

NOON BIBLE STUDY: 1 KINGS 21

1 KINGS 21:1-4 - AHAB WANTS VINEYARD. NABOTH DECLINES OFFER.

V. 3 - "THE INHERITANCE OF MY FATHERS" - ESV STUDY BIBLE: THE LAND OF ISRAEL BELONGED NOT TO THE FAMILIES WHO TECHNICALLY "OWNED" IT BUT TO GOD, WHO HAD BROUGHT THE ISRAELITES INTO THE LAND IN FULFILLMENT OF THE ABRAHAMIC PROMISE AND HAD, THROUGH JOSHUA, ALLOCATED ITS VARIOUS PARTS TO THE TRIBES AS THEIR INHERITANCE (E.G., GEN. 17:8; LEV. 25:23; JOSH. 13:1-7). INDIVIDUAL ISRAELITES COULD NOT SELL LAND IN PERPETUITY, AND A COMPLEX SET OF LAWS KEPT LAND IN THE FAMILY AND PREVENTED ITS ACCUMULATION IN THE HANDS OF A FEW (E.G., DEUT. 25:5-10). AHAB'S OFFER IS THEREFORE EVIDENCE OF HIS DISREGARD FOR ISRAELITE LAW.

"(NABOTH) TREASURES YAHWEH'S LAND-GIFT PASSED DOWN VIA HIS ANCESTORS MORE THAN MAKING BUCKS OR PLACATING KINGS. NABOTH, IN MY VIEW, IS NOT NASTY BUT DEFINITE: HIS REFUSAL (V. 3) IS COINED IN STRONG LANGUAGE BUT ONE CANNOT SAY HE WAS OBNOXIOUS. HE HAD A PERFECT RIGHT TO REFUSE AHAB'S OFFER" - DALE RALPH DAVIS ("FOCUS ON THE BIBLE: 1 KINGS", PAGE 297).

1 KINGS 21:5-7 - JEZEBEL GETS INVOLVED

1 SAMUEL 8:10-18 - FLASHBACK TO SAMUEL'S SPEECH TO THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL ABOUT THEIR DESIRE FOR A KING.

HONESTLY, THE WAY THAT AHAB RESPONDS IS CHILDISH, BUT MUCH MORE REASONABLE THAN WHAT JEZEBEL HAS PLANNED. YOU WANT TO BUY A PIECE OF LAND, A HOME, A GADGET, ETC. BUT THE OWNER DECLINES TO SELL IT TO YOU, THERE IS DISAPPOINTMENT. THAT'S OKAY. BUT TO SEEK VIOLENT RETALIATION IS UNREASONABLE. WE SEE AGAIN FROM THIS TEXT (AND THE MADNESS THAT FOLLOWS) THAT JEZEBEL IS THE REAL ONE RULING THE KINGDOM.

1 KINGS 21:8-14 - JEZEBEL'S PLAN TO DISPOSE OF NABOTH

THE PURPOSE FOR THE "TWO WORTHLESS MEN" WAS LIKELY TO HAVE THE ACCUSATION AGAINST NABOTH (THAT HE CURSED GOD AND THE KING) CONFIRMED BY "TWO WITNESSES". THIS WAS PROSCRIBED BY THE LAW IN DEUTERONOMY 19:15-21. THEY CHARGE NABOTH WITH BLASPHEMING GOD AND THE KING. THIS WAS A SERIOUS CHARGE ACCORDING TO THE LAW OF MOSES:

EXODUS 22:28 - "YOU SHALL NOT CURSE GOD, NOR CURSE A RULER OF YOUR PEOPLE.

LEVITICUS 24:15-16 - "YOU SHALL SPEAK TO THE SONS OF ISRAEL, SAYING, 'IF ANYONE CURSES HIS GOD, THEN HE WILL BEAR HIS SIN. 16 'MOREOVER, THE ONE WHO BLASPHEMES THE NAME OF THE LORD SHALL SURELY BE PUT TO DEATH; ALL THE CONGREGATION SHALL CERTAINLY STONE HIM. THE ALIEN AS WELL AS THE NATIVE, WHEN HE BLASPHEMES THE NAME, SHALL BE PUT TO DEATH.

THE TWISTED IRONY OF THIS IS THAT JEZEBEL USES DECEPTIVELY USES THE LAW OF MOSES TO ACCOMPLISH HER SINISTER PLAN.

1 KINGS 21:15-16 - JEZEBEL INFORMS AHAB

Q - WHAT DOES THIS INCIDENT SAY ABOUT THE HEART, CONSCIENCE AND THINKING OF AHAB AND JEZEBEL?

1 KINGS 21:17-19 - ELIJAH CALLED TO DENOUNCE AHAB (& JEZEBEL)

WE HAVEN'T HEARD FROM ELIJAH FOR A LITTLE WHILE. BUT HE IS NOW BACK IN THE NARRATIVE, AND REVIVED AGAIN. THE CHARGE THAT THE LORD GIVES HIM IS NOT A SMALL ONE. BUT ELIJAH IS NOT AFRAID OR SULKING ANYMORE.

"WHEN YOU BEGIN READING AT VERSE 17 YOU MUST UNDERSTAND THIS DID NOT OCCUR BECAUSE OF A NEWS LEAK. THE SPEAKING GOD IN VERSE 17 IS THE OMNISCIENT GOD WHO SAW. IT LOOKED LIKE A SLICK JOB, WITH AN AIR-TIGHT COVER-UP. JEZEBEL'S LETTERS HAD ALREADY BEEN PUT THROUGH THE SHREDDER AT CITY HALL: NONE OF THE SHADY DETAILS CAME OUT IN THE PAPERS. ELIJAH HIMSELF APPARENTLY DIDN'T KNOW UNTIL YAHWEH TOLD HIM. 'THEN THE WORD OF YAHWEH CAME.' YAHWEH DID NOT LET IT PASS. HE SAW AND INTERVENED. NABOTH BITES THE DUST AS A HELPLESS VICTIM, YET YAHWEH IS THE GOD WHO SEES HIS HAPLESS NABOTHS AND THEIR LIFELESS FORMS AMID THE STONES." (DAVIS, IBID, PG 304)

1 KINGS 21:20-24 - AHAB CONFRONTED BY ELIJAH

1 KINGS 21:25-26 - SUMMARY OF AHAB'S REIGN

1 KINGS 21:27-29 - AHAB HUMBLER HIMSELF

IT IS INTERESTING THAT THE LORD REMINDS US OF THE GREAT EVIL OF AHAB JUST BEFORE WE HEAR THIS CONCLUDING INCIDENT. IT IS AS IF THE NARRATOR WANTS TO MAKE SURE WE KNOW HOW BAD AHAB HAS BEEN, IN CASE THIS MOST RECENT STORY HASN'T CAUGHT OUR ATTENTION. AND WHY ARE WE TOLD AGAIN OF AHAB'S EVIL. BECAUSE THE CONTRAST OF GOD'S GOODNESS IS ABOUT TO BE SHOWN.

WE ARE SURPRISED BY BOTH AHAB'S HUMILITY AND ALSO THE LORD'S RESPONSE. BUT SO THAT WE DO NOT GET CONFUSED TO THINK THAT AHAB'S CONTRITION FOOLED GOD INTO CHANGING HIS WORD AND MIND - AS DALE RALPH DAVIS WRITES "IT IS ESSENTIAL TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN POSTPONEMENT AND CANCELLATION. IN VERSE 29 YAHWEH POSTPONES THE JUDGEMENT AGAINST AHAB'S DYNASTY OR HOUSEHOLD, BUT HE DOES NOT CANCEL IT." INSTEAD WE SEE THE VASTNESS OF THE CHARACTER OF OUR GOD. WE ARE AGAINST REMINDED THAT HE IS A GOD OF POWER AND MIGHT AND MERCY AND GRACE. THE WORST OF THE WORST CAN FIND HIS GOODNESS. AND THOUGH THE WORD OF THE LORD WILL STILL BE DONE, FOR A MOMENT, AHAB, (FINALLY) FIND THE REWARD OF HUMILITY AND BROKENNESS - THE LOVE OF GOD.

ONE OF THE MAIN THEMES OF THIS CHAPTER IS JUSTICE. NABOTH IS DEALT WITH UNJUSTLY AND THE LORD WILL AVENGE HIS BLOOD. JEZEBEL DECEIVES AND AHAB ABUSES, BUT BOTH WILL BE STOPPED. THE LORD IS A GOD OF JUSTICE. THOUGH AT TIMES IT APPEARS AS EVIL IS WINNING OUT (NABOTH DID LOSE THE CORRUPT TRIAL AND HIS LIFE), BUT GOD IS NOT TURNING A BLIND EYE TO THE INNOCENT, NOR THOSE WHO CRY OUT TO HIM. WE NEED TO REMEMBER TWO THINGS.

1 - WHEN JUSTICE IS ADMINISTERED BY THE LORD'S DIVINE WILL IN THIS AGE, SOMETIMES IT TAKES TIME TO UNFOLD. AHAB WON'T DIE UNTIL THE FOLLOWING CHAPTER AND JEZEBEL WILL LIVE UNTIL 2 KINGS 9. BUT THEY WILL BOTH DIE, AND IN GRUESOME WAYS. AND WHILE THEIR EVIL WORK CONTINUES ON, GOD IS WATCHING, KEEPING SCORE AND IN CONTROL. IT IS EASY FOR US TO LOOK AT THE GREAT EVIL-DOERS OF OUR DAY AND ASK "GOD WHY DON'T YOU JUST STRIKE THEM DOWN?!" BUT WE MUST LEAVE THE JUSTICE ADMINISTRATION

TO THE SOVEREIGN OF THE UNIVERSE. WE WAIT ON HIM, KNOWING THAT HE WILL DO RIGHT. WE PRAY FOR OUR ENEMIES AND FOR GOD'S KINGDOM WILL TO BE DONE ON THE EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.

2 - SECONDLY, SOMETIMES VISIBLE JUSTICE IS NOT DONE IN THIS AGE. SOMETIMES EVIL PEOPLE PROSPER, INNOCENT PEOPLE ARE ABUSED, WICKED MEN AND WOMEN HAVE POWER AND RIGHTEOUS AND FAITHFUL SERVANTS ARE MOCKED AND KILLED. BUT IN THE END, THE LORD WILL BRING JUSTICE FOR ALL. NO EVIL DOER WILL ESCAPE HIS RIGHTEOUS SENTENCE OR GO UNPUNISHED. ANY WHO DIE THINKING THEY WON AGAINST GOD WILL BE RAISED AGAIN TO LIFE TO STAND BEFORE THE JUDGE AND HEAR HIS DECISION. AND ANY INNOCENT AND FAITHFUL WHO DIE WONDERING IF THE LORD HEARD THEIR CRIES OR IF THEIR CASE GOT HIS ATTENTION WILL RISE TO LIFE AND WILL KNOW JUSTICE HAS BEEN DONE. THE LORD WILL ENSURE THEIR VINDICATION AND VICTORY.

1 PETER 4:12-13 - BELOVED, DO NOT BE SURPRISED AT THE FIERY ORDEAL AMONG YOU, WHICH COMES UPON YOU FOR YOUR TESTING, AS THOUGH SOME STRANGE THING WERE HAPPENING TO YOU; 13 BUT TO THE DEGREE THAT YOU SHARE THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST, KEEP ON REJOICING, SO THAT ALSO AT THE REVELATION OF HIS GLORY YOU MAY REJOICE WITH EXULTATION.

SO WE WAIT UPON HIM. WE TRUST HIM. WE OBEY HIM. WE POUR OUR HEARTS OUT BEFORE HIM. AND REST AND REJOICE IN THE POWERFUL TRUTH THAT WE ALREADY KNOW HOW THE STORY ENDS.

AND WE HAVE A SAVIOR WHO KNOWS WHAT THIS PATH IS LIKE. HE KNOWS THE TRIAL OF NABOTH BECAUSE HE HIMSELF HAD FALSE WITNESSES ACCUSE HIM. HE KNOWS ABOUT THE INJUSTICE INFLICTED BY THOSE IN "POWER" AS HE STOOD BEFORE THE RELIGIOUS COUNCIL, THE HIGH PRIESTS AND ROMAN GOVERNOR. HE KNOWS ABOUT DEATH AT THE HANDS OF CRUEL AND ENRAGED MEN. AND...HE KNOWS ABOUT THE VINDICATION THAT COMES IN THE END AS BRUTALITY OF GOOD FRIDAY TURNED TO THE DARKNESS AND SILENCE OF HOLY SATURDAY AND WAS ALL CRUSHED BY THE VICTORY AND POWER AND GLORY OF EASTER SUNDAY.

AND THIS SAVIOR NOW IS EMPOWERED TO EITHER DELIVER US FROM SUCH INJUSTICE OR WALKS WITH US THROUGH THEM.

SO WE WAIT UPON HIM. WE TRUST HIM. WE OBEY HIM. WE POUR OUR HEARTS OUT BEFORE HIM. AND REST AND REJOICE IN THE POWERFUL TRUTH THAT WE ALREADY KNOW HOW THE STORY ENDS.