

**“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
November 15, 2016**

1 Kings 20:26–21:29. Ahab’s short-lived repentance.

Mark 12:1–34. The capital command: Love God!

Proverbs 5:1–10. Man’s higher order appetites.

COMMENTS.

1 Kings 20:26–21:29. This reading can be divided into four sections. **First, Syrian is defeated again (20:23-34).** Syria misunderstands the nature of their first defeat and attributes the loss to the notion that Israel’s “gods are gods of the hills.” Thus, they decide to engage Israel on the plains and mass a great army for that purpose. God sends Ahab another message. Syria must learn the Lord exists everywhere and controls all terrain, so Israel will defeat the larger army again. By now Ahab should know who his God is, who God’s messengers are, and who his enemies are. Unfortunately, he remains oblivious to the implications of what he has seen and experienced. Ben-Hadad pleads for his life and has his request granted. Inexplicably, Ahab makes a treaty with this long-term foe who has twice sought to devastate Ahab and his people. All Ahab gains is the “restoration of captured cities and the right to extraterritorial areas in Damascus.” **Second, an unnamed prophet denounces Ahab (20:35-43).** **Third, Ahab and Jezebel murder Naboth (21:1-16).** Of all Ahab’s failings, the Bible has never accused him of oppression or brutality against his people. But here the king proves himself to have even less character than was demonstrated previously, and his wife is the catalyst for this decline. Ahab desires to buy Naboth’s vineyard, a property located close to the palace in Jezreel. Unlike Ahab, Naboth remains true to his ancestors’ heritage and refuses to sell the land. For him it is a matter of honor to keep what has been passed on to him. Ahab, on the other hand, has few convictions about the religious or administrative heritage of men like David. He operates here based on momentary wishes. **Fourth, Elijah denounces Ahab (21:17-29).** God instructs the prophet to expose Ahab’s sins of murder and stealing and to announce to the king that dogs will lick up his blood where dogs had drunk Naboth’s blood. God knows everything, so Ahab has nowhere to hide, no excuse to make. Elijah delivers God’s word. Because of his ongoing wickedness, Ahab will die and his dynasty will cease. His wife will die for her sins. In fact, dogs will eat her, which was a fate worse than Ahab’s, for it implied the denial of a decent burial. Later events proved that Ahab’s repentance was short-lived, but the Lord at least gave him another opportunity to turn from sin and obey the Word.

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. Note the unexpected humbling of Ahab, which is his most positive act in Kings. And observe how God forgives him and postpones the judgment on his family, which demonstrates the Lord’s overwhelming grace and mercy. *1 Kings 21:27 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."* God will judge those who continue to rebel against or ignore Him, but this is never His antecedent will. His antecedent will is to

share His divine life and love with the believer. God is always there to pour out His greater grace on us; pride is the only thing standing in the way. *James 4:6 But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."* 7 *Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.* God graciously draws near to us when we deal with the sin in our lives that keeps Him at a distance. He will not share us with anyone else; He must have complete control. The double-minded Christian can never be close to God. Recall how Abraham "drew near" and talked to God about Sodom, while Lot moved into Sodom and lost the blessedness of God because he stopped walking with Him *by proper knowledge and proper love*, preferring, instead, to walk in the dark world and its lusts. Our view of God determines our views toward everything else in life. It is only by *proper knowledge of God* that we gain a proper view of ourselves and others. Had Ahab loved God, he would not have been tempted to become involved in all of the evil he perpetrated on others and himself.

Mark 12:1–34. This reading begins with the parable of the vineyard owner (12:1-17) and concludes with the capital command to love God and man (12:28-34).

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. In this reading, Jesus says there is one central commandment from which all the others spring: *'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength'* (Deut. 6:4–5). It was used as a daily prayer by every pious Jew. I am sure many thought that they were doing this by memorizing and applying their Scriptures. It is not like they did not know they were supposed to love God. The problem is that without grace, man cannot do this. God must raise the intellect and will above the temporal goods. He must incline the human mind and heart to God and the things of God. He does this only for those who truly want Him as such (not as a means to other goods). Following the command to love God, Jesus adds another commandment, which He says is equally important: *'Love your neighbor as yourself'* (Lev 19:18). For Jesus, love for God goes hand in hand with love for others. As one loves God *by proper knowledge and proper love*, he will enjoy a new life. For example, he will find himself intuitively praying for others throughout each day, including his enemies.

Proverbs 5:1–10. Chapter 5 begins with the value of wisdom in preserving one from adultery. The reader is warned that sexual lasciviousness may be appealing on a sense level: *Prov. 5:3, For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey, And her mouth is smoother than oil.* However, the end is bitterness and destruction (5:4-5). This is all too often the case when the enjoyment of passionate sex leads to later rejection and bitter consequences, like personal rejection and unwanted pregnancies.

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and proper love. Every human being has lower sense-level appetites like food and sex and higher immaterial-level appetites like love and meaning in life. The key to a truly happy life is to develop the upper level appetites so that they rule over the lower appetites. The lower appetites, in and of themselves, have no norms and standards—they are simply sense appetites. The norms and standards come from the higher level appetites. As one walks with God *by proper knowledge and proper love*, his higher order desires inform, guide, and control the lower appetites. Moreover, only in the higher order desires developed by and in God can the believer live with the eternal perspective, which the Bible calls “hope,” and which is always connected to faith-knowledge and love.

Life in God by second person proper knowledge and by proper love,

Pastor Don