



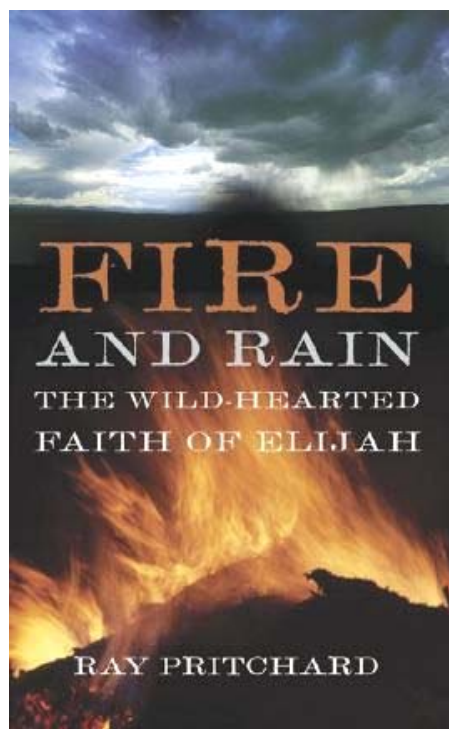
DEAN WELCH – TEACHER



WEEKLY SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

JULY 18, 2010

LESSON #7 FROM THE *MASTERWORK* SERIES STUDY OF:





Most of you are familiar with the TV game show Deal or No Deal. Howie Mandel is the host. There is a group of beautiful young women on a stage, each is holding a brief case with a monetary amount written on a card inside from a dollar to one million dollars. The contestant picks a case which contains his or her potential prize. As the cases are opened the amounts exposed are then eliminated from the big board. Depending on what amounts remain on the board, a banker phones Howie Mandel and offers the contestant a cash deal in exchange for what he or she may or may not have in their brief case.

For example, there are three cases left unopened on the stage in addition to the one held by the contestant. On the big board are four numbers: \$1, \$750, \$100,000, and \$1,000,000. Those four amounts remain in unopened brief cases. Which one does the contestant hold? The banker offers the contestant \$300,000 for his or her case, which may contain \$1, \$1,000, \$100,000, or \$1,000,000. And then Howie Mandel asks, "Deal or No Deal? The contestant thinks a moment... his or her family members are screaming. The studio is screaming..."Deal!" "Deal!" But you know they are going to go for the \$1,000,000 and the contestant says, "No Deal!"

Then comes the moment of truth ... the case is opened and the contestant and all the world sees he or she has traded \$300,000 for \$750. You don't always get what you want...and so it is today as we wrap up Week Seven of our lesson on Elijah from Dr. Ray Pritchard's book Fire And Rain. We do not play games with God, and God does not play games with us. We know that God is good, but we also must remember that God is just! Listen to this reminder from **GALATIANS 6:7-8 (NIV)**: *⁷Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. ⁸The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap*

destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

As we begin, let me ask you to name ONE THING you would buy if \$1000 landed in your lap this week—unexpected, out of the blue? [DISCUSS WITH VOLUNTEERS]

Over the last six weeks, we've followed Elijah's dealings with Ahab and Jezebel since the beginning of his prophetic ministry. We've learned all about Elijah and that both his message and his model of life were well known to Ahab and Jezebel. For years they were exposed to the truth, and for years God patiently waited. Still, they refused to believe. **What is one event you remember from Elijah's life? What is one thing you recall about Elijah? Look through the pages in your book. Did you mark anything from this week's reading? What struck you from this week's reading?**

The words from **PROVERBS 29:1 (NASB)** tell us that *"A man who hardens his neck after much reproof will suddenly be broken beyond remedy."* Did you hear that? In this verse from Proverbs, God is revealing the truth about Himself and man, who stubbornly refuses to listen to His voice and as you learned and read this week, sometimes God reaches the point where He says, *"That's enough?"* And, likewise, in our readings this week, despite all of the exposure to God's miraculous workings, both Ahab and Jezebel had *"hardened their necks."* This godless king and his wife had killed God's prophets and bowed down to Baal. But now things went from bad to worse. Their dealings in this week's lesson show how despicable this pair really was:

Open you Bible to **1 KINGS 21 (NLT)** and let's refresh our memories about the day King Ahab decided he wanted to make a deal with his neighbor so he could have a vegetable garden right beside his palace. Let's read **verses 1-2:** *¹"Now there was a man named Naboth, from Jezreel, who owned a vineyard in Jezreel beside the palace of King Ahab of Samaria. ²One day*

Ahab said to Naboth, "Since your vineyard is so convenient to my palace, I would like to buy it to use as a vegetable garden. I will give you a better vineyard in exchange, or if you prefer, I will pay you for it."

Ahab has built a country retreat at a place called Jezreel, about 18½ miles north of Samaria. This country palace is next door to a vineyard owned by a man named Naboth. And Ahab thinks to himself, that spot would be perfect for a vegetable garden to supply my palace. Obviously, being king, he could have just taken the land from his neighbor, but he decided to do the honorable thing. So he makes Naboth an offer—a perfectly reasonable offer it seems. He'll give him another piece of land in exchange or he'll pay him a generous amount of money. But, according to Jewish law, Naboth could not sell his father's inheritance, and he reminds the king of this is **21:3**, *But Naboth said to Ahab, "The LORD forbid me that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers."*

Ahab knew that once Naboth brought God into the equation, he wasn't going to get his vegetable garden. There's such a strong contrast here between Naboth who's insistent on obeying God's law, even if it might be at some financial cost, and Ahab who's only interested in his own comfort. Notice the response of the king to Naboth. He's just not satisfied—though he understands. He has made an offer and it has been legitimately refused. But he is Ahab, king of Israel. So, like a little child, he wants what he wants when he wants it and look at what he does in **verse 4**: *So Ahab went home angry and sullen because of Naboth's answer. The king went to bed with his face to the wall and refused to eat!* He goes home in a huff, climbs into bed and sulks, refuses to eat.

Sounds like a bedtime story or a fairy tale, doesn't it? This is a grown man—at least he's adult size—the king of the nation of Israel (although not necessarily the power on the throne). And he is pouting like a child who hasn't gotten his way. As I was flipping through the TV channels one day recently, I came across

an old episode of *Little House on the Prairie* and was reminded of exactly what we're talking about today. *Alison Amgrim played the role of Nellie Oleson on the Little House on the Prairie series and she was the most disliked person on the planet. She was Walnut Grove's richest and best-dressed young girl. She was also Walnut Groves most spoiled, unpleasant and disrespectful child. As the daughter of the wealthy Oleson family, Nellie was accustomed to having her way because her mother, Harriet, insisted on it. When things went her way, Nellie bragged about it. And when things did not go her way she was capable of concocting the most diabolical of schemes. Nellie could pout and throw tantrums as well as any snobby, bratty, and whiny person.*

Ahab was the adult version of Nellie Oleson. Pouting is not pretty in a child and it is even less so in an adult. The furthest thing from Ahab's mind was the will of God, or the way of God, or the wants and needs of his fellow human being. Ahab cared for no one but Ahab... so he pouted. When we react badly, we may set off a downward spiral of destructive consequences that affect others. And guess who has to come in and be the adult? **Verses 5-7** say: *⁵"What's the matter?" his wife Jezebel asked him. "What's made you so upset that you're not eating?" ⁶"I asked Naboth to sell me his vineyard or trade it, but he refused!" Ahab told her. ⁷"Are you the king of Israel or not?" Jezebel demanded. "Get up and eat something, and don't worry about it. I'll get you Naboth's vineyard!"*

Can't you picture the scene? Ahab, under pressure and stress, just loses it. So Jezebel takes over and acts in the flesh. She doesn't step back from the motion of the moment and evaluate the situation wisely. She doesn't ask God to work in her husband's heart—that's not the way she operates. She is a godless woman who lives her life in the carnality of self-satisfying desires. Her advice reflects that. Basically, she says, *"I'll take care of this for you. Just get out of my way!?"* I can just picture the scene now—my husband is the king and apparently Naboth doesn't really know WHO HE IS! I'll show him!

It was the final exam for an introductory Biology course at the university... the exam was two hours long and blue books were provided. The professor was very strict and told the class that they had exactly two hours to write the exam. Anyone who did not turn in their exam within two hours would fail the course. Half an hour into the exam a student rushed into the room and asked the professor for an exam booklet. The professor handed him the blue book and stated, you have exactly one and a half hours to complete the exam. You will have to hurry to make it. The student took the book and began writing furiously... an hour and a half later the professor called time and the students laid down their pencils and placed their blue books in a stack on the professors desk, all but the late student who continued to write.

A few minutes later the student approached the desk and attempted to add his exam to the stack of test books but the professor interrupted him and said, "No you don't... you did not complete the exam on time." The student asked with a sense of incredulity, "Do you know who I am?" The professor replied with an air of sarcasm, "No, as a matter of fact I don't." Raising his voice the student asked again, "Do you know who I am?" And the professor with an even greater air of superiority replied, "No I don't and I don't care who you are!"

"Good," replied the student who quickly lifted the stack of exams, stuffed his into the middle, and walked out of the room.

People with power have a heightened sense of entitlement. It doesn't matter if it is a Nellie Oleson or a King Ahab or a Dean Welch. We all at times have a sense of entitlement. We want what we want and we will do whatever we have to do to get it because we think we are entitled. We want to stand up and ask, "Do you know who I am?" Ahab's wife, Queen Jezebel, essentially said to him, "Don't you know who you are? You are the King! You don't have to pout about anything... you can have whatever you want. I am the Queen... I will get you your vineyard."

Look at **verses 8-10**: *⁸So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, sealed them with his seal, and sent them to the elders and other leaders of the town where Naboth lived. ⁹ In her letters she commanded: "Call the citizens together for fasting and prayer, and give Naboth a place of honor. ¹⁰ And then seat two scoundrels across from him who will accuse him of cursing God and the king. Then take him out and stone him to death."*

When you read that this week, didn't you wonder? Jezebel has **no** authority to write letters in the king's name. We know about that from a few years ago when Bill Clinton was president and yet it seemed his wife, Hillary, was a powerful behind the scenes mover and shaker?!? Although Jezebel had no authority here, that's not her worst offense. In writing these letters, she sets in motion a plot to kill Naboth—she's framing a helpless man. Although two witnesses were required in capital cases (Deuteronomy 17:5-6), these two were worthless, lowlife scoundrels, easily bribed into giving false testimony. They fit perfectly, says Dr. Charles Swindoll in his book on *Elijah*, in the portrait of disreputable witnesses painted by Solomon in **PROVERBS 19: 28 (NASB)**: *"A rascally witness makes a mockery of justice, and the mouth of the wicked spreads iniquity."*

The death of Naboth was a deceptive act of murder—and someone would be accountable, eventually. Continuing with **verses 11-16**: *¹¹So the elders and other town leaders followed the instructions Jezebel had written in the letters. ¹²They called for a fast and put Naboth at a prominent place before the people. ¹³Then the two scoundrels came and sat down across from him. And they accused Naboth before all the people, saying, "He cursed God and the king." So he was dragged outside the town and stoned to death. ¹⁴The town leaders then sent word to Jezebel, "Naboth has been stoned to death." ¹⁵When Jezebel heard the news, she said to Ahab, "You know the vineyard Naboth wouldn't sell you? Well, you can have it now! He's dead!"*

¹⁶So Ahab immediately went down to the vineyard of Naboth to claim it.

WOW! They set Naboth up for the kill and he is hauled outside the city walls and stoned to death. And notice Ahab's response. It's predictable. As is his custom, he leans on Jezebel and she comes through for him. He never questions HOW this has come about. He never asks what happened to Naboth. He simply accepts what he has wanted all along: Naboth's vineyard. Without hesitation, he stakes his claim on this piece of land and once again wickedness reigned in Ahab's court. Don't you just wonder where God is?

Well, get ready! For God has come to the end of his patience with this pair. He's put up with years of their godless acts...but no longer. As with Sodom and Gomorrah, God says, in effect, *"That is enough. You will go no farther!"*

Did you notice that Elijah has remained out of the picture for the most part? It's almost as if God were giving Ahab and Jezebel a final opportunity to turn to Him on their own. No way! They evidenced absolutely no change of heart. Instead, left to themselves, their wicked ways intensified. So God brings Elijah—his prophet and spokesman—back on the scene again. No more opportunities for repentance. It's time for justice. Let's continue with **verses 17-19** and get the rest of the story: *¹⁷But the Lord said to Elijah, ¹⁸"Go down to meet King Ahab of Israel, who rules in Samaria. He will be at Naboth's vineyard in Jezreel, claiming it for himself. ¹⁹Give him this message: 'This is what the Lord says: Wasn't it enough that you killed Naboth? Must you rob him, too? Because you have done this, dogs will lick your blood at the very place where they licked the blood of Naboth!'"* That's how justice sounds when God reaches the end of his patience. It isn't a pleasant message. It doesn't sound compassionate, nor should it.

So, we find that, as usual, Elijah obeys and confronts Ahab. **Verse 20** says, ²⁰*"So, my enemy, you have found me!" Ahab exclaimed to Elijah. "Yes," Elijah answered, "I have come because you have sold yourself to what is evil in the Lord's sight. ²¹So now the Lord says, 'I will bring disaster on you and consume you. I will destroy every one of your male descendants, slave and free alike, anywhere in Israel! ²²I am going to destroy your family as I did the family of Jeroboam son of Nebat and the family of Baasha son of Ahijah, for you have made me very angry and have led Israel into sin.' ²³"And regarding Jezebel, the Lord says, 'Dogs will eat Jezebel's body at the plot of land in Jezreel.' ²⁴*"The members of Ahab's family who die in the city will be eaten by dogs, and those who die in the field will be eaten by vultures."**

Doesn't this story remind you of when Nathan stood before guilt-ridden King David with judgment? The words are clear—judgment is coming. Doom is sure. Death is imminent. After Elijah confront Ahab, the writer of 1 Kings gives this commentary on the lives of Ahab and Jezebel: Listen to **verses 25-26**: ²⁵*(No one else so completely sold himself to what was evil in the Lord's sight as Ahab did under the influence of his wife Jezebel. ²⁶His worst outrage was worshiping idols just as the Amorites had done—the people whom the Lord had driven out from the land ahead of the Israelites.)*

What a partnership! They were partners in unparalleled evil, until God finally said, *"That's enough!"* *A few years ago, a man mistakenly swiped his driver's license through the self pay pump at a gas station in Pittsfield, Michigan. To his surprise, he was able to fill up his car with gas. Instead of reporting the glitch to the owner of the gas station, he told his friends about it who told their friends about it. Before the pirating was discovered, more than 100 people took advantage of the situation and stole gas from the station. Police say some of the customers returned up to 15 times. They also say, they will not have a problem finding*

the pirates. The gas station's computer stored the driver's license information from each of the people who stole the gas. One person discovered the glitch, and then invited others to join in an illegal activity. Everybody has influence. The only question is, will we use our influence for evil or for good—the choice is ours.

What are you doing with the power you have because of your position, education or friendships to influence others to follow Christ? Remember the words of Mordecai to another queen, Queen Esther *"For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place and you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?"* **ESTHER 4:14 (NASB)**

As we wrap up our lesson, I pray that you're not asking yourself what in the world this lesson has to do with you today? As you learned this week in your Bible study, there will be a **payday someday** according to God's Word. Listen to these words from **ROMANS 2:5 (NLT)**: *But because you are stubborn and refuse to turn from your sin, you are storing up terrible punishment for yourself. For a day of anger is coming, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.* And also these words from **MATTHEW 12: 36 (NIV)**, *But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.*

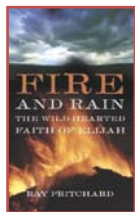
There are two sobering and solemn reminders for us to consider from our lesson and scripture this week: **FIRST, There is an end to God's patience. No one knows it.** God's wheels grind slowly but exceedingly fine. God, in his gracious patience and mercy, waits for us to hear His voice and obey. People hear the Gospel of salvation and do not respond. Yet God waits. Some claim His name, but live in a way that says otherwise. Still God waits. Just like we saw with Ahab and Jezbel, God's patience can

and does, finally, run out. Don't be fooled into thinking that his longsuffering is *everlasting* suffering.

In a Time magazine cover article several years ago entitled "Power Struggle-Who's In Charge," a vivid example of a somewhat epidemic was given. It reads: Here is a parenting parable for our age. Carla Wagner, 17, of Coral Gables, Fla., spent the afternoon drinking the tequila she charged on her American Express Gold Card before speeding off in her high-performance Audi A4. She was dialing her cell phone when she ran over Helen Marie Witty, a 16-year-old honor student who was out rollerblading. Charged with drunken driving and manslaughter, Carla was given a trial date — at which point her parents asked the judge whether it would be O.K. if Carla went ahead and spent the summer in Paris, as she usually does."

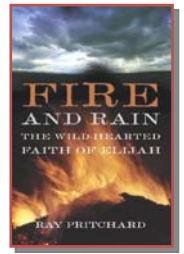
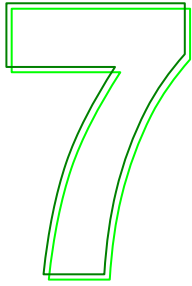
Finally, our **SECOND reminder: God keeps His word. No one stops it.** Never forget what you've read in this 21st chapter of 1 Kings. Ahab and Jezebel were so powerful, so intimidating, so wicked. They thought they were in charge of everything—invincible. But when God stepped in, it was curtains for them. They were helpless to stop his judgment.

I close with these serious warnings from Dr. Swindoll from his book on Elijah: Don't play games with God. Don't walk away from Him with a stubborn will. For in the end, remember, He always wins. When He says, "*That's enough*," it's too late. God is good, and He is also just. And when His justice finally kicks in, there's no escaping it. If you think otherwise, you've bought into "*the adversary's deadly lie*." **Let's Pray.**



© 2010 R. DEAN WELCH
JULY 18, 2010

JULY 18, 2010



1. **GALATIANS 6:7-8 (NIV):** *“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap _____; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap _____.”*

2. Sometimes God reaches the point where He says, “_____!”

3. People with power have a heightened sense of _____.

4. **PROVERBS 19: 28 (NASB):** *“A _____ witness makes a mockery of justice, and the mouth of the _____ spreads iniquity.”*

5. As you learned this week in your Bible study, there will be a _____ according to God’s Word. (See *Matthew 12:36*)

6. There are two sobering and solemn reminders for us to consider from our lesson and scriptures this week:
 - A. **First:** There is an end to God’s _____. No one knows it.

 - B. **Second:** God keeps His _____. No one stops it.