

The God who answers

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[0:00] 1 Kings 18. That's what we're going to look at this morning. Big chapter, lovely chapter, exciting chapter.! Let me ask this question this morning. Do you have a God who answers? Do you have a God who answers?

Everybody has a God. They might not realise it, say I'm not religious, but a God is what you depend on, what you look to, where you find your strength, where you find your comfort.

That's what human beings are, they're religious creatures. Perhaps you pray, perhaps you meditate, perhaps you have a practice of communing in some sort of way. A lot of people have, not necessarily church-going people, but is anybody there? When you are meditating, is it, in fellowship with somebody? Is there a personal contact? Is anybody there? So, maybe you find yourself here and you're not really interested in Christianity, you just happen to be here.

may I ask you, would you agree with me, that it's actually an awful thing to be in a universe where there is no listener?

that when you want to say, this is marvellous, thank you, and are grateful, there's nobody at the other end to receive the gratitude. Actually, it's so instinctive to human beings, isn't it? See a wonderful sunset, you're grateful, but if there was nobody to be grateful to, and if in the depths, and human experience does contain depths, if you cry out, help me, if there's nobody there to listen, how awful.

[1:54] If you're somebody seeking Christian faith, and do seek, do seek, don't just leave it as an interesting conundrum, but seek, don't you want somebody to answer you?

Do you have questions that you're saying, I want an answer, I want to know, I want to know the truth behind life, the universe, and everything?

I won't be satisfied with 42 as the answer. Jesus said, if you ask, it will be given you, if you seek, you will find, if you knock, the door will be opened.

What an amazing thing for him to say. Even if you take him simply as a wise religious teacher, what a claim, that if you really ask, it will be given you.

If you really seek, you will find, if you really knock, because you're excluded from something, if you really knock, the door will be opened.

[3:00] That's what Jesus said. And if you're a Christian, prayer. Do you have a God who hears and answers prayer? We began with the sentence from Psalm 34, I sought the Lord and he answered me.

How come we carry so many burdens if we have a God who answers prayer? Are you, what does it say, weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care?

Or what does it say, precious? I can't remember what it says. But it's saying pray, isn't it? And how come we ask so little if we have a God who hears and answers prayer?

So that's what we're going to look at today, the God who answers. That's what this passage is about, the God who answers. You know? Brr, brr. Brr, brr.

Brr, brr. Brr, brr. No answer. But God doesn't do that. God answers. And please can you turn, just keep one finger and one kings, but turn to James chapter 5.

[4:18] And when I've read this, if you really want to go to sleep, you can go to sleep after this because this is the important bit. James chapter 5, from verse 16, it says, moving on from another subject, it says, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.

He's talking about prayer. He's got on to the subject of prayer. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. Elijah was a man just like us.

He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.

Again, he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

And Elijah there is set as the example of prayer. He was just like us, and look at what was accomplished through prayer.

Prayer. So that's the thought this morning. Prayer is so powerful and effective. That's my point.

[5:28] If you want to go to sleep, you can go to sleep now. But I'm going to take the rest of us through this chapter. So let's recap. Historically recapping.

In the history of Israel, we started off following the Lord. L-O-R-D, capital letters. Yahweh is the Hebrew equivalent. The God of Abraham. God made promises to this man, Abraham, that through his seed all the nations of the world will be blessed.

And God has been following that purpose, that policy ever since. The God of the Exodus, who characteristically took his people out of slavery, brought them into a promised land, fed them in the desert, was with them all the way in that journey.

That's the Lord, the God of the Bible. The God of David, who says, I'm going to produce, I'm going to do this through a kingdom and a king. And I will make sure there is a king forever, a forever king. So that's where we started. But then in the course of history, we get to the time when the northern kingdom, there was a split between the Israelite kingdoms.

[6:39] The northern kingdom ended up worshipping golden calf idols. I've got that bit wrong. I don't know why I put Jezebel there. Via Jeroboam.

And they exchanged their glory for a shame, their glory for a lie. Hosea 4.7 says that's what it was in exchange. God was glorious and they chose these horrible golden calves instead.

And Romans 1.25 says that that's what human beings characteristically do. They take the glory of God and exchange it for something cruder, more insulting to God, but more suitable to human beings.

That's the sin of humanity, that we don't glorify God as God. We make up some other God and put our trust in the economy or our trust in education or our trust.

All sorts of things that we put instead of God's great glory. It's exactly as forbidden, but it's typically human. But as the course of history went on, they ended up worshipping Baal.

[7:44] His name actually also means Lord, but we'll put it in small letters. He was the Canaanite fertility god. And there's lots of things you don't really want to know about Baal and his worship.

A forbidden god with forbidden ways of worship is total disaster. That's the history that we've been looking at. And the answer, God's answer was to bring Elijah into the scene, a solitary prophet.

He was looked after by a poor widow. And what does this man have in his favour? Well, he is speaking and living under the word of God. And that's God's answer to this crisis.

That's a little bit of revision. Sometime previously in the story of Elijah, the widow's son had died. Poor boy.

And we have already seen God's prayer and his action to give life. He prayed and he did this sort of stretching himself on the boy three times and prayed again.

[8:46] Let this boy's life return. And he did. He returned. He came alive. Your son lives, was what Elijah said.

And so we've got in the story this really little, it's a sort of seminal example, a little sort of seed that might grow up into something fantastic of God bringing life from the dead.

So just bear that in mind. That's in the history. We also have had three and a half years where there was no rain. What tiny writing that is. From no rain.

17.1, which is what happened then when Elijah said to King Ahab, there will be no rain because you followed the Baals. Followed the false gods.

See what that... Oh! That was the wrong button, wasn't it? Right. Which is the right button? That button. Yes. Okay. Elijah confronted Ahab and said there will be no rain.

[9:50] That was back in chapter 17. And I should stop just to remind you that the rain and the no rain is part of the terms and conditions of the relationship between God and his Israelite people.

If you worship me, I will send rain and fruitfulness. If you don't worship me, I will withhold rain. Not the same as the terms and conditions of the covenant that we live under, but that was the terms and conditions of the covenant in the Old Testament.

And we want to move from no rain to rain. And that's where we're going to go. We're going to get a lot of rain by the end of the chapter.

But how do we get there? Three and a half year period in between. How do we get there? This is... You probably think... I don't know why he's bothering to say this, but it will become clear, even if not this time, maybe next time.

How do we get from no rain to rain? God is warning the people. Things have gone wrong. That's why I'm withholding this rain. You're under a judgment.

[11:07] But I'm going to bring you to favor and blessing. Now, how? Is it going to be by a wide and deep repentance as people turn from Baal to the Lord?

See, that's really what the covenant envisages. That's what's really needed. That's A. Is it going to be B, a confession of the truth that Baal is not God and God and the Lord is God?

That would be a good step forward. Or is it C, that actually nothing really changes at all? That would be a great disappointment. Now, bear those three things in mind.

I mentioned them last time, but keep bearing them in mind. Let's look at the text. Now, chapter 18, verses 16 to 46.

Just out of interest, really. Did you notice how many numbers there were in there? Loads of numbers. Three years, 450 and 400 prophets.

[12:07] One, I, I am, only am left. The trench with two seers of seed, which is approximately 15 litres. And people, so 15 litres. If you think of those milk, how big are these?

Two litres, aren't they? Four pints, two litres. So 15 would be seven of those. Just not a huge amount. Barrels, four barrels, three times.

Seven times of looking. Lots of numbers. I don't know why they're there. I just thought I'd point it out. It's interesting. Perhaps there's a reason that we haven't thought of. There's lots of compliance. So Elijah does most of the talking. And he says, go and do this, this, this, and this. And the other people do it. There's very other few people doing anything apart from what he says. It's all he says to do this and they do it.

It's just a feature of what happens, if you notice this as we go through. He says it and they do it. And in particular, a repetition of the word answer.

[13:10] I'd like you to look at this. Verse 21 says, The people answered nothing. Verse 21. Your translation might be different, but that's what it says.

Verse 24. Verse 24. The God who answers by fire, he is God. Verse 26.

There was no response. No one answered. Verse 29. There was no response. No one answered. No answer. Verse 37.

Answer me, O Lord. Answer me. So there's a lot about answering. That's a key theme. So let's just take us through the text then.

[14:12] Verse 16. So Elijah and Ahab meet. Ahab is the king who has caused this problem by worshipping this false god.

And he says that it's actually Elijah's fault for praying. You're a troublemaker. And Elijah said, no, you're the troublemaker. You've made trouble by abandoning the Lord's commands and following the Baals.

Verse 18. Right. Now, he says, this is what I want to happen. Summon the people.

Gather the people from all over Israel to meet me at Mount Carmel. And bring the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah, who I think is Baal's wife in this mythology.

450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah. So gather them all together on Mount Carmel.

[15:15] The word for gather is actually often used of gathering an army. So I wonder whether they come equipped for battle. But it's a sort of gather the hosts together for a battle.

So gather them all. Maybe give them swords. The 450 and the 400. And here are the prophets. So I'll give them little cloaks so you know that they're prophets. And interestingly, they eat at Jezebel's

table.

So I wonder what's going on there about Jezebel isn't... I think it's saying more than she just supports them with food. I think it's saying that they have fellowship together.

They're in this together. They eat and drink together. Jezebel feeds those people. Remember the Lord had fed his prophets in various ways. Remember he used ravens?

Didn't he? He used a widow. Then he used Obadiah. Different ways that he sustained his people. Christians eat and drink with their God.

[16:22] Don't they? We call it communion. We sit at the table with our God. We call it communion.

Am I right? Yeah, we do. I think that's the sort of thing that's going on here. It's a little reminder. It's an important thing, Christians, for us to have that fellowship at the Lord's table.

Just throw that in as a reminder. So what happens next? Ahab, verse 20. Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel.

Elijah went before the people. There's Mount Carmel. He says, you've got two ways. You've got the Lord and you've got Baal. Let's get everybody assembled there. He says, How long will you waver between two opinions?

The word is to sort of limp or totter or stagger. How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, then follow him.

[17:28] If Baal is God, then follow him. Interesting. He's been quite consistent, isn't he? He says, okay. If you say you're a Baal follower, then follow him.

If you say you're a Lord follower, then follow him. It's called being consistent. And he might say to us today, If you say you're a Christian, then be a Christian.

If you're not a Christian, don't be. If you say you're a Christian, be a Christian. Be consistent. Follow what it says. Don't be half-hearted.

Follow it. To which, verse 21, the answer comes, Nothing.

They haven't got much to say about that. And Elijah said to them, Okay. I am the only one of the Lord's prophets left, but Baal has 450 prophets.

[18:32] Here's my proposal. Get two bulls. Let us choose one. Let them choose one for themselves. Let them cut it into pieces. Put it on the wood, but not set fire to it.

I'll prepare the other bull. Put it on the wood, but not set fire to it. Then you will call on the name of your God. I will call on the name of the Lord. And the God who picks up the phone and answers by fire is God.

How does that sound? And they say, Good idea. The word is good. Okay. Let's do it then, shall we? Do you think that's a fair test? Seems pretty fair to me. So let's set it all up then. Choose and prepare. And you lot go first.

So they take their bull. Sorry about that. The graphics have gone wrong. That's just supposed to be a line. That's supposed to be a line. And that's supposed to be a line. So they're cutting up the bull. And they place it on the wood.

[19:34] Interestingly, the word for wood and tree is the same in Hebrew. The sacrifice is placed on the tree, on the wood. I can think of another sacrifice that was placed on the wood, but he was nailed to it.

So fire. Sorry about that. Those lines are supposed to be about our heads. No fire. And they do all that.

Verse 26. So he's told them what to do. They comply. Call on the name of your God, but do not light the fire. So they took the bull given to them. They prepared it. And they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon.

Oh, Baal, answer us. Baw, baw. Baw, baw. Baw, baw. And there was no response.

And it says there was nothing voice, nothing answer. And they, using the same word as to waver, to totter, I think he's probably being a bit insulting, they totter around the sacrifice.

[20:59] There's the Baal prophets jumping around the sacrifice. And at noon, Elijah begins to taunt them.

And he says, well, you know, that phone's been ringing now ever since this morning. Perhaps you should shout louder. Shout louder, he says.

Surely he is a God. Maybe he's deep in thought. Maybe he's thinking about something. You've got to shout louder and distract him.

Maybe he's busy. Maybe he's daydreaming.

Maybe he's busy. Maybe he's traveling. And in there, one of those phrases can actually mean he's gone to the toilet. Maybe he's gone to the toilet and you have to knock on the door and get him to come out.

[22:01] He's a God. Well, actually, he's being sarcastic, isn't he? Because a real God, a God worth calling a God, doesn't have to go to the toilet.

And a real God doesn't daydream. The Lord neither slumbers nor sleeps. He's there 24-7. He's on call 24-7.

You know, Baal is a pretty rubbish God if he's busy or needs to be roused by shouting louder.

But they do shout louder. Maybe he's asleep. Where am I? Maybe he's sleeping and has to be awakened. So they shouted louder. Let's see what they do next.

They shouted louder. And they slashed themselves with swords and spears until their blood flowed. So, let's see.

[23:04] Swords and spears until their blood flowed. There's a sacrifice. Sacrifice is on the wood and blood flows.

It's all wasted. It's all useless. It's all misguided. There's nothing precious about that blood.

Christians think of a sacrifice where blood was poured out.

But it was precious blood. It was purposeful blood. There's a song that says, Oh, the blood that flowed was shed for me.

What a huge difference to this rubbish, rubbish, rubbish sacrifice that achieves nothing and has just got lots of human ideas in it.

Shouting louder, cutting yourself, jumping up and down. It doesn't get anywhere. It doesn't get anywhere. Totally useless. They prophesied and they tottered around until the time of the evening sacrifice.

[24:26] And then you get to, so it's three times this time, no response, nothing response, nothing voice back, nothing answer, nothing attention.

Nothing. Nothing. Nothing. There is one God who is dependable and capable and living, but it's not Baal.

Baal's rubbish. The idols of the world, the made-up gods, are undependable. They promise a lot, but they don't deliver. They're incapable.

They have noses, but they don't smell. They have ears, but they can't hear. They have eyes, but they can't see. They have hands, but they can't touch. They have feet, but they can't move. And our God, the Lord, is not like the idols.

And the psalm, Psalm 115 says, when people make up idols, which the theologian Calvin says, the heart of humankind is a factory of idols.

[25:43] We love to make idols. We love to exalt them and give them the condition of certainty and dependability and security and give us meaning. But they're dead.

And the psalm says, those who make them will be like them. If you all put it this way, John Stott, I think it was, Reverend John Stott said, you become like the God you worship.

If you worship a dead idol, it kills you. Mind you, if you worship the living God, if you look at his glory, his glory shines back at you.

And we are changed from one degree of glory to another as we behold his face. This model of prayer, of just damaging yourself and being frantic and making a lot of noise and even shedding blood, is so unlike the Christian relationship of father-son, father-daughter.

That's the model of Christian prayer, isn't it? When we come before our heavenly father, our father who is in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven, give us this day our daily bread, lead us not in temptation, deliver us from evil.

[27:12] We don't have to cut ourselves to do that. We don't have to shout louder. It's in the nature of the heavenly father to hear his children. His eyes are upon his children, his ears are open to hear their cry.

We can just pray. Which is pretty amazing, isn't it? To have a God who answers like that. Now then, what happens when Elijah takes over?

He says, okay, you've had your go now. You've had a good long go. Verse 30, Elijah said to all the people, come near to me. Oh, I'm sorry about that. Come near to me. Now, why do you think he wants them to come near?

I think they are witnesses. He says, I want you to come near to be perfectly sure there's no trickery. I'm not going to do a magic trick. I'm not going to hide anything up my sleeve.

I want you to come near so that you can see. That person's still limping around between opinions, aren't they? This person is as well. So he says, come near to me.

[28:15] And they came. And he repaired the altar of the Lord which was in ruins. Actually, it says he healed the altar. And he heals it with 12 stones.

Here they go. 12 stones. 12 stones. 12 stones. 12 stones. 12 stones. 12 stones.

One for each of the tribes descended from Jacob to whom the word of the Lord had come saying, your name shall be Israel. 12 stones.

12 stones. Does anything strike you about the 12 in this context? It's all the tribes, isn't it?

This is quite a controversial statement because there had been a division and the northern kingdom had 10 of the tribes. But he's saying, the altar of the Lord is about all the people of God being together.

[29:12] which you, northern kings, southern kings, have managed to fragment. But the kingdom of God is about all his people. It's about all his people.

There's no Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, but all are one in Christ Jesus. And he now digs a trench. Now I'm trying to get hold of the size of this trench.

It's enough to hold two seers of seed, which is seven of those four pint bottles of milk. The fact that it's seed makes it a little bit confusing because if it was seed that you just put into a trench, then actually the trench would be quite small.

I think we're thinking about like the size of the piano around there. If it's the amount of seed that you could spread on the ground, then that makes it a huge amount. Do you see what I mean?

If it tells you the amount of seed, is it the amount of seed just like that or is it when you spread it out? So let's go with the smaller amount. So I think he's saying draw near because this is happening in quite a small area.

[30:19] And he arranges the wood and he cuts the bull in pieces. There's the bull. Now then, oh dear. he cuts the bull in pieces and puts the sacrifice on the wood.

And then he says, fill four large jars with water and pour it on the offering and on the wood. And he says, do it three times.

You might be interested to notice that four times three is twelve. Four plus three is seven. Why do you think he adds the water? Why does he say, we want to make this totally wet, make this very, very wet?

Why does he do that? To show how great God is. because we're now setting up something which is not just difficult but actually impossible. It's getting more and more impossible, isn't it?

Because we want to set fire to this soaking wet sacrifice. It's impossible. But what is impossible with human beings is possible with God.

[31:33] Jesus said that. Worth remembering, isn't it? What's impossible with human beings is possible with God. what happened there?

Right, and now he prays. At the time of the sacrifice, it is a sacrifice. It's not just a contest.

It's a sacrifice. At the time of the sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed. It's a wonderful prayer. Oh Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or Israel.

He's reaching back into history and he's saying, this is not just a made up God now. This is the God with this wonderful, rich track record, this fantastic CV of all the things he's done down through the centuries.

This God is here today. This God is the same God that we're calling on. Look at all the things that he's done. He's the same. He doesn't change. That's him. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

[32:36] He says, let it be known today that you are God in Israel. So let that be shown. Let people go away confident of that. And that I am your servant.

It's a good prayer to pray. Good prayer to pray for Ben and the people who go down to the book table. There's loads of tables down in London Road selling student accommodation and living Marxism and all sorts of things like that.

And the prayer is, let it be shown that these people are the servants of the Lord. Who are they serving? They're not serving Marx or the language student industry.

They're serving the Lord. Let it be known that you are God and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, O Lord.

Answer me. That's the request. Answer. And let the people know that you are turning their hearts back. So there's a number of requests there, including the turning of people's hearts.

[33:52] But let it be known that you are God, that I am your servant, I've done these things according to your word. Answer me, O Lord. Then, then, what happens next?

Oh, yes, the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, the soil, and licked up the water in the trench.

And everybody falls down. When the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, The Lord, he is God.

The Lord, he is God. Fantastic. Wah! Amazing. Fantastic answer to prayer. Whoa, zap. And the Lord is shown to be God.

Now, before we get on to the next bit, this fire that comes down from heaven is not just a display of pyrotechnics, not like fireworks, it has a meaning.

[35:04] And the meaning is that this sacrifice is being acceptable to God. He's accepting sacrifice. You find the same thing in Leviticus 9, when the tabernacle is started.

You might like to look at it. Leviticus 9, 24. Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting.

When they came out, they blessed the people and the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people and fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed the burnt offering and the fat portions on the altar when all the people saw it, they shouted for joy and fell face down.

So God's done that before. He said, yes, I am in this. I will accept this sacrifice. This is something I'm prepared to accept. And whoosh, he accepts it. And you get the same thing at the beginning of the temple in the 2 Chronicles chapter 7 account where Solomon puts the temple on line and it says, when Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices and the glory of the Lord filled the temple.

And God's saying, this new temple, I'll accept this, you can come to me through this. Wow! And this is another, there's only a few examples like this and this is one of them.

[36:29] Here's a question. The greatest sacrifice in the world, how did God show that he accepted that?

It's a slightly different answer, so don't jump in too quickly. The resurrection of Jesus Christ, isn't it? How do we know that God accepted the sacrifice of Christ on the cross?

He raised him from the dead. Slightly different, but that's how he showed he accepted that sacrifice. So what happens next? Let's find our places. So now everything works rather quickly.

So the prophets of Baal put them to death. Elijah commanded, seize the prophets of Baal, don't let them get away, they seized them. Elijah had them brought down into the Kishon Valley and killed them there.

So there are the prophets, there are the people with their swords, which perhaps they brought, and now the blood that's shed is the death of these prophets. he's picking up on part of the terms and conditions of the old covenant, which is to purge out the evil from among you.

[37:39] So if people were Baal worshippers or Baal advocates or advocates of false gods, they were to be put to death. Several times a similar sentence is used, for example, Deuteronomy 13, 15.

Interesting that the apostle Paul quotes that, because just in case you're wondering whether this gives Christians the excuse for jihad to go around killing people who don't believe in the Christian God, it doesn't.

Because when this is quoted in the New Testament, it's Christianized, and Paul quotes this, purge the evil from among you, 1 Corinthians 5, 13. And what he says is, exclude from your fellowship people who are not following the Lord.

so he doesn't say kill them, he uses that verse, but he says in Christian terms, you exclude them from the fellowship. It's interesting, isn't it? So our forefathers who I think misguidedly burned heretics at the stake, I think they got that wrong.

The New Testament doesn't say kill people who are heretics, it says exclude them from the fellowship, just in case you were wondering, just in case you brought a sword with you this morning, which I hope you didn't. And now it gets, it hasn't stopped yet because it, verse 41, Elijah says to Ahab, go up and eat and drink.

[39:00] So he's supposed to go up and eat and drink. So we had some more eating and drinking. And I think that this eating and drinking is a bit like the eating and drinking on the mountain with Moses.

It's sort of reestablishing communion with the Lord. I think that's what's happening, it's just very brief so you couldn't be dogmatic about it, but I think it's saying we're back to normal. We're eating and drinking with the Lord now.

And in the meantime, where are we? Elijah goes to the top of Mount Carmel and prays. Sorry about that picture, he is actually praying, it looks as though he's got a big nose or something like that, but he's praying.

And this is the bit that we need to look at now. Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel, bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees. He's doing that because he's praying. And he takes his servant with him and he says to the servant, there's Elijah praying, he says to the servant, go and look towards the sea.

Okay, he's praying. Christian prayer now. What's that Christian? Prayer to the living God. He prays. And what's the answer? What does the servant see?

[40:15] Nothing. Nothing. Interesting, isn't it? Nothing. Nothing. Interesting that. And he says that six times.

Still praying. Go and look. Six times. Six times. Tells us something about prayer, doesn't it?

It isn't automatically zap straight away. Even for Elijah, he was a man like us, he prayed. And he had to pray over a period. He had to repeat his prayer.

That's interesting, isn't it? That tells us something about our prayer. It might, at the first sound, seem like there is no answer. But repetition is called for here. And he repeats the prayer.

And on the seventh occasion, he says, I see a cloud like a man's hand rising from the sea. I wonder what that looked like.

[41:14] Just sort of that sort of size. Rising from the sea. And Elijah says, go and tell Ahab.

Tell Ahab to saddle up, get his chariot going. and to go down before the rain stops you. So that's what Ahab has to do.

And meanwhile, the sky grew black and there was wind and rain. It's really dramatic, isn't it? Sky goes black and wind and rain.

It's just been wall-to-wall sunshine for the past three and a half years and suddenly, it's really stormy. It's a little bit like the storm when Jesus walked on the water. Remember, it was dark, cloudy, windy, frightening.

You don't want to be stuck on top of a mountain, especially if you've got a chariot, unless it's a four-wheel drive chariot, which it probably wasn't. The sky grew black, the wind rose, and a heavy rain came on, and Ahab rode to Jezreel, there's Jezreel, and Elijah, the power of the Lord came upon Elijah, and tucking his cloak into his belt, he ran ahead of Ahab to Jezreel.

[42:34] There's a very little compressed statement there, what's going on, because I think what we've got here is, it's all done. This is the last chapter in the Bible, because everything's been put right.

We're having communion with the Lord, and we're going to announce in the city, we're going to announce what the classic good news is, the victory is won, the king is coming.

That's what Christian evangelists say, isn't it? The victory is won, the king is coming, get ready. And Elijah's well up for this.

Hooray, all finished. And I just want to say, because we're not going to do chapter 19, 15. And I want to say, please don't raise your expectations too high, because it doesn't work out quite as simply as we're thinking and as Elijah's thinking.

But where do we get to? Well, they all lived happily ever after. Well, not quite. But we have a sacrifice that's been accepted. We have prayer being answered. We have Baal defeated.

[43:45] The people turned back. Okay, the people turned back, but be prepared for a setback. Even this mighty sign is actually a failure.

It does not convert the nation. It is not the ultimate sacrifice. It does not mean everybody lives happily ever after, and poor old Elijah is really disappointed.

We should be on the lookout for another mountain. where there is darkness, although it's different, where blood is poured out, but this time it's precious blood, where prayer seems unanswered, blah, blah.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And there comes no answer. And here above all is the place where doubts are quashed, where God is seen, the Lord, he is God.

His true identity is confirmed on this other mountain. Does anybody know which mountain I'm talking about? Calvary, the mountain where Jesus died.

[44:59] And if you really want to know who is God, by all means look in 1 Kings 18, but don't stop there. If you really want to be sure, by all means look in 1 Kings 18, but don't stop there.

If you are willing to follow where the evidence lead, if he is the Lord, follow him, then you need to go to the cross of Jesus Christ. The sacrifice to end sacrifices.

The blood, which is the precious blood. The sacrifice upon the wood. And when he does his work, he cries out, it is finished.

Let's sing together number 601. As we come before you to pray.