

I KINGS

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to I Kings chapter 21 as we continue our study through the Word of God and we finish up this book tonight. As we continue on in our study of I Kings we have been looking at the life of the king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, Ahab and his wicked wife Jezebel. Keep in mind that Ahab heard the words of Elijah the prophet of God. He saw the power of God as the fire of the sacrifice was consumed on Mount Carmel. He saw the prophets of Baal and Asherah killed. He saw God stop the rain for 3½ years. He saw God give them this great victory over the Syrians, not just once but twice.

And yet, after all that, he did not heed the words of Elijah the prophet but instead he listened to the words of his wife Jezebel. Elijah was drawing him to God while Jezebel was pushing him away from God and like each one of us today, we have choices to make on who we will listen to and whatever choice we make, there will be consequences. Some of them will be positive and some negative, but there will always be consequences.

Tonight, as we pick up our study, on the heels of this great victory, the second one against the Syrians, Ahab let Ben-Hadad the king of the Syrians go free and the prophet of God, we are not sure which one, rebuked Ahab for his actions, and we closed last week with these words spoken by this prophet of God to Ahab, “... ‘Thus says the Lord: ‘Because you have let slip out of your hand a man whom I appointed to utter 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 displeased, and came to Samaria.”
 I Kings 20:42-43. With that said, let’s begin reading in I Kings chapter 21, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word this evening.

I KINGS 21

VERSES 1-3

1. Jezreel was northeast of Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, near Mount Carmel and it seems that Ahab had a home here and he wanted a piece of land for a vegetable garden that was next to his royal house. The problem was that Naboth owned the land. Thus, Ahab tries to make a little real estate transaction here, offering Naboth a better piece of land if he would give his vineyard to him.

But Naboth refuses and that may seem wrong, it may seem unreasonable on his part, but understand what Naboth did was exactly what the Lord wanted him to do and what Ahab was doing was not what God wanted. How can I say that? Why was this wrong for Naboth to sell this property? Because this land that Naboth had was his inheritance. And you could not sell that to anyone. You see, the land was God's who gave it to the children of Israel. And during the time of Joshua it was divided up. You could not sell that land, only lease it to help pay off a debt, but then every 50 years, in the year of jubilee, it returned to its owner.

So Ahab was asking Naboth to give him his inheritance, which he could not do. In Leviticus 25:23 we are told this very thing, **“The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me.”** (Also see, Leviticus 25:15, 25:23-28, Numbers 36:7, and Ezekiel 46:18). Thus, the land was never really sold, only leased and that was done under the most dire circumstances. The land was an inheritance from God and Naboth understood that but Ahab didn't. Or, maybe he did but he just wanted the land and it didn't matter what God had said. How will this mighty king respond to this rejection? Let's read on and see!

VERSE 4

1. Here is this mighty king who could not get what he wanted and he returns home, falls on his bed and refused to eat like a child who could not get his way! Adam Clarke made these remarks regarding Ahab and his actions here, “Poor soul! He was lord over tentwelfths of the land, and became miserable because he could not get a poor man’s vineyard added to all that he possessed!” So Ahab is pouting like a child, like a spoiled brat and notice what happens next.

VERSES 5-7

1. I guess you can see who wore the paints in this family and it was not Ahab. As Jezebel comes in and sees the king pouting, she asks him what is wrong and the king tells her that Naboth won’t give him the land he wants to buy so he can plant his vegetable garden. When she hears that she is outraged. He is the king, he can do whatever he wants and yet he isn’t. Thus, she tells the king to get up, stop pouting and start eating because she will take care of this situation with Naboth, the land will be the kings one way or another! How was she going to do this? Let’s read on and see and as you will see, it is not pretty what she will do to obtain this land for her husband!

VERSES 8-10

1. Here is this plan to get this property from Naboth and it is a wicked plan to say the least. First of all she sends out this letter to the elders and nobles, those with power. And in this letter these leaders were to get two witnesses to falsely testify against Naboth. These false witnesses were to testify that he blasphemed God and the king. You see, according to Deuteronomy 17:6, you needed at least 2 witnesses to testify against a person before you could put them to death. And, according to Leviticus 24:16, stoning was the punishment for blaspheming God. And to show that the king was behind this, she uses his seal to authenticate these letters she is sending out for this little gathering. Alexander Maclaren noted three types of dangerous characters in this chapter: (1) Ahab who was wicked and weak. (2) Jezebel who was wicked and strong. (3) The Elders of Jezreel, who were wicked and subservient. And they all were responsible for what was about to take place.

VERSES 11-16

1. Here is something that I find amazing. These people who were not following God, don't have a love for God at all, will judge others according to the standards of God so they can get what they want! These two wicked men, scoundrels, testify against Naboth, that he blasphemed God and the king and the leaders take Naboth out and put him to death, they stone him!

And it is even worse than that because in II Kings 9:26 we get some insight into what else happened for it wasn't only Naboth that was put to death. We are told, **“Surely I saw yesterday the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons,’ says the Lord, ‘and I will repay you in this plot,’ says the Lord. Now therefore, take and throw him on the plot of ground, according to the word of the Lord.”**

Now we will get the details of what that is all about when we get to II Kings, but what I want you to notice is that here in II Kings we are told that not only was Naboth killed but his sons were also killed. Why did they kill his sons? Because they would have been heirs to the land and thus, with them dead, Ahab is going to take possession. How wicked was Jezebel!

2. Now, as word gets back to Jezebel that this dastardly deed was done, she tells her husband and he is so excited to get his way, that he just goes and takes Naboth's vineyard, with no concern for that man or his family at all. I told you, Ahab and Jezebel are like the ***DEMONIC DUO!***

VERSES 17-19

1. Now please understand that Samaria and Jezreel are not the same place and that is not what this is saying. Ahab lived in Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel but this vineyard that he obtained from Naboth by having him murdered was northeast of Samaria, in Jezreel.

2. Now what Ahab did, God was not going to let him get away with it and thus, He sends Elijah to confront Ahab with words of judgment. And as Ahab is running to obtain his possession, this land, he meets Elijah instead. And he meets Ahab in Naboth's vineyard, which he coveted, and now has by murdering Naboth, for he was truly responsible for it, even though he did not pull the trigger. And Elijah tells Ahab that he will die for his actions. Like he did to Naboth, it will be done to him and it is the law of sowing and reaping.

Paul said in Galatians 6:7, **“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”** The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **“Do not be deceived and deluded and misled; God will not allow Himself to be sneered at (scorned, disdained, or mocked by mere pretensions or professions, or by His precepts being set aside.) [He inevitably deludes himself who attempts to delude God.] For whatever a man sows, that and that only is what he will reap.”** And The Living Bible tells us, **“Don't be misled; remember that you can't ignore God and get away with it: a man will always reap just the kind of crop he sows!”** You see, nothing gets by the eyes of the Lord, for all is open and naked before Him and what we sow we will also reap!

3. By the actions of Ahab, what he did to Naboth, he broke 2 of God's commandments. Deuteronomy 5:17 tells us that, **“You shall not murder.”** And in Deuteronomy 5:21 we are told, **“You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, and you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, his manservant, his maidservant, his ox, his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.”**

4. Now this idea of covetousness, I don't believe we do take the sin of covetousness seriously today, but we should. Listen to what Paul says in Ephesians 5:3, "**But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints.**" As Christians, it should not be part of our life, for if you look at the reason behind a majority of crimes today, you will find the sin of covetousness. Thus, the warning!

VERSES 20-22

1. Here we see the king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, when he is confronted with his sin, when his sin is exposed, points the finger right back to Elijah, the prophet of God and says that he is the enemy! We don't like it when our sin is brought out into the open and either did Ahab, but Elijah does not let him get away with it, he points his finger right back at Ahab and tells him that he is the one who sold his soul to the devil by disobeying God. It is because of his wickedness that not only will he be cut off, but so will his family just as the wicked kings before him, Jeroboam and Baasha!

VERSES 23-24

1. Not only was Ahab being judged for his wickedness, but so was Jezebel, for she was the one who came up with this plan and Elijah pronounces judgment upon her for her actions and we will see that played out.

VERSES 25-26

1. What a sad statement for a man that God warned over and over again, and yet he refused to listen and thus, he is like a dead man walking because his days are numbered!

VERSES 27-29

1. Now here is the big question, “Did Ahab truly repent and get right with God?” As you read this it seems that way, but I don’t believe there is the outward evidence to prove it. Don’t come to the conclusion that Ahab repented, for he only humbled himself before the Lord. He was mourning the calamity that was soon to come. But notice the richness of God’s grace towards Ahab, and He will not cut off Ahab’s family in his days, but in the days of his son.

I think Matthew Poole has it right as he sums this up for us. He wrote, “But this humiliation or repentance of Ahab’s was only external and superficial, arising from the terror of God’s judgments; and not sincere and serious, proceeding from the love of God, or a true sense of his sin, or a solemn purpose of amendment of his life, as appears, because all the particulars of his repentance here, are external and ritual only; nor is there the least intimation of any one sign or fruit of his true repentance, as that he restored Naboth’s land, or reprov’d his infamous wife; but in the very next chapter you find him returning to his former vomit.” I think he is correct, I don’t see true repentance here.

2. And, as we will see, within three years of Elijah speaking to him here, Ahab will be dead and if you read what transpired here, you will see he was not interested in following the Lord, but he had his own plans, his own desires. And in the end, judgment will fall upon Ahab and his wife Jezebel just as the Lord has said!

I KINGS 22

VERSES 1-4

1. For 3 years we see a cease-fire between Israel and Syria. It was during that third year that the king of Judah, Jehoshaphat by name, went down to visit king Ahab. Now that may seem confusing, since he would have to travel north to get to king Ahab. The reason he went down was because Jerusalem is built on a hill, and so no matter which way you traveled, you would have to go down to get there.

2. This alliance between Jehoshaphat, who was a godly king, and Ahab, who was a wicked king, is strange. I can't tell you why he enjoyed this fellowship with Ahab, but he did. And it seems that he was strong enough to withstand any evil influence that Ahab might have upon him, but we will see that Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram will marry the daughter of Ahab, Athaliah, and she will lead him astray. He was not strong enough to stand against her evil influence, even though Jehoshaphat was able to stand against Ahab's evil influence. As parents, as friends, we need to be careful who we hang around with, make close friends, because it will influence our family and other Christians and not in a good way!

3. Now king Ahab has a problem. If you remember back in I Kings 20:34 we were told, **“So Ben-Hadad said to him, ‘The cities which my father took from your father I will restore; and you may set up marketplaces for yourself in Damascus, as my father did in Samaria.’ Then Ahab said, ‘I will send you away with this treaty.’ So he made a treaty with him and sent him away.”** Ahab made this treaty with Ben-Hadad and the king of Syria said that he would return the cities that his father had taken from Israel, but he did not return Ramoth Gilead, which was located just on the east side of the Jordan River, in the area of the ½ tribe of Manasseh, almost directly east of Jezreel. And now Ahab wanted this land back from the Syrian’s and he is asking Jehoshaphat for help.

VERSES 5-9

1. Now this is a very wise move on the part of Jehoshaphat. Before he is willing to agree to go to war with Ahab, he wants to inquire of the Lord; to make sure that is what God wants. Folk’s, it may sound great in what you are going to do, but as good as it may sound, you need to bring it before the Lord. There is great wisdom in that.

2. So Ahab obliges the request of Jehoshaphat and brings out these false prophets and they tell both these kings that the victory is assured. Now keep in mind that Jehoshaphat is a godly man and he is not comfortable with that. God has given him discernment and he asks for a prophet of *YAHWEH* rather than listening to what these false prophets were saying. He saw that they were not prophets of God and he exposed them! How did he know? By what these prophets were saying, that their help was coming from the “Lord” or they were saying *ADONI* will deliver them, which means master, it is not the name of the true and living God, but even speaks of a king or leader. What a great lesson for us, just because someone is speaking of God, you better make sure which God. Just because someone speaks of Jesus, you better make sure they are speaking of the Jesus that is spoken of in the Bible. Use the discernment that God has given you just as Jehoshaphat did and expose the false prophets that are out there! And I don’t care if there are 400 that are in agreement, as we see here, if what the majority says is wrong, not according to God’s Word, then don’t listen to them, even if you are alone on this!

3. What is interesting to me is that when Jehoshaphat challenges Ahab on this he doesn’t deny that they are false prophets and, what he does do is he admits that there is one prophet left by the name of Micaiah, but he always speaks bad concerning the king. You see, in Ahab’s mind, a prophet would speak good things, but a false prophet will speak bad. Not true. A prophet speaks the truth, whether it is bad news or good news. And as Ahab comes against this prophet, Jehoshaphat tells the king not to speak such words against this man of God.

VERSES 10-12

1. So as these two kings sat and listened to these 400 false prophets, they even had a little skit or play to make their point. Zedekiah took two horns and went running around saying that Ahab will gore the Syrians to death and these 400 prophets gave their shouts of agreement! This was quite a scene that was taking place before these two kings but their words were empty. But now it was time for a true prophet of God to come forward and speak the truth, no matter how difficult that truth may be!

2. Now let me make one more point here. Zedekiah does speak of Yahweh and thus, I tend to think these were Jews, and yet, they were not speaking for God. Just because someone uses the name of God does not mean they are speaking for Him. Remember the story in Acts chapter 19 where we are told starting in verse 13, **“Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, ‘We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.’ Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, ‘Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?’ Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.”**

Acts 19:13-16.

I love that story. But here is the point. These Jews used the name of Jesus but they did not know Jesus and thus, they paid the price for it. Yes, there is something in that name, the name of Jesus but only for those who have received Him as Lord and Savior. Think about that. There is something in the name of the Kennedy family and yet, unless you are part of that family, you can't receive what they have. The same is true with Jesus! Unless you are part of His family, unless He is your Lord and Savior, you are not partakers of all the spiritual blessings that He has because those blessings are based in Christ!

VERSES 13-16

1. So now it was Micaiah's turn and he is in prison for his faith you might say and the guy that goes to get Micaiah tells him, "Now did you read that book on the 'Be positive attitudes?' And how about the one on 'How to win friends and influence people?' Everyone is speaking positive words before the king, please do the same! Don't embarrass, don't humiliate the king or me. Play nice, will you?"

Well Micaiah is a man of God, a prophet of God and thus, he says he will only speak the truth of God, be it good or bad. One of the problems today is people are speaking out of their own heart, instead of what God is saying. We must be sensitive that we don't let our own feelings speak for God. And we also must understand that the message is not always positive, there are some negative things also and the whole council of God must be spoken, not just what we like or what makes us feel good!

2. Now I love Micaiah here, he is just a little sarcastic. Not only that, but he is also mocking king Ahab as he says, “**Go and prosper for the LORD will deliver it into the hand of the king.**” And the way he said it, not only did king Ahab pick up on it, but so did everyone else. And Ahab is angry and wants Micaiah to speak the truth. Do you really think the king wanted the truth, even though he asks for it? Not at all as you will see. I think he was hoping for Micaiah to agree with the 400 false prophets, but as you will see, he is not going to do that!

VERSES 17-18

1. Remember in the movie, A Few Good Men, the scene in the courtroom with Jack Nicholson and Tom Cruise, it went like this:

Jessep: You want answers?

Kaffee (Tom Cruise): I think I’m entitled to them.

Jessep: You want answers?

Kaffee: I want the truth!

Jessep: You can’t handle the truth!

That was Ahab; he couldn’t handle the truth even though he wanted the truth.

Micaiah tells Ahab that the armies of Israel will be scattered because they have no shepherd. In other words, Ahab was going to be killed in this battle! As we are told in regards to Ahab hearing these words, “**... ‘Did I not tell you he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?’**” In Other words, “I told you Jehoshaphat that he would not tell me what I wanted to hear!” And Micaiah is not done. Listen to what he now tells Ahab.

VERSES 19-23

1. Not exactly the politically correct thing to say but it was the right thing to say, it was the truth, these prophets were not speaking for God, they were listening to lying spirits, demons and these are their doctrines you might say! And like the prophets in Ahab's day, there are many teachers out there who are speaking lies and saying they are of God, that God has told them and He hasn't. How can I be sure? Because it contradicts the Word of God and folk's, God has given us discernment, let's use it!

2. Now when you see what is said here, that God sent this lying spirit, this is very troubling for some. This is one of those sections of Scripture where people have difficulty. If God is righteous and true, and He is, how can He send a lying spirit to deceive Ahab? First of all we know from the book of Job that Satan and his demons have access to heaven. Thus, this lying spirit is not an angel of God, but a demon, a lying spirit that God allowed to go forth with his deceptive words. Ahab had God's word of truth spoken by the mouth of the prophet, Micaiah, but he rejected it. Therefore, God sends him a lying spirit since he refuses to believe the truth. And again, we see that even today. If you reject the truth, you will believe the many lies that are out there!

It is as Wiseman wrote, "It is rather a personified spirit of prophecy (Zechariah 13:2; 1 John 4:6), for even the false prophets may be governed by supernatural or spiritual forces rather than merely human reason. It represents the power of a lie in the mouth of someone opposed to the truth and speaking for his own ends."

VERSES 24-28

1. Now for those of you who want to speak the truths of God, notice the rewards that Micaiah received. Zedekiah punched him in the face and mocked him. The king threw him in prison and gave him bread and water to drink. Nice benefits? Here's the thing. The world is not going to reward us for our service to the Lord; it is the Lord who will reward us. Maybe you have heard this story but it does put into perspective what this life is all about and what is waiting for us. We are told:

A missionary couple came home aboard a ship after many years of faithful service in Africa. It so happened that there was a very important diplomat also on the same ship who got special treatment and special attention. When the ship arrived, this couple stood back and watched from the deck as the band played and the people had gathered and there was great applause. As the diplomat walked down the gangplank and was whisked off in a lovely limousine to the sounds of music and applause, this dear fellow put his arm around his wife and walked off with her and got into the streets of New York. "Honey," he said, "it just doesn't seem right after all of these years that we would have this kind of treatment and here this fellow gets that kind of special treatment." And she put her arms around her husband and said to him, "But, honey, we're not home yet."

- Al Bryant, 1,000 Illustrations

May we not forget that our rewards will come from the Lord for faithful service and we will receive them as we go to be with Him, at the Judgment Seat of Christ! Yes, God does bless us now, but the true rewards are still coming!

2. And did you notice that even after these threats and these actions Micaiah, before he is thrown in prison wants them to know that if the king does return in peace then he is a false prophet. But understand that will not happen, he will die in battle and thus, **“Take heed, all you people!”** A warning for them just as we warn people today of the coming judgment!

VERSES 29-31

1. I can't tell you why Jehoshaphat went into battle after hearing the words of Micaiah, and what happens here is even stranger. Ahab recognizes the fact that the Syrian army is really interested in killing the king and if the king is killed then the army will scatter. Thus, Ahab says that he is going to disguise himself, not look like a king but Jehoshaphat will enter the battle as a king. It would be like going into battle with a bull's eye on your outfit! And, I don't know why, he agrees to this. Some say it was great faith on his part, but I don't agree with that. We don't see the Lord saying that! And it gets even stranger.

VERSES 32-33

1. When Jehoshaphat sees that the Syrian army is after him and has him cornered, he cries out, “Hey, I’m not the one you’re looking for!” And once they recognized that this was not king Ahab, he was not the king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, the ones they were in battle with, they left him alone. Why would they do that? It doesn’t make any sense unless you read in II Chronicles 18:31, which says, **“So it was, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, ‘It is the king of Israel!’ Therefore they surrounded him to attack; but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the Lord helped him, and God diverted them from him.”** Now that makes more sense to me. They would have killed him no matter what, he was in this battle, but the Lord was the one who diverted their attention and spared the life of Jehoshaphat.

2. Interestingly enough, after this battle we are told in II Chronicles 19:4, **“So Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem; and he went out again among the people from Beersheba to the mountains of Ephraim, and brought them back to the Lord God of their fathers.”** In other words, he went and rededicated himself to the spiritual reform of the land, bringing them back to the Lord! That was a priority in his life!

VERSE 34

1. Is there any place you can go and hide yourself from God? Absolutely not and yet people still try to do it today! Is there anyway you can stop the will of God from coming to pass? Absolutely not and yet people still try to do it today! It is hard to hide yourself from God, as Ahab found out. This guy just shoots an arrow randomly into the air and it strikes Ahab between his armor, wounding him. Talk about your bad luck? No, God is a good shot! It is as Psalm 64:7 says, **“But God shall shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly they shall be wounded.”** The Lord said this would come to pass and it has! I like the way that Trapp saw this situation. He wrote, “And now what joy could Ahab’s black soul, ready to depart, have of his ivory house? Who had not rather be a Micaiah in the jail than Ahab in the chariot? Wicked men have the advantage of the way, godly men of the end.” How true that is!

VERSES 35-40

1. God’s word comes to pass, just as Elijah and Micaiah had said. Now this did not happen in Jezreel but in Samaria, so did Elijah’s prophecy come to pass? Some say because he had that pseudo-repentance and God was merciful to him that this judgment was stopped but because he continued in sin, God still took his life. We are not sure, but I know this, God’s Word has come to pass and I may not understand it fully at this time, but make no mistake about it, one day we will and it will be very clear!

2. And Asa died, he rested with his fathers. Now when we read of these Chronicles of the Northern Kingdom, please understand that we don't have them, they are not part of the Scriptures but the Chronicles of the Southern Kingdom of Judah we do have!

VERSES 41-46

1. Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, was a good king. He removed the **“perverted persons”** or the sodomites, those who practiced this sexual sin for religious purposes, from the land, and he truly loved the Lord. His failure was that he did not destroy the high places of worship and he made a friendship with Ahab, who was a wicked king. Now here in I Kings we just have a brief note of what he did but when we get to II Chronicles we will have a history of this king, this man of God and what he accomplished. Here are just a few things.

- He sent teachers of God's Word out to all his kingdom (II Chronicles 17:7-9).
- He established a permanent military garrison along the northern frontier (II Chronicles 17:1-2, 12).
- He trained and equipping a sizeable army (II Chronicles 17:14-19) that was able to quell a Transjordan invasion (II Chronicles 20:1-30).
- He placed Edom under Judean control, controlling an important caravan route to the south (II Kings 3:8-27; II Chronicles 20:36).
- God blessed his reign so much that the fear of the LORD came upon neighboring nations so that they did not make war against Jehoshaphat (II Chronicles 17:10).
- Jehoshaphat was also an able administrator, implementing judicial reforms (II Chronicles 19:5-11) and religious reforms (II Chronicles 17:3-9).
- Jehoshaphat was also the king connected to the famous incident when the army of Judah saw a great victory won as the Levites led the battle with praise (II Chronicles 20:15-23).

VERSES 47-50

1. Jehoshaphat was a good king ruling over the Southern Kingdom of Judah and his life has come to an end and his son is now on the throne, Jehoram.

VERSES 51-53

1. Back in the Northern Kingdom, Ahaziah, Ahab's son, is now king. And he is just as wicked as his father was. And we see this downward spiral continuing in the Northern Kingdom, and it will continue until they are taken away captive by the Assyrians.

2. The book of I Kings opened up with a godly king on the throne, David and now it ends with a wicked king on the throne in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, a divided kingdom! What a sad picture that is painted for us but again, it did not have to be that way. The reason for this death and destruction, for these judgments is that they refused to turn back to God and followed after the false god's with their perverted worship and God would not condone that! May we learn the lesson and serve the Lord faithfully. May we not have a divided heart but one that is sold out to Him!