

King Ahab had already been doing evil in the sight of the LORD by following his wife, Jezebel, in worshiping Baal. Now Ahab's covetousness for a vineyard will bring a pronouncement of judgment against both him, his wife, and his descendants. He will willingly take possession of Naboth's vineyard after his wife arranges for Naboth to be falsely condemned and put to death.

1 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. 2 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.

Ahab had a palace in the city of Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom of Samaria, but he apparently also had a second palace in Jezreel. Next door to the palace in Jezreel was a vineyard owned by a man named Naboth. Because he loved the convenience of the vineyard's location next to his palace, Ahab wanted to buy it from Naboth in order to use it for an herb garden.

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

When Israel came into the land of Canaan, the land was divided up between the tribes of Israel and then by each family in each tribe as their inheritance from the LORD. The LORD had forbidden Israel from surrendering permanent ownership of their family's inheritance (Lev. 25:23-28; Num. 36:7-9). Naboth refused to sell because doing so would be disobedience to the LORD.

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 apparently recognized that Naboth would never change his mind about selling the vineyard since his decision was based on a conviction. He must have really had his heart set on owning the vineyard because Naboth's refusal to sell put Ahab into a depression.

Verses 5-6: Ahab's wife, Jezebel, came to him and wanted to know the reason for his depression and loss of appetite. We might imagine the whiny voice that Ahab may have used when he told her that Naboth refused to sell his vineyard.

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.

"And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel?" – Obviously Jezebel was of the opinion that you did not allow moral considerations to stand in the way of getting what you wanted. Her question to Ahab was basically "You're the king of Israel, aren't you? As king, you have the power to take what you want."

"arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite" – Jezebel urged Ahab to cheer up and eat a meal because she would make sure that he would have Naboth's vineyard. She plans on using her position as queen to handle the situation with Naboth's refusal to sell.

Verses 8-11: Jezebel sent letters in Ahab's name to Jezreel, in which she instructed the authorities there to have false witnesses accuse Naboth of the capital crimes of blasphemy against God and the king. Then they are to convict and execute Naboth.

12 They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people.

"They proclaimed a fast" – The authorities begin following Jezebel's instructions by proclaiming a fast. The fast was to give the impression that Naboth's "crime" was so serious that they needed to humble themselves before God until the sin had been dealt with.

"and set Naboth on high among the people" – They placed Naboth in a prominent position where he could be seen by the people for a public trial.

13 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.

The Mosaic Law required two witnesses to condemn a man. The expression "men of Belial" refers to worthless men who obviously did not mind lying about an innocent man. They accused Naboth of blaspheming God and the king, crimes of which the mock court found him guilty. Notice that Jezebel had elevated blasphemy against the king to the same level as blasphemy against the LORD, which was consistent with her arrogant belief in the superiority of the king and the queen. The authorities wasted no time in executing Naboth for his supposed crimes.

14 Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, Naboth is stoned, and is dead. 15 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.

When the authorities report back to Jezebel that her instructions have been carried out, she then goes to Ahab with the "good news" that the vineyard was now his for the taking. The LORD will hold Ahab responsible for Naboth's death (v. 19) even though he didn't arrange for it to happen. The responsibility seems to fall on Ahab because he prioritized getting what he wanted above justice for Naboth.

16 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.

Instead of rebuking his wife, Ahab seemed happy to reap the benefits of what his wife had done. The property of executed criminals became the property of the king and so Ahab goes to Jezreel to take possession of Naboth's vineyard.

17 And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 18 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.

The LORD does not ignore the sin of Jezebel and Ahab because he sends Elijah to confront Ahab. The LORD knew where Ahab would be and why he was going there. We need not think that we can hide our sin from the LORD or that it will go unnoticed by Him (**Psa. 90:8** “*Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance*”). Sin has consequences and the LORD will make sure that we face up to it.

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.

“And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession?” – The LORD gives Elijah the message to deliver to Ahab when he confronts Ahab. Even though Jezebel planned and arranged the circumstances of Naboth’s death, Ahab obviously approved of it because he benefited from the result. Instead of rebuking Jezebel and refusing to take possession of the vineyard that cost a man his life, Ahab happily accepts the fact that he can now take possession of the vineyard. Thus, the LORD holds Ahab as responsible for Naboth’s death as if he had been the one who conceived and planned the whole thing.

“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” – The LORD declares death as the punishment for Ahab’s sin and predicts that the dogs would lick his blood in the same place (outside Jezreel) that they licked the blood from Naboth’s dead body. When Ahab repents, the LORD modifies the punishment and postpones it until after Ahab dies (vs. 27-29). After his death in battle against Syria, the dogs lick Ahab’s blood after it is washed out of his chariot and armor at the pool of Samaria (1 Kings 22:37-38).

20 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. 21 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,

“And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?” – Elijah has delivered the message of the LORD to Ahab (vs. 19). Ahab considered Elijah an adversary because Elijah seemed to oppose everything that Ahab did. The reality was that Elijah pronounced judgment against Ahab because the LORD was opposed to the sin that Ahab was committing, not because of any personal animosity that Elijah had toward Ahab.

“And he answered, I have found *thee*: because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD” – Elijah identifies the reason he has come to Ahab. Elijah was not there because he was the enemy of Ahab but was sent by the LORD because of Ahab’s evil deeds. Ahab had “sold himself” to do evil in order to obtain material gain.

“Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away [to consume with fire] thy posterity” – Elijah continues with the message from the LORD. Because of Ahab’s evil deeds, the LORD will bring “evil” (adversity) against Ahab and will consume his descendants as if by fire. King always desired the legacy of their descendants being on the throne long after them, but the LORD’s judgment was that Ahab’s descendants would be destroyed and their claim to the throne would end.

“and will cut off [amputate; fig. to kill] from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up [restrained] and left [to set free] in Israel” – The expression “pisseth against the wall” refers to the male gender (the gender with the ability to urinate against a wall). The LORD will destroy Ahab’s male descendants, whether they are bound or free (no exceptions), so that there will be no one left to continue the family legacy of being the king of Israel.

22 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.

“And will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah” – Jeroboam and Baasha were earlier kings of Israel that the LORD had removed from the throne and destroyed their family line because of their sin.

“for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked *me* to anger, and made Israel to sin” – Just like Jeroboam and Baasha before him, Ahab had provoked the LORD with his idolatry and the example and influence that had on the nation of Israel. The LORD holds leaders to a higher standard because of their influence over the people.

23 And of Jezebel also spake the LORD, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. 24 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.

“And of Jezebel also spake the LORD, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel” – Jezebel does not escape from the judgment of the LORD for her part in Ahab’s sinful deeds. The manner and location of her death is predicted, which, by no coincidence, was in the same place where Naboth died (2 Kings 9:30-37).

“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” – Kings and their family members were usually buried with honor when they died, but the LORD’s judgment was that Ahab’s descendants would not have the benefit of a burial. Instead, their bodies would become food for animals.

25 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.

“But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD” – Jeroboam had led Israel into sin, but Ahab exceeded Jeroboam and all the other previous kings. He had sold himself morally and spiritually in order to get what he wanted. **“whom Jezebel his wife stirred up”** – A man’s wife can influence him in a positive or negative way. Jezebel had influenced her husband to be even more evil than he would have been without her and the LORD held her accountable for her part in Ahab’s deeds.