

June 5

1 Kings 20-22

Hey, I'm Dave Irwin. Thanks for joining me for the Project 4:4 Daily Accelerator for June 5. Today we're covering 1 Kings 20, 21, and part of 22.

Getting stabbed in the back (metaphorically) feels pretty bad. Being stabbed in the back by the person you are trying to help feels even worse. Having your car stolen is bad. Having your car stolen by a person while you are busy changing the flat tire on their car is worse. That's what we see happening between God and Ahab in chapters 20 and 21.

In chapter 20, Ahab is facing attack from Ben-Hadad, King of Aram (Syria). Ben-Hadad seems anxious to pick a fight, so their negotiations break down pretty fast and battle is eminent. God sends a prophet to Ahab to deliver a message of deliverance. God says that He will give the Aramean army into Ahab's hand and he will be victorious. In typical God fashion, He delivers victory through an unlikely source – the junior officers of the provincial commanders. This would be like saying the interns would win the battle and bring victory. This ensures that only God can get the credit and therefore Ahab would see His great power and faithfulness to Israel.

God is not done revealing Himself to Ahab (or Ben-Hadad), so He tells Ahab to get ready because Ben-Hadad will be back next spring to attack again. While he was licking his wounds, Ben-Hadad's advisors have been telling him that the reason he lost was because he fought in the hills and Israel's God is obviously a God of the hills. Therefore he should attack again but do battle on the plains. They either did not realize who Yahweh really was or they had too little respect for Him. God again comes to Ahab and promises to deliver the Aramean army into his hands. When the armies do battle, the Israelites kill 100,000 Aramean soldiers. The Arameans then retreat and take refuge in the city of Aphek but 27,000 more die when the walls collapse on them. Without a doubt, this would have made the Israelites think back to the battle of Jericho when walls fell before and victory was won. God is showing Ahab and Israel that He is the same God fighting for them and His faithfulness is forever.

Do you get the feeling here that God is really going the extra mile to help Ahab and give him opportunities to turn from his evil ways and follow Him? How does Ahab respond? – with a stab to the back. Ahab's first stab comes in dealing with Ben-Hadad. After his defeat at Aphek, Ben-Hadad asks for a treaty with Ahab and Ahab accepts. In return for not being killed, Ben-Hadad pledges to give back land that Israel had lost in years past as well as opening trade relationships between Aram and Israel. On the surface, this seems like a great act of mercy and smart leadership on Ahab's part. He gets land back without more fighting and boosts the Israelite economy with more trade opportunities. However, it was not Ahab's place to grant this treaty with Ben-Hadad. When God actively fights with the army of Israel, He demands that all of the spoils of battle belong only to Himself (Joshua 6:18). The Israelites were not allowed to keep any plunder...including the lives of the enemies. In granting Ben-Hadad mercy, Ahab was taking that which belonged to God according to His Law. God confronts Ahab for this through one of his prophets who acts

out a scenario and pronounces punishment for letting a man live whom God had determined should die (1 Kings 20:35-43).

Ahab stabs again, showing total disregard for life and God's Laws when he plotted to steal a man's vineyard. A man named Naboth had a nice vineyard close to Ahab's palace and Ahab thought it would make a great royal garden. He initially approaches the transaction with integrity offering to provide Naboth a better vineyard or pay market value for the land. Naboth refuses the offer because this was his ancestral land given to his family when the promised land was divided up among the tribes of Israel. Ahab accepts this with sadness but his wife, Jezebel, took ruthless action to acquire the land. She had the local leaders of Naboth's city conspire to bring charges of treason against Naboth and have him killed. The plan worked and Ahab claimed the land for himself. This account shows us two levels of evil in Ahab's reign as king. First, it was not difficult to get city leaders to orchestrate false charges against Naboth and kill him. So corrupt was Ahab's reign, that lying and murder were common place. Second, is the issue of taking Naboth's land. In Leviticus 25 God makes it clear that the land of Israel belongs to Him first and foremost. The Israelites are just caretakers of God's land. There was even provision to return any purchased land to the owners every 50 years and rules for prorating the cost of land leading up to that 50<sup>th</sup> year. So, in taking Naboth's vineyard, Ahab was stealing from God in a very literal sense.

All of this begs the question, "Why is God helping King Ahab?" Remember that Ahab has not honored God in the least during his reign. In fact, he would be known as one of, if not the most, evil king of Israel. Why is God saving this man from defeat and death?? God, Himself, answers this question for us in the text. God says that He will defeat the Aramean armies so that Ahab (and Israel) will "know that I am the LORD." Here is a glimpse into the heart of God – He will go to great lengths to make Himself known to mankind. He has revealed Himself through visions, burning bushes, prophets, dreams, angels, the Law, and most importantly...Jesus. The entire Scripture is about God revealing Himself to a broken world so that He may redeem those who turn to Him. 2 Peter 3:9 tells us that God is not overlooking evil. His heart to redeem mankind drives Him to be patient and extend every opportunity for people to turn to Him for forgiveness. Even Ahab experiences God's grace when he repents after Elijah proclaims God's judgment for the evil he did against Naboth.

As we have benefitted from God making Himself known to us, we must ask ourselves, "How can we be part of making God known to those who need Him most?"

Thanks for joining me today!