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Tillamook, Oregon

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Naboth's Vineyard

Sunday School - February 28,
2021

Text: 1 Kings 21

Last week we looked at 1 Kings 19 and in particular verse 18 which the Apostle Paul cited and applied in his letter to the church at Rome. God's true people are *the remnant*. And the Lord always, always preserves His people. In fact, the only reason His true sheep exist is because we are His creation.

This morning, we come to 1 Kings 21. We aren't going to spend time in chapter 20 – it is the account of Ahab's wars with Syria and how, though the Lord gave him victory, Ahab sinned by failing to put to death the enemy king.

1 Kings 21 is the record of still another and even more evil sin of Ahab, conceived primarily by his evil queen, Jezebel. And then the chapter ends with a surprise ending.

Before we read the chapter, let's look at another reference to Jezebel. She comes up again in the very last book of the Bible –

Revelation 2:18-25 ESV “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: ‘The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze. (19) “I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first.

(20) **But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.** (21) I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. (22) Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, (23) and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind

and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works.

(24) But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden. (25) Only hold fast what you have until I come.

In other words, Just as Ahab allowed Jezebel to creep into Israel, so we must be on guard against her kind today. If we tolerate a wicked person like this and allow them to be among us in the church, the Lord holds US accountable. To willfully allow evil to be in Christ's church is to be an Ahab.

Here then is the record of Ahab and Jezebel's evil:

1 Kings 21:1-29 ESV **Now Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard in Jezreel, beside the palace of Ahab king of Samaria.** (2) 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."

(3) But Naboth said to Ahab, "The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers." (4) **And Ahab went into his house vexed and sullen because of what Naboth the Jezreelite had said to him,** for he had said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers." And he lay down on his bed and turned away his face and would eat no food.

NOTE: Even though this is taking place in Israel, the illegitimate northern kingdom, we know that God preserved His remnant there – at least 7000 people. And we get the impression here that Naboth was one of them. He knew that his land was his by inheritance and that the Law prohibited Ahab from taking it or even buying it:

Ezekiel 46:18 ESV The prince shall not take any of the inheritance of the people, thrusting them out of their property. He shall give his sons their inheritance out of his own property, so that none of my people shall be scattered from his property."

(5) But Jezebel his wife came to him and said to him, "Why is your spirit so

vexed that you eat no food?” (6) And he said to her, “Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and said to him, ‘Give me your vineyard for money, or else, if it please you, I will give you another vineyard for it.’ And he answered, ‘I will not give you my vineyard.’” (7) **And Jezebel his wife said to him, “Do you now govern Israel? Arise and eat bread and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.”**

NOTE: Wicked people crave absolute power. And when such a person is a ruler, this is their mentality. Total tyranny. The king can do anything he wants. History is filled with accounts of thee evil dictators. Ahab’s sin here is passive, but he is absolutely guilty. He allows Jezebel free hand and he had to know that she would kill Naboth.

(8) **So she wrote letters in Ahab's name** and sealed them with his seal, and she sent the letters to the elders and the leaders who lived with Naboth in his city. (9) And she wrote in the letters, “Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth at the head of the people. (10) And set two worthless men opposite him, and let them bring a charge against him, saying, ‘You have cursed God and the

king.’ Then take him out and stone him to death.”

NOTE: There is no doubt a lot more of this kind of evil that goes on today. And notice that Jezebel used the Lord’s name to kill Naboth. There is no conscience in such an evil person. None.

(11) And the men of his city, the elders and the leaders who lived in his city, did as Jezebel had sent word to them. As it was written in the letters that she had sent to them, (12) they proclaimed a fast and set Naboth at the head of the people. (13) And the two worthless men came in and sat opposite him. And the worthless men brought a charge against Naboth in the presence of the people, saying, “Naboth cursed God and the king.” So they took him outside the city and stoned him to death with stones.

NOTE: These men of Naboth’s city are totally guilty as well. They excused what they knew was evil by claiming they were just doing what the king told them. You can be sure that all of them met a far worse end than Naboth.

(14) Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, “Naboth has been stoned; he is

dead.” (15) As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, Jezebel said to Ahab, “Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money, for Naboth is not alive, but dead.” (16) And as soon as Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, Ahab arose to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.

NOTE: Once again we see no guilt of conscience. Ahab is guilty regardless of any claim that he didn’t know what Jezebel had done.

(17) Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, (18) “Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who is in Samaria; behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone to take possession. (19) And you shall say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Have you killed and also taken possession?”’ And you shall say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD: “In the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick your own blood.”’”

(20) Ahab said to Elijah, “Have you found me, O my enemy?” He answered, “I have found you, because you have

sold yourself to do what is evil in the sight of the LORD. (21) Behold, I will bring disaster upon you. I will utterly burn you up, and will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, in Israel. (22) And I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the anger to which you have provoked me, and because you have made Israel to sin.

(23) And of Jezebel the LORD also said, ‘The dogs shall eat Jezebel within the walls of Jezreel.’ (24) Anyone belonging to Ahab who dies in the city the dogs shall eat, and anyone of his who dies in the open country the birds of the heavens shall eat.”

(25) (There was none who sold himself to do what was evil in the sight of the LORD like Ahab, whom Jezebel his wife incited. (26) He acted very abominably in going after idols, as the Amorites had done, whom the LORD cast out before the people of Israel.)

(27) And when Ahab heard those words, he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his flesh and fasted and lay in sackcloth and went about dejectedly. (28) And the word of the

LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, (29) “Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself before me, I will not bring the disaster in his days; but in his son's days I will bring the disaster upon his house.”

Now, do not misuse this account to run off and start claiming that God forgives and saves people as wicked as Ahab. The Lord does indeed save the most vile sinner – *when there is genuine repentance and faith in Christ*. That is not what we have here. And you will see that this is the case in the very next chapter where Ahab continues in his sin and meets his end. Don't expect to see Ahab in heaven!

In fact, what you want to use this passage for at least in part is *as an illustration of false repentance that does not last*.

So what was the Lord doing? Why did he partially relent of His judgment?

Ezekiel 33:11-20 ESV Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and

live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel? (12) “And you, son of man, say to your people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him when he transgresses, and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall by it when he turns from his wickedness, and the righteous shall not be able to live by his righteousness when he sins. (13) Though I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, yet if he trusts in his righteousness and does injustice, none of his righteous deeds shall be remembered, but in his injustice that he has done he shall die. (14) Again, though I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ yet if he turns from his sin and does what is just and right, (15) if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has taken by robbery, and walks in the statutes of life, not doing injustice, he shall surely live; he shall not die. (16) None of the sins that he has committed shall be remembered against him. He has done what is just and right; he shall surely live. (17) “Yet your people say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just,’ when it is their own way that is not just. (18) When the righteous turns from his righteousness and does injustice, he shall die for it. (19) And when the wicked turns from his

wickedness and does what is just and right, he shall live by this. (20) Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' O house of Israel, I will judge each of you according to his ways."

Here is Matthew Henry's comment on this and he hits it very accurately-

Ahab was a kind of penitent. The message Elijah delivered to him in God's name put him into a fright for the present, so that he *rent his clothes and put on sackcloth*, [1Ki 21:27](#). He was still a proud hardened sinner, and yet thus reduced.

Note, God can make the stoutest heart to tremble and the proudest to humble itself. His word is quick and powerful, and is, when he pleases to make it so, like a *fire and a hammer*, [Jer 23:29](#). It made Felix tremble. Ahab put on the garb and guise of a penitent, and yet his heart was unhumbled and unchanged. After this, we find, he hated a faithful prophet, [1Ki 22:8](#).

Note, **It is no new thing to find the show and profession of repentance where yet the truth and substance of it are wanting.** Ahab's repentance was only what might be seen of men: *Seest thou* (says God to Elijah) *how Ahab*

humbles himself; it was external only, the garments rent, but not the heart. **A hypocrite may go very far in the outward performance of holy duties and yet come short.**

He obtained hereby a reprieve, which I may call a kind of pardon. Though it was but an outside repentance (lamenting the judgment only, and not the sin), though he did not leave his idols, nor restore the vineyard to Naboth's heirs, yet, because he did hereby give some glory to God, God took notice of it, and bade Elijah take notice of it: *Seest thou how Ahab humbles himself?* [1Ki 21:29](#). In consideration of this the threatened ruin of his house, which had not been fixed to any time, should be *adjourned to his son's days*. The sentence should not be revoked, but the execution suspended.

Now, (1.) **This discovers the great goodness of God, and his readiness to show mercy, which here rejoices against judgment.** Favour was shown to this wicked man that God might magnify his goodness (says bishop Sanderson) even to the hazard of his other divine perfections; as if (says he) God would be thought unholy, or untrue, or unjust (though he be none of

these), or any thing, rather than unmerciful.

(2.) This teaches us to take notice of that which is good even in those who are not so good as they should be: let it be commended as far as it goes. (3.)

This gives a reason why wicked people sometimes prosper long; God is rewarding their external services with external mercies.

(4.) This encourages all those that truly repent and unfeignedly believe the holy gospel. If a pretending partial penitent shall go to his house rerieved, doubtless a sincere penitent shall *go to his house justified.*