

## 1 Kings 20-21

Good evening and thank you for joining us tonight, would you please turn in your Bibles to 1 Kings 20? We're going to study both chapters 20 and 21 tonight, and as we get close to the end of this book, we'll then finish it next week then move onto the book of Galatians.

In 1973 on the Day of Atonement, Judaism's holiest day of the year, the nation of Syria launched a surprise attack on Israel.

**SHOW PIC** While Israelis fasted and prayed in their synagogues, thousands of Syrian tanks rolled across the northern border, and into the Golan Heights. The aggression caught Israel completely off guard. At the war's outset there were only 188 Israeli tanks in the Golan Heights trying to hold off 2000 Syrian tanks. **CLOSE**

**PIC** The Syrian troops outnumbered the Israelis 9 to 1. The battle that followed was nothing short of miraculous.

It was obvious, God's providence led to Israel's victory. **SHOW**

**PIC** One Israeli Lieutenant, Zvika Greengold, maneuvered his lone tank to single-handedly hold off an entire Syrian command. On the radio Zvika kept speaking of the "Zvika Force" – giving the Syrians the impression they were fighting an entire unit instead of his solitary tank. It was just like how Gideon defeated the Midianites. **CLOSE PIC**

The 1973 war lasted for only three weeks - from October 6-26. During that time Israel not only held off the Syrians, but drove to within 25 miles of Damascus.

All this is to say, not much has changed in the last 3,000 years. Israel and Syria are still enemies, and skirmishes continue to occur on their border. This is the subject we see in chapter 30—a conflict between Israel and Syria as the focus tonight moves off of the prophet Elijah to the wicked king named Ahab and his foolishness. But we'll also see an incredible picture of God's amazing grace

The title of tonight's message is OLD TESTAMENT GRACE  
Let's pray

1 Now Ben-Hadad the king of Syria gathered all his forces together; thirty-two kings (tribal chiefs) were with him, with horses and chariots. And he went up and besieged Samaria, and made war against it. This is a significant and scary military attack against Israel.

2-4

2 Then he sent messengers into the city to Ahab king of Israel, and said to him, "Thus says Ben-Hadad: 3 'Your silver and your gold are mine; your loveliest wives and children are mine.' "

4 And the king of Israel answered and said, "My lord, O king, just as you say, I and all that I have are yours." The Israeli king just rolls over and gives in without a fight. Ahab believed he was in no position to resist Ben-Hadad. It's quite likely that the national and military might of Israel was greatly weakened by the three-and-a-half-year drought and famine that had just ended, perhaps that's why he just gave in. That could be part of it, but as we'll see in tonight's study Ahab was a spineless leader.

5-6

5 Then the messengers came back and said, "Thus speaks Ben-Hadad, saying, 'Indeed I have sent to you, saying, "You shall

deliver to me your silver and your gold, your wives and your children”; 6 but I will send my servants to you tomorrow about this time, and they shall search your house and the houses of your servants. And it shall be, that whatever is pleasant in your eyes, they will put it in their hands and take it.’ ”Ben-Hadad wants more. He decides Syria will also conduct a sanctioned nationwide home invasion. His troops will enter Ahab’s palace and take whatever they want.

This statement of Ben Hadad is a picture of sin. When a person repeatedly gives in to their sin, whether it’s selfishness, or pride, or addiction, it’s never enough, it’s never satisfied, because sin always demands more and more.

7-8

7 So the king of Israel called all the elders of the land, and said, “Notice, please, and see how this man seeks trouble, for he sent to me for my wives, my children, my silver, and my gold; and I did not deny him.”

8 And all the elders and all the people said to him, “Do not listen or consent.” The elders and the people implore Ahab to show some backbone, and act like a king and stand up to Ben Hadad.

9 Therefore he said to the messengers of Ben-Hadad, “Tell my lord the king, ‘All that you sent for to your servant the first time I will do, but this thing I cannot do.’ ”

And the messengers departed and brought back word to him.

Ahab tells Ben Hadad you can take our gold and “loveliest wives”, but you’re not going to ransack us and take whatever you want.

10 Then Ben-Hadad sent to him and said, “The gods do so to me, and more also, if enough dust is left of Samaria for a handful for each of the people who follow me.” Ben-Hadad was not in the mood to strike a deal. He wants it all, and declares war.

11 So the king of Israel answered and said, “Tell him, ‘Let not the one who puts on his armor boast like the one who takes it off.’”

In other words, wars aren’t won with trash talk. You gotta fight the fight to see who’s victorious.

12-13

12 And it happened when Ben-Hadad heard this message, as he and the kings were drinking at the command post, that he said to his servants, “Get ready.” And they got ready to attack the city.

13 Suddenly a prophet approached Ahab king of Israel, saying, “Thus says the LORD: ‘Have you seen all this great multitude? Behold, I will deliver it into your hand today, and you shall know that I am the LORD.’” This is shocking. Despite Ahab’s blatant idolatry, God will show mercy and defend Israel. Remember, Ahab was extremely wicked, and yet God is determined to win his heart.

That’s why I believe Elijah was depressed in the last chapter. Elijah wanted to see Ahab annihilated. But God still had a purpose and a plan for Ahab. God tells Ahab through this nameless prophet that victory will happen so that Ahab recognizes who God is.

The heart of our Lord, the grace of our God, is absolutely incredible.

But Ahab wants to know how's this all gonna go down?

14 So Ahab said, "By whom?"

And he said, "Thus says the LORD: 'By the young leaders of the provinces.' "

Then he said, "Who will set the battle in order?"

And he answered, "You." This is funny. God promises Israel a military victory, but Ahab wants to know who's going to organize the troops... and God answers him, "You."

On occasion I'll have folks approach us with a need. 'Brian, we should have a prayer meeting for our missionaries, or an outreach to the homeless, or go witnessing in the neighborhood, or Bible studies in nursing homes.' And I agree.

Anybody can point out what we need to do. But my question is after identifying the need are you willing to take responsibility for getting it done?

Ahab knows the leadership a war effort will take, but he assumes someone else should step up and lead. And God says nope-it's you.

I've been in a leadership position now for 27 years. And the biggest commonality that causes people to shy away from leadership is the fear of being wrong and making a mistake.

Hey if the Lord has put a problem on your heart, He may also be nudging you to be the one that solves that problem

15 Then he mustered the young leaders of the provinces, and there were two hundred and thirty-two; and after them he

mustered all the people, all the children of Israel—seven thousand.

16 So they went out at noon. Meanwhile Ben-Hadad and the thirty-two kings helping him were getting drunk at the command post. Obviously, the Syrian army and their king were overconfident. Ben-Hadad thinks he can fight a battle and booze it up with his friends at the same time.

17-21

17 The young leaders of the provinces went out first. And Ben-Hadad sent out a patrol, and they told him, saying, “Men are coming out of Samaria!” 18 So he said, “If they have come out for peace, take them alive; and if they have come out for war, take them alive.”

19 Then these young leaders of the provinces went out of the city with the army which followed them. 20 And each one killed his man; so the Syrians fled, and Israel pursued them; and Ben-Hadad the king of Syria escaped on a horse with the cavalry. 21 Then the king of Israel went out and attacked the horses and chariots, and killed the Syrians with a great slaughter. Israel wins a great and miraculous victory! But one battle doesn't usually win a war—there's more to come.

22 And the prophet came to the king of Israel and said to him, “Go, strengthen yourself; take note, and see what you should do, for in the spring of the year the king of Syria will come up against you.” God is so merciful that He gives this wicked king head's up! He does the same for us too!

23 Then the servants of the king of Syria said to him, “Their gods are gods of the hills. Therefore they were stronger than we; but if we fight against them in the plain, surely we will be stronger than

they. Syria's military analysts assess the reason for their defeat. And they never mention the king's drunkenness.

24-25

24 So do this thing: Dismiss the kings, each from his position, and put captains in their places; 25 and you shall muster an army like the army that you have lost, horse for horse and chariot for chariot. Then we will fight against them in the plain; surely we will be stronger than they."

And he listened to their voice and did so. The Syrians conclude the God of Israel must be Lord over the mountains, where they just lost. So they decide when they strike again it'll be in the plains. They'll stay out of the hills so God won't be involved.

How silly and foolish right? We laugh at such behavior, but there are still plenty of Christians who are still thinking this way. They assume God is Lord over Sunday, but do as they please the other six days. They consult God on spiritual matters, but leave Him out of all other decisions.

We're as foolish as the Syrians if we put limits on the scope of God's sovereignty and involvement. As the old saying go, Jesus is Lord over all, or He's not our Lord at all.

26 So it was, in the spring of the year, that Ben-Hadad mustered the Syrians and went up to Aphek to fight against Israel. Aphek was located 11 miles northeast of Joppa-west of Samaria. The Syrians want to fight on the flatlands – not in the mountains.

27 And the children of Israel were mustered and given provisions, and they went against them. Now the children of Israel encamped

before them like two little flocks of goats, while the Syrians filled the countryside. You can picture the scene. The Israeli army was severely outnumbered and overpowered. They look like sitting ducks-or goats

28 Then a man of God came and spoke to the king of Israel, and said, "Thus says the LORD: 'Because the Syrians have said, "The LORD is God of the hills, but He is not God of the valleys," therefore I will deliver all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am the LORD.'" God will show the world that He is the Lord of all.

29 And they encamped opposite each other for seven days. So it was that on the seventh day the battle was joined; and the children of Israel killed one hundred thousand foot soldiers of the Syrians in one day. This was a huge victory for Israel. **SHOW PIC** Imagine everyone in Michigan Stadium slaughtered on the battlefield. 100,000 casualties is massive carnage. **CLOSE PIC**

30 But the rest fled to Aphek, into the city; then a wall fell on twenty-seven thousand of the men who were left.

And Ben-Hadad fled and went into the city, into an inner chamber. Notice God accomplished His will through 2 different ways. The first one He performed a miracle by working through the existing Israeli army. Even though severely outnumbered-The Israelites won.

Secondly , God used His own means by bringing the wall down.

31 Then his servants said to him, "Look now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings. Please, let us put sackcloth around our waists and ropes around our heads, and go out to the king of Israel; perhaps he will spare your life." Ahab



had sought mercy from Ben-Hadad. Now the roles are reversed. Ben-Hadad is hoping to receive mercy from Ahab.

32 So they wore sackcloth around their waists and put ropes around their heads, and came to the king of Israel and said, “Your servant Ben-Hadad says, ‘Please let me live.’”

And he said, “Is he still alive? He is my brother.” Ahab felt a kinship towards this pagan king. Perhaps Ahab wanted Ben-Hadad and Syria’s friendship as protection against the powerful and threatening Assyrian Empire.

33 Now the men were watching closely to see whether any sign of mercy would come from him; and they quickly grasped at this word and said, “Your brother Ben-Hadad.”

So he said, “Go, bring him.” Then Ben-Hadad came out to him; and he had him come up into the chariot.

34 So Ben-Hadad said to him, “The cities which my father took from your father I will restore; and you may set up marketplaces for yourself in Damascus, as my father did in Samaria.”

Then Ahab said, “I will send you away with this treaty.” So he made a treaty with him and sent him away.” A huge mistake! Even though the Lord had revealed Himself time and time again to Ahab, Ahab aligns himself with Ben-Hadad.

Now we’re about to read a bizarre situation regarding another prophet of God...

35 Now a certain man of the sons of the prophets said to his neighbor by the word of the LORD, “Strike me, please.” And the man refused to strike him. 36 Then he said to him, “Because you

have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, surely, as soon as you depart from me, a lion shall kill you.” And as soon as he left him, a lion found him and killed him. Directed by God, the prophet needed an injury to display to King Ahab. When his neighbor refused, the prophet announced coming judgment on the neighbor, through the unusual method of a lion attack. Obviously, the prophet was not lying.

The implication was this man who refused was a fellow member of the sons of the prophets, meaning he should have known better.

37-40

37 And he found another man, and said, “Strike me, please.” So the man struck him, inflicting a wound.

38 Then the prophet departed and waited for the king by the road, and disguised himself with a bandage over his eyes. 39 Now as the king passed by, he cried out to the king and said, “Your servant went out into the midst of the battle; and there, a man came over 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.’

40 While your servant was busy here and there, he was gone.” Then the king of Israel said to him, “So shall your judgment be; you yourself have decided it.” The prophet’s story told of a man who had the responsibility to guard the life of someone, yet this guard proved himself unfaithful. In the story, the guilty man’s excuse was that he was busy here and there, which was no excuse at all. He should have paid attention to the job he had to do.

He was unfaithful in guarding something that was entrusted to him. Ahab rightly judged that he should be held responsible for his failure to guard what was entrusted to him.

41 And he hastened to take the bandage away from his eyes; and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets. 42 Then he said to him, "Thus says the LORD: 'Because you have let slip out of your hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore your life shall go for his life, and your people for his people.'"

43 So the king of Israel went to his house sullen and displeased, and came to Samaria. The prophet answered Ahab by saying, "The word of the Lord is exactly that, because you didn't complete the task God called you to do, because you followed your own logic rather than God's direction, you're headed for destruction."

No matter what God is calling us to do, He's equipped us to do it. The question is if we will do His will. **Romans 8:37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.**

Or if we will make excuses for our disobedience.

Chapter 21

1-2

1 And it came to pass after these things that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard which was in Jezreel, next to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. 2 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 will give you its worth in money." Chapter 21 begins with an attempt at a basic real estate transaction. Ahab wanted the vineyard near his royal

house in Jezreel so that he might have it as a vegetable garden. He was willing to trade for the land or to pay for it.

3 But Naboth said to Ahab, “The LORD forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you!” Naboth’s response was an emphatic “No”

4 So Ahab went into his house sullen and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken 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. He’s an adult throwing a temper tantrum .

5 But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said to him, “Why is your spirit so sullen that you eat no food?”

6 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 pleases you, I will give you another vineyard for it.’ And he answered, ‘I will not give you my vineyard.’ ”

7 Then Jezebel his wife said to him, “You now exercise authority over Israel! Arise, eat food, and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.” Jezebel is about to demonstrate who really exercised authority in the palace of Israel.

8 And she wrote letters in Ahab’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. This tells us that Ahab was totally on board with Jezebel's plot because he allowed her to use his seal.

9-14

9 She wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth with high honor among the people; 10 and seat two men, scoundrels, before him to bear witness against him, saying, “You

have blasphemed God and the king.” Then take him out, and stone him, that he may die.

11 So the men of his city, the elders and nobles who were inhabitants of his city, did as Jezebel had sent to them, as it was written in the letters which she had sent to them. 12 They proclaimed a fast, and seated Naboth with high honor among the people. 13 And two men, scoundrels, came in and sat before him; and the scoundrels witnessed against him, against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, “Naboth has blasphemed God and the king!” Then they took him outside the city and stoned him with stones, so that he died. 14 Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, “Naboth has been stoned and is dead.” Jesus was charged with similar crimes, accused of offending both God and Caesar. Naboth, just like Jesus, was completely innocent of such accusations and was murdered without cause. The stoning of Naboth over a piece of land for a vegetable garden shows the brutal and wicked character of Jezebel and Ahab. Now 2 Kings 9 implies that the entire family of Naboth was murdered, so no heirs were left to claim his property.

15 And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, that 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 So it was, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab got up and went down to take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite. But God sees everything doesn't He? And now the prophet Elijah comes back on the scene

17 Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 18 “Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who lives in Samaria. There he is, in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone down to take possession of it. 19 You shall speak to him, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD: “Have you murdered and also taken possession?”’ And you shall speak to him, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD: “In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick your blood, even yours.”’ ”After a stoning the wild dogs lapped up the blood. In the exact spot of Naboth’s stoning, dogs will lap up the blood of Ahab.

20 So Ahab said to Elijah, “Have you found me, O my enemy?” And he answered, “I have found you, because you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the LORD: 21 ‘Behold, I will bring calamity on you. I will take away your posterity, and will cut off from Ahab every male in Israel, both bond and free. 22 I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, because of the provocation with which you have provoked Me to anger, and made Israel sin.’ This is huge-this means there will be no lineage, no one will be left of the line of Ahab.

23 And concerning Jezebel the LORD also spoke, saying, ‘The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall[fn] of Jezreel.’ 24 The dogs shall eat whoever belongs to Ahab and dies in the city, and the birds of the air shall eat whoever dies in the field.”Her end would be both horrible and disgraceful.

25 But there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the LORD, because Jezebel his wife

**stirred him up.** Ahab's sin was terrible, but the real root of the problem is that he allowed his wife to stir him up to do it.

This reminds us of what God said to Adam in pronouncing the curse after the sin in the Garden of Eden. God has distinct roles for husbands and wives, God's plan is for husbands to lead their homes.

Jezebel was an extremely evil woman - but because Ahab succumbed to her influence God held him accountable. The same is true for every husband.

The ancient Aztecs had a word for wife, "NAHUATL". It means "woman who owns a man." Is it any wonder Aztec society no longer exists? When men refuse the leadership in the home, the family is weakened and society suffers.

**26 And he behaved very abominably in following idols, according to all that the Amorites had done, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.** Now we're about to see another incredible example of God's mercy, if you've ever been suspicious of God's mercy the next few verses should extinguish your doubts. God has mercy even on a wicked man like Ahab...

**27 So it was, when Ahab heard those words, that he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his body, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went about mourning.**

**28 And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 29 "See how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the calamity in his days. In the days of his son I will bring the calamity on his house."**

Here we see a wonderful picture of God's heart. All a person must do is humble themselves before God, repent of their sin, trust in Jesus.

I hope these chapters expel the notion of "the mean God of the OT" vs the God of the NT who's full of mercy and grace.

Ezekiel 33:11 Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'