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1 KINGS 21:1 – 22:53

What we see recorded in **1 Kings 21** are events lifted out of the life of Ahab and Jezebel that have great consequences. And we'll see these consequences before we leave here today.

1 Kings 21:1-4...

Ahab already had everything a man could possibly want in life. He had money. He had position. He had power. He had land.

But the deceitfulness of sin tells us we need more to make us happy. The pleasures of sin are pleasures only for a season.

The flesh always wants more. Ahab was the king. Ahab already had vineyards...but his flesh wanted more and more.

And right next to his palace grounds there was a little vineyard that belonged to a man named Naboth. King Ahab saw it and wanted it. And he offered Naboth a deal he hoped Naboth couldn't refuse. It really sounds like Ahab was trying to be fair about getting this piece of land.

He offered Naboth a better vineyard **or** money in exchange for his vineyard, didn't he?

I think we should be aware that Naboth was a devout Jew and he was committed to live his life in obedience to the will of God and we know that by how he responded to Ahab's offer to buy his land.

See, when God gave the land of Israel to the Jewish people He made a commandment that they were not to sell any of it.

Leviticus 25:23:

"The land shall not be sold for ever; for the land is Mine, for you are strangers and sojourners with Me."

And God told us at length in His Word...in fact the Holy Spirit used nine whole chapters to tell us how God divided the land and distributed the land.

But, then He said,

"Now, remember, you're not going to live here forever. The land is Mine. I'm going to let you live on it. I'm going to let you possess it.

**You can grow what you want to grow on it.
You can build what you want to build on it.**

But it's My land. You cannot sell it because it belongs to Me!"

So, down through the years, when **one member** of the family died, **another** member of the family took the land. When **he** died, **another** member of the family took the land. It was never sold because God had said, **"It really doesn't belong to you. It belongs to Me. Enjoy it. Live on it. Live from it. But don't sell it."**

So, Naboth knew that if he had agreed to Ahab's terms, he would have been violating the will of God for his life.

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Ahab was a Jew, too. And Ahab should have known the laws of God. One of the requirements set forth for the king is that he should write a copy of the law and then that he was to read the law all the days of his life.

So, either Ahab knew the law, but decided the law didn't apply to him, or he didn't know the law because he hadn't bothered to learn it.

Well, when Naboth refused to let Ahab have his vineyard, what did Ahab do? Well, he went to his palace and laid down on his bed and turned his face away and refused to eat! Why? Because he didn't get his way.

What did he want?
Just a vineyard...a smaller one that he already had.
But he wanted it and he didn't get it.

Verses 5-10...

Jezebel knew how to handle this situation, didn't she? After all, Ahab was the king! And she was the queen! And who was Naboth to cross **them**?

If Ahab wanted the vineyard that God had given to Naboth's family to keep forever...what was that to Jezebel? Jezebel was a pagan. Jezebel was an idol-worshiper. Jezebel cared nothing about Jehovah nor the commandments of Jehovah.

So, we see Jezebel devising a scheme. The plan she came up with was that she would write letters to the elders and the nobles of the city...letters accusing Naboth of blaspheming God and blaspheming Ahab. And she sealed these letters with Ahab's seal.

Now, these were lies! Naboth hadn't blasphemed anyone. He hadn't blasphemed Ahab. He didn't say anything even unkind to Ahab. He surely hadn't blasphemed God!

But, Jezebel had come up with a **brilliant** plan. She had these elders proclaim a fast. Now we need to understand what this fast meant...

To call an assembly for solemn fasting implied that a disaster threatened all the people and this disaster could be averted only if they would humble themselves before the Lord and remove any person whose sin had brought God's judgment upon them.

The Mosaic law required two witnesses in capital cases.

See, Jezebel had thought of everything! She thought!

Verses 11-16...

Here was Jezebel working the legal system to achieve her own end results.

Naboth was given a so-called fair trial.
The leaders of the city called court into session.
Naboth came before them.

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The two false witnesses came, lied against him, and Naboth was stoned to death for blasphemy he didn't commit...and his sons were put to death as well.

Jezebel had committed the perfect crime. Naboth was stoned to death. She got rid of Naboth and got his vineyard for Ahab! Life's good!!! Or is it?

Verses 17-24...

Well, can't you just imagine how this scene played out. When Jezebel got word that Naboth was indeed dead for a crime he didn't commit, she went into Ahab's bedroom and said,

**"Ahab, O Ahab, I have done what I said I would do.
I told you I'd get Naboth's vineyard for you and now
Naboth is dead, his sons are dead and the vineyard is
all yours."**

And the Bible tells us he got up. Can't you just see this weak wimpish man getting up and perking up and smiling and getting himself something to eat? And then he started his way down to Naboth's vineyard and claimed it as his own.

I have the tape "**Payday Someday**" by Dr. R. G. Lee. That sermon was taken from **this** chapter and the **next** chapter of **1 Kings**. In fact, we really wanted to bring this tape and I was going to take our class over to watch that tape, because it is such a classic.

But, having said that, I want to say that it's impossible to get to this point in this passage and not be reminded how Dr. Lee dealt with it.

Dr. Lee, with his white hair and his white suit and his raspy voice screamed out "Where is God? Naboth was a good man. Naboth lived obediently in the will of God and now he's dead. And that vile, wretched, reprobate is setting foot on Naboth's property. Where's God?"

Dr. Lee said, "Is He deaf that He cannot hear?
Is He dumb that He cannot speak?
Is He dead that He cannot move?
Where is God?"

I want to ask you...have you ever wanted to cry those words out?

"God where are you? Lord, don't you see this injustice going on? Lord, don't You see the terrible sin in our land? Lord, don't You see the abortion? Don't You see the terrorism? Don't You see the lying and the cheating and the abuse and the divorce and the pornography? God, where are You?"

Well, let me remind you that God's mill may grind slowly, but it grinds exceedingly fine. God goes and finds a retired prophet. The last time we saw Elijah was in **chapter 19**.

The last time we saw Elijah he had anointed Elisha to be his successor. He had put his mantle around Elisha's shoulders. Elisha was the prophet now and Elijah was retired and he came out of retirement to confront old Ahab!

So Elijah goes to Ahab and the word of God fills his mouth...and he says,
"Ahab, have you committed murder? Ahab, have you stolen?
How are you standing here on property that belongs to Naboth? How
are you claiming for yours that which belongs to someone else?
Ahab, have you murdered? And have you stolen?"

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Ahab said, "Have you found me, O my enemy?"

And Elijah goes on to say, "Oh yes, I found you. As a matter of fact, it wasn't any trouble finding you. God knows where you are all the time. So I just followed His direction.

It wasn't anything to hunt you up. And I've come to tell you, the same place where the dogs licked up Naboth's blood, the dogs are going to lick up your blood.

And not only is God's judgment going to come upon **you**, but God's judgment is also going to come upon your kids. And not only is God's judgment going to come against **you and your kids**, but God's judgment is going to come upon your wicked **wife** as well."

Well, this terrified Ahab.

Verses 25-27...

Remember last week when we said that the Syrians came against Israel and were defeated? And we said that this was God's grace giving Ahab a little more to time to come to repentance?

But, Ahab didn't repent then. If he had, all this business with Naboth would never have happened. He wouldn't have allowed his wife to do this. In fact, he might have won his wife to faith in Jehovah.

Ahab cared nothing about God even though God had fought for him. Ahab took credit for what God had done. Ahab said nothing good about God. Ahab cared nothing for the glory of God.

But now in **verse 27**, Ahab repents. He tore off his clothing. He put on sackcloth and ashes. He fasted. All this is a symbol of repentance.

If he had done that in **chapter 20**, God would have reached out and put His arms around him and brought him to His bosom and loved him and forgiven and saved him.

But I want to tell you, there comes a time when it's too late to repent. There comes a time when it's too late to call upon God. There comes a time when it's too late to try to get things right.

Verse 27 is obviously a picture of humility before God. Ahab did all the right things outwardly, but was it a real thing inwardly?

Verse 28-29...

Now somehow, I believe the preachers who stand before their congregations and proclaim that our God is just a God of love and not also a God of wrath and justice and judgment would have a difficult time with this.

God doesn't say, "**Because he has humbled himself before me, I forgive him of all of his sin. I restore unto him fullness of honor...and I take all his sin away.**"

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No, God said, **“Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not let him live long enough to see his sons put to death. But I’m still going to put them to death. He won’t see punishment come upon his wife, but his wife is still going to be judged...”**

I want to tell you, there’s a line drawn in the life of every human being. God will plead. The Holy Spirit will convict. He will woo. He will draw. But there comes a time when man steps across that line and God says, “Enough. That’s it.”

God’s Spirit will not always strive with man. That’s what the Bible says. The Bible also says, “A man who hardens his neck after much reproof will suddenly be broken beyond remedy.”

Was Ahab’s humility real? Was it unto salvation as we know it? **Some Bible scholars say absolutely not. Some say yes.**

It may have been just remorse like the remorse Judas felt over betraying Jesus. It may simply have been that he was humbled over what he and his family would face because of his foolishness and weakness and sinfulness.

I believe what happens in the next chapter gives us a good clue as to whether this humility was genuine and was unto salvation.

Ahab was a very weak man.

Verse 20...

Verse 25...

Ahab sold himself to evil...he sold himself to the devil. God’s word, God’s will, and God’s way meant nothing to him. The most important thing in life was for Ahab to get his desires met.

Ahab allowed his evil, pagan, idol-worshipping, greedy, murderous wife to be in charge. And I believe Ahab crossed the line...

**of choosing her gods over Jehovah God...
of not having any influence for good upon his wife...
and of not having any godly influence upon his kids...
and of not having any godly leadership upon his nation...**

The next chapter of **1 Kings** is the last chapter in the life of Ahab. Three years had passed since the vineyard incident. Ahab and Jezebel had gone on their merry way...just living their lives and thinking they had indeed gotten by with their sin.

Well, years before...Syria had come against Israel and been defeated, but Syria was still in control of a little town called Ramoth-gilead.

Remember that Ahab was king of Israel, the Northern Kingdom. So, Ahab went to Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, the Southern Kingdom, and asked him to go with him and get Ramoth-gilead back from the Syrians.

Well, Jehoshaphat just happened to be a godly king and he said, “Ahab, before we do this, we better inquire of the Lord...let’s see if this is something **He** wants us to do.”

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So, Ahab called 400 prophets together and these prophets told him to go. I guess Jehoshaphat had a check in his spirit about this, and he said, **“Is there any other prophet of the Lord we should ask?”**

And Ahab said, “Well, yeh...there’s one more. But I really don’t like to ask him anything. In fact, I hate him, because he never prophesies anything good concerning me.”

Now, folks...I believe this is very good cause for us to believe that the humility we found in **chapter 21** was not humility leading to real repentance. Ahab is still calling on false prophets...he’s got 400 of them!

You might say, “Well, I thought Elijah killed all of them!” Well, they’re kind of like Al Qaeda...they just keep reappearing!

Listen, you don’t have to look very far or very long to find false prophets...they just seem to crawl out of the woodwork. They are of their father, the devil...and he always has an abundance of them.

To make a long story short, the prophet of God...a man named, Micaiah, was called and at first, he told Ahab just what he wanted to hear...he told him to go on up against the Syrians. And he did this because the messenger who was sent to get him told him he better agree with the other prophets.

But, when he was pressed...this is what he said,

“I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, like sheep which have no shepherd. And the LORD said, ‘These have no master. Let each of them return to his house in peace.’”

Do you know who the shepherds of Israel were? They were the **kings**. Not the **preachers**. The **kings!** **Israel considered their kings their shepherds**. He said, “You want me to tell you what God said? God said I’m seeing Israel scattered like sheep without a shepherd...without direction, without protection, without a master.”

The bottom line of this story, and I do wish we had time to cover all of it, is that Ahab and Jehoshaphat indeed **did** go up against Syria...and Ahab decided to disguise himself. He didn’t wear his kingly robes. He was dressed like an ordinary soldier. But, guess what? A **random arrow** shot by a **random bowman** hit Ahab in the joint of his armor...and he died...

And **verse 38** tells us “they washed the chariot by the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke.”

It took three years, but Ahab really did have a payday someday.

We don’t see Jezebel’s death until **2 Kings 9**. The judgment of Almighty God fell on Jezebel for all the sins she had committed and for the mercy of God that she had rejected. But she died just like God said she would. The dogs ate her flesh just like God said they would.

It took twenty years...but she really did have a payday someday.

Why do you think God’s word has this story for us?

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I believe we have much to learn from this.

- 1) **I believe we learn that greed and lust must be dealt with.** Bro. Bob told us last Sunday night that lust means desiring what feeds the flesh. And Ahab desired Naboth's vineyard because he wanted his flesh fed.

What do we desire? If we're not desiring the things of God and the things that feed our spirit, we're going to be desiring the things that feed our flesh.

That doesn't seem too bad until we understand that most of the time this desire leads us to sin more and more. **Who would have thought that a man's desire to have a vineyard would lead to murder and theft?**

- 2) **I also believe we learn that we are all to live up to the position to which God has called us and placed us.**

Ahab was a king. He had a grave responsibility of the spiritual leadership of his people. However, he married a wicked heathen woman who was also very strong, domineering and just plain mean. Ahab was the shepherd of Israel, but God said they were scattered like sheep which have no shepherd.

Wherever God has placed you, for goodness' sake, take your responsibilities seriously to show forth Jesus. It may be in the work place, it may be in an organization...or it may be in your family...as a wife and a mother and a grandmother.

- 3) **I believe we can also learn that the man (or woman) of God is not our enemy.** Ahab always looked upon God's prophets as his enemies. And he did this because they brought conviction to his heart. However, Ahab's life would have been much different if he had paid attention to what Elijah and Micaiah told him.

God puts certain people in our lives to hold us accountable. Don't dread to see them coming. Don't hate them. Don't think of them as being a "troubler of your soul." **Ask God to give you an open mind and heart to receive encouragement, exhortation, and even admonition from them.**

- 4) **Finally, this teaches us there is a payday someday as Dr. R. G. Lee preached.** God really is a God of love, but God also really is a God of wrath and judgment. I believe folks we see today who live their lives with no regard as to what the Lord thinks or feels will someday have to pay the price.

God's Word tells us we that God is not mocked, what a man sows he will also reap. And if a person sows to the wind, he will reap the whirlwind.

No man had a greater opportunity to live for God than Ahab did. Yet no man ever squandered his life to a greater degree than Ahab did.

He was a proud and arrogant man, but he was also a weak man. He cared nothing about God, or the things of God. His gods were many, but they didn't really exist. They were gods he created with his hands, and imagined in his mind.

He sowed a bitter seed and he reaped a bitter harvest. And he left behind a bitter legacy. We've said it before and we'll say it again. Unless Jesus comes back first, we're all

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going to die. That's a given. We don't have a choice about that. **But we do have a choice about what kind of legacy we are going to leave behind.**

My prayer is that we leave behind a legacy of good and godly influence for those who come after us.

That ends our brief study in the book of **1 Kings**.