

# AHAB'S COVETOUSNESS

**BIBLE TEXT** : I Kings 21:1-29

LESSON 300 Senior Course

**MEMORY VERSE:** "He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live" (Proverbs 15:27).

## **BIBLE TEXT in King James Version**

### **1 Kings 21:1-29**

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

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

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said unto him, Why is thy spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread?

<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> 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:**

### **I The Coveted Vineyard**

1. Ahab seeks to buy Naboth's vineyard, I Kings 21:1, 2.
2. Naboth's refusal is in accordance with the Law, I Kings 21:3;

#### **Leviticus 25:23**

<sup>23</sup> The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land *is* mine; for ye *are* strangers and sojourners with me.

#### **Numbers 36:7**

<sup>7</sup> So shall not the inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe: for every one of the children of Israel shall keep himself to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers.

#### **Ezekiel 46:18**

<sup>18</sup> Moreover the prince shall not take of the people's inheritance by oppression, to thrust them out of their possession; *but* he shall give his sons inheritance out of his own possession: that my people be not scattered every man from his possession.

3. Ahab pouts, I Kings 21:4.

### **II Jezebel's Wicked Plot**

1. She scorns the restraint of the Law, I Kings 21:5-7.
2. She plans murder, I Kings 21:8-10.
3. The murderous plans are carried out, I Kings 21:11-14.
4. Ahab takes possession, I Kings 21:15, 16.

### **III Elijah Announces Ahab's Doom**

1. The word of the Lord comes to Elijah concerning Ahab, I Kings 21:17-19.
2. Ahab feels the sting of being caught, I Kings 21:20.
3. Ahab hears the doom of his house, I Kings 21:21-24.
4. Jezebel is named the instigator of Ahab's wickedness and idolatry, I Kings 21:25, 26;

#### **1 Kings 16:31**

<sup>31</sup> And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him.

#### **1 Kings 18:13**

<sup>13</sup> Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the LORD, how I hid an hundred men of the LORD'S prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water?

5. Ahab's humility gains him a respite, I Kings 21:27-29;

#### **Psalms 86:5**

<sup>5</sup> For thou, Lord, *art* good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.

#### **Lamentations 3:22**

<sup>22</sup> It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

## **NOTES:**

### **Real Estate Laws**

In the light of present-day real estate transactions it would appear that Ahab was making a good offer unto Naboth for his vineyard. Ahab offered to trade Naboth a better vineyard or pay

with Naboth.

<sup>9</sup> And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people:

<sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> 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.

<sup>12</sup> They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people.

<sup>13</sup> 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.

<sup>14</sup> Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, Naboth is stoned, and is dead.

<sup>15</sup> 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.

<sup>16</sup> 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.

<sup>17</sup> And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,

<sup>18</sup> 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.

<sup>19</sup> 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

him cash for it. However, the law of Israel differed from ours in that God had commanded, "The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me" (Leviticus 25:23). Thus we see that Ahab was seeking a deal that was contrary to the law of God.

The laws that God gave concerning the land of Israel were economically sound though not always pleasing to the covetous heart of man. If because of poverty a man was compelled to sell his land, it had to be returned to the original owner at the Year of Jubilee, which was proclaimed every fifty years. Thus men could not become lords of vast estates and subject the people to be peasants. Rulers were instructed also concerning this thing: "Moreover the prince shall not take of the people's inheritance by oppression, to thrust them out of their possession; but he shall give his sons inheritance out of his own possession: that my people be not scattered every man from his possession" (Ezekiel 46:18). God did not want the rulers of Israel to oppress or take advantage of the people. He has left this advice for the spiritual leaders of today: "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock" (I Peter 5:2, 3).

### Redemption and Jubilee

When a man sold his land he sold it according to the number of years until the Year of Jubilee; thus, if it were eighteen years until jubilee and the price were \$1,800.00, each year the price of the land would be reduced by \$100.00 until the Year of Jubilee, when it would be free. At any time the original owner, or his next of kin, desired to do so, he could redeem the land by paying the original sale price less the percentage reduced according to the proximity of the Year of Jubilee.

The story of Ruth gives us a beautiful example of how Boaz, as the next of kin, redeemed the property belonging to Naomi, and accepted Ruth as his bride. Ruth thus becomes a type of the Gentile Bride of Christ. We were sold under sin, until Christ our Redeemer bought us with His own precious Blood and gave us "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven" (I Peter 1:4). Do you treasure your inheritance as Naboth did his? He said to Ahab, "The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee" (I Kings 21:3).

### Covetousness

Because he did not receive what his covetous heart desired, Ahab, like a sulky, sullen, pouting child, lay "down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread." This shows the extreme covetousness of his heart. The tenth commandment that God gave the Israelites was, "Thou shalt not covet . . . any thing that is thy neighbour's" (Exodus 20:17). Ahab looked over his palace walls and saw this attractive vineyard and decided that it would be a good place for him to have a vegetable garden. Now it seemed innocent enough to want this piece of land that joined his property, but God had said No. If our neighbour has something good and is enjoying it, that, is his privilege. If he has more than we have, it matters not; it is still his, and we must be careful not to let our eyes cause our heart's desire to be set on anything that belongs to another.

Covetousness is linked with the oldest sin in history, and is still the downfall of many today. Satan probably had Eve walking

Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.

<sup>20</sup> 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.

<sup>21</sup> 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,

<sup>22</sup> 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.

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

<sup>24</sup> 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.

<sup>25</sup> 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.

<sup>26</sup> 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.

<sup>27</sup> 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.

<sup>28</sup> And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,

<sup>29</sup> 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.

around a tree looking at the fruit until she could no longer resist. She took of it and plunged the whole human race into sin. Lot looked over the well-watered plans of Jordan and soon pitched his tent toward Sodom and, in the end, barely escaped with his life. Achan saw among the spoils of Jericho a goodly Babylonish garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold; he took them, but as a result his whole household was stoned. Gehazi saw the gifts of Naaman and ran after them, but ended up with the leprosy of Naaman. Judas had his eyes fixed upon money and sold his Lord for thirty pieces of silver, but ended his life by committing suicide. Is it any wonder that we are instructed: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (I John 2:15, 16).

### Treasures in Heaven

We are not left with just a warning against coveting the things of this world, but are told where our affections and treasures should be: "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:20, 21). "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:2). To the rich young ruler Jesus said: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me" (Matthew 19:21).

A Christian has eternal life and must look beyond temporal values to those things that shall endure forever. Ahab saw a field. What do you see? Where are your eyes? Abraham "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). He was among those who "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country" (Hebrews 11:13, 14). What are you seeking? Ahab sought a vineyard; Jezebel obtained it for him.

### Jezebel

"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" (I Kings 21:25). An example of Jezebel's stirring up Ahab is given when she said: "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" (I Kings 21:7). With these words she plotted the murder of Naboth. She saw the deed carried out, and then sent Ahab down to possess the vineyard. Such cold-blooded, ruthless tactics meant nothing to this painted-face worshiper of Baal. She slew the prophets of the Lord and yet supported eight hundred and fifty prophets of her own. She could murder, under the pretence of upholding the name of her god, and yet be an ardent worshiper of Baal. The shameful practices that have gone on under the name of religion have cast a blight over the history of many generations.

### Judgment and Mercy

However, let no one think that God is not mindful of these things; sooner or later judgment will be meted out. God had Elijah on hand to reprove Ahab when he went down to take

possession of Naboth's vineyard. Elijah told Ahab just what judgments were going to befall him and his house. The dogs were going to eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel, and all Ahab's posterity were soon to be cut off. Somehow the message of God's fiery Prophet reached the heart of the wicked king. He put on sackcloth and moved about softly. Oh, the great love of our God who showed mercy even to Ahab when he humbled himself before God!

### **QUESTIONS**

1. Why did not Naboth sell his vineyard to Ahab?
2. What shows that Ahab was covetous?
3. What does the law say concerning covetousness?
4. Name others who have fallen because of covetousness.
5. How did Jezebel obtain Naboth's vineyard for Ahab?
6. What proves Ahab's guilt in the crime?
7. Who else was guilty in the plot?
8. Explain the law concerning the sale of real estate in Israel.
9. When and where did Elijah meet Ahab?
10. What judgments were pronounced against Ahab?
11. What effect did Elijah's words have on Ahab?
12. How was God's mercy shown to Ahab?