

## **AHAB'S SIN – COVETOUSNESS, MURDER**

– *OCTOBER 3. – 1 KINGS 21. –*

KING AHAB'S IVORY PALACE – HE COVETED LARGER GARDENS – NABOTH REFUSED LARGE MONEY – AHAB WAS VEXED – HIS QUEEN EFFECTED NABOTH'S MURDER – GOD THROUGH ELIJAH REPROVED KING AHAB, PROMISING PUNISHMENT – MODERN APPLICATIONS AND LESSONS.

**"Be sure your sin will find you out." – Numbers 32:23.**

KING AHAB had concluded a great war victoriously, defeating the Syrians, who had attempted an invasion of Israel's land. The fame of the king had gone abroad. He was feeling his own greatness, perhaps. Indeed, Ahab is rated as one of the great kings of Israel. Although not truly great, he had certain progressive elements of character. While King Solomon had the distinction of being the first king to have a throne of ivory, for King Ahab has been claimed the distinction of having a palace of ivory. His gorgeous palace needed a large and handsome garden. His neighbor Naboth had a vineyard adjoining, which would make the surroundings of the palace ideal.

Messengers were sent to Naboth to negotiate the purchase; and a goodly sum of money was offered for the vineyard. Naboth, within his rights, refused to sell. As the sequel shows, however, he would have been the wiser not to have stood for his full rights. The Jewish Law forbade, indeed, the selling of family inheritances; but he could have given a lease for a time to the king's pleasement and to his own profit.

The Bible suggests to Christians the wisdom of being accommodating in every manner not in violation of conscience.

While they have as great rights as others (or greater, perhaps, on account of being God's children), nevertheless it is part of their covenant with the Lord that **[R5771 : page 284]** they will not live for themselves merely, but chiefly for the service of the Lord and their fellows. They are forewarned also not to expect full justice – although always to seek to give justice, in harmony with the Golden Rule, full measure pressed down. They are to realize that in taking this course they will have more and more the Lord's blessing, and that the experiences of character development under such conditions will be helpful to them as respects the coming Kingdom.

### **QUEEN JEZEBEL FEARED NOT GOD**

Of all the characters on the pages of history Queen Jezebel, Ahab's wife, stands out prominently as one of the most conscienceless. Noting that King Ahab appeared despondent, she asked the cause. On learning it she promised the king that she would give him Naboth's vineyard, and advised that he should, therefore, cheer up. Immediately she wrote letters in King Ahab's name, using his royal seal. She instructed some of the officials that on an appointed fast-day, on which the people would be in mourning to the Lord for their sins, Naboth should be given a seat of great honor. Two men were to be bribed to rise up then, suddenly in the midst of the meeting, and denounce Naboth as a slanderer of God and of the king. The rulers thereupon were to hear the evidence and to put the penalty promptly into execution. The Jewish Law provided that any blasphemy against God's name should be punished by stoning. The hired witnesses promptly denounced Naboth and corroborated each other's testimony. Forthwith a company arose, and stoned the man to death outside the city.

The hypocrisy of the proceedings astounds one. The proclaiming of the fast was seemingly in honor of God's laws and His justice. The Queen's perfidy matches anything on the pages of

history. The servility of the governors to her behests evidences what a low state of morals prevailed.

King Ahab seems to have been the passive beneficiary of all this wickedness. He was, nevertheless, the accountable person. His course proves that he was not truly great. Riches and station cannot make greatness, but character only can do so. The king was very willing to profit by his wife's shameful course. Upon hearing through her that Naboth was dead, he went over to look at Naboth's vineyard and to consider how it might be adapted to his purposes as a part of the palace garden.

Just as he was entering the garden he was met by Elijah, who had been sent by the Lord with a message of reproof. The king saluted the Prophet, saying, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" Elijah answered, "I have found thee; because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord." Then he informed the king that Divine judgment was that in the same place that the dogs had licked the blood of Naboth, dogs should also lick the king's blood, and that Queen Jezebel would have a similar fate.

### **PRESENT WAR RESULT OF SELFISHNESS**

It should be remarked that at present, as in the past, God is not serving as a policeman to safeguard the world against its own fallen conditions, appetites, covetousness, etc. For six thousand years the Lord seems to have contented Himself with letting mankind learn their own lessons, except so far as their course of sin might interfere with the outworking of God's great plans. In such cases the sentiment of the Lord seems to have been, "Thus far shalt thou go and no farther."

Undoubtedly the permission to mankind to do great injury to themselves is a very practical way of inculcating important lessons. God seems to be bidding the angels to no longer restrain, but to let loose the four winds of heaven – to allow mankind to engage in

universal strife – unhindered. The result is the most stupendous of wars, impoverishing all nations engaged therein, costing millions of lives in the flower of manhood, and entailing debts, to pay interest on which will impoverish the people for long years to come – debts which probably never can be paid. The Bible indicates that following the war will come a great revolution and that following it may be expected anarchy. The winds of strife, now let loose, may be expected to injure the world unrestrained by the Almighty until, in man's extremity, God's opportunity will come, and the Kingdom of Messiah will be established for the blessing of the world.

With the establishment of God's Kingdom everything will be changed. No longer will sins be permitted and the punishments follow; but instead, punishments will be inflicted upon those who attempt to do evil – before they shall have done the evil. For the Lord has promised, saying, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My Holy Mountain [Kingdom]." (Isaiah 11:9.) In that glorious time all good intentions and good endeavors will have God's blessing and will bring uplift mentally, morally and physically to those participating. Thus will be fulfilled a Scripture which declares, "When the judgments of the Lord are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." – Isaiah 26:9.

## **THE SIN OF COVETOUSNESS**

Sin and selfishness are, practically, synonymous terms. When Adam was perfect, in the image and likeness of God, he was unselfish, just, generous, kind, benevolent; **[R5771 : page 285]** for these are elements of the Divine disposition, and man must have had these when in God's likeness. The first of all sins was committed by Satan. It was to forward his ambitious, selfish designs that he misrepresented the Divine message, contradicted the Almighty, became the father of lies and the murderer of Adam and his race. Mother Eve's course also was prompted by an acquired selfishness. She thirsted for knowledge, which, the serpent told her,

she could get by disobeying God. Father Adam's disobedience was not of ignorance, but because he believed that his life would be happier by disobeying and sharing Mother Eve's experiences.

Today, wherever we look, we can clearly trace all sin back to its fountain, selfishness. Covetousness is selfishness – sin. It is very prevalent because all are sinners. Our laws indeed seek to protect us in our just rights, yet how unsuccessful we often are in securing our rights, and in defending ourselves against those who would unjustly violate the Golden Rule.

The lesson for all is that nothing short of the Golden Rule is acceptable in God's sight from any professing to be of His children. A second lesson is that while we are to render justice and the Golden Rule's requirement to all, without exception, we are not always to demand justice, the Golden Rule, etc., from others. Rather, God's people are to consider themselves His representatives and ambassadors in a land and amongst people alienated from Him and His Government. The Lord's children, always just, are to be also generous and to "show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvelous light." As their Heavenly Father is generous as well as just, so are His children to be partakers of His character-likeness and to be helpers in everything that makes for righteousness.

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