

I Kings Lesson 21

I Kings Chapter 21

Distributed by: KJV Bible Studies

Website: www.KjvBibleStudies.net

E-mail: mailKjvBibleStudies@gmail.com

Memory verses for this week: **Mat 6:1** *Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.*

Introduction: We studied last week how Benhadad, king of Syria came up against Israel. The Lord sent a prophet and tells Ahab that God will deliver them although they were greatly outnumbered. More than once God gave the victory to them although the forces were larger than they faced. In chapter 21, we find Ahab seeking after Naboth's vineyard.

Matthew Henry said this about Ahab:

Ahab is still the unhappy subject of the sacred history; from the great affairs of his camp and kingdom this chapter leads us into his garden, and gives us an account of some ill things (and ill indeed they proved to him) relating to his domestic affairs. First, Ahab is sick for Naboth's vineyard. Next, Naboth dies by Jezebel's plot, that the vineyard may escheat to Ahab. Ahab goes to take possession, but Elijah meets him, and denounces the judgments of God against him for his injustice.

I. Ahab's Desire for Naboth's Vineyard

1Ki 21:1 *And it came to pass after these things, that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria.*
1Ki 21:2 *And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house: and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money.*

Naboth, the Jezreelite had a vineyard in the city of Jezreel. Jezreel was a site frequently associated with violence and death. It was a walled city and the Bible mentions its wall, gate and tower. This was the place where Ahab had a palace. King Saul and his sons were killed by the Philistines near Jezreel. Both King Ahab and Jezebel spent much time here, and she was killed here. King Jehoram, Ahab's son, was killed just outside Jezreel, and his body was cast in the field of Naboth.

The heads of Ahab's seventy sons were piled by the gate of Jezreel. It is here that Naboth is murdered by Jezebel. Naboth's vineyard was located next to Ahab's Palace, and was his family inheritance. In verse 2 we find that Ahab

coveted Naboth's vineyard. God had warned Israel about the covetousness of kings.

*1Sa 8:9 Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.
14 And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants.*

Covetousness is a sin that is overwhelmingly condemned throughout the Bible.

Psalm 10:3 For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the LORD abhorreth.

1 Corinthians 6:10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

Covetousness is the desire to have or possess that which is forbidden.

Deuteronomy 5:21 Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour's wife, neither shalt thou covet thy neighbour's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or any thing that is thy neighbour's.

Covetousness is also an inordinate desire to possess almost anything.

Ephesians 5:5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

1 Timothy 6:9-10 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

The word covet is used in a good sense only twice in the New Testament.

1 Corinthians 12:31 But covet earnestly the best gifts....

The Bible teaches that we are to hate covetousness.

Proverbs 28:16 ... he that hateth covetousness shall prolong his days.

1Ki 21:3 And Naboth said to Ahab, The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.

1Ki 21:4 And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.

Naboth stands obedient to the old ways and says he will keep his father's inheritance. The book of Joshua tells of how the land of Israel was originally divided among the people. It was God's purpose that each family would possess their portion from one generation to the next. I personally have a lot of pride that our old farm place where I grew up is still in our family and owned by my aunt. I hope her children keep it in the family when she dies, but it may not be maintained. But a family inheritance is something that should be valued, and Naboth realized this.

Leviticus 25:23 The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me.

Numbers 36:7 So shall not the inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe: for every one of the children of Israel shall keep himself to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers.

Ezekiel 46:18 Moreover the prince shall not take of the people's inheritance by oppression, to thrust them out of their possession; but he shall give his sons inheritance out of his own possession: that my people be not scattered every man from his possession.

The law of Moses did make provision for temporarily leasing out the land. The property automatically reverted back to the land owners every year of Jubilee. Naboth stood true to the Word of God. (And it cost him his life.)

2 Timothy 3:12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

II. Jezebel's Wicked Scheme

1Ki 21:5 But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said unto him, Why is thy spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread?

1Ki 21:6 And he said unto her, Because I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him, Give me thy vineyard for money; or else, if it please thee, I will give thee another vineyard for it: and he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard.

1Ki 21:7 And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.

1Ki 21:8 So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that were in his city, dwelling with Naboth.

1Ki 21:9 And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people:

1Ki 21:10 And set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king. And then carry him out, and stone him, that he may die.

Ahab is sad that Naboth refused to give him the vineyard, and Jezebel asks him why he is sad. She makes Ahab a promise that she will get him the vineyard and comes up with a conniving scheme. She wrote letters in Ahab's name which may have been a regular practice and sends them out with the king's seal. The elders were of the same character as Jezebel. Jezebel is not above using the Law of Moses to accomplish her evil purpose. So they are to proclaim a fast.

The New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible said:

The public fast signified that a load of guilt was resting on the people, for which they humbled themselves before God.

1Sa 7:3 And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroath from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.

1Sa 7:4 Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroath, and served the LORD only.

1Sa 7:5 And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD.

1Sa 7:6 And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the LORD. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh.

Naboth is to be set on high among the people. This was not a place of honor, but the place of the accused. It is amazing what covetous people in power may do to accomplish their desires. Two men are to witness against him. This too was based upon the law of God.

“Belial” means “worthlessness or wickedness.” Thus the sons of Belial were what we might call vile scoundrels. Their lies against Naboth: that he blasphemed God. The purpose of Jezebel's scheme: to murder Naboth.

Lev 24:10 And the son of an Israelitish woman, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the children of Israel: and this son of the Israelitish woman and a man of Israel strove together in the camp;

Lev 24:11 And the Israelitish woman's son blasphemed the name of the LORD, and cursed. And they brought him unto Moses: (and his mother's name was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan:)

Lev 24:12 And they put him in ward, that the mind of the LORD might be shewed them.

Lev 24:13 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

Lev 24:14 Bring forth him that hath cursed without the camp; and let all that heard him lay their hands upon his head, and let all the congregation stone him.

Lev 24:15 And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin.

Lev 24:16 And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the LORD, shall be put to

death.

It wasn't enough that they kill only Naboth; they had to kill all his inheritors as well. This guaranteed their ability to obtain the property as no heirs would be available to take it.

2Ki 9:26 Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, and the blood of his sons, saith the LORD; and I will requite thee in this plat, saith the LORD. Now therefore take and cast him into the plat of ground, according to the word of the LORD.

1Ki 21:11 And the men of his city, even the elders and the nobles who were the inhabitants in his city, did as Jezebel had sent unto them, and as it was written in the letters which she had sent unto them.

1Ki 21:12 They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people.

1Ki 21:13 And there came in two men, children of Belial, and sat before him: and the men of Belial witnessed against him, even against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth did blaspheme God and the king. Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died.

1Ki 21:14 Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, Naboth is stoned, and is dead.

So Jezebel's scheme is accomplished. They setup the fast and the men came and witnessed against Naboth. There is a complicity of evil between the Elders and Nobles of Jezreel. So the result is the murder of both Naboth and his sons. In verse 14, Jezebel is notified. It was clear that the elders knew who the instigator of this plot was.

1Ki 21:15 And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned, and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money: for Naboth is not alive, but dead.

1Ki 21:16 And it came to pass, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.

Jezebel gives the good news to her husband, and Ahab goes to possess the vineyard. Note that Jezebel and Ahab were nowhere near the crime scene. In verse 7 Jezebel declares, "I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth," and in verse fifteen she says, "Arise, take possession of the vineyard... for Naboth is not alive, but dead." With this, Ahab had to know that his wife was behind Naboth's death. Unconcerned for Naboth, Ahab goes to claim the vineyard.

Those that do not know the Lord will do almost anything to accomplish their desires, even if it means the death of the innocent. But the Lord sees all things, and innocent blood will not go unpunished. Even Cain when he slew his brother was brought to account.

Gen 4:9 And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?

Gen 4:10 And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth

unto me from the ground.

Gen 4:11 And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand;

III. Elijah's Message of Condemnation and Judgement

1Ki 21:17 And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,

1Ki 21:18 Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, which is in Samaria: behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it.

The word of the Lord came to Elijah. God directs Elijah to go down and meet with Ahab. We can hide our sins from men, but be sure we can never hide it from God.

Numbers 32:23 But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out.

Isa 45:19 I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.

Mar 4:22 For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad.

Mar 4:23 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

1Ki 21:19 And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.

1Ki 21:20 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.

1Ki 21:21 Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity, and will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel,

1Ki 21:22 And will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked me to anger, and made Israel to sin.

1Ki 21:23 And of Jezebel also spake the LORD, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.

1Ki 21:24 Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat.

God's message for Ahab was not one he wanted to hear. The truth is revealed and Ahab is charged with the murder of Naboth. While he may not have been the one that did it, he willingly turned the matter over to Jezebel. He did not inquire or interfere and he certainly was pleased with the results. Some people do not care how things happen as long as they get their desired results. Ahab is again

notified of his impending doom and violent death there in verse 19.

In F. C. Cook's "The Bible Commentary" he said:

"Sold thyself to work evil." in Verse 20 is "The metaphor is taken from the practice of men's selling themselves into slavery, and so giving themselves wholly up to work the will of their master."

Ahab's dynasty is abruptly ended like the dynasties of Jeroboam and Baasha. Jezebel is also worthy of God's notice and condemnation and the prophet foretells how the dogs will eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. Their evil accomplishments now must seem so inconsequential. Ahab goes from great happiness to facing judgment.

IV. Ahab's Humility Before God

1Ki 21:25 But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.

1Ki 21:26 And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all things as did the Amorites, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.

1Ki 21:27 And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly.

Verse 24 and 26 gives us a summary of Ahab's wickedness. No king before him was ever so humble before the Lord. He followed after idols according to the ways of the Amorites which God hated. It is too late, but in verse 27, Ahab humbles himself before God. Ahab had a change of attitude because of his impending doom. Repentance is a change within the heart, and is made evident by a change of life.

I believe that we must come to the Lord when he calls, not at the time of our choosing. There may come a day when we are no longer called by the Lord, and that means we have no hope. Only when we are drawn by the spirit of God and we truly repent with faith and repentance can we be saved, and this is at God's timing, not our own. The events of the next chapter will reveal that Ahab is still the enemy of God.

1Ki 21:28 And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,

1Ki 21:29 Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? because he humbleth 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.

The results of Ahab's humility is that God's judgment is delayed, but not abandoned. The next chapter will reveal the true heart of Ahab.

* Additional Comments added by E.L. Bynum in Feb. 2014

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.