

**Wednesday, June 19**

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**1 Kings 20:1 - 21:29**

**20** **1** About that time King Ben-hadad of Aram mobilized his army, supported by the chariots and horses of thirty-two allied kings. They went to besiege Samaria, the capital of Israel, and launched attacks against it. **2** Ben-hadad sent messengers into the city to relay this message to King Ahab of Israel: "This is what Ben-hadad says: **3** 'Your silver and gold are mine, and so are your wives and the best of your children!'" **4** "All right, my lord the king," Israel's king replied. "All that I have is yours!" **5** Soon Ben-hadad's messengers returned again and said, "This is what Ben-hadad says: 'I have already demanded that you give me your silver, gold, wives, and children.' **6** But about this time tomorrow I will send my officials to search your palace and the homes of your officials. They will take away everything you consider valuable!" **7** Then Ahab summoned all the elders of the land and said to them, "Look how this man is stirring up trouble! I already agreed with his demand that I give him my wives and children and silver and gold." **8** "Don't give in to any more demands," all the elders and the people advised. **9** So Ahab told the messengers from Ben-hadad, "Say this to my lord the king: 'I will give you everything you asked for the first time, but I cannot accept this last demand of yours.'" So the messengers returned to Ben-hadad with that response. **10** Then Ben-hadad sent this message to Ahab: "May the gods strike me and even kill me if there remains enough dust from Samaria to provide even a handful for each of my soldiers." **11** The king of Israel sent back this answer: "A warrior putting on his sword for battle should not boast like a warrior who has already won." **12** Ahab's reply reached Ben-hadad and the other kings as they were drinking in their tents. "Prepare to attack!" Ben-hadad commanded his officers. So they prepared to attack the city. **13** Then a certain prophet came to see King Ahab of Israel and told him, "This is what the LORD says: Do you see all these enemy forces? Today I will hand them all over to you. Then you will know that I am the LORD ." **14** Ahab asked, "How will he do it?" And the prophet replied, "This is what the LORD says: The troops of the provincial commanders will do it." "Should we attack first?" Ahab asked. "Yes," the prophet answered. **15** So Ahab mustered the troops of the 232 provincial commanders. Then he called out the rest of the army of Israel, some 7,000 men. **16** About noontime, as Ben-hadad and the thirty-two allied kings were still in their tents drinking themselves into a stupor, **17** the troops of the provincial commanders marched out of the city as the first contingent. As they approached, Ben-hadad's scouts reported to him, "Some troops are coming from Samaria." **18** "Take them alive," Ben-hadad commanded, "whether they have come

for peace or for war.” **19** But Ahab’s provincial commanders and the entire army had now come out to fight. **20** Each Israelite soldier killed his Aramean opponent, and suddenly the entire Aramean army panicked and fled. The Israelites chased them, but King Ben-hadad and a few of his charioteers escaped on horses. **21** However, the king of Israel destroyed the other horses and chariots and slaughtered the Arameans. **22** Afterward the prophet said to King Ahab, “Get ready for another attack. Begin making plans now, for the king of Aram will come back next spring.” **23** After their defeat, Ben-hadad’s officers said to him, “The Israelite gods are gods of the hills; that is why they won. But we can beat them easily on the plains. **24** Only this time replace the kings with field commanders! **25** Recruit another army like the one you lost. Give us the same number of horses, chariots, and men, and we will fight against them on the plains. There’s no doubt that we will beat them.” So King Ben-hadad did as they suggested. **26** The following spring he called up the Aramean army and marched out against Israel, this time at Aphek. **27** Israel then mustered its army, set up supply lines, and marched out for battle. But the Israelite army looked like two little flocks of goats in comparison to the vast Aramean forces that filled the countryside! **28** Then the man of God went to the king of Israel and said, “This is what the LORD says: The Arameans have said, ‘The LORD is a god of the hills and not of the plains.’ So I will defeat this vast army for you. Then you will know that I am the LORD.” **29** The two armies camped opposite each other for seven days, and on the seventh day the battle began. The Israelites killed 100,000 Aramean foot soldiers in one day. **30** The rest fled into the town of Aphek, but the wall fell on them and killed another 27,000. Ben-hadad fled into the town and hid in a secret room. **31** Ben-hadad’s officers said to him, “Sir, we have heard that the kings of Israel are merciful. So let’s humble ourselves by wearing burlap around our waists and putting ropes on our heads, and surrender to the king of Israel. Then perhaps he will let you live.” **32** So they put on burlap and ropes, and they went to the king of Israel and begged, “Your servant Ben-hadad says, ‘Please let me live!’” The king of Israel responded, “Is he still alive? He is my brother!” **33** The men took this as a good sign and quickly picked up on his words. “Yes,” they said, “your brother Ben-hadad!” “Go and get him,” the king of Israel told them. And when Ben-hadad arrived, Ahab invited him up into his chariot. **34** Ben-hadad told him, “I will give back the towns my father took from your father, and you may establish places of trade in Damascus, as my father did in Samaria.” Then Ahab said, “I will release you under these conditions.” So they made a new treaty, and Ben-hadad was set free. **35** Meanwhile, the LORD instructed one of the group of prophets to say to another man, “Hit me!” But the man refused to hit the prophet. **36** Then the prophet told him, “Because you have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, a lion will kill you as soon as you leave me.” And when he had gone, a lion did attack and kill him. **37** Then the prophet turned to another man and said, “Hit me!” So he struck the prophet and wounded him. **38** The prophet placed a bandage over his eyes to disguise himself and then

waited beside the road for the king. **39** As the king passed by, the prophet called out to him, “Sir, I was in the thick of battle, and suddenly a man brought me a prisoner. He said, ‘Guard this man; if for any reason he gets away, you will either die or pay a fine of seventy-five pounds of silver!’ **40** But while I was busy doing something else, the prisoner disappeared!” “Well, it’s your own fault,” the king replied. “You have brought the judgment on yourself.” **41** Then the prophet quickly pulled the bandage from his eyes, and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets. **42** The prophet said to him, “This is what the LORD says: Because you have spared the man I said must be destroyed, now you must die in his place, and your people will die instead of his people.” **43** So the king of Israel went home to Samaria angry and sullen.

**21 1** Now there was a man named Naboth, from Jezreel, who owned a vineyard in Jezreel beside the palace of King Ahab of Samaria. **2** One day Ahab said to Naboth, “Since your vineyard is so convenient to my palace, I would like to buy it to use as a vegetable garden. I will give you a better vineyard in exchange, or if you prefer, I will pay you for it.” **3** But Naboth replied, “The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance that was passed down by my ancestors.” **4** So Ahab went home angry and sullen because of Naboth’s answer. The king went to bed with his face to the wall and refused to eat! **5** “What’s the matter?” his wife Jezebel asked him. “What’s made you so upset that you’re not eating?” **6** “I asked Naboth to sell me his vineyard or trade it, but he refused!” Ahab told her. **7** “Are you the king of Israel or not?” Jezebel demanded. “Get up and eat something, and don’t worry about it. I’ll get you Naboth’s vineyard!” **8** So she wrote letters in Ahab’s name, sealed them with his seal, and sent them to the elders and other leaders of the town where Naboth lived. **9** In her letters she commanded: “Call the citizens together for a time of fasting, and give Naboth a place of honor. **10** And then seat two scoundrels across from him who will accuse him of cursing God and the king. Then take him out and stone him to death.” **11** So the elders and other town leaders followed the instructions Jezebel had written in the letters. **12** They called for a fast and put Naboth at a prominent place before the people. **13** Then the two scoundrels came and sat down across from him. And they accused Naboth before all the people, saying, “He cursed God and the king.” So he was dragged outside the town and stoned to death. **14** The town leaders then sent word to Jezebel, “Naboth has been stoned to death.” **15** When Jezebel heard the news, she said to Ahab, “You know the vineyard Naboth wouldn’t sell you? Well, you can have it now! He’s dead!” **16** So Ahab immediately went down to the vineyard of Naboth to claim it. **17** But the LORD said to Elijah, **18** “Go down to meet King Ahab of Israel, who rules in Samaria. He will be at Naboth’s vineyard in Jezreel, claiming it for himself. **19** Give him this message: ‘This is what the LORD says: Wasn’t it enough that you killed Naboth? Must you rob him, too? Because you have done this, dogs will lick your blood at the very place where they licked the blood of

Naboth!” **20** “So, my enemy, you have found me!” Ahab exclaimed to Elijah. “Yes,” Elijah answered, “I have come because you have sold yourself to what is evil in the LORD ’s sight. **21** So now the LORD says, ‘I will bring disaster on you and consume you. I will destroy every one of your male descendants, slave and free alike, anywhere in Israel! **22** I am going to destroy your family as I did the family of Jeroboam son of Nebat and the family of Baasha son of Ahijah, for you have made me very angry and have led Israel into sin.’ **23** “And regarding Jezebel, the LORD says, ‘Dogs will eat Jezebel’s body at the plot of land in Jezreel. ’ **24** “The members of Ahab’s family who die in the city will be eaten by dogs, and those who die in the field will be eaten by vultures.” **25** (No one else so completely sold himself to what was evil in the LORD ’s sight as Ahab did under the influence of his wife Jezebel. **26** His worst outrage was worshiping idols just as the Amorites had done—the people whom the LORD had driven out from the land ahead of the Israelites.) **27** But when Ahab heard this message, he tore his clothing, dressed in burlap, and fasted. He even slept in burlap and went about in deep mourning. **28** Then another message from the LORD came to Elijah: **29** “Do you see how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has done this, I will not do what I promised during his lifetime. It will happen to his sons; I will destroy his dynasty.”

## **Acts 12:24 - 13:15**

**12 24**Meanwhile, the word of God continued to spread, and there were many new believers. **25** When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission to Jerusalem, they returned, taking John Mark with them.

**13 1** Among the prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch of Syria were Barnabas, Simeon (called “the black man” ), Lucius (from Cyrene), Manaen (the childhood companion of King Herod Antipas ), and Saul. **2** One day as these men were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Dedicate Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them.” **3** So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way. **4** So Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the Holy Spirit. They went down to the seaport of Seleucia and then sailed for the island of Cyprus. **5** There, in the town of Salamis, they went to the Jewish synagogues and preached the word of God. John Mark went with them as their assistant. **6** Afterward they traveled from town to town across the entire island until finally they reached Paphos, where they met a Jewish sorcerer, a false prophet named Bar-Jesus. **7** He had attached himself to the governor, Sergius Paulus, who was an intelligent man. The governor invited Barnabas and Saul to visit him, for he wanted to hear the word of

God. **8** But Elymas, the sorcerer (as his name means in Greek), interfered and urged the governor to pay no attention to what Barnabas and Saul said. He was trying to keep the governor from believing. **9** Saul, also known as Paul, was filled with the Holy Spirit, and he looked the sorcerer in the eye. **10** Then he said, "You son of the devil, full of every sort of deceit and fraud, and enemy of all that is good! Will you never stop perverting the true ways of the Lord? **11** Watch now, for the Lord has laid his hand of punishment upon you, and you will be struck blind. You will not see the sunlight for some time." Instantly mist and darkness came over the man's eyes, and he began groping around begging for someone to take his hand and lead him. **12** When the governor saw what had happened, he became a believer, for he was astonished at the teaching about the Lord. **13** Paul and his companions then left Paphos by ship for Pamphylia, landing at the port town of Perga. There John Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem. **14** But Paul and Barnabas traveled inland to Antioch of Pisidia. On the Sabbath they went to the synagogue for the services. **15** After the usual readings from the books of Moses and the prophets, those in charge of the service sent them this message: "Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, come and give it."

#### **Psalm 137:1 - 9**

**137 1** Beside the rivers of Babylon, we sat and wept as we thought of Jerusalem. **2** We put away our harps, hanging them on the branches of poplar trees. **3** For our captors demanded a song from us. Our tormentors insisted on a joyful hymn: "Sing us one of those songs of Jerusalem!" **4** But how can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a pagan land? **5** If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget how to play the harp. **6** May my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth if I fail to remember you, if I don't make Jerusalem my greatest joy. **7** O LORD, remember what the Edomites did on the day the armies of Babylon captured Jerusalem. "Destroy it!" they yelled. "Level it to the ground!" **8** O Babylon, you will be destroyed. Happy is the one who pays you back for what you have done to us. **9** Happy is the one who takes your babies and smashes them against the rocks!

#### **Proverbs 17:16**

**17 16** It is senseless to pay to educate a fool, since he has no heart for learning.