

Wednesday, August 3, 2022 • Read 1Kings 21:1–16

Questions from the Scripture text: Who had what, where, in v1? What offer did Ahab make in v2? Why wouldn't Naboth accept (v3)? How did Ahab respond (v4)? Who comes to him in v5? What does she ask? What does Ahab leave out of his answer (v6)? What does she tell Ahab that he has (v7)? But who is actually going to exercise authority? What does she tell him to do? What does she write (v8)? In whose name? With whose seal? To whom? What does she tell them to proclaim (v9)? And where to seat whom? And whom else to seat with him (v10)? And what are they to say about him? And then what would the elders and nobles do? Who act in v11? According to what? What do they proclaim (v12)? Where do they seat Naboth? Who sit with him (v13)? What do they say? Who take what action upon this testimony? To whom do they report (v14)? What does Jezebel do, when she hears (v15)? What does Ahab do (v16)?

When a man—or a society—is only superficially moral, how bad can it be? 1 Kings 21:1–16 looks forward to the first serial reading in morning public worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these sixteen verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **great wickedness ensues from only half-heartedly following God's Word—even among people that make external show of following it**

"Sullen and displeased" in v4 connects us back to "sullen and displeased" in 20:43. In chapter 20, the Lord had shown Ahab mercy that brought him to the point of obedience by difficult providence. But then incomplete obedience had displayed that the obedience wasn't from the heart, and when condemned for it, he went home "sullen and displeased."

When a man—or a society—is only superficially moral, how bad can it be? Well, these sixteen verses show that it can be pretty bad. Naboth wasn't just being obstinate toward the king, or sentimentally attached to the property where he grew up. He really believed Yahweh forbade him from selling (v3, cf. Lev 25:23–28, Num 36:7–9). Poor Ahab was depressed because he thought this was an obstacle.

Amateur! Jezebel knows how to get it done. She can use proper government procedure (v8), religious façade (v9), proper legal procedure (v10, cf. Deu 17:6–7), and Scripture-defined sentencing (v10b, cf. Lev 24:13–16) to procure vegetable gardens. She can even convince Ahab that he rules Israel, when he doesn't even rule his own house (v7). It's worth mentioning that a woman teacher in the church of Thyatira also theologized the church into wickedness, and for this she is called Jezebel (cf. Rev 2:20).

It is vital that we recognize that proper order and procedure may be followed and the use of it and the outcome still be satanically wicked. Real integrity and righteousness matter!

But there are times when real integrity and righteousness are missing from among the people of God. Here, the city elders and nobles are willing to go along (v8, 11). They even knew (v14) that it was Jezebel behind this, even though the official documentation said "Ahab" on it. Whether it was the weakness of fear or the wickedness of ambition, their willingness to go along is sadly not unusual in the visible church. In such times, a man who is careful to honor Yahweh (v3) may be executed for blasphemy (v13), and indubitably the average resident of Naboth believed it.

Dear believer, watch against half-hearted or part-way obedience! And be prepared, in seasons when the church is brought low, to entrust your soul and your vindication to God alone; for, men may all believe the worst of you and do the worst to you, even in your integrity.

How much of Scripture will you follow if you believe and submit to the Word of God? Why isn't following proper procedure a guarantee of righteousness in the church? With whom are you assuredly safe?

Sample prayer: Lord, how quickly Ahab went from incomplete obedience, to rebellion, to complicitness in murder! And yet, we have often slouched into our own incomplete obedience. At other times, we have been like the elders of the city, either so weak by fear or so eager for approval as to go along with something wrong. Forgive us, Lord, and deliver us from both the guilt and the power of our sin, through Christ, in Whose Name we ask it, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP1 "How Blessed the Man" or TPH1B "How Blessed the Man"

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

First Kings, 21, verses 1 through 16. These are God's words and it came to pass after these things that they bought. The Jezreel had a vineyard which was in Jezreel Next to the palace of Ahab. King of Samaria. So Ahab spoke to Naboth saying, give me your vineyard that I may have it for a vegetable garden because it is near next to my house and for it.

I will give you a vineyard better than it. Or if it seems good to you, I'll give you its worth in money. But Naboth said to Ahab you all way forbid that I should give the inheritance of my father's to you. So I have went into his house Sullen and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezebelite had spoken to him for.

He had said, I will not give you the inheritance of my father's and he lay down on his bed and turned away his face and wouldn't know food. But Jezebel, his wife came to him and said to him. Why is your spirit so sullen that you eat? No food.

He said to her because I spoke to Naboth. The Jews were liked, said, to him, give me your vineyard for money or else. If it please you, I'll give you another vineyard for it and the answered I will not give you my vineyard and Jezebel. His wife said to him you now, exercise authority, overall, Israel arise eat food.

Let your heart be cheerful. I will give you the vineyard of Naboth. The Jezreelite, She wrote letters and they have's name sealed them with his seal and sent the letters to the elders. And the nobles who were dwelling in the city with Naboth, she wrote in the letter saying proclaim, a fast and seat in a balls with high on or among the people and seat two men scoundrels before him to bear witness against him.

Saying You're a blasphemed God on the king and then take them out and stone him that he may die. So, the man of the city, the elders, and the nobles who were inhabitants of the city did, as Jezebel had sent to them as it is written as it was written in the letters, which she had sent to them, They proclaimed a fast and seated Naboth with high honor among the people and two men scoundrels came in and sat before him and the scal draws witnessed against him against Naboth in the presence of the people saying Naboth has blasphemed God and the king, then they took them outside the city and stoned him with stone so that he died.

Then they sent to Jezebel saying and they both has been stoned and his dad and I came to pass when Jezebel heard that they both had been stoned and was dead, that Jezebel said, to Ahab arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezrealite, which he refused to give you for money.

For Naboth is not alive, but Dad, So it was when Ahab heard that they bought was dead. That Ahab got up and went down to take possession of the vineyard of Naboth. The Jezrolite So far the reading of God's inspired and an air and tort

You know, sometimes we read of great wickedness like this between man. And man the murder of Naboth for his vineyard and We don't realize how close We may be to having a similar sort of heart because Ahab didn't love his neighbor. Literally this next door neighbor, they Naboth as himself because Ahab didn't love.

Yahweh because God with all his heart, soul, mind and strength. If you look at verse 4. So they have went into his house Solon and and displeased It's picking up language, from just five verses earlier or four verses earlier actually, Remember chapter divisions are not original to the scripture four verses previous it said.

So the king of Israel went to his house Sullen and displeased. You see the soleness and the displeasedness did not come from the situation between him and Naboth or the disappointment of not, having the particular plot of Earth that he wanted for his vegetable garden. The soleness and the displeasedness came from within Ahab because he did not love the Lord with all his heart.

Soul, mind, and strength. He loved what the Lord could do for him and when the Lord was getting him out of the situation with Ben Haddad and giving him victories, that was fine. But when the Lord wanted him to execute the king, who is trying to make a very economic economically, favorable treaty with him, That's where a Hebrew the line because Yahweh was no longer serving Ahab.

Well, I have wanted to set up the Israelite consulate and market and Damascus. The the capital of the Arabians have been had at And so he had let Ben had live. And you remember when the prophet came and he confronted him about it. Ahab heard the condemnation of his behavior.

And instead of being brokenhearted and repentant like when the Prophet came, Nathan came and confronted David in a very similar way you remember the profit with Ahab, had told Ahab about his situation giving him the parable that, you know, he is supposed to watch a man and he said that.

Yeah. And then basically said, that's what you've done. AM and when with David Nathan had come and he told him about the, the rich, man, and the poor man, who had just one new land, which was like a daughter to him and so forth. And and then when the king pronounces a sentence, He says, you are the man.

And David does what He doesn't go home to his house Sullen and displeased. It's brokenhearted about his sin. The Lord gave him repentance. So the Sullen and displeased in verse 43 of chapter 20 results in the salon and displeased in verse 4, out of chapter 21. If we do not love the Lord, our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

Then we will not love our neighbor as ourselves If we love the Lord, as is convenient for us than our love. For our neighbor will not go because they are in the image of God and it pleases God who made them in his image that we would love them.

If we don't love the Lord, with all our heart soul, mind and strength and our love for neighbor will be selfish. Just like our love so-called for God is selfish. I have didn't set out to murder Naboth. In fact, Ahab, doesn't even care about Naboth. Sounds. Like he doesn't even know how Naboth died by the end of the passage.

All he knows is that obstacle to vegetable garden has been removed. Now, it gets convicting for us because each of us has many times every day when there's something we're trying to do or something. We're trying to get where there's an objective in our minds. And one of these people that we actually do love dearly because the Lord is forming that in our hearts and yet our love is imperfect and doesn't come entirely out of love for God.

And our love for God is imperfect and someone becomes the obstacle to one of our objectives or even as just in the wrong place at the wrong time when we're frustrated about something else. And we lash out of the out at them maybe just in our hearts often even with our mouths and sometimes even with actions and we realize that the same dynamic is happening.

We have that. Remember, the word solemn here has a tone of obstinate and rebellious Ahab having the pity party. That even his wicked wife is like, why are you so obstinate and rebellious that you won't eat your supper. It's because obstinate and rebellious are his middle name at this point because that's how he is towards God.

And We often have exposed about our hearts that we're not wholehearted towards God, even if we're trying to serve him in other ways, even if we're trying to serve him in other ways, the whatever it is that our objective is that we're doing more for ourselves and for the Lord.

And then someone who's in his image, even someone who belongs to his church. And he has set apart to himself and counted as holy like, little Boaz who was born this morning, you know, he'll be baptized because he's been set apart as holy. He doesn't get set apart by being baptized The Lord did that first.

The Lord had it into the church. Well, even to church members, we do this. And then even more those whom the Lord put in our family, We do this to one another the most, because we live with one, another, the most. And in part I think one of the reasons it's easier as I hope because we have good hope of forgiveness from one another and we are safe with one another for which not use that safety as an opportunity to take one.

Another lightly, we should treasure each other more because the Lord picked us to be and family together. So, there's that half-heartedness towards God, that having other things, that he serves more centrally, primarily with his heart than the Lord and often our lashing out at someone can can be a moment that can stop us in our tracks.

And say all right what just came out of my heart towards my brother or sister what just came out of my mouth towards my brother's sister is an indication that there's something that I'm serving more than I'm serving the Lord right now. Sometimes it's just the desire, not to be inconvenienced, or to be thought, well of, by others, whatever it is.

So there's that half-heartedness toward God, Sadly for Ahab. If you want to disobey God and be really good at it, then he has married very well. Jezebel knows how to get things done. She's descended from the Cydonian royal family. She is one of the top maybe the top bail and astral worshippers on earth.

And so, you know, as you marshals, all her sidonian, and and bail list and asterist the morals. And she basically says, you know, you don't need, you don't need to fret about this. You are the king over all Israel, which of course is just one of her satanic lives because she rules the house.

She tells her husband. What to do? She writes letters in his name? She uses his seal. She doesn't even ask permission to do this. She's just accustomed to running the kingdom. Not too long ago. We had a president who a lot of people suspected. His wife was running the country and offing people who got in the way and they you know, might still be doing that.

Well, she's not the first and if the Lord tarries she won't be the last. And here is here, is Jezebel showing how it's done and she's just totally businesslike. She knows to follow the rules. It was.

In Deuteronomy 17 verses 6 through 7. It says that you have to have two witnesses. So, she makes sure there's two witnesses in Leviticus, 24, verses, 13 through 16. Blaspheming gauge should be punished by death and specifically prescribed stoning. So, she specifically, prescribes stoning. She uses that same word of the Lord to follow the procedure for how to get rid of naboth.

That Ahab was so upset at. You can see the connection of to go back to the first first point that has murderousness came out of half-heartedness towards God. You can see that in part and what he's actually upset at. He tells Jezebel, he's upset that he doesn't have the vineyard but the Sorry, I'm strong page.

The text tells us that he was upset at, I will not give you the inheritance of my father's. You see Neymath knew Leviticus 25:23 through 28 to numbers. 36 versus 7 through 9 which said you weren't allowed to sell the inheritance of your fathers that it had to stay in the family.

It was assigned by the Lord and no one, no one could change that or take it away. And so Naboth literally said y'all wait forbid. It's part of why the king couldn't understand him. Ahab isn't following the Lord wholeheartedly, but nay bought this. So Ahab all offers him money or a different vineyard and the implication is more money than it's worth or a better vineyard than he currently has.

And they both doesn't moved by the offers. Why? Because God forbids it and his hope is in God is to lightenedism in God, obviously not perfectly but it's he's a great contrast to Ahab. Well.

Jezebel seems to have a care for the word of the Lord, and this is something we need to watch out for. When our hearts our hard towards God and hostile or unfeeling towards men, we can still be the kind of people who make sure that we dot all the eyes and cross all the T's and follow the church order and have a superficial obedience towards God and the elders of the city are in on it.

The letter comes in Ahab's name. The letter is verified with Ahab Seal, but to whom do they send word? Once the guy dies, they said the word to Jezebel. So, The elders of the city. No, what's going on and and yet they are glad to have the procedural cover of a two witness verified accusation of blasphemy, which requires stoning, right?

They can, they can break out the minutes of the city council and say, no, we followed procedure. Everything's on the up and up they probably because this is the way unscrupulous men are in local government. Just as in, in national government they're probably glad to be red of naboth that scrupulous Bible follower and claim that they were following the Bible themselves as they did it.

So there are way to your things in God's Word than the following of proper procedure. Things like loving the Lord. Our God, with all our heart. Things like loving our neighbor and not valuing property over another man's life. And so we should always be seeking from the Lord that we would give appropriate proportional weight to the more important thing.

You remember Jesus telling the Pharisees who were, you know, tithing dill or mint and cumin, which they should have God's word said. So, and what did he say? He said, But they were ignoring the way to your things of the law, things like love and justness. Something similar here.

So we must be careful because Pharaohsaical. Sometimes is a something that we need to grow out of because we're still spiritually mentoring, understanding God. Better understanding his word better growing in grace, but being Pharisical is also a skill of the satanic. Jesus told the Pharisees generally speaking, some of them were fairly sincere and actually believed in him, you think, of her Joseph of Arithy and Nicodemus and so forth.

But he told them generally speaking, and the ones who were arguing with him, at the time that they were children of the devil Jezebel here, shows a parasitical spirit and the elders of the city. So a feroceneical spirit and we wouldn't say that they are less satanic. Would we than the scoundrels who could be hired to accuse a man of blasphemy, think of the dynamics of the passage and the skill that is shown at appearing righteous.

At least everybody, you know, knew and acknowledged. Those guys as scoundrels in the dynamics of the passage. It's really the elders of the city and Jezebelt herself. He'll come off as the most satanic. So, two huge things for us to watch out for. Then One is a half-heartedness towards God that results in unfeelingness and hostility towards others and the other is a superficiality in following proper procedures and ticky, shouldn't say ticky about the word of God minut details of the law of God.

While ignoring the way to your things of the law, which is a distinction, the Lord Jesus made, and so we should absolutely make it and we should apply it first and foremost to ourselves before we start applying it to others. So Since we so often find our hearts and our mouths and even our accents, flashing out at one another, I suppose the Lord's writing this on our hearts, He'll give us much opportunity to recognize times and situations ways in which we are not loving him with all our hearts and that that is being exposed in the, not loving our neighbors as ourselves, But the Lord Jesus has done both perfectly.

And it is to him that the Spirit him he has given us is conforming us. So we have good hope as we ask him to help us now. Let's pray.

We pray O Lord that you would help us by your spirit to love you with all our hearts to love our neighbors as ourselves and two in our self-examination. And in our pursuit of sanctification to reflect the same priorities as you do in identifying these way to your matters.

Help us. O God that we would not be children of the devil but that we would even love our enemies. And so be children of you, our Father in heaven who makes His son to shine and has reigned to fall on the just and the unjust alike, granted we asking Christ's name.

Amen.