

Elijah and the Wicked

1Ki 21

Introduction:

1. Elijah finally returned to the land from his sojourn in the wilderness, but some time passed before he came back into the spotlight.
2. Maybe 2 or 3 yrs passed before the situation we see today
 - a. We see a thriving vineyard in Jezreel which means that the effects of the 3.5 year drought are over.
 - b. After the return of Elijah, Israel had several wars with Syria which probably lasted 2 yrs
3. Elijah comes on the scene because of the criminal behavior of Ahab
 - a. With a lull in the battles with Syria and the drought is now over, Ahab now has time to sit and think
 - b. The main palace was in Samaria and the home in Jezreel was like Camp David to our presidents
 - c. Ahab especially wanted the vineyard of Naboth

I. The Proposition of Ahab – vs 2-3

A. A Reasonable Offer – vs 2

1 And it came to pass after these things, that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. 2 And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house: and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money.

1. We are surprised that wicked Ahab would even make an offer
 - a) *When wicked Jezebel was not around, he was fairly decent*
 - b) *He offered a “better” vineyard*
 - c) *He offered a good price*
2. Ahab saw great value in the property and wanted it badly

B. A Rejected Offer – vs 3

3 And Naboth said to Ahab, The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.

1. The Basis of the Rejection
 - a) *Many would grab at the offer of the king and feel proud that they had something that the king wanted*
 - b) *Naboth flatly refused the offer with a finality that precluded further negotiation*
 - c) *He refused for spiritual reasons – “the Lord forbid...”*

d) *Naboth was one of those 7000 who had not bowed to Baal though his land bordered Ahab's*

2. The Victory in the Rejection

a) *The Dignity of the Temptation*

- (1) The temptation came from a king
- (2) Not everybody has a king knocking at their door
- (3) Temptation coming in the rags of a tramp is easier to resist than when it comes in the robes of a king
- (4) The devil often uses important people in commercials to tempt people to go after some unholy practice

b) *The Dividends of the Temptation*

- (1) Everyone wants improvement, gain, profit in business and property
- (2) This was only gain in the material and not in the spiritual
- (3) Sin cannot give spiritual gain

c) *The Defeat of the Temptation*

- (1) Naboth won the victory over his temptation
- (2) Get rid of the idea that temptations are too hard to resist, stay in the word and obey God's commands and we can resist
- (3) Jesus resisted temptation

3. The Response to the Rejection – vs 4

4 And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.

a) *Naboth did not take well to the rejection - He pouted*

b) *He had palaces, position, wealth, power and here he is pouting over a vineyard*

c) *Paul had contentment in prison, but Ahab did not have it in the palace*

II. The Plot of Jezebel – vs 5-16

A. The Contempt in the Plot – vs 5

5 But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said unto him, Why is thy spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread? 6 And he said unto her, Because I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him, Give me thy vineyard for money; or else, if it please thee, I will give thee another vineyard for it: and he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard.

1. Contempt for Godliness

a) *Naboth's refusal to sell the property was an act of godliness and Jezebel was not impressed*

b) *All Naboth's will be the target of evil*

2. Contempt for Government – vs 7

7 And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.

- a) *She saw it as a chance for wealth and as king, Ahab should be able to have that land*
- b) *She wants permission to use the king's power to take care of the situation*

B. The Craftiness in the Plot – vs 8-10

8 So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that were in his city, dwelling with Naboth. 9 And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people: 10 And set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king. And then carry him out, and stone him, that he may die.

1. Jehovah Appeared to be Honored

- a) *Jezebel made it sound like Naboth blasphemed God*
- b) *She had no doubt blasphemed God and was not interested in the honor of God*
- c) *Telling the elders to fast until the culprit was caught would sound holy*

2. Justice Appeared to be Honored

- a) *Her plot called for a public trial on the word of 2 witnesses*
- b) *This would satisfy God's law and give the proceedings and air of integrity*
- c) *She would get even with Naboth in the name of religion*

C. The Compliance with the Plot – vs 11

11 And the men of his city, even the elders and the nobles who were the inhabitants in his city, did as Jezebel had sent unto them, and as it was written in the letters which she had sent unto them.

1. The men of the city were eager to comply with the request of Jezebel
2. Many politicians are “yes men” eager to do whatever asked regardless of the justice of the act
3. Some people may ask where God is in all of this
 - a) *Here is a man who bucks the tide and goes against the king*
 - b) *Why is God permitting this?*
 - c) *Realize that God is not a helpless victim and no Naboth dies except God permits it*
 - d) *God always acts in wisdom and when He allows a Naboth to die, He has infinite reasons for it*

D. The Cruelty of the Plot – vs 10, 15

1. The Slandering – vs 10a

10 And set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king. And then carry him out, and stone him, that he may die.

- a) *Sons of Belial were sought out to be false witnesses*
- b) *They accused Naboth of blasphemy when in reality he stood up for spiritual things*
- c) *People were willing to believe the testimony of these questionable witnesses – such is society*

2. The Stoning – vs 10b

a) *The decree said that Naboth would be stoned which was the legal punishment for blasphemy*

b) *The charge of blasphemy was a cover up to get Naboth killed so Ahab could have the vineyard*

c) *The more godless a society is, the less it values life*

d) *2 Ki 9:26 tells us that Naboth's 2 sons were killed also*

3. The Stealing – vs 15

15 And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned, and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money: for Naboth is not alive, but dead.

a) *Stealing would not bother Ahab and Jezebel*

b) *They killed people when they felt like it so stealing would not bother them*

c) *The cruel plot of Jezebel deprived Naboth of his reputation, his life, and his possessions (including his sons)*

III. The Proclamation of Elijah – vs 17-27

A. Details of the Proclamation

1. The Discovery of Ahab – vs 20

20 And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee: because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD.

a) *We do not envy the task of Elijah as he is called on to go to Ahab with the proclamation from God*

b) *It is not pleasant to be God's spokesman in evil days*

c) *Surely it was a shock for Ahab to look up and see the man of God standing in his presence*

d) *“Be sure your sin will find you out.”*

2. The Deeds of Ahab – vs 19a
19 And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? ...
 - a) *In God's eyes, Ahab was guilty of murder even though he did not throw one stone*
 - b) *Ahab was guilty because he encouraged the deed and gave Jezebel the authority she needed to issue the decree*
 - c) *He was guilty because, as king, could have stopped the crime*
 - d) *He was guilty because he gladly seized the profit of the evil of others*
3. The Death of Ahab – vs 19b
19b ...And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.
 - a) *Ahab is going to reap what he has sown*
 - b) *It is a gruesome prediction*
 - c) *This would take all joy out of the new vineyard*
4. The Deal of Ahab – vs 20
20 And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee: because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD.
 - a) *Ahab exchanged the welfare of his soul for cheap, corruptible, temporal gains*
 - b) *Judas sold out for 30 pieces of silver*
 - c) *Achan sold out for some clothes, gold, silver*
 - d) *Ahab sold out for a vineyard*
 - e) *We need to make sure that sin does not get such a hold on us that we sell out to it*
5. The Dynasty of Ahab – vs 21
21 Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity, and will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel,
 - a) *Every king dreams of his descendents sitting on the throne after him*
 - b) *Ahab's sin will destroy that dream*
6. The Wife of Ahab – vs 23
23 And of Jezebel also spake the LORD, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.
 - a) *Dogs will eat her flesh by the wall of Jezreel*
 - b) *She will die a horrible and disgraceful death*

B. Effect of the Proclamation – vs 27

27 And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly.

1. The message from God cut deeply, but it was needed
2. Ahab appeared to have repented
3. He humbled himself and God in mercy stayed the punishment

28 And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 29 Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house.

- a) *The marvelous grace of God reaches down to sinners*
- b) *We can see that God is ready to forgive*