying, maybe finding. Christianity is a faith in which God comes to man.

Manifest his presence among men so that they may know. Assurance is a big thing in the faith. Because God wants us to know who he is.

He is sovereign, sure. He's in control of all of this. But these events took place so that he would manifest his involvement so that people may know. And we see it in 1 Kings chapter 20.

It's a very long chapter. And I'm very appreciative of your patience with me tonight. Thank you, my brothers.

Thank you.

[40 : 42] Thank you.

Thank you.