



Fire from Heaven

Eight Studies in the Life of Elijah
from 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 2
by **Peter J Blackburn**

6. I Want that Vineyard!

Bible Reference: 1 Kings 21

Read: 1 Kings 21.1-7

Ahab wanted Naboth's vineyard so that he could have a garden of his own (1 Kings 21.1-2). At first sight his offer seems fair and reasonable. It was close to the palace – a king is a busy person and needs something convenient. He was offering either a better vineyard or a cash compensation. Of course, he wanted to use it for a vegetable garden – so the well-established vines would have to go. (Note that grape vines, once established, continue productive for a very long time. Not just the inheritance, but the vineyard itself may have been there for many years.)

We find it a little difficult to understand Naboth's attitude to his inheritance. In our society, we assume that ownership also involves a right to buy and sell. Note Leviticus 25.23ff – "Your land must not be sold on a permanent basis, because you do not own it; it belongs to the Lord, and you are like foreigners who are allowed to make use of it." Every fifty years there was to be a year of Restoration (vv.8ff). On that year everything had to revert to its original owner. Land prices, instead of going up with inflation, went down as the year of restoration came closer. Naboth was a God-fearing man and not even an offer from the king could take away his responsibilities towards the land.

Although the offer seemed reasonable and came from the king himself, Naboth refused it on the grounds that it was his inheritance – he was duty bound before the Lord to retain it.

7. There is a God is Israel! Bible Reference: 2 Kings 1.

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Ahab went home “depressed and angry.” On hearing the story, Jezebel replied, “Are you the king or aren’t you?” She assumed that, as king, he had absolute rights. In reality, even a king’s rights are limited by the sovereignty of God. “I will get you Naboth’s vineyard!” (vv.4-7)

Reflect:

- What is the proper attitude to our possessions?
- What is the difference between ownership and stewardship?
- What is the relationship between rights and responsibilities? In what ways are our rights limited by the sovereignty of God?

Jezebel's Scheme

Read: 1 Kings 21.8-16.

Now “the officials and leading citizens of Jezreel” were brought into Jezebel’s nasty plan. A day of fasting was called and Naboth was given the place of prominence. (Compare 1 Samuel 7.6. The inference seemed to be that there was some public evil that had to be redressed.)

He was then accused “by two scoundrels” of “cursing God and the king” – he had done nothing of the sort! The great evil of Jezebel is seen in her scheme (as a Baal-worshipper) to accuse Naboth of blasphemy against the Lord, the penalty for which was death (vv. 8-15).

The Lord’s Judgment

Read: 1 Kings 21.17-29.

But the Lord regarded this scheme as murder and stealing (v.19), and Elijah came with the word of the Lord's judgment (vv.20b-24). Ahab seemed totally given over to evil - aided and abetted by Jezebel (vv.25-6). Yet when he showed signs of humility before God, the Lord was prepared to defer the predicted disaster.

Reflect:

- Think again about the question (in study 2) about the purpose of the Lord's judgments. Is there a point at which a person is no longer able to repent?

- Think about the story of Jonah who became disappointed and angry when the people of Nineveh humbled themselves before the Lord.