

Elijah the Tishbite

- Naboth's vineyard (chapter 21)

This evening's study (God willing)

Section 1:

Naboth...
had a
vineyard
(1 Kings 21)

Section 2:

Which
things
are an
allegory



Section 1:

Naboth... had a vineyard

A standalone account

- The massed armies of Syria/Israel in the previous chapter (20) transition to the account of a single man and his vineyard (chapter 21)
- Seemingly, this chapter focuses in on one, Naboth, of the seven thousand remnant referred to in 1 Kings 19 v 8
- The faithful stand made by Naboth (an 'unknown') initiates a sequence of events that shaped the future destiny of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah
- These events provide an intricate portrayal of the eventual betrayal and murder of the Lord Jesus Christ, one greater than Naboth...

**Lesson – precious to
God are his saints**

The scene is set, Naboth values his inheritance

1 Kings 21 v 1-3

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

- Each tribe’s inheritance must be preserved (cp. Num. 36 v 7, [Note: contrast Esau, who sold his rights of inheritance! Cp. H
- Perhaps a great temptation for Naboth, who – along with the nation – had previously suffered severe droughts (1 Kings 17 v 1)?
- Could have rationalised the sale – escaping from proximity to the palace?
- In some ways, these events a fulfilment of prophecy in 1 Samuel 8 v 10, 14

Lesson – beware of compromise & self-justification

The king goes off and sulks

Lesson – want versus need can be confused

1 Kings 21 v 4-7

“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. But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said unto him, Why is thy spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread? And he said unto her, Because I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him, Give me thy vineyard for money; or else, if it please thee, I will give thee another vineyard for it: and he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard. 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.”

- Ahab’s behaviour is childish and petulant, he had not got his own way (but equally it is clear that there was no *legal* basis to get what he wanted)
- Contrast Ezra (10 v 6) who did “eat no bread” due to mourning transgression
- “I will give thee”, said Jezebel, seeking to overturn God’s allotment of an inheritance to each of the families of Israel (Numbers 26 v 52-56)

“Thou shalt not covet”

Lesson – sin’s
corrupting influence
grows

- A sorry sequence of (escalating) events:

“Give me thy
vineyard” v. 2
**X. Thou shalt
not covet**¹

“set two men... to
bear witness” v. 10
**IX. Thou shalt not
bear false witness**²

“he died” v. 13
**VI. Thou shalt
not kill**³

“Ahab rose... to
take possession”
v. 16
**VIII. Thou shalt
not steal**⁴

¹ Exodus 20 v 17
² v 16 ³ v 13 ⁴ v 15

- Some parallels with David’s sin with Bathsheba, although that of weakness so forgiven when repented of (2 Samuel 11, 12)

The miscarriage of justice

1 Kings 21 v 8-13

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

**Lesson – to permit a
Jezebel = to be an
Ahab**

- How corrupt the elders of Jezreel had become, alongside false witnesses
- Jezebel led others astray, as she became a figure for in future (e.g. Rev. 2 v 20)
- The stoning commandment of Lev. 24 v 16 unlawfully used (& Exo. 22 v 28)
- More than just Naboth killed, cp. 2 Kings 9 v 26 (would have passed on to sons)

A clear and chilling judgement

Lesson – we will reap
what we sow
(ultimately)

1 Kings 21 v 16-24

“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. And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 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. 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 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. 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 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 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.”

- “Hast thou killed”
direct blood guiltiness
(as David with Uriah,
2 Samuel 12 v 9)
- Symmetry of
judgement, posterity
for posterity
- Vengeance is the
LORD’s (Deut. 32 v 35),
through his chosen
vessel Jehu (see 2 Kings
9, 10)... in the same
place! (2 Kings 9 v 21>)

God's amazing grace even to undeserving

1 Kings 21 v 25-29

“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. 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. 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.”

- Judgement was deferred by a generation (as also in case of other OT kings)
- It would be Ahab's son, Jehoram, who would eventually be slain by Jehu
- For God to have been merciful in this way, this must have been a meaningful self-humbling
- Perhaps a matter that Elijah had to personally grapple with?

**Lesson – how much
more mercy to us
(Gw)**



Section 2:

Which things are an allegory

The familiar **figure** of the vineyard

Isaiah 5 v 1-7

“Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. **For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.**”

Luke 20 v 9-16

“Then began he to speak to the people this parable; A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time. And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard: but the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty. And again he sent another servant: and they beat him also, and entreated him shamefully, and sent him away empty. And again he sent a third: and they wounded him also, and cast him out. Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him. **But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him.** What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them? He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it, they said, God forbid.”

The detailed allegory, simply summarised

Naboth the Jezreelite	Jesus of Nazareth
Worked in the vineyard	Came to God's vineyard, seeking fruit (Luke 13 v 6-9)
Ahab tried to take his inheritance, asking Naboth to break law	The religious leaders sought to entrap him (Mark 12 v 13)
Naboth remained faithful in this trial and to the end	Suffered, being tempted, did no sin (Hebrews 2 v 18, 4 v 15)
The heir to be cut off so the wicked could get their way	"This is the heir... let us kill him" (Luke 20 v 14)
A Jew (Ahab) and a Gentile (Jezebel) conspired to murder	Jews and Gentiles joined in power against him (Acts 4 v 27)
An illegal trial held, with false witnesses brought forward	An illegal trial held, with false witnesses (Matthew 26 v 59)
The accusation is blasphemy	The accusation is blasphemy (Matthew 26 v 65)
He was taken out of the city to die a cruel death	Jesus crucified outside the city walls (Hebrews 13 v 12)
The guilty party (Ahab) had posterity cut off	The betrayer (Judas) had posterity cut off (Psalm 109 v 8-13)

Our conclusion

- A **highly evocative sequence** that contains many lessons for believers of all ages
- It is evident that as well as the surface reading, there is **great depth to the allegory** contained in these events (pointing forwards to the murder of our innocent Lord Jesus Christ)
- It is our hope, God willing, that we might meet both **Elijah and Naboth in the future fruitful vineyard of God** (when the harvest is complete)