

1 Kings 21: Naboth's Vineyard

Part 1: Setting the stage

The King

Read Deuteronomy 17:14-15. When you enter the land the Lord your God is giving you and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, "Let us set a king over us like all the nations around us," be sure to appoint over you the king the Lord chooses. He must be from your own brothers. Do not place a foreigner over you, one who is not a brother Israelite.

The Location

The capital and palace of Israel were in Samaria, but Herod chose to build a second palace, inlaid with ivory, in Jezreel. The valley of Jezreel was one of the richest areas of Palestine, in terms of rich soil and a good supply of water. It was an ideal place to raise grapes and other crops. "Jezreel" is a Hebrew word, meaning "God will sow." This is where a man Naboth owned land with a vineyard, apparently close to Ahab's summer palace.

Part 2: Ahab confronts Naboth

Read 1 Kings 20:43. (from last week's lesson). Sullen and angry, Ahab went to his palace in Samaria.

1. This followed an encounter between Ahab and an unnamed prophet who predicted the consequences of Ahab setting Ben-Hadad free. What does this tell us about Ahab's general disposition at times when he did not get his way?

Moses used the same words to describe a stubborn child that refuses to obey his mother or father (Deut. 21:18-21). Hosea uses it to describe a stubborn heifer who will not obey her owner (Hosea 4:16). The Hebrew word for "angry" is used to describe a raging sea (Jonah 1:15). Wolfgramm p. 146.

Read 1 Kings 21:1-3.

This encounter happened at Ahab's second residence, in Jezreel, northeast of Samaria.

2. Why was Ahab required to ask Naboth for the vineyard? He was the king. Couldn't he just take it?
3. Why did Naboth refuse to give up his land?

Read Leviticus 25:23. The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants.

See also the note from the Concordia Self-Study Bible for 1 Kings 21:3.

Naboth's refusal to dispose of his land was based on the conviction that the land was the Lord's, that he had granted a perpetual lease to each Israelite family and that this lease was to be jealously preserved as the family's permanent inheritance in the promised land. P. 517

Part 3: Ahab and Jezebel

Read 1 Kings 21:4-7.

4. How does Ahab's reaction to Naboth's refusal compare to his general disposition (question 1)?
5. What do we know about Ahab's background – Who was his father? (See 1 Kings 16:29.)

Read 1 Kings 16:29. In the thirty-eighth year of Asa King of Judah, Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years.

6. Is it likely that Ahab was a descendent of Israel? Why or why not?
7. What is the background of Ahab's wife Jezebel?

Read 1 Kings 16:31b. [Ahab] took for his wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal and worshiped him.

8. How does Jezebel's background explain her sarcastic question in verse 7?

Jezebel. Her name is synonymous with wickedness. Of all the beautiful biblical names used for children today, you won't find one Jezebel. Women of the Bible, p. 216

Part 4: Jezebel takes over

Read 1 Kings 21:8-16.

9. Why did Jezebel tell the elders and leaders to proclaim a fast?

Jezebel attempted to create the impression that a disaster threatened the people that could be averted only if they would humble themselves and remove any person whose sin had brought God's judgement on them. Concordia Self-Study Bible, note for v. 9 on p. 517

Read 2 Samuel 7:5-6. Then Samuel said, "Assemble all Israel at Mizpah and I will intercede with the Lord for you." When they had assembled at Mizpah, they drew water and poured it out before the Lord. On that day they fasted and there they confessed, "We have sinned against the Lord."

10. How did Jezebel attempt to make **this** event appear to be a legitimate judicial procedure?
11. What was the charge against Naboth?
12. What was the penalty?

In accordance with Mosaic law, Naboth was stoned on his own field and his sons were stoned with him. Concordia Self-Study Bible, note for v. 13 on p. 517

Part 5: Elijah enters the scene

Read 1 Kings 21:17-26.

13. In God's eyes, who was responsible for Naboth's death?
14. Look again at Jezebel's question in verse 7. In what way does this verse explain why Ahab was held responsible for the murder?

Read 1 Kings 14:11. Dogs will eat those belonging to Jeroboam who die in the city and the birds of the air will feed on those who die in the country. The Lord has spoken!

Read 1 Kings 16:4. Dogs will eat those belonging to Baasha who die in the city, and the birds of the air ,

15. How is the curse in 1 Kings 21:24 similar to these?
16. According to 1 Kings 21: 20 & 25, what serious action is Ahab accused of doing?

Read John 8:34. Jesus replied (to the Pharisees in the temple), I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.

17. In what way does this new language of “selling oneself” add weight and condemnation to the temptations and sins into which we regularly fall?

Read 1 Kings 21:27-29.

18. How does God respond to Ahab’s repentance?
19. Can you remember another example where a curse placed on a king of Israel was delayed until the time of the king’s death?

Read James 4:4b. Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend with the world makes himself an enemy of God.

20. How might individuals today rebuff God as Ahab did? Should they expect similar results?

Read James 5:17-20. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit. My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

21. James returns to the story of Elijah in this passage. What do these verses teach us about God’s forgiveness of sins for Christ’s sake?

Just as God used Elijah’s prayers to stop the rain, He uses individuals, like you and me, to share the Gospel of Christ and the redemption He alone offers. God’s Word for Today, 1 and 2 Kings, pp. 87-88.

References:

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