

引言 INTRODUCTION

Many years ago, a disc-jockey said in his midnight radio program: “Now you can take down the mask you have been wearing during the day.” People can go back to their real selves when no one is watching. The world evaluates a person based on the appearance and performance. For example, your clothes, your car and your profession. People then give you certain labels. Needless to say, such analysis is superficial. In order to truly know a person, you need to understand the motives behind his/her behaviors. The character of a person will influence his/her values and actions. Pastor James Merritt wrote a book titled “Character Still Counts” published last year. He serves at a bigger Baptist church in Atlanta. At the back of the book, the publisher says “You can look good on the outside without being good on the inside.” That is so true. The world teaches us to cover ourselves up by a shell of pretense. Family members and good friends may know you to a certain degree. But only God can see you thoroughly deep down inside. No action, word or even thought is hidden from Him. Integrity is more important than image. God looked at the person’s heart when He categorized an Israeli king as good or evil. He uses the same standard to evaluate us too. As Christians, our character must be shaped by God’s values. Last time we studied some interactions between prophet Elijah with king Ahab and queen Jezebel. Today we will examine the characters of this couple from a few incidents.

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 愚昧的決定 A Foolish Decision

Chapter 20 records two back-to-back wars between Israel and Aram. Ahab made a foolish decision in handling this enemy. Let us begin by reading **verse 1 to 6**. Aram held Israel under siege. Ahab unwisely agreed to the requests of Ben-Hadad. The Aram king might be thinking: “Since Israel did not resist, why not ask for more?” So goes the saying: if you give in an inch to your opponent, he will ask for a mile. Ahab then consulted his officials. Everyone told the king to say no to Ben-Hadad. A war would be imminent. Continue to read **verses 13 and 14**. A prophet of God assured Ahab a victory. Queen Jezebel tried to get rid of all the prophets of Jehovah. But God preserved some of His faithful followers. It was true that the Arameans were numerous. But God is way transcendent than any earthly kingdom. God would help Ahab win this battle. The purpose was to show Ahab that Jehovah was God. None of the idols Israel worshipped could save its people. God is bigger than any of our problems. By delivering us from troubles, God verifies that He is real and He is actively working in us. He deserves all the glory. God told Ahab to dispatch some young officials to coordinate his army, but Ahab had to be the commander-in-chief. A good leader will delegate responsibilities to capable associates. However, he must oversee an important operation. Israel inflicted a big blow to the Arameans. The same prophet who spoke earlier cautioned Ahab not to celebrate too soon. Aram would regroup and come back in a year. Ahab should use the time to beef up his defense. Putting our trust in God and taking precaution does not contradict each other. We lock our doors at night to prevent an intruder. We maintain healthy habits to take care of bodies. We purchase insurance plans to protect our family members. But ultimately, it is God who watches over us. The

Arameans came to an interesting conclusion as they evaluated its defeat. **Verse 23** reads: Meanwhile, the officials of the king of Aram advised him, “Their gods are gods of the hills. That is why they were too strong for us. But if we fight them on the plains, surely we will be stronger than they.” In the ancient world, people thought that their nation could win a battle if their gods were stronger than their opponents’. Also, in a pantheistic religion, each god has its own specialty or territory. The traditional Chinese folktales claim that there are separate gods in-charge of money, sea and even kitchen. The Arameans were confident that they could prevail if they fought on the plains. From a tactical standpoint, Ben-Hadad lost because his soldiers rode on horses and chariots. It was difficult for them to maneuver over the terrains. However, the counselors were correct that Jehovah was backing Israel up. Compare what they said to **verse 28**: The man of God came up and told the king of Israel, “This is what the Lord says: ‘Because the Arameans think the Lord is a god of the hills and not a god of the valleys, I will deliver this vast army into your hands, and you will know that I am the Lord.’” Jehovah is the Commander of the seas, land and air. God can manifest His power in any circumstance and anywhere. He can dispatch His servants to share the gospel to your family members in your home-country. God can also heal any disease from your head to toes. He cares about every aspect of our lives all the time. God helped Ahab accomplish an even bigger success in the second battle. Eventually, a hundred thousand Aramean soldiers were killed. Another twenty-seven thousand were crushed by a fallen city wall. Ben-Hadad then ran hiding. Some officials recommended him to surrender to Ahab. He did as they suggested. Look at **verse 32 and 33**. Ahab made a foolish decision. He relied on God earlier, but now he trusted his own instinct. He even addressed Ben-Hadad as his brother. The Aram king promised to return a few cities his father seized years ago and made a treaty for future trading. Ahab then released Ben-Hadad. The first king of Israel, Saul, committed the same mistake. God asked him to completely wiped out the Amalekites. But Saul kept the best of the flock for himself and spared the life of the Amalekite king. He even lied to Samuel the prophet that he had fully carried out God’s command. Since Saul rejected God, God also rejected Saul. We question why God was so cruel to ask His people to kill their enemies entirely. First off, it is either you or opponent die in a war. If you do not subdue your foes completely, they will come back for a revenge. Nowadays, countries resort to a diplomatic means to avoid a conflict as much as possible. By letting Ben-Hadad go, Aram remained as a future threat. God judged Ahab for his foolish decision. Let us read **verses 42 and 43**. Ahab and his countrymen would replace the lives of his enemies. They would become God’s targets. The word translated as “die” here is a term commonly used in the Old Testament to denote someone or something God had determined to destroy. For example, in the battle of Jericho, God asked the Israelites to eradicate every person and object. A man named Achan secretly took some treasures as his personal possession. He kept the things God intended to get rid of. Due to one person’s sin, Israel lost in its next battle. In both cases of Achan and Ahab, God disciplined Israel as a whole even though only one person violated His instruction. Ahab was a military leader; but he was supposed to be the spiritual leader of his people too. We should learn from his mistake. We rely on God when we are in a desperate situation. However, we should also trust God whole-heartedly in normal times. Only by doing so can our relationship with God continue to grow.

2. 詭詐的騙局 A Foulest Deception

After a major victory, Israel enjoyed some time of peace. As we come to chapter 21, another event happened through which God decisively rejected Ahab. Queen Jezebel devised a foulest

deception to help Ahab achieve selfish gain. Let us begin by reading [21:1-3](#). To Ahab, it was purely a business transaction. Naboth chose to honor God rather than to seek personal profit. Money can easily become a temptation to us. The world encourages us to compromise Biblical principles to save or earn extra money that does not belong to us. It comes down to whether we choose to please God or please our pocket. God forbade the Israelites to sell their land. A related law can be found in [Leviticus 25:23](#) – “The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants.” Their land belonged to God! If an Israelite became so poor that he must sell his land, and sell himself and his family as slaves, he could only do so to another Israelite. There would be a Year of Jubilee every 50 years. It was the time when all the land being sold must be returned to the original owners, and all the Israeli slaves could freely go home too. The idea was to remind people that every blessing was from God. People should practice grace, rather than hoarding wealth. The Law-abiding attitude of Naboth was a stark contrast to Ahab’s self-centeredness. When the deal did not materialize, Ahab went back to the palace feeling sad and angry. He looked like an upset child whose parents refuse to buy a toy he wants badly. Jezebel noticed Ahab’s long face. On hearing what had happened, the queen was amazed. She responded: “Aren’t you the king of the country?” Ahab could have anything he wanted! Jezebel assured Ahab that she would get Naboth’s vineyard for him. Then she went off to implement her foulest deception. Continue to read verse [8 to 10](#). Can you count how many sins Jezebel committed? There was forgery using the king’s name, instigation to bear false witness, murder and stealing another person’s property. Jezebel knew the legal system well. There had to be at least two witnesses to convict a suspect. She even asked the city officials to pronounce a day of fasting to make the matter look more serious. Naboth was sentenced to death by false accusations of blasphemy to God and treason to the king. Didn’t the plot look familiar? Our Lord also died because of injustice. The religious leaders condemned Jesus for claiming Himself to be God. They also told the Roman authority that Jesus’ existence would be a threat to the local government officials and to Caesar. Even to this day, many innocent citizens suffer under the hands of tyrants or a crooked justice system. But our holy and righteous God will surely judge the wrongdoers, if not in this life then in eternity. After poor Naboth died, Jezebel told Ahab that he could now take over Naboth’s land. Ahab did not even ask how Naboth passed away and why his vineyard was available now. Once again, Ahab showed to be an ignorant leader. He merely cared about his self-interest. Jezebel thought no one would know her evil scheme if everyone kept his mouth shut. God revealed her sins to Elijah. He sent the prophet to convict the king. Read [verse 19 to 21](#). Ahab should not be shocked by what his wife did. The penalty for murder was death, as the Law stipulated. In this case, God’s judgment would be extended to everyone in Ahab’s household. God added in verse 24 that all the people belonged to Ahab would also die, and animals would consume their corpses. As for Jezebel, wild dogs would devour her dead body. It implies not receiving a proper burial. That is considered an utmost disgrace in any culture. The author stated an awful remark in [verses 25 and 26](#). Ahab was wicked because he made a series of bad decisions. He married a pagan woman and followed her evil deeds, to the point of selling himself. A spiritual sin of idolatry led to moral and behavioral sins. People who do not abide by God’s standard will follow the world’s standard. Jesus says in [Matthew 16:26](#): “What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?” We need money to survive. But money can become an idol if we worship money instead of God. If we do not master our money, then money may become our master. We need to examine if our pursuit of success will draw us closer to God and bless others, or it will increase our greed and pride. Now Ahab understood that his

career, his life and his whole family would come to an end soon. He could have vented his rage on Elijah and mistreated him. But he finally made a wise choice. He humbled himself by fasting and putting on a sackcloth. Those actions demonstrated grief and repentance. Even if Ahab could fool people, he could not deceive God. God acknowledged Ahab's genuine remorse, and He would delay the judgment to Ahab's son. God bestowed grace to even the vilest king in the history of Israel. Naboth's family or Elijah might want an instant vindication. But God desires to see the worst criminals to confess their sins. We cry out to God for fairness when we are offended. But we should let God be God. Jesus asked us to pray for our enemies. We do not need God's help if we can do that on our own strength. A noble person may choose to ignore the hurt. But only when rely on God can we pray for those who cause us harm. We are not demanding God to send fire from the sky to burn them up. Instead, we ask God to bless them. We also ask God to change their hearts so that they realize that they sin against Him. Eventually, things happened just as God foretold. Ahab died in a war. Jezebel and everyone in the family were killed.

結論 CONCLUSION

Our character must be shaped by God's values. Character directs our actions. People around us notice what we do. But God goes deeper and assesses why we do what we do. A heart committed to God will display in godly deeds. Ahab's life confirmed that he completely abandoned God. God gave Ahab multiple opportunities to return to Him. He clearly saw that God was with him when Israel defeated Aram. But he kept going the wrong direction. He could have said no to Jezebel's evil schemes. But Ahab yielded to his wife in many major decisions. Ultimately, Ahab lost everything and was rejected by God. God has a high expectation to those He entrusts His authority. Those who are in leadership positions have to do the right things God desires. They must also guide their followers to seek after God.

引言 INTRODUCTION

許多年前，一位午夜電台節目的廣播員說：「現在，你可以把白天戴的面具拿下來。」當沒有人在注意的時候，人們可以回到真正的自我。這個世界根據外表和技能來評估一個人。例如，你的穿著、車子和職業。人們然後給你某些標籤。當然，這樣的分析是膚淺的。要真正認識一個人，你需要了解他做事情背後的動機。一個人的品格會影響他的價值觀和行為。詹姆斯·梅里特（James Merritt）牧師去年出版了一本書，名為《品格仍然非常重要》。他是亞特蘭大一所比較大的浸信會的主任牧師。在書的背面，出版社說：「你可以在外表上裝起來很不錯，雖然你的裡面並不怎麼樣。」沒錯，這個世界教導我們掩飾真我。家人和好朋友可能在一定程度上認識你。但是只有神才能透徹地看出你的內心。沒有任何行動、言語甚至意念可以在神面前被隱藏。一個人的真誠比他的形象更重要。神是按照一個以色列君王的內心來評估他是善還是惡。神也使用相同的標準來評估我們。作為基督徒，我們的品格必須由神的價值觀來塑造。上一次，我們看了先知以利亞與亞哈王和皇后耶洗別之間的互動。今天，我們將從一些事件中來衡量這對夫婦的品格。

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 愚昧的決定 A Foolish Decision

第 20 章記錄了以色列和亞蘭之間的兩次戰爭。亞哈對付這個敵人時做了一個愚昧的決定。讓我們首先閱讀第 1 至 6 節。亞蘭圍困以色列。亞哈沒有智慧地同意便哈達的要求。這個亞蘭王可能想：「既然以色列沒有反抗，為什麼不提高要求呢？」俗話說：得寸進尺。亞哈然後諮詢他的官員。每個人都告訴王要拒絕便哈達的要求。一場戰爭即將爆發。請繼續閱讀第 13 和 14 節。一位神的先知向亞哈保證勝利。耶洗別試圖鏟除所有耶和華的先知。但是神卻保留了一些忠心的跟隨者。雖然亞蘭的軍隊人數眾多，但是神比任何世上的國度都更超越。神會幫助亞哈打贏這場仗。目的是向亞哈表明耶和華是神。以色列敬拜的偶像無法拯救他們的子民。神比我們遇到的任何問題都要強大。藉著拯救我們擺脫困境，神證明祂是真實的，而且祂在我們的心中積極工作。神配得一切的榮耀。神告訴亞哈差派一些年輕的官員來協調他的軍隊，但亞哈必須擔任總司令。一個聰明的領袖會把責任分配給能幹的下屬。但是，他必須擔任總監督。結果以色列對亞蘭人造成了很大的打擊。之前講話的同一位先知告訴亞哈不要

太早高興。亞蘭會重組軍力並在一年後回來。亞哈必須趁機加強防守。信靠神並採取預防措施並不相互矛盾。我們在晚上把門鎖上，提防小偷闖進來。我們維持健康的習慣來照顧身體。我們買保險以保護我們的家人。但最終，是神看顧著我們。亞蘭人在評估戰敗的原因時得出了一個有趣的結論。第 23 節說：**亞蘭王的臣僕對亞蘭王說：「以色列人的神是山神，所以他們勝過我們；但在平原與他們打仗，我們必定得勝。」**在古代世界，人們認為如果他們的神明比對手的神明強大，他們的國家就可以贏得勝仗。同樣，在泛神的宗教中，每個神明都有自己的專長或地頭。中國傳統民間信仰也是一樣，不同的神明負責管理金錢、海洋、甚至是廚房。亞蘭人相信，如果他們在平原上作戰，他們會佔上風。從戰術的角度來看，便哈達輸了是因為他的士兵們騎著馬和坐戰車。那些裝備很難在山丘上走動。但是，那些師爺倒是說對了一點，是耶和華在背後支持以色列。我們把他們的結論和第 28 節作比較：**有神人來見以色列王，說：「耶和華如此說：『亞蘭人既說我耶和華是山神，不是平原的神，所以我必將這一大群人都交在你手中，你們就知道我是耶和華。』」**耶和華是海陸空的統帥。神可以在任何情況和任何地方彰顯祂的能力。祂可以差派僕人將福音傳給你在家鄉的親人。神也可以治愈你從頭到腳的任何疾病。祂關心我們生活的各方面。神幫助亞哈在第二場戰役中取得了更大的成功。最終，十萬名亞蘭國的士兵被殺。倒塌的城牆又另外壓死了兩萬七千人。便哈達隨後躲起來。一些官員建議他向亞哈投降。他按照他們的意見去做。看**第 32 和 33 節**。亞哈作了一個愚昧的決定。他之前依靠神，但現在他卻相信自己的直覺。他甚至稱呼便哈達作兄弟。亞蘭王答應歸還他父親以前佔領的幾個城市，並為以後的貿易立約。亞哈然後釋放了便哈達。以色列的第一個王掃羅曾經犯了同樣的錯誤。神要求他徹底消滅亞瑪力人。但是掃羅為自己保留了最好的牲畜，並保存了亞瑪力王的命。他甚至向撒母耳撒謊，說他已經完全執行了神的命令。因為掃羅拒絕神，神也拒絕了掃羅。我們質疑為什麼神如此殘酷地要求祂的子民徹底清除他們的敵人。首先，在戰場上不是你死就是我亡。如果你不完全制服敵人，他們將來就會報仇。現代的國家會採取外交手段來盡量避免衝突。因為便哈達被放走，亞蘭仍然是未來的威脅。神因此審判亞哈的愚昧決定。讓我們讀一下**第 42 和 43 節**。亞哈和他的士兵將代替敵人的性命。他們將成為神的目標。在這裡，「滅絕」這個用詞是舊約中常見的一個術語，表示神決定要消滅的人或東西。例如，在耶利哥城的戰役中，神要求以色列人剷除一切的人和東西。一個名叫亞干的人偷偷留下一些財寶給自己。由於一個人犯罪，以色列在下一場戰爭中慘敗。在亞干和亞哈這兩個例子中，即使只有一個人違反神的指示，神還是會管教整個群體。亞哈是一位軍事領袖。但是他也同時是人民的屬靈領袖。我們可以從他的錯誤中學習。當我們處於逆境時，我們會依靠神。但就算在順

境中，我們也應該全心全意地相信神。唯有這樣做，我們與神的關係才能繼續成長。

2. 詭詐的騙局 A Foulest Deception

在取得重大勝利之後，以色列享受了一段太平時期。當我們進到第 21 章時，發生了另一件事，讓神完全地否定亞哈。皇后耶洗別設計了一個詭詐的騙局，幫助亞哈取得個人的利益。讓我們閱讀 21:1-3。對亞哈而言，這純粹是一宗商業交易。拿伯選擇敬畏神，而不是貪圖個人利益。金錢很容易成為我們的試探。這個世界誘惑我們妥協聖經的原則，節省或賺取不屬於我們的金錢。我們的選擇是取悅神還是取悅自己的口袋。神禁止以色列人出售他們的土地。在利未記 25:23 中可以找到相關的律法 – 「地不可永賣，因為地是我的；你們在我面前是客旅，是寄居的。」他們的土地是屬於神的。如果一個以色列人變得如此貧窮，必須賣地，並把自己和家人賣身作奴僕，那麼他只能賣給另一個以色列人。每 50 年將有一個禧年。那時必須將所有出售的土地歸還給原來的主人，所有以色列人的奴僕也可以自由回家。這個規定是要提醒人們，所有的祝福都是從神而來的。人們應該施予恩典，而不是只管累積財富。拿伯遵守律法的態度與亞哈的自我中心形成了鮮明對比。當交易談不攏時，亞哈既難過又氣憤地回到皇宮。他就像一個沮喪的小孩，因為父母拒絕買他想要的玩具。耶洗別注意到亞哈的臉拉長了。得知發生了什麼事後，皇后大為驚訝。她回答：「你不是國王嗎？」有誰敢攔阻亞哈想要得到的東西？耶洗別向亞哈保證，她會得到拿伯的葡萄園。於是她便去進行她最詭詐的騙局。繼續閱讀第 8 至 10 節。你能數一下耶洗別犯了多少罪嗎？她冒充王的名字、煽動他人作假見證、謀殺和搶走別人的財產。耶洗別很了解律法。必須至少有兩個證人才能定罪。她甚至要求官員宣布禁食一天，使事情看起來更加嚴重。拿伯因為褻瀆神和叛國兩條虛假的罪名而被判死刑。這個劇情是否似曾相識？我們的主耶穌也是死於不公義的判決。宗教領袖控告耶穌自稱是神。他們還告訴羅馬當局，耶穌的存在將對當地的政府官員和凱撒構成威脅。直到今天，許多無辜的人在暴君的手下或在不公正的司法制度下受苦。但是我們聖潔公義的神必然會審判犯罪的人，不是在今生，就是在永恆。可憐的拿伯死後，耶洗別告訴亞哈，他現在可以接管拿伯的土地。亞哈甚至不去問拿伯怎樣去世以及為什麼現在可以買到他的葡萄園。亞哈再一次證明他是個無知的領袖。他只關心個人利益。耶洗別認為，如果每個人都閉上嘴巴，沒有人會知道她的邪惡計劃。但是神向以利亞揭露耶洗別的罪。神派以利亞去定亞哈的罪。閱讀第 19 至 21 節。亞哈不應該為妻子的所作所為感到驚訝。根據律法的規定，謀殺的處罰是死刑。在這事件，神的審判會包括亞哈家中的每個人。神在第 24 節中補充說，凡屬亞哈的人也會死掉，甚至動物會吃他們的屍體。至於耶洗別，野狗會吃她的屍體。這意味著這些人不會

被埋葬。在任何文化中，這都是最大的羞辱。作者在第 25 和 26 節給了一個令人震驚的結論。亞哈的罪是基於他做出了一系列錯誤的決定。他娶了一個異教徒為妻，效法她的邪惡行為，甚至出賣自己。拜偶像這個屬靈的罪導致了道德和行為上的罪。不遵守神標準的人便會追隨世界的標準。耶穌在馬太福音 16:26 中說：「人若賺得全世界，賠上自己的生命，有什麼益處呢？人還能拿什麼換生命呢？」我們需要錢才能生存。但是，如果我們崇拜金錢而不是神，金錢就變成我們的偶像。如果我們不是金錢的主人，那麼金錢就可能成為我們的主人。我們需要小心，對成功的追求是否會使我們更加接近神並祝福他人，或是使我們更貪心和自滿。現在，亞哈明白他的王位、生命和整個家族很快都會沒有。他本可以找以利亞出氣，並虐待他。但是他終於做出了明智的選擇。他禁食並穿上麻布，表示憂傷和悔罪。就算亞哈能夠騙人，他也不騙不了神。神接納亞哈真誠的認罪，祂會將審判推遲致亞哈的兒子。神甚至賜恩典予以色列歷史上最邪惡的君王。拿伯的家人或以利亞可能希望神馬上主持公義。但是神樂意看到最壞的罪犯認罪。當我們被冒犯時，我們向神求公平。但是我們必須相信神的計劃。耶穌要求我們為敵人禱告。如果我們依靠自己能夠做得到的話，我們就不需要神的幫助。一個心胸寬廣的人可能選擇不去記仇。但是，唯有依靠神，我們才會願意為那些傷害我們的人禱告。我們不是要求神從天上降火消滅敵人。我們乃是求神祝福他們。我們也求神改變他們的心意，使他們明白到他們其實是得罪了神。結果事情正如神所預言的那樣發生。亞哈戰死沙場。耶洗別和家族中的所有人都被殺害。

結論 CONCLUSION

我們的品格必須由神的價值觀來塑造。品格指導我們的行動。我們周圍的人只注意到我們在做什麼。但是神深深了解我們，祂明白我們的動機。對神真誠的心會帶出敬虔的行為。亞哈的一生證明他完全拒絕神。其實神給了亞哈好幾次回轉的機會。當以色列打敗亞蘭時，亞哈清楚地看到神與他同在。但是他一意孤行。他本可以拒絕耶洗別的邪惡計劃。但是亞哈在許多重大決定中都屈服於他的妻子。最終，亞哈失去了一切，並且被神棄絕。神對那些祂賦予權柄的人有很高的期望。擔當領袖的人必須做神所喜悅的事情。他們還必須帶領別人尋求神。