

AHAB'S COVETOUSNESS

BIBLE TEXT : I Kings 21:1-29

LESSON 300 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he posseseth" (Luke 12:15).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

1 Kings 21:1-29

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

New Schemes

God had pronounced judgment upon Ahab for his wickedness. But instead of repenting of his sins when he knew his end was near, he planned more mischief.

One of Ahab's neighbour had a vineyard that Ahab wanted. He was willing to pay for it, and tried to make a business deal. But God had commanded the Israelites not to sell their land; and Naboth, the owner of the vineyard, had more regard for the Law of God than did the king. Naboth answered: "The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee." Naboth might have excused himself by saying that if the king commanded it, he would have to sell regardless of the Law of God. Some people are very quick to find an excuse for compromising with the thing they know is not the will of God. However Naboth had courage to hold to the right, even if he displeased the king.

Jezebel's Plot

Ahab certainly was displeased when he heard that Naboth would not sell him the land. Ahab acted like a spoiled child, and went to bed and pouted. But Jezebel, his wicked wife, was going to make sure that Ahab got what he wanted. She was clever, and she began to scheme how she could take the vineyard from Naboth to give to her disappointed husband. Was he not the King of Israel? Should not he be entitled to anything he wanted?

First Jezebel wrote letters, signed in the king's name, and sent them to the elders in the city where Naboth lived. In the letter were instructions to call a fast, and to set Naboth before all the people. Perhaps they were to make him think that he was going to be honoured. But then they were to hire two wicked men to accuse him of blasphemy. They would have to be false witnesses, because Naboth had done nothing wrong.

The Law of God said that no man could be condemned by less than two witnesses. "At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death" (Deuteronomy 17:6). It was not hard to get two witnesses to lie if they were paid for it. There are many dishonest people who will even betray their friends for money.

Martyrs

Many people have been condemned to a martyr's death by false witnesses. False witnesses were hired against Jesus Himself. And Jesus said: "The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20). The followers of Jesus Christ were not to be disheartened or frightened because of the things they might have to suffer for Him. He said, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33), even though it looked as though His enemies had overcome Him.

When we are the children of God, we are "Joint-heirs with Christ." If we suffer with Him, we shall be glorified together

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.

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.

¹² They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people.

¹³ And there came in two men, children of Belial, and sat before him: and the men of Belial witnessed against him, *even* against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth did blaspheme God and the king. Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died.

¹⁴ Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, Naboth is stoned, and is dead.

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.

¹⁶ And it came to pass, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.

¹⁷ And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,

¹⁸ Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, which *is* in Samaria: behold, *he is* in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it.

¹⁹ And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, In the place where dogs licked the blood of

(Romans 8:17).

Naboth Stoned

Naboth had to suffer and give his life because he insisted on keeping the Law of God. He was carried outside the city and stoned until he was dead. What glory must have been his when he stood before his Maker, having given his life for his God! Naboth had entered into eternal life to live with God throughout all the ages.

Naboth's stoning reminds us of that of Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Stephen was not afraid to die for Jesus, and when he left this earth he received a royal welcome into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Treachery Discovered

Now the vineyard belonged to Ahab. Was he going to enjoy it? His greediness had caused the death of an innocent man. Could Ahab be happy?

Children are often told that God is watching everything they do. God watches not only the children. He had watched Ahab's pouting, and Jezebel's treachery. God had seen His servant Naboth die; and it is written, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Romans 12:19). It is not our place to try to get even with someone who has wronged us. There will come a time of reckoning when God will even all scores. "Be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23).

Ahab was guilty of robbery and murder, and God was going to punish him. He was the king of Israel, but the glory of the throne was not to remain in his family. No son of his would be king after him, for God said that all his sons were going to die — and they would not even have a decent burial. His wife, too, was going to suffer a shameful death for her sins. All this was the wages for Ahab's sins. Not everyone is told ahead of time what his punishment will be; and sometimes it seems that some wicked people never do have to suffer for their sins. But the Bible says, "The wages of sin is death" — eternal death. God sees the sin and it will surely bring punishment if it is not repented of.

Mercy

God in His mercy does forgive when we repent. It was said of Ahab that he did more to provoke the Lord God than any other king of Israel had done who reigned before him; yet, when Elijah, the Prophet of God, came to tell him of the judgment he would receive for his sins, Ahab humbled himself, put on sackcloth, and prayed. God saw that, too, and He sent Elijah to tell Ahab that because he had humbled himself, all the judgments would not happen to Ahab's house until after he was dead.

"It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not" (Lamentations 3:22). Everyone has sinned, and needs to repent and be saved, even though his sins may seem to be little. Perhaps a person would not think of committing murder in order to get the thing he coveted; but if he only disregarded his service to the Lord in order to get unnecessary comforts and possessions, it would be sin and would need to be repented of.

Covetousness

The sin of covetousness can begin in a small way. We may admire something someone else has. There is nothing wrong in that so long as we are glad that he has it, and we do not want it for ourselves. But when we begin to want something we cannot have, and take steps to try to get it, as Ahab did, then it becomes sin. The Bible tells us that covetousness is idolatry. Other things have become more important to the covetous person than the will

Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.

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.

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,

²² And will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked *me* to anger, and made Israel to sin.

²³ And of Jezebel also spake the LORD, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.

²⁴ Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat.

²⁵ But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.

²⁶ And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all *things* as did the Amorites, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.

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.

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.

of God. "Let your conversation be without covetousness." Do not be always talking about the things you are going to get for yourself, or how you can better yourself. You will get a much greater blessing by talking about the things of God, and how you can help others: "Be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5).

QUESTIONS

1. What did Ahab want?
2. Why did Naboth not want to give it to him?
3. How did Ahab act when he could not get it?
4. How did Jezebel help Ahab get what he wanted?
5. What kind of person was Naboth?
6. How do Naboth and Stephen compare?
7. What is covetousness?
8. What has God promised to those who are content with what they have?