

WHEN GOD'S PATIENCE RUNS OUT (1 KINGS 21)

We enjoy lessons on the love and mercy of God, but we cannot preach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) without also preaching on the justice and holiness of God—the side of God that cannot tolerate sin.

In Proverbs 29:1 we read, “A man who hardens his neck after much reproof will suddenly be broken beyond remedy.” The passage begins with mercy, depicting an individual who has had opportunity after opportunity to change, but stubbornly refuses to listen to God’s admonition. Finally, God’s patience ends. Then “*suddenly*” the man who hardened his heart will be “broken beyond remedy”! What a frightening prospect!¹

The Bible is full of illustrations of this principle. The twin cities of Sodom and Gomorrah had many opportunities to change, such as when a righteous man named Lot moved into Sodom; but they grew more and more immoral. Genesis 19 tells of the moral pollution and degradation in those cities. Finally, God said, “That’s enough!” Suddenly, they were “broken beyond remedy.” God wiped them from the face of the earth.²

The kingdoms of Israel and Judah tried God’s patience year after year. Although God sent prophets to call them back, “they continually mocked the messengers of God, despised His words and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, *until there was no remedy*” (2 Chronicles 36:16; emphasis mine). God said, “That’s

¹Another passage that speaks of the same principle and also uses the word “suddenly” is Proverbs 6. Verse 12 and the next few verses speak of the characteristics of “a wicked man”; then verse 15 tells of his fate: “Therefore his calamity will come *suddenly*; *instantly* he will be broken, and there will be no healing”! (Emphasis mine.)

²Today we are unsure of the exact location of these cities.

enough!” and suddenly they were broken—first Israel, then Judah.

Consider Belshazzar in Daniel 5. He and his guests were engaged in a drunken feast, drinking from the sacred vessels from the temple, when “*suddenly* the fingers of a man’s hand emerged and began writing . . . on the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace” (v. 5; emphasis mine): “*Mene, menē, tekel, uphārsin*. . . you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient” (vv. 25, 27). God was saying, “That’s enough!” That very night the city fell, and Belshazzar died (v. 30). Suddenly, he was “broken beyond remedy.”

In the New Testament we see the story of Herod Agrippa (Acts 12). Herod stood before the people, giving an oration. According to Josephus, he wore silver-lined garments. Herod glistened in the rays of the morning sun. The people shouted, “The voice of a god. . . !” (v. 22). Herod accepted the adulation, and God said, “That’s enough!” Acts 12:23 says, “And *immediately* an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory.” (Emphasis mine.) Josephus said that Herod doubled over with a terrible pain in his abdomen. He was carried to his bed, where he lingered five days in agony until he died. The Bible says, “He was eaten by worms and died” (v. 23b). He was “broken beyond remedy.”

Other illustrations could be given.³ No illustration, however, is more powerful than that of Ahab and Jezebel. Ahab and Jezebel had opportunity after opportunity to acknowledge God and to turn

³A number of New Testament expressions also reflect this principle: “God gave them [the Gentiles] over” (Romans 1:24, 26, 28). (The KJV has the more graphic phrase “God gave them up”—because they had given God up.) Some who fall away become so hardhearted that “it is impossible to renew them again to repentance” (Hebrews 6:6). First John 5:16 speaks of “a sin leading to death.”

from their evil ways, but they did not. First Kings 21 is the definitive chapter on their character. In it we see one of the most despicable acts in the Scriptures. We also see the patience of God running out, as He says, "That's enough!"

THE SIN AGAINST NABOTH (21:1-16)

Chapter 21 begins, "Now it came about after these things," that is, after Elijah had dropped out of sight and after Ahab had resumed his normal activities. Ahab no doubt came back from Mount Carmel intimidated; but when Jezebel threatened Elijah, Elijah fled. Ahab had not heard from him since that time, so Ahab resumed his way of life. In chapter 19 we read of two battles he fought with Syria in which Israel won decisive victories (and after which Ahab was condemned for freeing the Syrian king).⁴

"Now it came about after these things, that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard which was in Jezreel beside the palace of Ahab king of Samaria" (v. 1). Naboth was one of God's noblemen. He had a vineyard in Jezreel beside Ahab's palace. The capital of Israel was Samaria, which was several miles to the south,⁵ but Ahab also had a beautiful palace at Jezreel. Both inspired and secular records testify to Ahab's ability to build (1 Kings 22:39). The grounds of the palace at Jezreel were undoubtedly beautifully kept, with manicured lawns, beautiful flowers and shrubs, and stately trees. One thing was missing, however. Ahab did not have a little plot to grow herbs and fresh vegetables for his table. One day he looked out of a palace window and saw Naboth's vineyard. Ahab had to have it.

And Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying, "Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden because it is close beside my house, and I will give you a better vineyard than it in its place; if you like, I will give you the price of it in money" (v. 2).

Upon first hearing it, we may think that Ahab's proposition sounds reasonable, but it involved a violation of God's will. When the children of Israel went into the land, each parcel of ground was allotted to the various tribes and families. The land was to stay within those families (Leviticus 25:24-

34).⁶

"But Naboth said to Ahab, 'The Lord forbid me that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers'" (v. 3). Naboth probably had many reasons not to sell the land. No doubt the vineyard was a place of wonderful memories. His father had worked this vineyard . . . and his father before him . . . and his father before him. I can see Naboth, when he was young, playing in the shade of the vines, laughing and eating the grapes until the purple juice ran down his chin. Now he worked the same vineyard with his own sons. The reason Naboth would not sell it was that *God* had said, "Do not give it away or sell it!" Naboth was determined to obey the Lord. He was one of the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal (note v. 3)!

Ahab went back into his palace, "sullen and vexed":

So Ahab came into his house sullen and vexed because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers." And he lay down on his bed and turned away his face and ate no food (v. 4).

Ahab lay down and pouted like a child who has been refused a trinket. This is not the action of a man, much less a king. Imagine the scene: Perhaps Ahab was in an ivory palace.⁷ He would have been lying on an ivory couch.⁸ The walls were inlaid with ivory.⁹ He was surrounded by wealth and opulence, yet he was pouting because he could not have a little piece of dirt. He was like an eagle surrounded by mounds of prey, pouting because he could not have the crumbs of the sparrow. He was like a lion surrounded by carcasses, pouting because he could not have the cheese of the mouse.

Jezebel missed Ahab at the banquet table. Perhaps she sent him a tray of food which came back uneaten. The head of the house went to find out what was wrong. She came into his room. Probably the first thing she did was put a hand on his brow. He had no fever. She asked, "How is it that your spirit is so sullen that you are not eating food?" (v. 5). He answered in a whiny voice:

"Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite, and

⁶See Numbers 36:1-9; 27:1-11.

⁷1 Kings 22:39; see also Psalms 45:8; Amos 3:15.

⁸Amos 6:4.

⁹It might have been white marble, resembling ivory.

⁴See the previous lesson.

⁵Authorities differ on exactly how far apart the cities were.

said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if it pleases you, I will give you a vineyard in its place.' But he said, 'I will not give you my vineyard'" (v. 6).

Ahab did not mention what Naboth had said about the prohibition of *God*. That was of no concern to Ahab. The only thing that concerned him was that he had been thwarted.

Jezebel taunted him: "Do you now reign over Israel?" (v. 7a). Of course, Ahab did not really govern Israel—Jezebel did—but she was saying, "There is no point in being king if you cannot have what you want." Then she said: "Arise, eat bread, and let your heart be joyful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite" (v. 7b). "I will give you the vineyard. You were going to *buy* it; I will *give* it to you."

Here is the classic picture of a domineering wife and a henpecked husband. Wise wives know they need to encourage their husbands to be leaders, to take the initiative. Here, however, when the husband was ineffectual, the wife took over. Instead of encouraging him to face his problem and deal with it, she said, "Get out of my way; I'll do it"; and he was glad to let her do it.

We come now to one of the most cold-blooded schemes in the annals of mankind. If a Mafia boss had planned it, we might not be surprised; but this was done in the name of God's anointed one, the king over God's people!

So she [Jezebel] wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal, and sent letters to the elders and to the nobles who were living with Naboth in his city. Now she wrote in the letters, saying, "Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth at the head of the people" (vv. 8, 9).

God's laws were used as the tool in the scheme. Jezebel hated God's laws. What pleasure it must have given her to pervert the laws of Jehovah in this fashion! The first law that was perverted was the proclamation of a fast. Fasts were used to ward off the wrath of God (note 2 Samuel 21:2; Joshua 9:11; Deuteronomy 21:9).

The second law that was perverted pertained to the involvement of all the people. When God was angry with all of the people, all of the people were required to fast. The leaders were to pretend that the city was under a cloud of guilt, due to an unknown citizen's capital crime. We see in this event a diabolic mimicking of Joshua's procedure in the case of Achan (Joshua 7).

According to Josephus, Naboth was respected

by the people. His being set "at the head of the people" indicated a position of honor.

Jezebel's instructions continued: "And seat two worthless men¹⁰ before him, and let them testify against him, saying, 'You cursed God and the king.' Then take him out and stone him to death" (v. 10). Three more laws of Jehovah were perverted by their scheme: (1) the law that said an accusation was established at the mouth of two or three witnesses (Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15); (2) the law that said blasphemy was a sin punishable by death (blasphemy against the king as God's representative was the same as blasphemy against God; see Leviticus 24:15); and (3) the law that prescribed death by stoning as the penalty for the sin of blasphemy (Leviticus 24:14-16). What a devilish mind Jezebel had!

The moral and spiritual state of the nation is seen in verse 11 (along with the fear Jezebel generated): "So the men of his city, the elders and the nobles who lived in his city, did as Jezebel had sent word to them, just as it was written in the letters which she had sent them."

Imagine what happened from the viewpoint of Naboth as he arose that morning. He enjoyed breakfast with his wife and sons. Word came that there was to be a special fast in the city, and everyone was to come.

When Naboth reached the appointed spot, he was pleasantly surprised to be seated in a place of prominence. The procedure began. The people asked, "Why is God's wrath resting upon us? Where does the sin lie?" To Naboth's surprise, two men stood—men with abominable reputations in the community. They walked in front of Naboth, stopped, and pointed their fingers at him. "Naboth has blasphemed God. Naboth has blasphemed the king!" Naboth thought, "This must be a joke. Surely no one will believe them." Looking around, however, he saw only the hardened faces of the elders and the leaders. His friends and neighbors turned away.

As Naboth was dragged out of the city, he thought, "Surely this nightmare must end soon." They came to the place of stoning. Naboth was forced to his knees. The two witnesses stepped forward with huge rocks in their hands; they hurled

¹⁰The KJV has "sons of Belial," which is a literal translation of the text and means "sons of worthlessness." Hence the rendering in the NASB and other modern translations.

them at Naboth. The pain began. The stones rained on his body and head. Finally, his body was broken, his skull was crushed, and he lost consciousness. He gave a final gasp and died, a martyr to his commitment to the Lord.

The horror was not over. Others would inherit Naboth's vineyard. All the loose ends must be tied up. Ten chapters later, 2 Kings 9:26 adds a horrifying detail we do not find in 1 Kings 20:21 They also took Naboth's boys and killed them!

"Then they sent word to Jezebel, saying, 'Naboth has been stoned, and is dead'" (v. 14). Jezebel had signed Ahab's name to the letter, but she did not fool anyone. The city officials knew who sent the letter. They knew who was boss; they knew whom they should notify.

Picture Jezebel walking in her beautiful gardens or sitting in all her finery in her music room, listening to the king's orchestra. Word came: "Naboth has been stoned, and is dead." Jezebel had no thoughts of compassion for a mother fighting for the bodies of her husband and boys against the mangy, half-starved dogs that ran in packs, dogs that licked up the blood of her loved ones.¹¹ She had no thought for that mother who was trying to arrange those broken bodies, preparing them for burial, washing the bodies not only with water but with her tears. Jezebel was all smiles as she went to her sulking husband, for the law of the land¹² said the land of a traitor reverted to the crown.

And it came about 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" (v. 15).

Jezebel was boasting, "I told you I could do it, Ahab—and I have!"

This rejuvenated the pouting potentate! "And it came about when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab arose to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it" (v. 16). Ahab got out of bed, put his clothes on, perhaps ate a hasty meal, and went down to the vineyard, probably with a song on his lips.

GOD'S PATIENCE RUNS OUT

¹¹ See verse 19.

¹² This was not a law of God, but a customary law in the ancient Near East.

(21:17-24, 27-29; 22:38; 2 KINGS 9:21-36)

That was it. God's patience ran out. God said, "That's enough!" We read in verse 17, "Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite." Here we see the "word of the Lord" again. Elijah was back in business! God commanded Elijah,

"Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who is [or which is] in Samaria; behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth where he has gone down to take possession of it. And you shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the Lord, "Have you murdered [literally, slaughtered], and also taken possession?"' And you shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the Lord, "In the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth the dogs shall lick up your blood, even yours"' (vv. 18, 19).

At the vineyard, Ahab was walking in his new property with those who had come with him. He was probably planning his garden: "I'll put tomatoes here . . . corn there . . . onions over there . . . and broccoli . . . forget the broccoli." If Ahab had looked carefully, he might have seen footprints in the soft soil—the large footprints of Naboth, the smaller footprints of Naboth's wife, the still smaller footprints of Naboth's sons—but Ahab was blind to those. Then he heard a footstep. Turning, he saw his conscience incarnate—his old nemesis, Elijah, still in his rough clothing, his eyes shining like fire in their deep sockets. Ahab asked, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" (v. 20a). Some writers think Ahab meant, "Have you found me *out*?" Elijah replied, "I have found you [not because I am your enemy, but because of your sin], because you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the Lord" (v. 20b).

The person who sells out to evil invariably finds that he has sold himself for nothing. Achan sold himself for a rich mantle and a wedge of gold, and he ended up with nothing. Judas sold himself for thirty pieces of silver and received no benefit from them. Ahab sold himself for a plot of earth, but his days were numbered.

Someone may object: "Wait a minute. Ahab didn't murder Naboth; he didn't even send out the contract." That is true, but at some point Ahab was probably aware of what was happening. If he was not, he should have been. One thing is sure: He was willing to accept the fruits of the ungodly deed. A point made throughout the Bible is that the husband is responsible for the decisions made in his household. It is a fearsome responsibility to be a

husband and a father. Take the job seriously!

Elijah's voice continued like the voice of doom:

"Behold, I will bring evil upon you [there is a play on words here: Since you sold yourself to evil, I will give you what you sold yourself for], and will utterly sweep you away, and will cut off from Ahab every male, both bond and free in Israel; and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, because of the provocation with which you have provoked Me to anger, and because you have made Israel sin" (vv. 21, 22).

The two houses Elijah mentioned, the house of Jeroboam and the house of Baasha, were exterminated because of sin. Elijah continued:

"And of Jezebel also has the Lord spoken, saying, 'The dogs shall eat Jezebel in the district of Jezreel.' The one belonging to Ahab, who dies in the city, the dogs shall eat, and the one who dies in the field the birds of heaven shall eat" (vv. 23, 24).

It would be hard to imagine more terrifying predictions of doom!

There is one more detail we need to notice: According to 2 Kings 9:25, at least two other men were present when Elijah confronted Ahab. One was *Jehu*, one of Ahab's commanders and the one God had said would take Ahab's place (1 Kings 19:16f.). No doubt this scene and message were indelibly etched on Jehu's mind.

When we come to verse 27, we find something unexpected, almost startling. Ahab was terrified. "It came about when Ahab heard these words, that he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and fasted, and he lay in sackcloth and went about despondently." God again showed Himself a gracious God. Ahab's show of sorrow won him a reprieve for several years.

Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, "Do you see how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the evil in his days, but I will bring the evil upon his house in his son's days" (vv. 28, 29).

In these verses we find two powerful messages. First, even someone as hardened as Ahab can be touched. Second, God honors His promises, even with someone like Ahab. Clyde Miller made this observation:

If God would be compassionate toward the most

wicked kings of Israel and Judah when they turned to him, and he can save the "chief of sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15), there is no limit to his power and willingness to save all who come to him in penitence and obedience (Heb. 5:7-9).¹³

The chapter ends there, but the story does not. Ahab's repentance, if it can be called repentance, was short-lived. Nothing happened to Ahab. *Three years* went by (1 Kings 22:1), and nothing happened. No plague fell on Ahab. No lightning flashed from heaven; the earth did not open up and swallow him. Ahab went back to his old ways.¹⁴ I can imagine Jezebel at the dinner table, passing Ahab a serving bowl of fresh vegetables and saying, "Have some peas and carrots, Ahab. These are out of the garden I gave you." She might have laughed and said, "Old Elijah said the dogs would lick your blood where Naboth's was licked, but I've never seen you look better!" I imagine, however, that Ahab gave a shudder every time a dog barked.

With that, we come to chapter 22. Three years had passed without war with Syria; now war was resumed. Ben-hadad had not done what he said he would do; Ramoth-gilead was still in the hands of the Syrians. Ahab enlisted the help of the king of Judah and prepared to do battle. A prophet of God warned him not to go. Ahab refused to listen to the prophet; nevertheless, he was exceedingly nervous. He disguised himself as he went into battle. He did not wear his royal robes over his armor as was the custom. Ben-hadad, the king of Syria, sent out thirty-two charioteers to look for Ahab, but they could not find him. Then a nameless, aimless archer shot an arrow into the air, and that arrow found a chink in Ahab's armor. Apparently, an artery was severed. Ahab was propped up in the chariot, perhaps so he would not appear wounded; but with every beat of his heart, his life's blood poured onto the floor of the chariot until Ahab died. We read in verse 38, "And they washed the chariot by the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood . . . according to the word of the Lord which He spoke." God's promises are sure.

That still did not finish the story. *Twenty years* went by. We are reminded that God's ways are not our ways and God's schedule is not our schedule. Much happened during those twenty years. Elijah went to heaven in a whirlwind. Elisha started his

¹³Clyde M. Miller, *Living Word Commentary on First and Second Kings* (Abilene, Tex.: ACU Press, 1991), 298.

¹⁴Ecclesiastes 8:11.

great ministry. Ahab's son Jehoram (or Joram) came to the throne. Jezebel was the ungodly queen mother. At last, however, the time came for the story's conclusion (2 Kings 9).

Jehoram was wounded in battle at Ramoth-gilead. He went back to Jezreel, leaving Jehu in charge of his forces. Elisha sent a prophet to anoint Jehu as the next king.

Jehu started toward Jezreel, with the army behind him. When he was about six or seven miles away, the watchman on the wall saw him. A messenger was sent out to meet Jehu. Jehu told him, "Turn behind me" (v. 19), and he did. A second messenger was sent out; he also ended up riding behind Jehu. By this time Jehu was closer to the city, and the watchman reported, "The driving is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi, for he drives furiously" (v. 20).

Jehoram and Judah's king, Ahaziah, went out to meet Jehu. Notice where they met: "They . . . found him in the property of Naboth the Jezreelite" (v. 21)—not in the property of the king of Israel, but in Naboth's property. As far as God was concerned, it was Naboth's property; the law had decreed the property could not leave the family to whom it was given.

Jehu killed Jehoram and then went into the city. Jezebel heard what was happening "and she painted her eyes and adorned her head, and looked out the window" (v. 30).

And as Jehu entered the gate, she said, "Is it well, Zimri, your master's murderer?" [She called him "Zimri" because Zimri had come to the throne by treachery.] Then he lifted up his face to the window and said, "Who is on my side? Who?" And two or three officials looked down at him. And he said, "Throw her down." So they threw her down, and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall and on the horses, and he trampled her under foot. When he came in, he ate and drank; and he said, "See now to this cursed woman and bury her, for she is a king's daughter." And they went to bury her, but they found no more of her than the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands. Therefore they returned and told him. And he said, "This is the word of the Lord, which He spoke by His servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 'In the property of Jezreel the dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel'" (vv. 31-36).

Someone may say, "Why does the Bible tell us things like that? That's disgusting!" It is not a pretty sight, but the consequences of sin are never pretty. If you want to know what sin is all about, do not look at Ahab's ivory palace, but at the dogs licking

up his blood. Do not look at Jezebel in her jewels and fine clothes, but at the dogs with bloated stomachs. Do not look at the ads extolling drinking, but at the broken bodies of teen-agers on the highway. Do not look at the movies glorifying sexual immorality, but at the horrors of the AIDS epidemic!

CONCLUSION

The story of Ahab and Jezebel is a sad one, but it is not merely a sad story. It is much more than that if we can grasp the lessons God has for us:

First, God's patience has an end—and no one can know when that will come. Nothing is more dangerous than rejecting the overtures of God's mercy and love. I do not know when one reaches the "point of no return," as described in our last lesson. It is possible, however, that some are dangerously close to that point—and some, perhaps, have even passed it.

Second, God's promises are sure—and no one can change them. When God says something, that is it. We may think, "Surely this cannot be," but if God said it, you can count on it. Some may protest, "I'm not as bad as Ahab and Jezebel." That is not the issue. You are a sinner (Romans 3:23), and God's promise to sinners is clear: "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Believe it, and flee to the Lord for mercy!

Third, God's pronouncements always contain mercy, and no man should refuse it. God's promises, whether curses or blessings, always have conditions, whether stated or implied. Even hardhearted Ahab stayed God's wrath for three years by showing *humility*. God's wrath could probably have been averted indefinitely by true and continued repentance on Ahab's part. Be aware of God's mercy, and claim God's blessings.

Do not let God's patience run out on you!

Author's Note: R. G. Lee preached a sermon, "Pay Day Someday," based on Ahab and Jezebel. I am indebted to that sermon for some of the images I have used in this lesson.

VISUAL-AID NOTES

Make a large sign with these words on it: "GOD SAID, 'THAT'S ENOUGH!'" Use it with the introductory illustrations; then lay it down until the climactic moment in the lesson when God said, "That's enough!" to Ahab and Jezebel. Leave the

sign displayed as you tell of their deaths. Then use it as part of your invitation: "Do not continue to reject the grace of God. You do not want to hear God say to you, "That's enough!"

LESSON OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

- A. We enjoy lessons on the love and mercy of God, but we cannot preach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) without also preaching on the justice and holiness of God—the side of God that cannot countenance sin. Our series on Elijah now brings us to a lesson of that nature.
- B. Before going to 1 Kings 21, let us establish the principle we will be illustrating:
 - 1. Old Testament passages: Proverbs 29:1; 6:12, 15
 - 2. Illustrations:
 - a. Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19)
 - b. The kingdoms of Israel and Judah (2 Chronicles 36)
 - c. Belshazzar (Daniel 5)
 - d. Herod Agrippa (Acts 12; note v. 23)
 - 3. New Testament expressions (Romans 1; Hebrews 6; 1 John 5)
- C. We have seen the evil of Ahab and Jezebel. We will now see one of the most despicable acts in the Scriptures, and we will see God saying, "That's enough!"

I. THE SIN AGAINST NABOTH (21:1-16)

- A. "Now it came about after these things" (v. 1a):
 - 1. After Elijah dropped out of sight
 - 2. After Ahab and Israel had resumed their normal activities
- B. Ahab wanted a field, and Naboth would not let him have it.
 - 1. Verse 1b: The capital city of Samaria was thirty-five to forty miles south of Jezreel, but Ahab had a castle in Jezreel.
 - 2. Verse 2: Ahab wanted Naboth's vineyard, but when the Israelites went into Canaan, land was allotted to the tribes and families, and the land was to *stay* with those families (Leviticus 25).
 - 3. Verse 3: Naboth was one of the seven thousand who had not bowed to Baal.
 - 4. Verse 4: Ahab pouted because he could

not have the vineyard.

- 5. Verse 5: Jezebel came to see what the problem was.
- 6. Verse 6: Ahab told his "sad story."
- 7. Verse 7: Jezebel taunted her husband and then said, "I'll take care of it."
- C. To get the field, they devised a scheme that perverted God's laws.
 - 1. Verse 9:
 - a. A fast was proclaimed. Law number 1: Proclaim a fast to ward off the wrath of God.
 - b. Naboth was given a place of honor "among the people." Law number 2: All the people must be involved in the fast.
 - 2. Verse 10:
 - a. Worthless men were bribed to lie about Naboth. Law number 3: Have two or three witnesses.
 - b. They charged Naboth with blasphemy. Law number 4: Blasphemy was punishable by death. Law number 5: It was to be death by stoning.
- D. Naboth was killed, and Jezebel and Ahab were happy.
 - 1. Naboth was killed (along with his heirs; see 2 Kings 9:26).
 - 2. Verse 14: The message was sent to Jezebel.
 - 3. Verse 15: She told Ahab.
 - 4. Verse 16: Ahab was happy again.

II. GOD'S PATIENCE RUNS OUT (21:17-24, 27-29; 22:38; 2 Kings 9:21-36).

- A. Elijah delivers God's message.
 - 1. Verses 17-19: The word of the Lord came again to Elijah.
 - 2. Verses 20-24: Elijah found Ahab and delivered God's message:
 - a. The dogs would lick Ahab's blood where they licked Naboth's blood (see v. 19).
 - b. The dogs would eat Jezebel at Jezreel (v. 23).
 - c. Other men were present, including Jehu (2 Kings 9:25). This scene and message were indelibly etched into Jehu's mind.
 - 3. Verses 27-29: Surprise! Ahab was terrified and humbled himself, winning a reprieve for several years.

- B. Unfortunately, Ahab's repentance was short-lived. Nothing happened to Ahab, and he returned to his old ways (note Ecclesiastes 8:11).
- C. God's frightening promises were fulfilled.
 - 1. Ahab (1 Kings 22)
 - a. Ahab went to battle in disguise. The arrow of a nameless, aimless archer found a chink in Ahab's armor.
 - b. Verse 38: God's promises are sure.
 - 2. Jezebel (2 Kings 9)
 - a. Twenty years passed. Elijah was replaced by Elisha. Ahab's son Jehoram was on the throne, and Jezebel was the ungodly queen

mother. It was time for the conclusion of the story of Ahab and Jezebel.

- b. Read 2 Kings 9:21, 25, 26, 30-36. What a sad, sad story!

CONCLUSION

- A. God wants us to learn from this story:
 - 1. God's patience has an end—and no one can know when it will come.
 - 2. God's promises are sure—and no one can change them.
 - 3. God's pronouncements include mercy—and no one should refuse it.
- B. Let us never forget that God is a God of mercy *and* a God of justice.

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