

1 Kings 20-21 – Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

XIII. Ahab (Israel) • 16:29-22:40

A. Ahab's Wickedness • 16:29-34

B. Elijah's Career • Chs. 17-19

In our last study we followed the prophet Elijah in his journey through depression.

It ended with him in a cave on Mt. Sinai, not at all getting God's counsel.

So God dealt with him by simply sending him back to work.

He told him to leave his self-imposed exile, travel north to anoint Hazael as the next king of Syria, Jehu as the new king of Israel, & Elisha as the next prophet.

The scene now shifts back to King Ahab & the northern kingdom of Israel's troubles with Syria.

C. Israel & Syria • Ch. 20

1. Campaign #1 • vs. 1-22

¹Now Ben-Hadad the king of Syria gathered all his forces together; thirty-two kings were with him, with horses and chariots. And he went up and besieged Samaria, and made war against it.

During this period of time, Syria was a region much like Greece; it was divided into several powerful city-states.

Each of these districts were ruled by a central city which had managed to exert control over its surrounding lands.

The *ruler* of each of these cities was called the king.

Each of these ruling cities pressed the boundaries of its rule out till it came into contact with another city that was doing the same thing.

Then one of two things happened; they either went to war against each other, or they forged a treaty, sometimes an alliance, to pool their strength & use it to conquer *other* regions.

Sometimes, one city-state was able to rise above all the others using political, economic, or military pressure.

That's what Damascus had done among the Aramean tribes in Syria.

This Ben-Hadad is #2. His ancestors were the rulers of Damascus who'd asserted dominance over 32 other Syrian city-states.

Ben means "son of" & Hadad was an ancient Aramaic generic word for "god." So Ben Hadad wasn't his name, it was a *title* he'd claimed for himself, "son of god."

The Syrians recognized the growing power of the emerging Israel & knew they'd eventually try to press northeast to reclaim the Golan Heights Syria had taken from them years before.

So they decided to launch a pre-emptive strike & reduce Israel to a vassal state. Ahab & the northern tribes were not prepared.

The Syrians were able to march virtually unopposed all the way to the new capital of Israel at Samaria.

Ahab never had time to mobilize his main army.

His only advantage was the young commanders of the provinces who managed to outpace the Syrian advance & arrived at Samaria just ahead of the enemy.

With them, these commanders brought their hand-picked best troops.

²Then 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.’ ” ⁴And the king of Israel answered and said, “My lord, O king, just as you say, I and all that I have are yours.”

As soon as the siege was set & the city surrounded, the king of Syria sent a message to Ahab with the terms of surrender.

He was to surrender all his wealth & family as hostages.

The point was clear – Israel was defeated & Ahab was to be Ben Hadad’s vassal.

Without deliberation, Ahab capitulated.

Now, normally, some negotiating would take place. But Ahab’s got a plan.

He knows if he accepts the initial terms, Ben Hadad will press for more, and that’s exactly what Ahab’s counting on.

⁵Then 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”; ⁶but 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.’ ”

Ahab knew Ben Hadad would demand something like this.

It’s one thing for *HIM* to lose all his wealth & family, but Ahab knew when the demand was made of all the leaders of Israel, they’d be more inclined to fight.

⁷So 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.”

“I didn’t provoke him!! I complied with his request. But then he went and got all uppity and demands you guys give up your stuff too.”

Ahab is a very clever guy!

⁸And all the elders and all the people said to him, “Do not listen or consent.”

The rest of the leaders of Israel refuse the new terms, meaning one thing – war!

⁹Therefore 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. ¹⁰Then 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.”

Ahab sent word to the king of Syria that the new terms were rejected.

So Ben Hadad sent the messengers *back* to Ahab with the announcement there'd be no mercy in the coming battle, Samaria's destruction would be complete!

Ahab sent hem back one last time with a retort that's become a saying in Hebrew to this day -

¹¹So 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 – “We'll see about that!”

¹²And 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.

Here's the problem – Ben-Hadad & his commanders aren't in the right state of mind.

They've been drinking, partying! They're getting drunk; not the condition you want to be in when you're entering mortal battle.

But they think their forces are so superior, sheer numbers will make for an easy victory.

¹³Suddenly 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.’ ” ¹⁴So 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.” ¹⁵Then he mustered the young leaders of the provinces, and there were 232; and after them he mustered all the people, all the children of Israel—7,000.

¹⁶So they went out at noon. Meanwhile Ben-Hadad and the 32 kings helping him were getting drunk at the command post. ¹⁷The 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!”

¹⁸So he said, “If they have come out for peace, take them alive; and if they have come out for war, take them alive.” ¹⁹Then these young leaders of the provinces went out of the city with the army which followed them. ²⁰And 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.

Here's how it went . . .

Ahab first sent out a diversionary force of 232 crack troops; these guys were all skilled warriors.

Their prowess in battle way outdid their small numbers.

When they first came out of the main gate of Samaria, the Syrians guards sent

word to the command center.

Ben Hadad, drunk as he was, thought it was some kind of a joke that Ahab would send such a small force out, so he decided to turn the tables on him by instead of killing them outright, to take them prisoner and use them as leverage.

The problem is, these 232 guys had no intention of being taken prisoner; they were never going to surrender.

As they mowed down the Syrians who came to capture them, more & more troops had to go until pretty soon the main body of the Syrian force was bearing down on them.

Ahab was watching from the Samaria's walls and as soon as he saw this shift in the deployment of the enemy, he came out of the city with the main force, 7000 strong.

They immediately pressed toward the Syrian command center where Ben-Hadad & his buddies were getting wasted.

Only the Syrian cavalry along with their inebriated king were able to get away in time.

This was a major set back to the Syrians.

In v. 13 we read that a prophet told Ahab this is how the battle would turn out.

What's interesting, is that Ahab doesn't arrest & clap this man of God in chains.

Remember, the worship of Yahweh had been banned by Ahab & Jezebel; & the servants of God had been driven into hiding.

But Ahab doesn't arrest this guy when he comes with the good news that God is going to help them defeat the enemy. Why?

Because, above all else, Ahab is a *pragmatist*. All that matters to him is that *something works*.

Who cares what or how!

He's one of those guys who sees himself as a hard-headed realist – a guy who has his feet planted firmly on the ground, in the cold, hard light of day.

For Ahab, power & politics are all that matter.

Religion is just a lot of mumbo-jumbo, but a convenient tool to use on others to get them what he wants them to do.

To be sure, Ahab's seen some pretty wild things in his time.

The drought brought on & ended by Elijah's word.

Fire from heaven that consumed Elijah's offering on Mt. Carmel.

And this miraculous victory over a vastly superior force.

But Ahab's always got an explanation for such things.

It's coincidence that there was a drought.

It's a fluke that the prophet announced his victory over the Syrians.

As for the fire from heaven, well, there's **GOT** to be some natural explanation for that – some law of nature that man has yet to discover.

I've known a few Ahab's – people who've seen amazing miracles time & again.

But they make no real, lasting difference in how they live or what they believe.

Because God is all wise & all loving & not willing that any perish, I'm convinced if seeing a miracle is what it would take to convince someone to turn to Him,

then God will send that miracle.

For some, that's exactly what happens.

But God knows others won't be convinced even if they do witness a miracle, so no miracle comes.

Still others, like Ahab, see miracles but remain in unbelief.

They will have more to answer for in the judgment because God gave them abundant evidence of His existence, but they refused to come to faith in Him.

2. Campaign #2 • vs. 23-30

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."

Ben Hadad now has something to prove. He got *whooped* before & needed to recover face – an all-important value in the Oriental culture of the Middle East. The same prophet who'd encouraged Ahab before returns with counsel from God on what to do.

He ought to build up the defenses of Israel for the coming assault.

Ahab got caught with his proverbial pants down last time, he ought not let it happen again.

Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.

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. 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.

Ben-Hadad's counselors told him the reason for Israel's victory was because Yahweh was a deity of the hill country.

Syria's gods prefer the plains. Lure Israel's army out of their hills into the flats and Syria will dominate.

Also, Ben-Hadad needs to loose the petty kings as his commanders and pick guys who actually know something about war – these guys know better than to get smashed on the eve of battle.

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. 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.

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.’ ” ²⁹And 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. ³⁰But 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.

Aphek is in the Golan Heights.

Knowing the Syrians would attack, Ahab led his forces up on the Golan and met the advancing Syrian force near Aphek.

If you’ve seen the movie *300* or know the story of the Battle of Thermopylae, you can get an idea of the setting here.

Instead of a narrow pass between cliffs where the 300 Spartans held off the many thousands of Persians, this site was a narrow strip of land about a football field in length, wide – 330 feet.

This narrow strip runs 440 feet in length, plunging away on either side into steep walled gullies.

Ahab has well more than 300, but his numbers are vastly overwhelmed by the Syrians who have the high ground behind them and a far more expansive field.

Israel is limited to a small platform.

For a week they face off against each other. Then on the 8th day, Israel attacked.

Though no account of the details of the battle are given, scholars think Ahab probably sent some troops through the gullies, up the other side of the cliff, and into the back of the Syrian lines.

Thinking he was being attacked from the rear by a northern ally Ahab had brought in against him, Ben Hadad turned to face the threat, only to expose himself to the attack of Ahab’s main force streaming now through the narrow.

Once again the Syrians were routed & retreated to Aphek, trying to clamor inside its walls.

But their numbers were too many & a wall collapsed, killing thousands.

3. An ill-advised treaty • vs. 31-34

³¹Then 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.” ³²So 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.*”

It was obvious the end was coming so Ben Hadad’s counselors suggested surrender, showing themselves to be willing supplicants instead of the boastful braggarts they’d been before.

Instead of gloating over his defeated foe, Ahab graciously extends leniency to Ben-Hadad.

In fact, Ahab went *too far*.

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.

A conquering king usually showed his victory by demanding the defeated prostrate himself & take an oath of loyalty – usually at the point of a sword.

A king would often place his foot on the neck of an opponent, saying in effect, “I have total mastery over you. Your life is in my hand. From now on you owe me!”

Since it had been Ben Hadad’s intent to submit Israel to the place of vassaldom, the least Ahab out to have done was require an oath of fealty on the king of Syria’s part.

But he does none of this – he extends his hand to him in complete equality – by inviting him into his chariot.

Ahab may think he’s being magnanimous but all he’s doing is proving once & for all he’s a terrible judge of character.

Ahab had misjudged Jezebel, the prophets of Baal, Elijah, and here he’s badly fooled by the Syrians.

Being a good judge of character is a trait essential to a ruler.

The good ruler realizes the importance of counsel and seeks to surround him/herself with good people who can give good advice.

So being a good judge of people is a crucial skill.

Ahab was a complete dim-bulb when it came to this part of his reign.

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.

Well, this doesn’t look so bad. Hang on.

4. Ahab rebuked • vs. 35-43

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.

What? This prophet was being commissioned by God to go confront King Ahab with a poignant object lesson.

So he approached someone with a command to smack him with a serious blow that would wound him; that wound would be part of the lesson for Ahab.

The person the prophet asked to strike him knew this was being directed by God but he refused.

That’s why the guy was judged so harshly.

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

Probably because he knew about what happened to the previous guy.

38Then 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*.” **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.

Ben Hadad’s war of aggression on Israel ought to have been dealt with by his execution, not a treaty.

God had made his will to Ahab clear by the previous prophets who’d spoken to him that Ben Hadad was to meet his end.

But following his typical pattern of thinking he knew better than God, Ahab had decided to let him live and even to re-establish him on the throne of Damascus.

In the same way Nathan had confronted David over his sin with Bathsheba by telling a story, this prophet secures Ahab’s judgment against himself by telling this little tale.

Knowing he’s condemned himself, Ahab returned to his palace at Samaria in a foul mood.

Which is pretty much where we’re going to find him for the rest of his story – in a sullen, bummed out place.

D. Naboth’s Vineyard • 21:1-16

Now we get a little story meant to illustrate the *warnings* Samuel had given Israel when they demanded a king a couple hundred years before.

Samuel said, “Are you sure you want a king? He’s going to be hard to deal with. He’s going to raise taxes, and draft your young men into military service, and he’s going to take your lands and set up his own idea of justice. Are you sure that’s what you want?”

And they said, “Yep!”

1And 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.

Jezreel was a lovely city up north where Ahab & Jezebel had a summer palace.

Naboth had some land bordering that palace with a nice vineyard on it.

Keep in mind that when people wanted to cool off during the hot times of the year, they didn’t go indoors; no air conditioning or good ventilation.

They kept gardens, & used trees for shade, under which they'd sit.

²So 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."

Pragmatic Ahab has what he thinks is a great idea.

"My palace is here, Naboth's vineyard is right there. I want it. I can annex it & either trade it for one of my other properties somewhere else or just pay Naboth for it. Excellent!"

What's Ahab not considering?

You can't buy or sell land in Israel – the land belongs to God and is given by Him to the tribes & families. [Lev. 25 & Num. 36]

³But Naboth said to Ahab, "The LORD forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you!"

Here's one man at least in Israel who still honors the commands of Yahweh.

⁴So 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.

What a spoiled brat!

⁵But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said to him, "Why is your spirit so sullen that you eat no food?" ⁶He 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.'"

⁷Then 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 doesn't understand what the problem is.

She comes from a place in Phoenicia where the king has absolute authority and can do what he wants.

There is no justice higher than the king's.

For her, might makes right.

So she says, "Leave it to me. I'll show you how it's done. If you want something —*Take it.*"

⁸And 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. ⁹She wrote in the letters, saying, "Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth with high honor among the people; ¹⁰and seat 2 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." ¹¹So 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.

¹²They proclaimed a fast, and seated Naboth with high honor among the people. ¹³And 2 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. ¹⁴Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, “Naboth has been stoned and is dead.” ¹⁵And 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.” ¹⁶So 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.

Using Ahab's authority, Jezebel hatched a conspiracy.

She wrote a letter to the rulers of Jezreel, calling them to call for a fast.

Public fasts like this were called for as a way to avoid God's judgment for some heinous sin.

They weren't to publish ahead of time what sin was being exposed, only to invite Naboth to *officiate* as one of the city leaders.

They did as they were bidden, and at the right moment, 2 crooks who'd been paid got up and leveled their charge against Naboth.

Two witnesses were needed because this was a capital crime and so they both had to give the same story – which they did, and Naboth was dragged out and stoned.

When the deed was done, Jezebel went to Ahab with the good news he could take possession of the plot he wanted.

What about Naboth's relatives? Why didn't they take the property so it could stay in the family?

2 Kings 9 tells us along with Naboth his sons were also killed!

This was a prime example of government corruption at the highest level.

Unknown to Jezebel, Ahab, or those corrupt elders, God was intently watching all their affairs.

Their sin and corruption would not go unanswered.

E. Elijah Condemns Ahab • 21:17-29

¹⁷Then 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.

God spoke to Elijah as soon as Ahab went to survey his new land.

¹⁹You 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.”’”

Though Jezebel had been the primary author of the conspiracy to murder Naboth,

Ahab knew what she was up to & did nothing to stop her. He was as guilty as she.

Elijah tells Ahab that just as the dogs had lapped up Naboth's blood outside of Jezreel where he'd been stoned, so too Ahab's blood would be lapped up by the dogs.

This meant he'd not die of natural causes but would in some way be murdered.

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.'

A fitting punishment since this is what Ahab & Jezebel had done to Naboth's family.

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.'

These were 2 earlier dynasties of Israel that had been completely wiped out because they'd led Israel into idolatry.

23 And concerning Jezebel the LORD also spoke, saying, 'The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall 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."

The ultimate humiliation, especially for royalty, was to *not* be buried in a significant monument or tomb, but to be left for scavengers.

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.

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.

Under Jezebel's wicked influence, Ahab opened wide the floodgates of idolatry & paganism in Israel.

His sins rivaled the hideous practices of the Amorites.

One of the reasons God brought Israel back in to Canaan after their years of bondage in Egypt was to act as the instrument of His justice in judging the incredibly wicked Canaanites, who were mostly descendants of the Amorites.

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."

This is so amazing!

Ahab has enough history with Elijah to know when this guy says something, well, it comes to pass.

And now that this serious message of personal judgment has come, Ahab awakens from his classic pragmatism long enough to realize he's been a fool & needs to repent. Which, he does.

It's not easy for someone like a king, who's used to wearing sumptuous regal robes to replace them with a scratchy burlap sack – but Ahab does it.

This is an amazing mark of humility that by God's response seems to be a genuine mark of repentance.

And because Ahab repented, even after all the evil he did, God relented of the judgment He'd announced.

It would come on Ahab's sons instead.

Now – does that sound fair?

How could God pour out judgment of Ahab's sons & not Ahab?

Well – first – Ahab genuinely repented – that's why God stalled the judgment.

If God would do that for Ahab, would he do any less for his sons, if they repented?

So – if they suffered the judgment Elijah announced, what does that tell us about them?

It means they didn't repent.!

Don't think of Ahab's sons as being sweet innocent little 3 year olds; they were grown men who made their own decisions & committed their own evil.