

## 1 Kings 21:1-29

### Naboth's Vineyard

The name "Naboth" means "fruit" or "produce" of the land.

Ahab, representing the Evil One, wants to possess our spiritual inheritance, our portion of the Promised Land or the kingdom of God.

**1 Kings 21:1-2** - "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. 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."

"which was in Jezreel" - The LXX omits these words, and makes the vineyard to be "hard by the threshing-floor of Ahab, king of Samaria." Apparently, Naboth lived in Jezreel but held this inherited vineyard in an outlying area close to Ahab's palace.

Ahab says he wanted to buy Naboth's vineyard and convert it into a "garden of herbs."  
(**1 Kings 21:2**)

A "garden of herbs" is the same Hebrew phrase - *gan yaraq* - used in **Deuteronomy 11:10** to describe the land of Egypt - "a garden of herbs." Naboth was horrified that his inheritance - a type of the Promised Land - would be converted spiritually into Egypt's "garden of herbs" and he refuses, which costs him his life.

**1 Kings 21:3** - "And Naboth said to Ahab, The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee."

Ahab's offer seems reasonable and courteous. But Naboth - who seems to be an Israelite loyal to Yahweh rather than to Baal - points to commandments in the Law that warn against selling one's ancestral lands:

- **Leviticus 25:23-24** - "The land, moreover, shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are but aliens and sojourners with Me. 'Thus for every piece of your property, you are to provide for the redemption of the land.'"

- **Numbers 36:7** - "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."

Who do we know that also sold his birthright and regretted it? *Esau!*

In **Genesis 25**, Esau exchanged his birthright - both his position as firstborn and his inheritance - for a bowl of pottage.

In The New Testament, this inheritance is equated with the whole grace of God and a life of holiness:

- **Hebrews 12:15-17** - "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."

Naboth didn't want to trade this away.

Why did Ahab, who was king, need more land, more stuff? Because covetousness is never satisfied.

**1 Kings 21:4** - "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."

Ahab responds like a petulant child, sulking in his bed. We've seen before that he is spineless, cowardly and vacillating. Even though he is king, he's feeling victimized by Naboth. He's like Haman who couldn't rest while Mordechai sat in the gate.

Ahab and Jezebel together display most of the character traits of self-seeking narcissists. Spiritually they simply reflect the picture of natural man, human nature stripped of its covering.

**1 Kings 21:7** - "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."

### **Jezebel's Scheme**

**1 Kings 21:8-10** - "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. And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people: 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 fast conveyed the idea that some calamity has come upon the nation. First Naboth is set in a high place of honor, perhaps as governor of the event. But then his character will be attacked as a blasphemer and a traitor. Like Jonah, he would be the scapegoat because of his supposed blasphemy and disloyalty.

**1 Kings 21:11** - "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."

This treachery was carried out by Naboth's own neighbors, elders and friends in his city.

The New Testament tells us: "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (**2 Timothy 3:12**). Like Jesus, Naboth was accused of blasphemy as well as rebellion against the established government. Both were accused by lying witnesses. Both were innocent.

The Bible's requirement of conviction "by the mouth of two or three witnesses" is an ideal, but it can easily be twisted and foiled in our imperfect and fallen world at the instigation of powerful tyrants.

Whenever we refuse to compromise our inheritance, we will suffer.

- **1 Peter 4:12-13** - "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

This incident is also a classic example of tyrannous government, with a weak leader influenced by a strong and scheming advisor, able to enlist subservient and spineless collaborators in unjust accusations.

In **2 Kings 9:26**, the murder of Naboth is connected with "the blood of his sons." Apparently Naboth's whole family was murdered.

Ahab may have then claimed the land because by law the crown seized all the property of any executed criminal. Some have speculated that because Naboth's land was adjacent to Ahab's they may have been related. With Naboth and his sons dead, Ahab may then claimed the land as next kinsman.

### **Elijah Confronts Ahab**

God tells Elijah to meet Ahab in Naboth's vineyard just as Ahab is taking possession of it.

**1 Kings 21:19** - "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 Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine."

Nobody likes to hear that!

**1 Kings 21:21-22** - "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. 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."

Naboth refused to sell his inheritance. Now Elijah says Ahab has sold himself (really sold his soul) to do evil. Paul says that without God's grace, we are all "sold under sin." We become enslaved to the Evil One.

### Prophecy Against Jezebel

**1 Kings 21:23-24** - "And of Jezebel also spake the LORD, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. 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."

To be eaten by dogs rather being buried in the family's ancestral tomb struck horror into ancient peoples. All but Jezebel's hands, feet and skull remained (**2 Kings 9:35**), and her carcass became "as dung upon the face of the field."

Jezebel is later described as committing "countless harlotries and sorceries" (**2 Kings 9:22**).

She stands as a depiction of false religion later expressed as Babylon, the Great Whore of Revelation (**Revelation 17**). Nahum also labels the city of Ninevah as this same whore/Jezebel figure:

- **Nahum 3:4-5** - "Because of the many harlotries of the harlot, the seductive mistress of sorcery, who betrays nations by her prostitution and clans by her witchcraft. "Behold, I am against you," declares the LORD of Hosts. "I will lift your skirts over your face. I will show your nakedness to the nations and your shame to the kingdoms..."

A false prophetess at the church in Thyatira is also called "Jezebel":

- **Revelation 2:20-23** - "Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works."

### An Evaluation of Ahab's Rule

**1 Kings 21:25-26** - "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. 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."

This is similar to Adam who was "stirred up" by Eve to do evil in eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Again, it says Ahab "sold himself" to do wickedness. We lose our humanity, our soul, when we trade it away for worldly gain or success, power or pleasure. And what you think you gain also evaporates like a mist.

**1 Kings 21:27** - "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."

Ahab got no pleasure from acquiring Naboth's vineyard. But he had seen God's power at Mount Carmel, and so he knew Elijah's words were true. Somehow he was able to repent at least for a moment.

And God always responds to repentance with mercy.

**1 Kings 21:28-29** - "And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 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."

**Bottom Line:** Don't sell out your inheritance from God.