

### Naboth's Vineyard

#### 1 Kings 21:1-16

1 Kings 21:1-16 – *“And it came to pass after these things that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard which was in Jezreel, next to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. So Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying, ‘Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near, next to my house; and for it I will give you a vineyard better than it. Or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its worth in money.’ But Naboth said to Ahab, ‘The LORD forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you!’”*

*So Ahab went into his house sullen and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, ‘I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers.’ And he lay down on his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no food. But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said to him, ‘Why is your spirit so sullen that you eat no food?’ He said to her, ‘Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite, and said to him, ‘Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if it pleases you, I will give you another vineyard for it.’ And he answered, ‘I will not give you my vineyard.’”*

*Then Jezebel his wife said to him, ‘You now exercise authority over Israel! Arise, eat food, and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.’ And she wrote letters in Ahab’s name, sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters to the elders and the nobles who were dwelling in the city with Naboth. She wrote in the letters, saying, ‘Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth with high honor among the people; and seat two men, scoundrels, before him to bear witness against him, saying, ‘You have blasphemed God and the king.’ Then take him out, and stone him to death.’”*

*So the men of his city, the elders and nobles who were inhabitants of his city, did as Jezebel had written in the letters she sent to them. They proclaimed a fast, and seated Naboth with high honor among the people. And two men, scoundrels, came in and sat before him; and the scoundrels witnessed against him, against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, ‘Naboth has blasphemed God and the king!’ Then they took him outside the city and stoned him with stones, so that he died. Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, ‘Naboth has been stoned and is dead.’”*

*And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, ‘Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead.’ So it was, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab got up and went down to take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.”*

### Background Notes

Wicked King Ahab of the northern kingdom of Israel had a number of opportunities to repent and turn the kingdom back to the Lord, but he didn't do it. He continued on in his wicked ways - in his own personal life, as well as his life as king of

Israel. 1 Kings 21:1-16 tells the story of King Ahab and his sin in connection with Naboth's vineyard, another event in which the evil lifestyle of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel was exhibited.

Jezreel was the location of the winter palace of the northern kingdom of Israel, similar to our Camp David, and Ahab wanted to extend the royal properties at Jezreel. But the property that Ahab wanted to buy was not for sale. The owner, Naboth, would not sell - no matter what price Ahab offered him! Ahab offered him money or another choice piece of land, but Naboth said "No deal."

*"Naboth said to Ahab, 'The Lord forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you!'"* Under God's Law, land was to remain in the family and never sold outside the tribe, and that's the reason why Naboth refused to sell it. In Numbers 36:9, God's Law said: *"Thus no inheritance shall change hands from one tribe to another, but every tribe of the children of Israel shall keep its own inheritance."*

So Naboth was not holding out for a higher price. He was a godly man, and he wanted to obey God's Law. He would not sell or exchange his family's heritage for any price. Naboth was one of the godly people in the northern kingdom who worshiped the true God of Israel. He had *"not bowed the knee to Baal."*

Wicked King Ahab couldn't have cared less about Naboth's godly values and attitude. He couldn't get his own way, so he went back to the palace and sulked. Queen Jezebel asked, "What's wrong with you? Why aren't you eating?" And Ahab replied, "Naboth won't sell me his vineyard. I want his vineyard and he won't give it to me." We'd never behave like that, would we? We'd never sulk if we couldn't get our way - would we??

Jezebel said, "Well, what's the matter with you? You're the king! Here, I'll get the vineyard for you." So Queen Jezebel arranged to have Naboth killed. She sent a royal letter under Ahab's seal, ordering a religious fast in Jezreel. She may have implied that there was an impending disaster, and they needed to find out who was "responsible."

She arranged for Naboth to be seated with high honor at this gathering, so it would look like a fair trial. No one would suspect a set up. Then she arranged for two accomplices - scoundrels - who were willing to falsely accuse Naboth of blasphemy and treason!

What hypocrisy! Imagine - Jezebel, the Baal worshiper - actually using God's Law for evil purposes. She knew God's law required two witnesses (she had two false accusers), and she knew that the penalty for blasphemy of God was death. She arranged this evil, satanically inspired framing of godly Naboth. And after Naboth was stoned to death, Ahab took possession of the vineyard.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. God allows innocent people to suffer.

Poor Naboth. What did he do to deserve such treatment? He was doing the right thing; he was obeying God. And yet he was set up and framed - and stoned to death! Why?

What's the Bible teaching us here? God allows innocent people to suffer. We know that the Bible teaches that sometimes people suffer because of their own fault. We also know that the Bible teaches that sometimes people suffer because God is using the suffering for discipline. But here we see another truth. Sometimes God's allows innocent people to suffer, even though they haven't done anything wrong. God allows this, and we often don't know why. Sometimes we see the good that comes out of suffering, but not always.

Maybe you're suffering in some way just now. Maybe someone at your job has framed you. Maybe someone has hurt you in some way, even though you haven't done anything wrong. You love the Lord and you're seeking to follow Him. Why would God allow this hurtful thing to happen to you? Often we don't know why.

In adverse circumstances we must trust God and continue to be faithful, as Naboth was. If you're a faithful believer, you will be rewarded in Heaven. *"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven... Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven."*(Matthew 5:10&12).

We don't know all the reasons why God sometimes allows suffering, but we do know there is reward to follow for faithfully trusting God through the suffering. Sometimes God allows innocent people to suffer.

### 2. The "pleasures of sin" last only "for a season."

The pleasures of sin are fleeting. That truth is found in Hebrews 11:25.

After Naboth's death, Ahab went down to enjoy himself on his new property: "This is so great! I have my beautiful vineyard now. Let's see, I think I'll plant fig trees and olive trees, and some barley over here, and wheat over there. This garden is going to be great." How long do you think Ahab enjoyed his new vineyard? Not long. In fact, only one verse long, because God brought Elijah to confront Ahab!

It's possible that you're involved in some kind of sinful activity right now. Maybe it's a secret sin, and you don't want to give that sin up because it's "fun." The Spirit of God may already be working on your conscience about that secret sin. Maybe there's something else in your life that you enjoy, but you know it's wrong. Maybe it's gossiping about (even bad-mouthing) a brother or sister in the Lord. Maybe you've been jealous of that person, and you're enjoying the mean gossip

because you look good when that person is put down! This portion of God's Word certainly teaches us that the pleasures of sin are fleeting. They last "for a season" – only a short time! You can be sure that the fun and pleasure of sinful activity will come to an end, because the Bible teaches that the "pleasures of sin" last only "a season."

## Practical Applications

### 1. How much money would it take to get you to compromise?

Think about how much money Naboth could have made if he had sold his vineyard! Ahab was the king, and he wanted that property. Ahab was willing to pay big bucks – or exchange it for a valuable piece of land. "What's your price Naboth? Just name it!" But Naboth would not sell, because it would have been wrong before God for him to sell.

How much money would it take to get you to compromise? Suppose somebody wanted you to cheat or compromise standards on your job. What would your reaction be? "Not me. No way, I'm not going to compromise." Suppose they offered you \$10,000 to cheat just a little bit. "Hey, what do you think I am? Forget it." What about ten million - and no one would know? What if your job was on the line? Would many of us compromise?

How much would it take to get us to compromise? Do I have a price? Do you have a price? That question is convicting, isn't it? How much money would it take to get us to compromise? Let's be like Naboth. Let's hope no amount of money would tempt us to compromise?

### 2. Are you a wife like Jezebel?

Are you a wife like Jezebel? You're probably saying, "No way! Jezebel was a pagan Baal worshipper - I'm a Christian!" Okay. But Jezebel had a lot of influence on her husband Ahab, and you have a lot of influence on your husband as well.

You can influence your husband to move in a positive direction, or you can influence him to move in a negative direction. Jezebel could have said. "Ahab, we have plenty of property. We don't need that vineyard! We can plant your garden somewhere else." But no! Instead, she told him that he should be ashamed of himself for not using his royal power to annex the property - illegally!

Are you a wife like Jezebel? Maybe you don't influence your husband to do wrong, as Jezebel did - but do you influence him to move in a positive direction? Do you influence him to move closer to the Lord? Do you help him grow as a man of God?

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