

Lesson Five  
The Life and Times of Elijah and Elisha  
1 Kings 21-22; 2 Chron. 18

1. Naboth's Vineyard. 21:1-29.

1. The clash between the king and the commoner. 21:1-6.

1. It is worth noting that Ahab's state of mind upon returning from his unsuccessful negotiation with Naboth was exactly the same, including the exact same words ("heavy and displeased" NAS), that he had as a result of Elijah's message. 1 Kings. 20:43.
  1. The identity of terms indicates identity of feelings.
  2. The same self-assertion and lack of submission to God that had led to his release of and covenant with Ben-hadad, prompted both his rebellion and anger upon hearing Elijah's Divine message and his resentment of Naboth's conduct.
  3. It was not that Ahab lacked comfort and beauty, Jezreel was the nearest, safest, and most desirable summer retreat from Samaria, it was that he (as many of us) wanted more.
2. Naboth, the owner of the coveted piece of land, could not be tempted to part with it by Ahab's offer of either a better vineyard or an equivalent in money.
  1. It was the ancestral possession of Naboth's family, and piety toward God combined with reverence for the memory of his fathers forbade the unholy bargain.
  2. It is rare to find such stern assertions of principle so fearlessly uttered.
    1. Israel could not be wholly sunken in corruption and idolatry so long as it numbered among its number men like Naboth.
    2. Jehovah had not left its households when even in Jezreel a man like Naboth was willing to reject the demands of the King by appealing to the law of God.
  3. It was here that Ahab's self-will and lack of self-control took command.
    1. It was utter and childish petulance, as well as unbridled selfishness, to act as he did on his return to Samaria.
    2. He turned his face to the wall and refused to eat.
    3. Thanks to the strong hand of Jezebel, all was submissive to his will in Samaria, but outside her sway, he was always opposed by

Jehovah, first by his prophets and then by his worshipers.

1. Here was a power which he dared not resist, yet to which he would not submit.
  2. But Jezebel did not share the feelings or the scruples of her husband.
  3. She dared what she would and she would what she dared.
  4. She now spoke to her husband as a strong unscrupulous woman to a weak and unprincipled man.
    1. She must have known what prompted Naboth's refusal, but Ahab in his account of what happened, omitted all reference to it. v. 6.
    2. Ahab must have known when Jezebel demanded the royal signet that she had in view some violent scheme.
      1. Often it seems more convenient - certainly more easy - to remain in wilful ignorance, than to learn what would call for our active resistance, or, in the absence of it, fill our conscience with uneasiness.
      2. While remaining in wilful ignorance, Ahab may have flattered himself that he had not incurred responsibility in Naboth's murder.
2. Jezebel's plot. 21:7-16.
1. Jezebel's measures were at least plain and straightforward.
    1. The Mosaic civil code places jurisdiction first, even in matters of life and death, in the "judges and officers" of a place. Deut. 16:18.
    2. In times of corruption, this local tribunal might be subject to the influence of the powerful, especially in a small royal town like Jezreel.
    3. Jezebel knew this all too well and, with a terrible frankness, wrote to each member of the court what would seem to be the king's directions.
      1. As if some great sin rested upon the city (comp. 1 Sam. 7:6), and, as a result, some heavy judgment was to be averted (2 Chron. 20:2-4; Jer. 36:6, 9), the eldership of Israel gathered the people of Israel to a solemn fast.
      2. Had such a great sin been committed, it would have been the duty of the city to purge itself of the guilt.
    4. In the assembly thus called, Naboth was to be set on high.
      1. This was not to give him an honorable place, but the more effectively to rouse public indignation when one so honored was

- convicted of such a crime.
2. Apparently the assembly was called to set before them the nature of the crime.
  3. For this purpose Naboth was set on high as one incriminated before the elders, against whom witnesses were to be called and on whom the assembled people of his own city were to pronounce judgement.
    1. This explains how the two "sons of Belial" were set before Naboth (v. 10).
    2. The text informs us that the two witnesses testified that Naboth had "blasphemed" God and the king.
  5. As in all such cases, the punishment was carried out immediately, apparently in Naboth's own vineyard.
    1. It was quite natural that the property of one guilty of treason should be forfeited to the crown.
    2. Thus, when Jezebel was informed that Naboth was stoned, she could tell Ahab to go and take possession of the vineyard that had been refused him.
  6. There was bitter and haughty irony in the words of Jezebel, as if she felt herself a queen whose wishes and commands were above all law, human or Divine, and could not be resisted by either God or man (v. 15).
    1. The text gives no indication that Jezebel informed Ahab of the manner of Naboth's death, or that Ahab inquired as to the cause.
    2. Doubtless Ahab knew that Jezebel had some complicity in Naboth's death, and, in fact, had probably intended such when he pouted to her.
    3. Ahab "rose up" to take possession of the coveted vineyard, perhaps the day after Naboth's murder (2 Kings 9:26).
  7. Ahab found something else in the vineyard.
    1. On that very day, just when Ahab thought himself secure in the possession of the fruit of his crime, Jehovah sent Elijah to Ahab with a Divine message.
    2. Picture Ahab giving directions on transforming the vineyard into a magnificent garden for his pleasure, when suddenly there stands before him not one of the sons of the prophets, nor an ordinary seer, but the terrible figure of the Gileadite, with his burning eyes, clad in

the rough cloak of black camel's hair, girt about with a leathern girdle.

3. It must have recalled to Ahab's mind the first time he ever saw Elijah in the midst of Samaria, when the prophet had pronounced three years of drought, and then suddenly vanished from his sight.
  4. The last time he saw the prophet was on Mount Carmel, and then in the blinding rain as the prophet ran before him to the gates of Jezreel to herald the victory of Jehovah.
  5. And now Ahab once more stood before him, this time knowing all too well why.
3. Elijah prophesies the death of Ahab's House. 21:17-26.
1. Elijah's message was brief but unmistakable.
    1. Its first sentence swept away all self-deception - it had not been Jezebel but Ahab who had killed Naboth.
    2. And now he had taken possession as if there were no Jehovah in heaven.
    3. The next sentence pronounced stern, strict, even literal retribution.
    4. Ahab's childish retort laments that Elijah, who had always been his personal enemy, had now at last found him in some actual sin on which he might invoke some Divine punishment.
    5. It was a surprise admission, but joined with the excuse that Elijah was his personal enemy and had lain in wait for the occasion to call down Divine judgment upon him.
    6. Elijah addressed Ahab's attempt to make the matter entirely a personal controversy (v. 20).
      1. What Elijah had spoken was not from personal enmity, nor was what had occurred the result of a sudden temptation or rash mood of the king, but of the whole direction of life that Ahab had deliberately chosen.
      2. Two elements were marked: 1) he had sold himself as a slave (Rom. 7:14) so that he no longer had freedom of action, and 2) he had so sold himself to do evil in the sight of Jehovah.
      3. Not only was the controversy not personal, but it also struck his dynasty and doomed it to extermination "on account of the wrath which thou hast caused to go forth, and hast made Israel to sin."
      4. The dogs would eat Jezebel at the wall of Jezreel while a similar

fate would overtake all the posterity of Ahab in the city or in the field.

4. Ahab's repentance. 21:27-29.

1. There was a most unexpected result to Elijah's sermon; his words went straight to Ahab's heart.

1. He no longer disguised the truth from himself or sought to divert his mind by thoughts of personal animosity.

2. As a mourner he rent his clothes; as a penitent he wore sackcloth; as guilty he fasted; and as one staggering under a heavy burden of grief and sin, he walked softly.

2. God, who had seen and avenged the crime done, also saw the repentance and sent Elijah one more time.

1. The personal repentance brought remission of the personal punishment, though not that pronounced on the dynasty.

2. The visible judgment, by which all were to perceive the retribution of God's justice, was delayed to the time of his son.

3. But when the dogs licked up the blood of Ahab, as they washed the chariot stained with his gore, they recalled the yet unfulfilled judgment that hung like a dark cloud over the house of Ahab (1 Kings 22:38).

3. But this was in Samaria, not in Jezreel, nor in the portion of Naboth, for as Elijah had foretold, God brought not "the evil" itself, only its warning remembrance, in the days of Ahab.

4. The terrible reality of literal fulfillment would descend on Jezebel.

2. Ahab's Final War with Aram. 22:1-38.

1. Ahab consults the prophets. 22:1-7.

1. The events of chapter 20 were followed by a period of rest.

1. Religiously, it might be said to be an approximation of the worship of Jehovah.

2. But for that reason it might be all the more dangerous as being the outcome of an attempted compromise in an area where compromise was impossible.

3. Evidence of this occurs when Ahab called the 400 prophets together when requested by Jehoshaphat to inquire at "the word of Jehovah" as to the projected expedition against Ramoth-Gilead.

1. They could not have been the prophets of Baal since they were destroyed on Carmel.

2. They were not likely the 400 prophets of Asherah - supported by Jezebel - who were summoned to Carmel (1 Kings 18:19) but did not appear (1 Kings 18:22, 26, 40).
  3. These prophets were summoned as professedly bringing the "word of Jehovah."
  4. They at first spoke of Adoni (the Lord, v. 6), and afterwards pronounced what Jehovah would do (vv. 11, 12).
  5. Zedekiah, their leader, expressly referred to "the Spirit of Jehovah" as having gone from himself to Micaiah (v. 24).
  6. Yet they were not true prophets of Jehovah or even the sons of the prophets.
    1. From the first Jehoshaphat seems unwilling to recognize their authority.
    2. They were evidently not those for whose message he originally wished (v. 5), and in contrast to them he continued to ask for a prophet of Jehovah (v. 7), upon which Ahab mentions Micaiah (not one of the 400) as one by whom to inquire of Jehovah.
    3. Lastly, the 400 prophets are afterwards designated, first by the evil spirit, and then by Micaiah, not as those of Jehovah, but as those of Ahab (vv. 22, 23).
    4. If these prophets were really priests of the worship originally instituted by Jeroboam, and now restored, it is only natural to suppose that they may have been formed into a prophetic association, after the mode and in imitation of the institution of the sons of the prophets.
2. We can now realize the scene enacted before Ahab and Jehoshaphat. (It is related in almost identical terms in 2 Chron. 18:2-34.)
1. Chronicles records the events that led up to the ill-fated expedition against Syria.
    1. Recall that eight or nine years previously,, Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat, married Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel.
    2. So far as we know, the two monarchs had not personally met since the wedding.
    3. But when Israel, after the defeat of Ben-hadad, enjoyed a long period of peace, while Judah was in an equally prosperous condition (2 Chron. 18:1), it was natural for the two monarchs

whose families and kingdoms were so closely connected to arrange a personal meeting.

2. Jehoshaphat was royally received and entertained at Samaria.
  1. It was strange to see a Davidic king of Judah on a visit to the capital of the rebel provinces, yet not more so than that one of the religiosity of Jehoshaphat should consort with an Ahab.
  2. The appeal that Ahab made was about Ramoth-Gilead.
    1. It was a threatening outpost for Syria to occupy, from which they might not only watch Israel, but from which they could swoop across Jordan and up the valley to Jezreel before information of their advance could even be known.
    2. Under one pretext or another, Ben-hadad had not given up this city to Ahab as promised. 1 Kings 20:34.
    3. It is natural that Ahab would want to secure so important an outpost, but he should have recalled that the real problem lay with him because of his folly in releasing Ben-hadad.
    4. Given the prophets predicted punishment for his folly, he should not have entered upon such an expedition without express warrant from God.
3. Still, Jehoshaphat's proposal to inquire at the word of Jehovah seems inconsistent.
  1. He had entered the alliance for the campaign, and it seemed too late to turn back now whatever the word of Jehovah might be.
  2. It was only what is to be expected when the people of God allow themselves to be entangled in alliances with ungodly men.
  3. One step leads to another until at last we recoil when it is too late to withdraw, and the only consistent thing is our inconsistency in professing God where His will can no longer be obeyed.
3. We are in the entrance for the gate of Samaria and two thrones have been set for the two kings who appear arrayed in their royal robes.
  1. Before them is the multitude of prophets.
  2. Ahab puts the question whether or not he (Chron. - "we") should go up to Ramoth-Gilead.
    1. These prophets knew what the king wanted (22:13).
    2. The cry goes up -- "Go up, for the Lord will give it into the hand of the king."

2. Micaiah prophesies against Ahab. 22:7-28.
  1. Ahab sends for Micaiah. 22:7-12.
    1. Jehoshaphat was not satisfied and asks if there is not a prophet of Jehovah to be found in Samaria. v. 7.
    2. Ahab knows of one, but his experience with him has not been pleasant. v.8
      1. Ahab's language suggests that Micaiah had been prophesying evil to the king and was at that time a prisoner of Ahab.
      2. This seems to be supported by v. 26 where Micaiah is ordered to be carried back to custody.
  2. Micaiah's warning. 22:13-18.
    1. This passage casts light on the true and the false prophets.
      1. The false prophets declared what was pleasing to their employers, while the prophets of God faithfully delivered their message, whatever the consequences might be.
      2. The king regarded such message as the outcome of personal enmity towards himself; Ahab imagined that what he called "good" or "evil" in the message was the result of either personal friendship or enmity.
      3. While Micaiah was being brought, Zedekiah, leader of the false prophets, engaged in symbolical action.
        1. He declared victory with two horns pressed to his head. See Deut. 33:17.
        2. This is significant because it demonstrates that at the time that this history was originally recorded the book of Deuteronomy existed and its writings had permeated the people.
        3. If the action of Zedekiah was to impress upon the people the certainty of his prediction, the arrival of Micaiah certainly changed things.
      4. While Micaiah was being brought those bringing him impressed upon him the message that the king had received from the majority (400-1), and asked him to confirm it.
        1. Micaiah's emphatic reply was that he would fulfill his office and simply deliver the message of Jehovah.
        2. When he arrived, however, he spoke as the 400 prophets had spoken.



1. Such a mechanical outward conformity could not have been misunderstood.
2. It meant that Ahab did not want to hear a message from Jehovah; that he had already determined his cause of action and was seeking support for it.
3. Ahab so understood it and adjured Micaiah to speak the truth in the name of Jehovah.
5. Micaiah declared that Israel would be scattered as sheep without a shepherd. v. 17.
6. Ahab's reaction, though invited, was predictable -- I told you so.
3. Micaiah's second vision. 22:19-28.
  1. Micaiah described a vision in which Jehovah seeks one to go forth and entice Ahab to go up to battle at Ramoth-Gilead.
    1. Ultimately one was selected who described his method as being a lying spirit in the mouths of all of Ahab's prophets.
    2. When Micaiah charged Ahab's prophets with prophesying falsely, Zedekiah responded by striking him.
    3. Whatever Zedekiah meant by the blow (perhaps punishment, or perhaps as a public affront), we have no difficulty in understanding his words. v. 24.
      1. They are a satirical reproof of what Zedekiah perceived to be Micaiah's presumption to himself as being the only true spokesman of God.
      2. Further, Zedekiah must have known that he did not have a message from Jehovah, and his words indicate that he had expected the same from Micaiah, yet Micaiah's words left no doubt on Zedekiah that Micaiah had truly spoken from Jehovah.
      3. Zedekiah was an Old Testament Simon Magus who knew that he did not have but wanted badly the power of God.
  4. Micaiah responded to Zedekiah that the proof of the pudding was in the eating -- you shall see on that day (the day of the battle) when (your prediction will not come true and) you will go and hide yourself in an inner chamber to hide from those who sought him.
    1. Some may have concluded that the whole matter had evolved into a wrangle between rival theologians.
    2. At any rate the time for talking had passed and the time for

- action had come.
3. Ramoth-gilead was theirs, let theologians say what they would in exaltation of their dogmas.
  4. The two kings were united in an alliance that could not be unsuccessful.
  5. All was propitious - let them go up.
2. Ahab sent Micaiah back to custody for the duration -- "until I come in peace."
    1. By these words he uttered a distinct challenge to God and his prophet.
    2. There was but one possible reply -- "If you come at all in peace, Jehovah hath not spoken by me."
    3. Unfortunately, when different messages are today chalked up to competing theologians, there is no test until judgment day, and then it is too late.
  3. The battle at Ramoth Gilead. 22:29-38.
    1. The expedition against Ramoth-gilead would follow promptly after the assembly in Samaria.
    2. The whole account of the battle, the apparently very subordinate part that Jehoshaphat placed in it, as well as the absence of any reference to the army of Judah, and the solitary notice that Jehoshaphat returned to Jerusalem in peace (2 Chron. 19:1), without any reference to his people, all convey the impression that Jehoshaphat had, without returning to Jerusalem, merely summoned a small Judean contingent, so that his presence and aid - if known to the Syrians - were regarded as a very secondary element in the campaign.
    3. Ahab may have also had misgivings.
      1. Surely he could not have gotten Micaiah's words out of his mind completely.
      2. In fact, his conduct in disguising himself indicates that he took them seriously.
      3. Josephus, without Biblical support, says that Ahab and the people had at first been afraid at the words of Micaiah, but that they took courage when Divine judgment did not immediately follow on the blow that Zedekiah gave to the prophet.
    4. The battle was joined.

1. In spite of Ahab's precautions and the failure of the Syrians to kill the king by assigning soldiers the sole task of finding and killing the king, God's prophesy would not fail.
  2. An arrow was drawn random and it struck a fatal blow to Ahab.
  3. He was held up in his chariot, his blood running down into the chariot's floor, and he died at even.
  4. The cry went out, "Every man to his city and every man to his country."
  5. Ahab was brought to Samaria and buried.
  6. But the chariot, full of his gore, was washed in a pool frequented by harlots, and the dogs licked his blood that flowed from the chariot's floor as they washed it.
3. Closing Notice of Ahab's Reign. 22:39-40.
1. Ahab was buried with his fathers and his deeds were left to history.
  2. Ahaziah became king in his stead.
    1. As Ahab's successor, did he not think of the blood of Naboth, and the curse that rested on Ahab, not only as the murderer of Naboth, but as he who had seduced Israel into idolatry and all sins?
    2. Did Jezebel not see in this red flood, in which her priestesses of the worship of impurity performed their sacred ablutions, a warning token of that judgement that was gathering like a dark cloud over her own head?
  3. But as these judgments of the Lord slumbered, "So Ahab slept with his fathers, and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead."