



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

1 KINGS 12-22 &
2 CHRONICLES

Week 2

DAY 8

A Man Just Like Us

1 Kings 19:1-8

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever experienced a depression or a let-down after a time of great accomplishment? How did you get over it?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. How did Jezebel react to the news that Elijah had killed the prophets of Baal? How did Elijah react to her declaration (vs. 1-3)?
2. Why do you think Elijah's reaction was so extreme (vs. 4-5)?
3. Did God forsake his discouraged servant (vs. 5-6)?
4. What were the angel's instructions (vs. 7-9)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Elijah was one of the greatest heroes of the Old Testament. His feats are legendary. Yet he too could become depressed and fearful, as we all sometimes do. Read James 5:17.
2. Psychologists say that in times of stress the body initiates a "fight or flight" mechanism. Could this explain Elijah's actions?

WINDOW
on the Word

The **angel** mentioned here was appointed to minister to Elijah. The Old Testament mentions angels at significant junctures in God's unfolding purpose. They were guardians at the Garden of Eden (Ge 3:24—the Cherubim, who appear on the veil of the Tabernacle and over its Mercy Seat). Angels executed judgment at Sodom (Ge 19), and the angel of God appeared at the Exodus (Ex 14:19). An angel was sent to destroy Jerusalem in the time of David (2Sa 24:16). Today some people become obsessed with angels, linking them to sentimental or pleasant mystical experiences. We do not see such experiences in the Bible. Angels can rescue people and go before them as guides and emissaries (Ge 48:16; Ex 23:20). They are often used to deliver messages (Jdg 6:11-23; 13:3-5; Lk 1:26-38). But angels can startle and terrify (Dan 8:15-18; Mt 28:1-4). The Bible gives many warnings that should make us wary of anyone who tries to talk us into contacting or "channeling" celestial messengers. Angelic encounters recorded in the Bible are usually for a specific reason and are used to point people to God, as did the angel in Elijah's day.

The Still, Small Voice

DAY 9

1 Kings 19:9-14

Have you ever felt God's miraculous intervention in your life at a time of crisis?

1. Elijah reached Mount Horeb. Was this the same area where Moses received his call (Ex 3:1)?
2. What was God's greeting to Elijah (2Ki 19:9)? How did Elijah respond (vs. 10)?
3. How did God deal with his harassed, exhausted prophet (vs. 11-13)?
4. The King James version translates "a gentle whisper" as a "still, small voice." Why do you think God chose to speak to Elijah that way?
5. Why do you think Elijah responded to God the way he did (vs. 13-14)?

1. Elijah was the fearsome prophet of famines and fiery judgments. Yet after the wind, quake and fire, God appeared to him in a kind, gentle way. Is there a subtle lesson here in humility? Can servants of God get "carried away" with their own importance? Have you seen such cases in your own church or denomination?

2. Elijah claimed to be all alone (v. 10, 14), yet that was not true. Faithful Obadiah had hidden 100 prophets of God (18:4). What conclusions are often drawn when someone feels "all alone"?

*A **dramatic manifestation of God** is referred to by the technical literary term **theophany**. While the Bible often deals with visions and revelations, a theophany is different. It is an account of an appearance of God (or a god, in other ancient literature) to a human being. The wrestling of Jacob with the angel in Genesis 32 is considered a theophany. Theophanies were associated with geographical locations and defining moments—confirming a promise or renewing a pledge.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

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DAY 10

A Dynamic Duo

1 Kings 19:15-21

OPENING
up to the Word

Who were some of your childhood heroes? Did they usually have a sidekick or companion?

DIGGING
into the Word

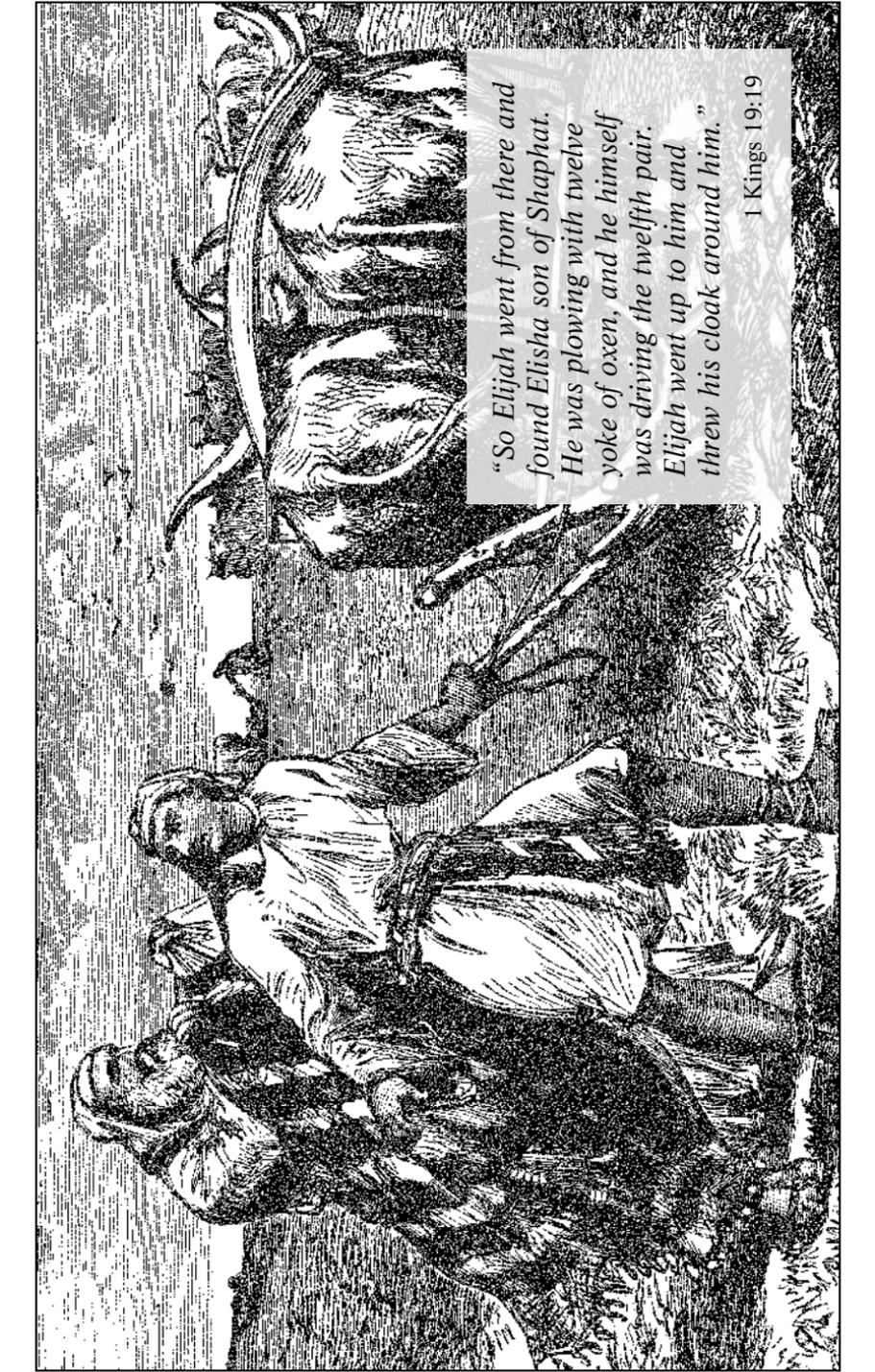
1. What is Elijah instructed to do (vs. 15-17)?
 2. The prophet is recommissioned and his authority is expanded. He is to anoint kings—a foreigner and an Israelite. What were their names (v. 15-16)? Is Elijah reminded that he is not alone (v. 18)?
 3. Who else is Elijah to anoint and appoint (v. 16)? How did Elijah further publicly demonstrate that Elisha would be his successor (v. 19)?
 4. What activities did Elisha undertake to show that he understood his commitment (vs. 20-21)?
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LIVING
out the Word

1. There is an old adage: “A trouble shared is a trouble halved.” Does God’s dealing with Elijah seem to bear this out?
 2. Does anyone assist you with your responsibilities?
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WINDOW
on the Word

*Elisha hailed from the strategic little town of **Abel Meholah** (v. 16). Centuries before, it had been the scene of Gideon’s victory over the Midianites (Jdg 7:22). It was in the Jordan valley nine miles from where David had buried Saul’s family. Nearby was **Tirzah**, former capital of the northern kingdom of Israel (1Ki 15:21). Elisha will show himself as a true patriot, a prophet with an unusual affinity for Israel and its kings. He was from the heartland, from a well known family, unlike the enigmatic Elijah. During his long and productive ministry, Elisha would be a bulwark for Israel against her enemies.*



“So Elijah went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. He was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he himself was driving the twelfth pair. Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak around him.”

1 Kings 19:19

Shadows Over Samaria

1 Kings 20:1-34

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you met people who seem to possess a mixture of traits—good and bad? How about yourself?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Who was Ben-Hadad (v. 1)? What threats did he make against Samaria, Israel's capital (vs. 2-6)? How did the king of Israel react (vs. 7-17)?
2. What strategy did the prophet of God place before Ahab (vs. 13-14)? Did it work (vs. 17-21)?
3. What happened in "round two" (vs. 22-30)? What actions displayed the Syrians' attitude toward the God of Israel (vs. 23, 28)?
4. Did God allow Israel to prevail to support Ahab or to show that he is the one true God? How did the defeated kings react to all this (v. 31)? Did Ahab grant them amnesty (vs. 32-34)?
5. Was Ahab playing politics with God's victory?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Do you think Ahab understood the principle expressed in the hymn, *To God be the Glory*? Is Hebrews 3:13—"hardened by sin's deceitfulness"—a good description of Ahab?
2. Success can be intoxicating. Have you ever reacted like Ahab—glad for deliverance from God in times of trouble but quick to go back to your old ways?
3. "...the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Ro 11:29). Once God gives a promise he will perform it. Can we see this continuing theme in the midst of Ahab's wars?

WINDOW
on the Word

*Historians have suggested a possibility as to **why Ahab was quick to spare the king of Aram** (Syria) and his allies. At the start of the ninth century B.C., the Assyrian king Ashurnasirpal II threatened the nations of the eastern Mediterranean. He reached as far as Tyre and Sidon, home of the family of Jezebel. His son Shalmaneser III resumed these campaigns in the sixth year of his reign, in 853 B.C. At the city of Qarqar on the Orontes River, Shalmaneser's advance was checked by a coalition, among whose leaders he listed "Ahab the Israelite." Fear of Assyrian power may have influenced Ahab to sign a treaty with Ben-Hadad as indicated in 1 Kings 20.*



“Now Ben-Hadad king of Aram mustered his entire army. Accompanied by thirty-two kings with their horses and chariots, he went up and besieged Samaria and attacked it.”

1 Kings 20:1

The Stele of Ben-Hadad, found in the Phoenician port city of Tyre, apparently commemorating a treaty between Tyre and Ben-Hadad.

The Price of Pride

1 Kings 20:35-43

OPENING
up to the Word

What is your definition of pride? Can you see it in yourself as well as others?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. How did God communicate his displeasure with Ahab (vs. 35-38)?
2. How effective do you think the prophet's approach to Ahab was (vs. 39-40)?
3. Do you think Ahab's reaction indicated he had absorbed God's message (vs. 41-43)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Have you ever rejected unsolicited advice from an experienced source? What happened?
2. Have there been times when you felt wrongly treated by the law or someone in authority? How would you feel if you were Ahab?

WINDOW
on the Word

Note the phrase **“the sons of the prophets”** in 20:35. This is the first mention in the biblical narrative of bands of prophets clustered around a leading figure. With the Temple in Jerusalem often inaccessible to devout Israelites by the ongoing wars and the religious crises provoked by Jezebel and Ahab, prophetic schools became popular (2Ki 2:3-7, 15). The phrase “sons” denotes a class or membership of a group rather than a physical family. The **strategy used by the unknown prophet** here recalls Nathan's diplomatic but uncompromising appeal to King David (2Sa 12:1-13). The message is delivered in the form of an **acted parable**. Jesus used acted parables when he set a child in the midst of the disciples to demonstrate humility and when he cleansed the Temple area and cursed the fig tree to depict the nation's lack of fruit. According to Donald J. Wiseman, “It is the responsibility of a prophet to direct one who errs to the right interpretation of events and so lead to self-judgment. Here we are reminded that not even a king is above the law but is subject to divine justice” (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: 1 and 2 Kings, page 179).

When Murder Was No Mystery

DAY 13

1 Kings 21:1-28

Do any examples come to mind of a ruler or political leader who has abused his or her authority? What was the eventual outcome?

1. Why was Naboth so important to Ahab? How did he come to Ahab's attention (vs. 1-3)?
2. In ancient Israel a family and its inherited plot of land were meant to be inseparable. Rights of inheritance were highly respected (Lev 25:25-28; Nu 27:1-11). How did Jezebel "solve" the problem (1Ki 21:4-16)?
3. What was Elijah's solemn pronouncement against Ahab (vs. 17-19)? Was Ahab glad to see Elijah and hear his message (v. 20)?
4. What else did Elijah predict (vs. 21-24)?
5. Do you think Ahab's surprising response indicated a change of heart (vs. 25-27)? Did God buy Ahab's remorse (vs. 28-29)?

1. Do you agree with the adage, "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely"? This chapter reassures us that wicked rulers will be punished.

2. Naboth was executed by a "legally" convened tribunal, but the whole affair was against the law of God. What specific commandments were ignored?

*Here we see that the **role of the prophet** included more than just foretelling the future. Often they were sent as enforcers of the covenant that had been made at Sinai between God and Israel. "They are God's mediators, or spokespersons, for the covenant. Through them God reminds people in the generations after Moses that if the law is kept, blessing will result; but if not, punishment will ensue" (How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth, page 151). Also, this chapter offers a clear example that the prophetic message did not originate with a person but came from the Almighty himself. That is why the expressions "This is what the Lord says" or "the Lord says" are so important.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

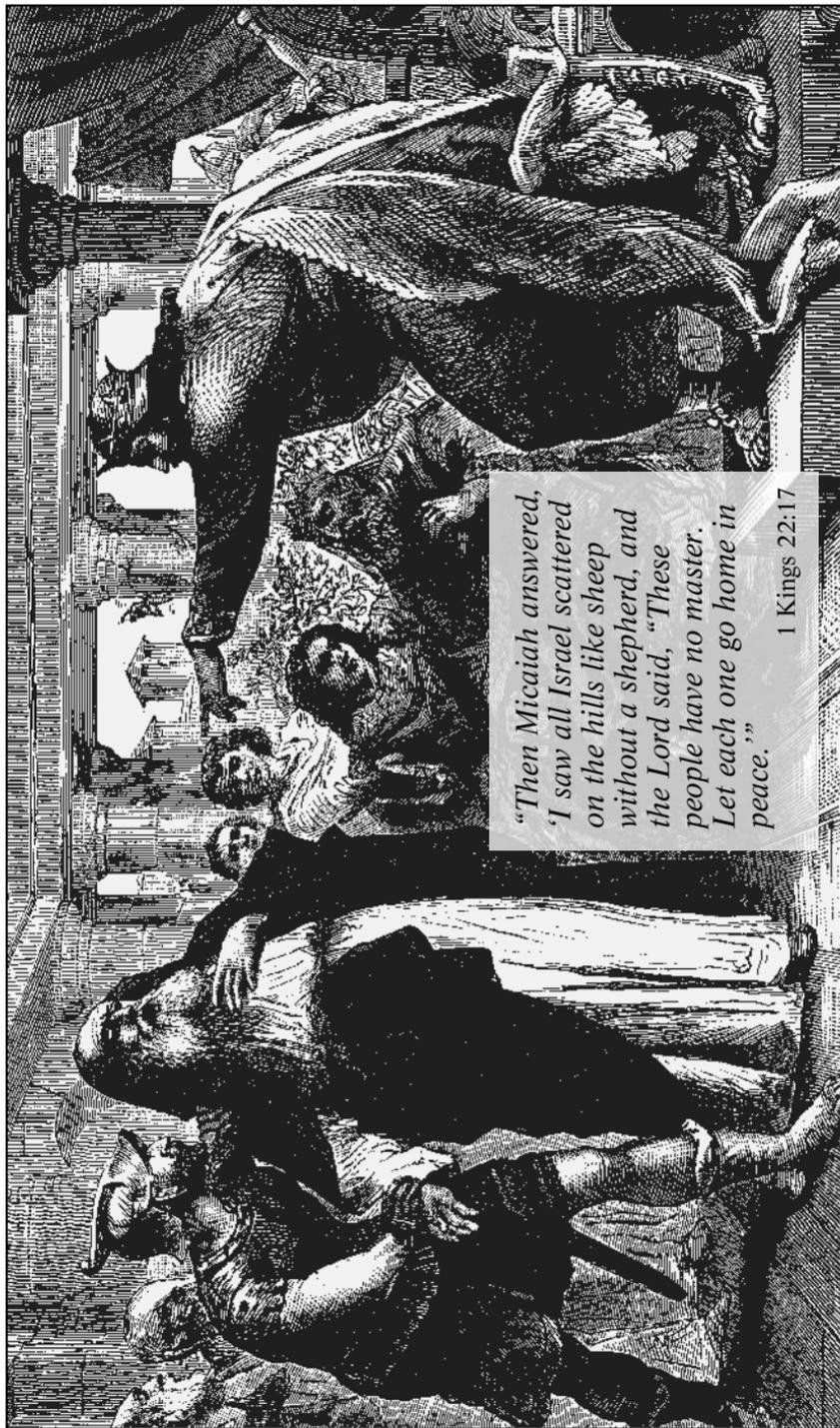
into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word



*“Then Micaiah answered,
‘I saw all Israel scattered
on the hills like sheep
without a shepherd, and
the Lord said, “These
people have no master.
Let each one go home in
peace.””*

1 Kings 22:17

Tell Me What I Want to Hear

DAY 14

1 Kings 22:1-28

How open-minded are you? Do you listen to someone who disagrees with your point of view?

1. Why did Ahab propose an alliance with Jehoshaphat against Syria, rather than taking care of the matter himself (vs. 1-4)?
2. Would you have accepted Ahab's proposal? What was Jehoshaphat's only stipulation (vs. 5-9)?
3. Do you think the 400 prophets believed they were telling the truth (vs. 10-13)? Did Micaiah agree with them (vs. 14-17)?
4. What was Ahab's response (v. 18)? What else did Micaiah have to say (vs. 19-23)?
5. What was Micaiah's reward for his trouble (vs. 24-25)? What was his last word (vs. 26-28)?

1. Have you ever been in a situation where you knew the truth about something and everyone else disagreed with you? How did you react?
2. The philosopher Immanuel Kant updated the old saying, "Honesty is the best policy" to read "Honesty is better than all policy." Does this passage support that idea?
3. In essence, what was the one criterion for a true prophet in ancient Israel (Dt 13:1-3)? Does this have any application or validity for today?
4. Have you ever been hurt by a lie?

*The incident of God allowing a "lying spirit" to deceive Ahab raises the issue of human **free will** and the nature of God's **providential control** over his creatures. Some feel the use of a "lying spirit" here is contrary to God's moral nature. Yet God on more than one occasion decreed evil as well as good (Isa 45:7). The New Testament teaches that God at times gives some people over to their evil desires (Ro 1:24-32). God had already decreed through Elijah the ultimate fate of Ahab. Yet even at this late date, Ahab still had an occasion to repent, to turn aside the judgment previously given by a prophet of God.*

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LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word