

AHAB – THE POUTING KING

(Romans 6:23)

Purpose: To show that God is not willing that men should perish, but calls them to repentance.

One day King Ahab, the ruler of Israel, was visiting his summer palace in Jezreel. As he looked out at his garden he admired all the beautiful things he possessed.

Where in all the world was a garden as lovely as this? A garden to be treasured and it was his, all his!

As the king stood there admiring his garden he tried to think of some way to add to its beauty. Suddenly he noticed something.

Right next to his own garden, just on the other side of the wall, was a fine vineyard. The vines were heavy with fruit, and the king could see that the land was good.

Right away King Ahab wanted that vineyard. Why, it was just what he needed to enlarge his garden! He could tear out the grape vines and plant whatever he wanted to.

Greatly excited by his new discovery, King Ahab went to see the owner of the vineyard – a man by the name of Naboth.

The king told Naboth how he wanted the vineyard because it was near his own garden, and he was ready to buy it at whatever price the land was worth.

But Naboth didn't want to sell. He explained to the king that this vineyard had been in his family for many years.

To Naboth, this land was something to be guarded with care because God had given it to his family as their inheritance. According to the law, Naboth's inheritance was his very own.

Not even the king could take it away. Here was something the king wanted and couldn't have.

And that made Ahab very angry. How dared Naboth refuse him – the king! Especially when he was willing to pay any price for the vineyard!

When Ahab returned to his court in Samaria he thought about his disappointment and the more he thought, the more miserable he felt.

All his great palaces, his riches and his power were nothing to King Ahab now. What was the use of being king if he couldn't have what he wanted?

King Ahab was so unhappy that he went to bed and he wouldn't talk to anyone.

The servants became alarmed when the king lost his appetite and refused to eat, and they decided they should go tell the queen.

Queen Jezebel was a very wicked woman, cruel and selfish, and she was powerful too. King Ahab ruled Israel, but Queen Jezebel ruled the king.

When the servants reported that the king was sad and wouldn't eat his food, Queen Jezebel prepared to take care of the matter right away.

"Is that all that's wrong?" she laughed as she soothed the king. "Come, get up and eat and be happy. I'll get the vineyard for you."

So Queen Jezebel wrote letters to the rulers of Jezreel, the city where Naboth lived, which was quite a distance from the king's palace in Samaria.

And she signed the letters with the king's name and stamped them with his seal, so the rulers of the city would be forced to obey.

The letters commanded that Naboth be brought before the people and that two wicked men be found who would swear that Naboth had spoken against God and the king.

And the letter went on to say, *"Then carry him out and stone him, that he may die."* And with the king's signature on the letter and the king's seal, what could the rulers do but follow the orders?

Of course when Naboth was put on trial he tried to tell the people he was a God-fearing man and that he would never talk against God or the king.

But the two false witnesses swore that Naboth was guilty and the people believed them.

Naboth was carried outside the city walls and stoned to death.

When Queen Jezebel received the report that Naboth was dead, she said to Ahab, *"Go, take possession of the vineyard that Naboth refused to sell you, for now Naboth is not alive, but dead."*

Ahab was delighted with his clever queen. She not only gave him what he wanted, but now it wouldn't cost him a penny!

So the king lost no time in getting on his way. He was already excited at the thought of standing in that vineyard and saying, "It's mine, all mine!"

Of course, with Naboth dead there was no one to stand in the king's way. No one, that is, except God. Ahab had forgotten God, but God hadn't forgotten Ahab.

Elijah was a great prophet, and God spoke to him and told him to meet Ahab, King of Israel in the vineyard of Naboth, and the Lord told Elijah what to say to the wicked king. So King Ahab stood in the vineyard.

But what he saw made his heart stand still! There stood Elijah – the stern prophet of God!

And Ahab cried out, *"Have you found me, O my enemy?"*

And Elijah answered, *"I have found you because you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the Lord."* And Ahab heard from the lips of Elijah the terrible price he would pay for his sin.

Ahab's heart was melted with fear as he heard that his whole house would be wiped out – himself, his queen, all his sons – and there would be no one left to carry on his name.

The Bible tells us in Romans 6:23, *“The wages of sin is death”*. And with that fearful warning God seeks to turn us from our own way of destruction to a way of life. For God offers hope with a wonderful promise to all who are willing to hear:

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord.” (Romans 6:23)

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