Sin found out

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Preacher: Rev J.J.Murray

[0:00] We turn to a reading in 1 Kings chapter 21. We read again at verse 20. And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?

And he answered, I have found thee, because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord. Amen. We are studying the life of Elijah, and we come to the last but one studies in the life of this prophet.
We have seen how he is a man of God and a man of prayer, a man who is jealous for the name of the Lord God, and who by his prayer shut up the heavens, so that there was no rain upon the land. And how he confronts the wickedness of Ahab and Jezebel, how he calls down fires from heaven, and how God is shown to be God.
And then last time we saw how this man goes from the heights to the depths, how he goes from Mount Carmel to the wilderness, to the desert, where he despairs of life, and where God comes and ministers to him there, and brings restoration to him, and sends him once again on his way.
[1:31] With a fresh call to service, with a new sphere of usefulness, he teams up with Elisha, whom he anoints to be prophet in his stead.

And for the next ten years, there is not much recorded about the prophet Elijah. We believe that during this time, when Ahab was so busy at war with the king of Syria, that Elijah and Elisha were establishing the schools of the prophets.
If we go over to 2 Kings 2, we read there in verses 3 and 5 about the schools of the prophets. And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth to Elisha.
And in verse 5, the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha. It would seem that these men were busy at this time fitting and preparing young men for the prophetic office.
They were training others to be prophets of the Lord. And so there's this period of ten years where there is not much recorded with regard to Elijah.
[2:45] But then we find Elijah coming to the fore once again. And it's in connection with this man Naboth. This man Naboth had a fine piece of land in the town of Jezreel.

And this piece of land was bordering on the edge of Ahab's summer palace there in Jezreel. And Ahab the king is attracted by this piece of land.
And he asked Naboth if he can have this piece of land. And he offers him a better vineyard than the one he has if he will give it to him.
And if he won't have that, he'll offer him money for this vineyard, for this piece of land. And so the first thing we see here this evening is Naboth's choice.
Now Naboth is faced with this offer from the king. And it seems a very fair offer. He's got this place and he has it in his possession.
[3:52] But yet the king is offering a better place. Or the king is offering him money for it. But you see, what happens is this. That Ahab forgets that this is an impossible request.

It's an impossible request. For Naboth was forbidden by God's law to sell his land. All land in Israel belonged to God.
It belonged primarily to God. In Leviticus chapter 25 verse 23, The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is mine, saith the Lord.
In Numbers chapter 36 verse 7, Every one of the children of Israel shall keep the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers. It was a law in Israel.
It was a religious duty closely connected or associated with the promise of the covenant. God giving the people the land.
[4:56] And that's what Ahab forgot about. He didn't realize that. Or he didn't take notice of that. Look what Naboth saith to him.

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The Lord forbid it me that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee. And see, the great choice here for Naboth is between complying with the human convention and complying with the word of God.
On the one hand there's the word of the king. And that should be something that should be noticed and taken note of. He's got the word of the king and the command of the king or the request of the king.
And he's got to consider that. But on the other hand, he's got the word of God. And he's got the law of God. And the word of God says, You must not sell the land.
The land belongs to me. It belongs to your tribe. It belongs to your father's house. And what does Naboth do? Well, his conscience is bound by the law of God.
[6:04] He takes his stand against the king because far more important than the request of the king is the command of God and the word of God.

And you see, that's a choice that the people of God have to make so often in life. Think of Daniel's three friends who are commanded to worship the image or be cast into the fiery furnace.
What is their response? Our God is able to deliver us. And even if he does not deliver us, we will not bow down to this image.
It's a command of man versus a command of God. Who are we going to obey? God or man? Think of the apostles there in Acts chapter 4 and how the authorities tried to silence them and told them not to speak again in the name of Christ.
And what is their response? Whether it be right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.
[7:18] And that's the answer of the people of God. That's the answer of the conscience that is bound by the word of God. The authority of God is more than the authority of man where there's a contradiction against the word of God.

And it's the same as we have been seeing in the letters to the seven churches. How many in these churches were asked to worship the emperor? How many in these churches were asked to give allegiance to Caesar?
not necessarily to deny that Jesus is Lord, but at the same time to say that Caesar is Lord and they wouldn't do it.
Antipas, as we heard of, who refused to do it and who lost his life as a result. And you know there are Christians today in the Middle East and in other countries and are facing the same choice.
Are they going to obey men? Are they going to obey the authorities there? Or are they going to obey God? And so many of them are choosing rather to obey God than to obey man.
[8:31] And they're suffering for it with so many losses, so many confiscations of property and so on, and the loss of jobs.

And you see that's what the Christian has to face. And even in our own land today there's many subtle things that come in. You must work on the Lord's day or you cannot be employed in this company.
I'm talking about works that are not works of necessity and mercy. And you see the Christian is faced with a choice to obey God or to obey man.
Who is he going to obey? What is he going to put first? The choice that has to be made. And Naboth made that choice. God forbid it me that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.
God forbid it I should sell that which is so precious to thee for the sake of a little gain in this world.
[9:36] It's far more precious to be faithful to God and to his truth than to get some earthly gain as was offered to Naboth here.

And so we see the choice that Naboth made. But then secondly we see here the wickedness of Ahab and Jezebel.
What was the trouble with Ahab as he viewed this vineyard that belonged to Naboth? Well the trouble was covetousness. He had all the land he was the king he possessed as much as he needed and more.
He had all the riches he had all the wealth he had all the authority he had his policies he had everything and yet he is not satisfied. He is covetous of Naboth's vineyard.
He's deciding this thing inordinately and he's out to get it. And when he doesn't get it he has a fit of dejection.

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[10:42] He goes in the south his heart has been crossed in his desires and he shows it in his attitude. All that he has avails him nothing as long as he hasn't got Naboth's vineyard.

And you see how the rich the ungodly rich are never truly satisfied. With all they have they want more. And here is Ahab and he's coveting he's wanting more and he's not satisfied with what he has.
And when he doesn't get it then he goes into a state of dejection. And it's interesting to think that here is a ruler of a nation Ahab a ruler of a nation and he cannot even rule his own spirit.
He cannot even control his own spirit. He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh ten cities says the word of God.
But here is a man who is a leader of a nation a king who is supposed to be leading others and yet he cannot rule his own spirit. But anyway into this place where Ahab was where he was showing this fit of dejection comes Jezebel and what does she do?
[12:10] Well she asks him why is he in this condition? And Ahab conceals from her the reason why Naboth refused to give him the vineyard.

Ahab makes out that it was an obstinacy that was insubordination that caused Naboth to refuse to give the vineyard.
There's no mention about the word of God there's no mention about the law it's purely his obstinacy it's his insubordination and so Jezebel says to Ahab are you the one who's ruling Israel?
Why are you allowing this to happen? My father she would have said to him back in Sidon he wouldn't tolerate this no one would stand in his way why are you allowing Naboth to stand in your way?
I will give you the vineyard of Naboth and so Jezebel goes on her way and what does she do? Well she does three things first of all she commits forgery she wrote letters in Ahab's name she borrows the privy seal and she writes letters to the elders and to the nobles in Jezreel then secondly she commits hypocrisy because she does it under the name of religion she says that they are to proclaim a fast why were they to proclaim a fast well they were pretending or she was pretending that there was a great offender among them who was going to bring the judgment of God on the people and therefore they were to proclaim a fast and then thirdly she was going to commit perjury because she gets two men we are told scoundrels to bear witness against
[14:08] Naboth in the midst of this assembly that he had blasphemed God and the king and these men came to this assembly this fast that was called by Jezebel and these scoundrels accused Naboth of blasphemy against God and the king and that was a very serious offence an offence that merited the death penalty and it all worked it worked for Jezebel and they took Naboth out and stoned him with stones and you see the wickedness of these people as Matthew Henry says stand amazed at the wickedness of the world and the wickedness of religious people you see what is said in verse 20 about Ahab you have sold yourself to work evil in the sight of the Lord they had sold themselves to work evil in the sight of the Lord if you go through what happened in this chapter you will see that they broke nearly all of the ten commandments in what they did and you see it's so interesting too the way that wicked people work

Jezebel who rejected the word of God and served Baal still uses that word of God for her own purpose in other words she takes the law of Israel with regard to blasphemy and she uses it for her own ends you see sometimes religion has its advantage and wicked people can use religion to that advantage what crimes have been committed in the name of religion throughout the centuries throughout history and that's what wickedness does here it does it in the name of religion and then a second thing we can say about this is stand amazed at the suffering of the innocent you see innocency will not always bring security innocency will not always bring security here is the innocent neighbor and he suffers injustice the righteous suffer in this life right is not always immediately avenged wrong is not continually frustrated and hampered we're living in a world where there is injustice we're living in a world where things are irregular we're living in a world where the righteous suffer we're living in a world where wickedness has its day we're living in a world where righteousness seems to be taking a beating and what's the answer to it well there was a man in the United States a rabbi called Rabbi Kushner and he had a three year old son he was told that this three year old son would not live to his teens and so he began to grapple with this problem about evil and he wrote the book when bad things happen to good people how can you have an answer to the fact that bad things happen to good people that Naboth suffers this injustice he had done nothing wrong and yet he suffers from these wicked people well he wrestled with the problem and

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he said what aspect of divine nature is not able to cope with this situation what aspect of the divine nature is not able to operate in a case when bad things happen to good people and he said is it the goodness of God or is it the power of God and he concluded it was the power of
God he said that God is always good but he's not omnipotent he cannot prevent evil God is a limited God and that's why there's evil in the world because God has not the power to prevent it that was his conclusion and another man wrote a book in answer to that and his book was for this when bad things happen to God's people and he said yes there is a mystery we have to hold to the fact that God is good and God is omnipotent we've got to hold these things together we cannot reconcile all of God's ways there are no easy answers what we're called upon to do is to trust and there's two things we can trust God implicitly for and that is this these are are these first of all that all things work together for good to them that love
God of that we can be ultimately assured that even when they suffer injustice even when they go through great trials and tribulations these things are working for their ultimate good and the second thing we can trust is this that evil will be dealt with by God that God is a God of justice there will not be compensation from there will not be compensation from man to man we can never ultimately expect that and there will be people who will suffer injustice in this world and that injustice will never be righted for them by man but this is true there will be justice from God there will be justice from God for all evil that takes place in this world and that will be manifested in the two categories of people as far as his own people is concerned that will be manifest in his chastisements because he will not overlook evil in his people he will not overlook evil and sin in his own people
[20:44] God will judge his people he will chastise them in this present life and we can be assured of that and as far as other people is concerned that evil will be dealt with by judgment in time and in eternity judgment temporal and judgment eternal and we must rest upon that in the midst of all the atrocities that we read about and hear about in our world we must rest upon that there's much that we can't understand but we must trust we must have faith and you see that brings us to the third thing and that's Elijah's message to Ahab and it has to do with this the cry of Naboth innocent blood comes up to heaven God does not let it slide God is keeping an exceedingly exact record book there is a payday and you see

Elijah is sent to Ahab first of all think of the one who's sent this man who is so well known to Ahab who has confronted Ahab on other occasions and Ahab knows what Elijah is all about but also the place where Elijah goes to meet Ahab it's in Naboth vineyard on the time Ahab has just taken possession of the vineyard and he's pleasing himself with his ill-gotten gains see what it says in verse 19 how have you murdered and also taken possession it's just when he had taken possession of that vineyard that had been taken by wrong that the word of God and the messenger of God comes to confront Ahab and you see what
Ahab says to this man of God he says have you found me oh mine enemy why does he call him his enemy the last time that they parted they were on good terms it was when the rain came down when God answered Elijah's prayer and when Elijah went ahead of Ahab to Jezreel and they appeared to have parted on good friend on good terms and yet when they meet again this is what Ahab says hast thou found me oh mine enemy why does he say this well you see his conscience told him that he had made God his enemy by his actions and therefore he could not expect Elijah to be his friend if Elijah is a friend of God and the messenger of God he couldn't expect
Elijah to be his friend and so therefore he counts him as an enemy hast thou found me oh mine enemy and you see he not only hated Elijah for what he was but he feared him hast thou found me oh my enemy never was a deather or a criminal more confounded than Ahab was at this time he's caught in the very act he's taking possession of the vineyard that was not his that was taken by deceit and murder and he's found in the very spot he's found in that very spot I have found you says Elijah because you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the Lord you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the Lord and you see he tells him the judgment of God verse 21
Ahab and all his male descendants would be cut off from this life verse 22 his kingdom and dynasty would come to an abrupt end and Jezebel would come to a terrible end dogs would devour her by the wall of Jezreel and you see the mills of God grind slowly but they grind exceeding small the slow moving wheels of justice had turned and he had ground everything so fine this Ahab and this Jezebel that had defied God so long are finally caught up in these wheels of justice and they are brought to a day of judgment and you see at the end of this chapter something unexpected appears and that is that

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[25:57] Ahab has a momentary and external repentance in verse 27 and it came to pass when Ahab heard these words that he rent his clothes and put sackleth upon his flesh and fasted and lay in sackleth and went softly and the word of the Lord came to Elijah saying see thou how Ahab humbles himself before me because he humbles himself before me I will not bring the evil in his days but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house what an amazing thing although it's only an outward repentance although it's only an outward acknowledgement of his sin through a fear of judgment rather than a hatred of sin God stays the execution the mercy and the goodness of God to this man and surely the lesson we learn from this if such a repentance and such a humiliation on the part of Ahab brings a reprieve what would a true repentance what would a true rendering of the heart have done in the case of Ahab it was only an outward one it was only an external one and yet

God took notice of it but if there hadn't been not only a rendering of the garments if there had been a rendering of the heart on the part of Ahab what a different story this might have been if Ahab had truly repented of his defiance of Jehovah of his idolatry of his complicity in wickedness what a different story it would have been but you see God saw that that heart of Ahab was not truly broken it was not truly convicted of sin although in an outward way he showed his fear of judgment yet in the end he remained hardened against God and you see the judgment is only suspended it's not taken away completely and we read later on in chapter 22 how someone at random some archer shot a bow an arrow at
Ahab and that arrow struck him in his chariot and he was taken back to the city and as they washed out the chariot there the dogs licked the blood of Ahab and you see how exact God's judgment is in the case of Ahab and in the case of Jezebel they had shed the blood of an innocent man and that blood that was licked up of Naboth is going to be a similarity in the case of Ahab and in the case of Jezebel the judgment of God against sin it's so exact it so corresponds to the sins that we commit against God and that's what we need to remember that sin is not something we can treat lightly sin is not something we can think we can get away with there's got to be a judgment either in ourselves or in our substitute the justice of God has to be satisfied and it has either to be satisfied in us in temporal and eternal judgment or it has to be satisfied in our substitute someone must bear the judgment and the justice of God that's the law of the universe it's built into this moral universe that sin must be dealt with that sin must be dealt with by God and you see if it's not dealt with in us it has to be dealt with in Jesus
Christ and that's the great lesson we would learn from this tonight what is happening to you as a sinner tonight are you going to face the consequences of your sin or are you going to take refuge in the Lord Jesus Christ and find in him one who has borne already the sword of justice in his own soul whose blood was shed on account of sin can you not take covering in that blood and know that you will be washed from your sin and that you will be delivered from that judgment because in him and in him alone is that deliverance oh turn to him tonight and seek him and seek deliverance from the consequences of sin because these consequences will come to you as a rebel against God as sure as they came to
Ahab and to Jezebel and therefore seek refuge tonight in Christ may God bless to us his word let us pray our gracious and eternal God we pray that we might fear thee and we might fear thy judgments because thou art as true in thy judgments as thou art in thy promises and we know that throughout the whole story of Elijah thou art showing us that thou art faithful to thy word oh may we tremble before thee tonight because thou art a God who is fulfilling thy word in the case of people here upon earth and we pray that we might recognize and realize that if we do not repent and turn to thee and seek Christ that that judgment will come upon us oh we pray that we will flee to Christ tonight to the refuge set before us in the gospel and find deliverance from the judgment that should come upon us we pray that thou indeed make us aware of these things and draw us to Christ tonight for his deliverance hear us we pray thee and cleanse us from all our sin for Jesus sake amen

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