

God's Word Must Be Fulfilled

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Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[0 : 0 0] Let's turn again to the chapter we read in 1 Kings, chapter 22, verse 14.

We read these words, But Micaiah said, As the Lord lives, what the Lord says to me, that I will speak.

Sometimes we don't take God's word as seriously as we should, and maybe that's because of how we live and how we speak ourselves, because not everything that we hear throughout the day is true.

Sometimes people exaggerate. Sometimes people pass on things that they've heard which aren't true, and we might be guilty ourselves of saying things that we're not altogether sure about, and maybe we ourselves may exaggerate.

But the Lord never says anything that is untrue or anything that is exaggerated in any shape or form. God's word is always, always, always exactly true.

[1 : 1 2] And that is one of the things that we really have to lay hold on, because, like himself, his word is unchangeable. It says in God's word that he is with himself, that there is no variableness or shadow of turning it.

We've got that description of who God is. Well, that's true of his word as well. And so, as we come to this portion of God's word, it's one of the many incidents and many stories in the Bible that just show so clearly how true God is to his word.

When I was growing up, I always loved the Bible stories, and particularly, there were favorites, and I always loved the story surrounding Ahab and Elijah, because there was such a contrast.

You had Ahab, this powerful king, who was really, in a sense, a puppet king. His wife, Jezebel, was the power behind the throne. Whatever she said, that's what happened.

Ahab just did what his wife said. But he was a king who, although he was very powerful, had sold himself to wickedness. He had abandoned all the heritage he had been shown, and he followed the ways of Baal, the idol Baal.

[2 : 3 8] And then you had Elijah. Elijah was this kind of mysterious character. Seemed to be a kind of fiery character, a loner. But somebody that God used powerfully and mightily.

And as far as this world was concerned, Elijah had nothing. As far as this world was concerned, Ahab had everything. And yet you always knew, at the end of the day, that Ahab was going to be the loser, and Elijah was going to be the winner.

And you couldn't have, although you had Elijah living in the desert, Elijah for periods just living by the stream, being fed by ravens, being housed by a widow woman for years, and Ahab living in his palace, you somehow knew that the end was going to be very different.

And you couldn't have had a more extraordinary contrast in the deaths. Because Ahab, we find him slumped in his chariot, bleeding to death, under the judgment and curse of God.

He's in his chariot, bleeding to death, while Elijah is also in a chariot, being carried up alive, into glory.

[3 : 59] There has never been a greater contrast than that. From Genesis to Revelation, I can't imagine a greater contrast than this wicked king, dying, slumped in his chariot, bleeding to death, and the one who had pronounced the judgment on him, being carried up to glory in this chariot of fire.

And we've always got to remember that at the end of the day, it's our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that counts. No matter what you get in the world, no matter what the world gives you, don't have the Lord Jesus Christ, you have nothing.

Anyway, here we have this particular incident, and there's sermons in this all the way through. But, we find that, we didn't read it, because the chapters are rather lengthy.

But the background, very simply, is that next door to the palace, there was this man, Naboth, who lived, and Naboth had a beautiful vineyard. Very simply, Ahab wanted that vineyard.

And, you would look at it, and you'd say, well, it's reasonable what Ahab did. Ahab came to Naboth, and he said, look, I'd like to buy your vineyard. And I'm sure he was offering quite a good price. But Naboth was a good man.

[5 : 20] And Naboth said to him, I'm sorry, but I can't give you, I cannot sell the vineyard. It's against God's law. You see, the law of Israel, because God, remember this, God looked on the land.

Remember the whole land of Canaan. That was his land. That was the land that he had given his people. And it was his land, and the people had to live according to his laws.

And one of the laws was that they were not to sell off the inheritance that they had. They were given this inheritance, and it was handed down. And that's what Naboth was saying, very simply.

I can't sell it to you. He's going to the Levitical law, and this is what it says. The land shall not be sold, for the land is mine, says the Lord, for you are strangers and sojourners.

That's what God said. The land is mine. You're not to sell it. You're just strangers and sojourners. I'm giving you this. So, Naboth was a good man, and he was adhering to God's law.

[6 : 28] And he saw that he was really just a tenant. That he was looking after this land for the Lord. It belonged to the Lord. And he said to Naboth, to Ahab, I can't sell it to you.

Even if I wanted to, I can't sell it. Ahab was furious. He had no care or concern for God's law. And he went home in a huff.

And just to cut a long story short, you remember how his wife saw him like this, in this huff, and she said to him, look, I'll sort this out.

But you know, in passing, it might be worth just highlighting that we also have been given a great inheritance. inheritance. We've grown up with a spiritual inheritance here.

You have been born into a spiritual inheritance that is really amazing. And sometimes we take it for granted. And there will be loads of voices saying compromise, give it up.

[7 : 30] Because you know, today, the devil will whisper to you and say, look at the crowd. The crowd no longer go to church. That was okay for a past generation, bygone days.

The times have moved on. The Bible's not relevant like it was for another generation. You've got to sort of move with the times. Come on, compromise. In fact, I'll give you far more.

That's what Satan tells us. And you know, there's a lot of people listen to that lie. And they go down, they go with the crowd. Well, remember, the crowd isn't always right.

Remember that it was the crowd that cried, crucify him, crucify him. It was only a small group that stayed loyal to Jesus. The huge crowd were all against him.

That's where the crowd is. Jesus tells us which road the crowd are walking on. They're walking on the broad road. That leads where? To destruction.

[8 : 30] Leads to hell. And so, it's a very, very solemn thing. We have, you know, sometimes because of what we've grown up with and we're used to it and so on, it's precious.

This heritage that we have been given, the God's Word, the day that we have, all these things, they are so precious to us. And we have a great responsibility to hand this down to our children.

And we have to do that by living, showing that this day is special, that it's a Lord's day, showing that God's Word is relevant to our lives.

There's no point in saying to our children, oh, you've got to read God's Word when we're not in the slightest concern with God's Word, that we don't appreciate God's Word or interested in God's Word.

If we live according to God's Word, then we're showing that God's Word has a place within our lives. And so, we too have to be like Naboth and not sell out.

[9 : 35] Anyway, Ahab went into a huff. His wife saw him in a huff. She said, what's up? And he said, Naboth won't sell his vineyard. Oh, she said, I'll sort that out. And very simply, what she did, she hired out a few bad men in the city and got these bad men to tell lies about Naboth.

and Naboth, she said that, or these people were saying that Naboth had cursed God and cursed the king. So he was tried before this, like what we'd term a kangaroo court.

He was found guilty and he was taken out and he was stoned to death. And, you know, when you read the story, it is absolutely awful. But God was watching over and God wasn't going to let this just pass by.

He was taking note. And there we find, that's where we find, Ahab has gone into his new found vineyard. There he is, he's strolling around the vineyard and he'd be saying to himself, oh, this is great.

Best vineyard there was in the land. I'm really chuffed to get it. Poor Naboth, but anyway, that's what he gets for not selling to me. And as he turns around the corner, he almost bumps into Elijah.

[10 : 50] And of course, the words, we find that Ahab says to Elijah, have you found me, O my enemy? And Elijah gives God's word to Ahab straight between the eyes.

Bang! And he says very simply, have you killed and taken possession? Thus says the Lord, in the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick up your blood.

And the dogs will eat Jezebel within the walls of Jezreel. And you know, there's a fearful severity in that judgment. And you say to yourself, why?

That is fuchs. Well, we've got to remember that Israel were God's people. Ahab was the king of Israel.

And Ahab had sold himself to do evil. That's what he had done. We're told that, and I will, because, the Lord says in verse 22, because you have provoked me and because you have made Israel to sin.

[12 : 04] Isn't that a solemn thing? Can you imagine that that's what your life's work was about? Was making people sin? That's what Ahab's life was about. His mission was to take the people away from God and to force them into worshipping idols, to worship Baal.

And God was saying, what you have done, you have provoked me to anger, and it's a fearful thing to provoke the living God to anger. It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

And that's what was going to happen to Ahab because of his willful disobedience, because of his love of sin. Let us be careful that we don't lead people into sin.

God doesn't treat that lightly. And that's what we find this is part of what is going to be the judgment that's going to be visited on Ahab. And there was a judgment that was going to be visited on Israel because they had the light and they've turned their back on the light.

And that's the worst thing that we can do. And nationally, you know, when you read the things like this in the Scripture, God is true to Himself. God is looking at our nation today.

[13 : 20] We had the light. It's not so long ago that this was a nation. Our nation was known for its adherence to God's Word. It was built on the truth.

Even cities like Glasgow, its motto was that let Glasgow flourish by the Word. It was tied into it. And that's been taken out because people don't care about the Word.

Nationally, we're turning it back upon God. Well, God is not mocked. God is taking note. And one day, and we, you know, even as we look at our nation just now, everybody's away.

It can't go on. It's like it's being suffocated more and more and more. And so often people are beginning to say, I feel very vulnerable. Particularly, you've got this coronavirus.

There's terrorism. There's all these kind of economic threats. And people are saying, what's going to happen? God's on the throne. And he's saying to us, listen to me.

[14 : 23] Turn back to me. And it's a solemn thing. Well, this is what happened in Israel. They just rebelled against God until the time God was dealing with the kings one after another that were turning their back on him.

And it came to the point when God said, right nation of Israel, you've had it. I have, I have repeatedly tried to bring you back to myself. And you just keep turning away.

You're going into captivity. And so it happened. And so it happened for Judah as well. So we have to take these warnings to heart. Anyway, we find here that Jehoshaphat, who was a good king, he was the king of Judah, he came down to see Ahab in Israel.

And Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, you know, see that place, Ramoth Gilead, that actually belongs to us. The Syrians have had it for ages. I want to take it back. Will you come and give me a hand?

Will you help me? And Jehoshaphat said, yes, he said, my horses are your horses, my chariots, my soldiers are with you. Jehoshaphat shouldn't have got involved with Ahab.

[15 : 33] This was a very, very wrong compromise. Because here's this good man, Jehoshaphat, who was a really godly king. And he's joining up with this man who is under the sentence and judgment of God.

And Jehoshaphat, if we read all the way through it, Jehoshaphat nearly lost his life through it. And we need to be careful that we don't over compromise. Of course, in this world, we have to be involved.

But don't sell yourself. Don't compromise your position. Don't compromise your faith. Because once you've compromised your faith, you've kind of lost your way in this world.

You haven't lost your soul. But you lose your standing. You lose your place. You lose your acceptance, both within the church and within the world. It's important.

And Jehoshaphat nearly lost out. And he was rebuked because of what he did, aligning himself and joining himself up with Ahab. Anyway, Jehoshaphat, being the good man, said, well, before I go to battle, I want to know God's word on this.

[16 : 41] And I like what Jehoshaphat is doing because he wants to know the will of God. Now, people say, a lot of people today will say, God has given us common sense. Use it.

Yes, God has given us common sense. But let me assure you, your and my common sense won't always work out God's will for our lives. And I'm sure if you look back, you will see that there have been certain things in your life that as you prayerfully bring it before God, God shows you.

And if you had just used your common sense, you would never have arrived at that decision. You have followed what you believe God is showing you. Not your common sense. Now, as I say, common sense comes into play a lot.

But God's word overrules everything. And that's what this man, Jehoshaphat, knew. And that's why he asked for this. He said, send for a prophet. And of course, Ahab sends for 400 prophets.

Now, these weren't the prophets of Baal. There were the prophets of Baal as well. But these were false prophets. These were supposed to be prophets of God. They were like, they were, they were great, what we would turn graceless ministers.

[17 : 52] And one of the greatest curses that can ever be upon the church of God is to have people preaching or telling God's word who don't know God at all. It's a fearful thing.

Well, here were these, these people. And they were giving Ahab exactly what he wanted to hear. Ahab, they knew, was wanting to go to battle. So they said, yeah, yeah, on you go.

Everything's going to be good. You're going to win. It's going to be a tremendous victory for you. God is with you. And Jehoshaphat knew straight away, these aren't the real deal.

These people aren't genuine. These are not men of God. So he said, is there not a true prophet of the Lord? And Ahab said, well, there's this man, Micaiah, but I hate him because he never prophesies anything good about me.

Little wonder, because God had nothing good to say to Ahab because of his rebellion and hatred of God. So Micaiah is called. And to begin with, Micaiah is purely mocking.

[19 : 01] He is following the prophets of, the false prophets just in a cynical, sarcastic way, which was very obvious to both to Micaiah, both to Ahab and Jehoshaphat.

But then he says, I'll tell you, I'll tell you the truth. And that's what he says, as the Lord lives, what the Lord says to me, that I will speak. And that's how it's always got to be.

And you know, that is part of the reason why many people today won't open their Bibles. Because they don't want to hear what God says. Many people who don't believe in God, but even people who do believe God, they don't want to open their Bibles because they don't know what God's Word will say.

There are many people who won't come to church because they don't want to hear what God has to say. Well, God's Word is true.

And it's one of the things we've always got to do. Something I'm always conscious of. I always, always, with my hand on my heart, I've always tried to proclaim exactly what God's Word has said.

[20 : 09] It might not be comfortable. Sometimes it's not comfortable to me. Sometimes what I preach, I preach to myself as well as to you. And sometimes it goes like a knife into my own heart.

But I've got to because it's God's Word. I have to give an account for what I have preached. I have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ as every minister has to.

As to whether we were faithful to God's Word or not. And it's a serious, solemn thing. And you and I, as listeners, have to give an account of what we have done with God's Word.

Do you know the worst thing you can do is sit in judgment? Sit in a seat listening to God's Word, sitting in judgment upon it. God will judge for that. We have to take God's Word to heart.

It was something Ahab had never learned to do, but Jehoshaphat had. And Micaiah tells what's going to happen. And as we said, it was quite extraordinary how the great contrast between Ahab and Elijah.

[21 : 14] But you'll notice, you'll notice how Ahab actually dies. And it, you would say to yourself, reading it, it seems just, almost like, so absolutely random.

Because it tells us here in verse 34 of chapter 22. A certain man, we have no idea who it was, a certain man drew his bow at random.

In other words, just, there was, translated in innocence. In other words, this man, he's firing arrows, and he pulls out an arrow, and he fires, not aiming at anything.

That arrow is just going. This man, we don't know who he is, fired this arrow, and he had no idea where it was going. Isn't that extraordinary? But God was in charge of that arrow.

And that arrow hit Ahab in the one place that his armor couldn't protect. And Ahab says, I've been hit. And he slumps down in the chariot.

[22 : 24] And he's lying there for long enough. Turn round and carry me out of the battle, for I am wounded. And the battle continued that day, and the king was propped up in his chariot, facing the Syrians, until that evening he died.

He had a long, slow, lingering death under God's judgment. Oh, that was an awful place to be.

And yet, as we said, we find that here's this man, Ahab, who tried to outrun God, outsmart God, and dismiss God. And everything that God said was absolutely true.

Verse 37, So the king died and was brought to Samaria, and they buried the king in Samaria, and they washed the chariot by the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood, exactly as had been said.

Let us remember that God's word is absolutely true. You can't change it, I can't change it. We can't run from it. We can try and block it out of our thinking.

[23 : 36] We can, as I say, wrongly, sit in judgment on it. God will fulfill his word to the last letter. So may we seek that we will know this true God as our God, and that we may bow before him so that our end will not be an end of judgment, but an end like Elijah's was.

As we said, the contrast couldn't be greater. One slumped in his chariot under the judgment of God, and the other carried in a chariot of fire into the presence of the Lord.

Contrast could not be greater. You make sure that it's carried as last as it was by the angels into heaven, that it will be for you at the end and trusting in Jesus.

Let us pray. O Lord, our God, we pray that your word may go down deep within our soul. Sometimes, as we come to your word, your words are full of grace and truth.

Your words are always full of truth, but sometimes you show us hard things, things that challenge us, things that go right deep within us, things that maybe we don't find easy to deal with or contend with, but they're necessary.

[24 : 55] And so we pray, Lord, that you will bless us, that you will do us good, and that you will watch over us, take us all to our homes in safety. Bless our homes, our families, and all whom we love.

Bless a cup of tea, coffee in the hall after. Watch over us and forgive us all our sin, we pray. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.