

1  **The Covetous King and the Conscientious Cultivator**

1 Kings 20-21

2  **Getting started**

- At the beginning of this lesson, we have a question we need to ask ourselves: What are the task(s) that God has given to me to carry out?
- What are the specific charges or missions with which we have been entrusted?
 - As Christians?
 - As Church members?
 - As parents?

3  **Our missions**

- We reviewed some of these very missions, or callings, in our previous lesson. They are general commandments that apply to all believers.
 - The Dominion Mandate
 - The Call to Men
 - The Great Commission
 - The Call to Women

4  **The Dominion Mandate**

• *And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. (Gen 1:28-30)*

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5  **The Dominion Mandate**

• *And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered... And you, be fruitful and multiply, teem on the earth and multiply in it." (Gen 9:1-2, 7)*

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6  **The call to men**

• *And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (Gen 2:22-24)*

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7  **The call to men**

- *Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. (Tit 2:2)*
 - *Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us. (Tit 2:6-8)*
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8  **The Great Commission**

• *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I*

am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Mat 28:18-20)

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9  **The call to women**

- *Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. (Tit 2:3-5)*

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10  **The call faithfully followed**

- Last week we saw that Elisha faithfully followed the individual calling of God to be Elijah's servant and eventual successor.
- In so doing, Elisha was willing to give up his fortune and the lands that he would inherit, a comfortable lifestyle, and even his family.
- Elisha's obedience would lead to blessing and many years of fruitful ministry.

11  **The call faithlessly forgotten**

- In the next two lessons, we are going to look at the example of a king who refuses to follow God's individual calling for a specific circumstances.
- As a result, the king and his family come under the judgment of God.
- We will also meet a conscientious cultivator – and see how he follows God's commandment and eventually suffers for it.

12  **A portrait of palace life**

- Set near the end of Elijah's ministry, this unique story gives us a personal look into the lives of the Israelite royalty – Ahab and Jezebel.
- Like most of the historical narratives in the Bible, this story is not only an important spiritual lesson, it is a valuable historical reference.

13  **Summary**

- In this story we will see:
 - A Covetous King
 - A Conscientious Cultivator
 - A Conniving Queen
 - A Kangaroo Court
 - A Canine Conclusion

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14  **1. The coveting king**

- Ahab has recently returned from defeating Ben-Hadad (Hadadezer), the king of Syria (Aram-Damascus), for the second time.
 - Ben-Hadad means “Son of Hadad [Baal]”
 - Hadadezer means “Hadad [Baal] is my help”
- Hadadezer was an actual historical figure, and Aram-Damascus (Syria) was an actual historical empire. It is important to keep in mind that the events recorded in Scripture are not merely a nice story; they are genuine historical fact.

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15  **The defeat of Ben-Hadad**

- God gives Ahab victory over the Syrians not once, but twice, in 1 Kings 20:
 - Verses 1-22 – Ben-Hadad brings a coalition of thirty-two kings against Samaria, the capital city of Israel. Instructed by a prophet of Jehovah, Ahab surprises Ben-Hadad while he and the other kings are drunk, and they slaughter the Syrians. Ben-Hadad, however, escapes.

16  **The defeat of Ben-Hadad**

- God gives Ahab victory over the Syrians not once, but twice, in 1 Kings 20:
 - Verses 23-34 – Ben-Hadad's advisors suggest that perhaps the reason the Israelites won while severely outnumbered last time was that Jehovah was a god of the hills.
 - Samaria and Jerusalem were both located atop large hills or mountains
 - In this time it was common for there to be deities specific to certain locations

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- 17  **Pagan perceptions**
 - The mistake that Ben-Hadad's army makes here is a fairly common one among people who do not know God – they assumed they understood the scope of His power.
 - They made the mistake of thinking of Jehovah as a small local deity, not realizing Him for who he truly was.
- 18  **The second battle**
 - Ben-Hadad brings up such a large army that Ahab's army is like a flock of small goats in comparison (verse 27).
 - Through a prophet, God again promises victory to Ahab.
 - Ahab's army routes the Syrians and slaughter 100,000 of their footmen in the battle (verse 29).
- 19  **The second battle**
 - An additional twenty-seven thousand are killed when a wall of Aphek (the nearby city to which they flee) collapses (verse 30).
 - Ben-Hadad and his servants put on sackcloth and go to Ahab and plea for their lives. Ahab grants mercy to the mortal enemies of Israel (whom God had delivered into his hands) in exchange for the return of the cities that Syria had taken from Israel.
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- 20  **Why does God give victory to Ahab?**
 - At this point we have to stop and ask ourselves: if Ahab was such a wicked king, why did God give him two such amazing victories?
 - 1. To show Ahab that He is God (verse 13) – even though He has already done this (at Carmel)
 - 2. The second, even greater victory, to show that He is God of everything and everywhere – not just a God of the hills.
- 21  **Ahab's mistake**
 - On the face of it it might seem to us that what Ahab did was merciful and good.
 - However, God was displeased by it because Ahab did not carry out his mission to the end after God had already delivered Ben-Hadad into his hands.
 - God illustrates his displeasure by allowing Ahab to condemn himself.
- 22  **The prophet**
 - Amid all of this we have a story that seems almost entirely out of place, and yet it is important to understanding why God was so displeased with Ahab:
 - Verses 35-36 – *"And a certain man of the sons of the prophets said unto his neighbour in the word of the LORD, Smite me, I pray thee. And the man refused to smite him. Then said he unto him, Because thou hast not obeyed the voice of the LORD, behold, as soon as thou art departed from me, a lion shall slay thee. And as soon as he was departed from him, a lion found him, and slew him."*
- 23  **The emphasis**
 - The emphasis in these two verses is simply this: When God charges us with a specific task, commission, or goal, by not fulfilling it we not only lose blessings, we incur His judgments.
 - When the prophet commanded this man to strike him, and he would not, it was a picture or type of Ahab's failure to complete the destruction of the Lord's enemies.
- 24  **Ahab's punishment**
 - The Prophet then allows Ahab to pronounce his own judgment:
 - *And as the king passed, he cried to the king and said, "Your servant went out into the midst of the battle, and behold, a soldier turned and brought a man to me and said, 'Guard this man; if by any means he is missing, your life shall be for his life, or else you shall pay a talent of silver.' And as your servant was busy here and there, he was gone." The king of Israel said to him, "So shall your judgment be; you yourself have decided it."* (1Ki 20:39-40)
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- 25  **Ahab's judgment**
 - *Then he hurried to take the bandage away from his eyes, and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets. And he said to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Because you have let go out of your hand the man whom I had devoted to destruction, therefore your life shall be for his life, and your people for his people.'" (1Ki 20:41-42)*

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26 **Ahab sulks**

- After this judgment was pronounced, Ahab essentially went home and sulked:
 - *And the king of Israel went to his house vexed and sullen and came to Samaria.* (1Ki 20:43)
- Note that this is the first time a death sentence will be pronounced upon Ahab – but it will not be the last.

27 **Impulse buying**

- So with all of this in mind, Ahab's heart is heavy and sorrowful. He back home to sulk.
- When he gets home he does what many of us will do to console ourselves – he sees something and decides he wants to buy it.
- In this case, it is the vineyard of Naboth.

28 **2. The conscientious cultivator**

- Scripture doesn't tell us a whole lot about Naboth, but we are given some clues to the kind of person he might have been.
 - The location where his vineyard was (the hill of Jezreel, in Samaria) indicates that he was probably of the nobility – or at least wealthy.
 - The word "Naboth" actually means "vines." So it is possible that his name was actually derived from his vineyards, and that people literally knew him as the "vineyard guy."

29 **Eminent domain**

- In any case, whatever Ahab's motivations, he *wants* Naboth's vineyard and so it is Naboth's vineyard that he must have.
- So Ahab makes an offer to Naboth that seems on the surface to be fair and even equitable: the offer of a parcel of land of equal or greater value, or the value of the land in gold.

30 **Ahab's offer**

- *Now Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard in Jezreel, beside the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. And after this Ahab said to Naboth, "Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near my house, and I will give you a better vineyard for it; or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its value in money."* (1Ki 21:1-2)
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31 **Naboth's refusal**

- Naboth refuses Ahab's more than generous offer in terms that seem on the surface to be harsh and uncalled-for:
 - *But Naboth said to Ahab, "The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers."* (1Ki 21:3)
- In reality, however, Naboth was merely obeying the Law of Moses.

32 **Keeping it in the family**

- Leviticus 25:1-55 lists a whole host of laws concerning property in Israel.
 - One of them is that land must be kept in the family. In the fairly mobile age in which we live this is a somewhat foreign concept.
 - Specifically, land is not supposed to leave the possession of the family. If it *does*, it must be returned upon the Year of Jubilee.
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33 **Jubilee**

- Jubilee was supposed to take place every 50 years. Among other things, it meant that slaves had to be freed and land had to be restored to the family to which it had originally belonged.
- Israel was not celebrating the calendar commanded by the Old Testament law at this time. Thus, Naboth would have known that once he had sold the land to Ahab, it would never return to his family.

34 **Contrasts: The King and the Cultivator**

- 1 • Ahab – Entrusted with the spiritual and physical well-being of the nation of Israel. Fails by allowing Baal-worship.
 - Fails again by not destroying God's enemies.
- 2 • Naboth – Entrusted with the preservation of his family's identity and heritage.

- He keeps the law of God by keeping that which was entrusted to him in the family.

35  **Why it matters**

- As His servants, God will entrust each one of us with specific tasks – these can be life-long missions or goals. They can also be individual tasks that He expects us to carry out on a daily basis.
- If we, like Ahab, fail to carry out these tasks faithfully, we not only lose blessings – we invite the judgment of God upon our life.

36  **Why it matters**

- We live today in a culture that is regressing into savagery because the Dominion Mandate is not being followed.
- We have churches geared more and more toward entertainment because Christians are not taking the Great Commission seriously.

37  **Why it matters**

- Families are falling apart, and more single mothers than ever before in history are having to raise families themselves because men refuse to grow up.
- Churches in general are increasingly run by women who are rejecting their God-given roles and instead trying to assert their dominance.