

## Ahab's Evil Politics

Anyone who has ever read through 1 or 2 Kings is aware of a king of Israel named AHAB. Ahab reigned from roughly 871-852 BC. The Bible sums him up in one sentence: Ahab "*did more evil in the eyes of the LORD than any of those before him,*" (1 Kings 16:30). His ungodly wife Jezebel, was partly a major enabler to Ahab in his evil.

Ahab had no less than five encounters with the Lord God's prophets [1]:

1. The first encounter is with Elijah, who predicts a drought because of Ahab's sins.[1 Kings 17:1]...This encounter ends with Elijah's victory over the prophets of Baal in a contest held for the sake of Ahab and the Israelites, to bring them into repentance.[1 Kings 18:17-40]
2. The second encounter is between Ahab and an unnamed prophet in 1 Kings 20:22.
3. The third is again between Ahab and an unnamed prophet who condemns Ahab for his actions in a battle that had just taken place.[1 Kings 20:34-43]
4. The fourth is when Elijah confronts Ahab over his role in the unjust execution of Naboth and usurpation of the latter's ancestral vineyard.[1 Kings 21:1-16] Upon the prophet's remonstrance ("Hast thou killed and also taken possession?"[1 Kings 21:19]), Ahab sincerely repented, which God relays to Elijah.[1 Kings 21:27]
5. The fifth encounter is with Micaiah, the prophet who, when asked for advice to recapturing Ramoth-Gilead, sarcastically assures Ahab that he will be successful. Micaiah ultimately tells him the truth of God's plan to kill Ahab in battle, due to his reliance on the false prophets, who were empowered by a deceiving spirit.[1 Kings 22]

Ahab was a major problem for Israel and literally the "shadow government" that we hear so much about today. In spite of the abject evil of Ahab/Jezebel, it *seems* like God simply ignores it. Of course He doesn't and what is assumed to be God's "ignorance" is really His *grace* intended to give Ahab time to turn to God. But for the duration of his reign, Ahab not only rejected God and God's ways, but capitulated to his wife Jezebel in encouraging her to worship Baal. Why would God allow this to occur in the nation He created from Abraham? Certainly God had His reasons.

But in spite of all the terribly godless things Ahab did during his 20-year reign, probably the thing that most disturbs me is Ahab's tacit approval of the murder of Naboth (1 Kings 21), to take Naboth's vineyard/land. Here was a godly man of Israel simply trying to live in obedience to God because he obviously *feared* God, which enabled him to stand up to the king. How else could he have stood up to Ahab? Obeying God was far more important to Naboth.

Ahab came to Naboth with an offer he didn't think Naboth could refuse. But Naboth *does* refuse the offer. The land/vineyard came to his family through lots and he knew that he should not give it or sell it away. He was trying to remain faithful to the Mosaic Law. Yes, there were times when a person could sell their land when in dire straits but this is also where the "kinsman redeemer" came in (also in the Mosaic Law), so eventually, the land could be received back to the family who originally owned it. A person's land was not simply to be given or sold to people

outside that immediately family. Ahab undoubtedly knew this but thought that money could buy anything.

After being rebuffed by Naboth, Ahab goes back to his palace *sullen*, refusing to eat anything. Jezebel asks what was wrong. He explains. She reminds him he is KING of Israel and should be able to take whatever he wants, no ifs, ands, or buts! She then promises to get him the vineyard.

Jezebel's vengeful scheme employs the use of lies and murder, but does so through the *technicalities* of the Mosaic Law. So she creates a document and signs it as though signed by Ahab in which she demands that a feast be held in honor of Naboth. During the feast, she says that there should be two worthless men (sons of Belial), sitting near Naboth. During the feast, they were to publicly accuse Naboth of blaspheming God *and* the king. According to the Mosaic Law, testimony against a person was only to be heard if at least two witnesses came forward. One witness was not enough.

So Naboth was accused by two "witnesses" and as punishment, stoned to death. As an aside, blaspheming the King of Israel was not against the Mosaic Law, but Jezebel made it so even putting it on the same level as blaspheming God, essentially deifying Ahab.

While God *seemed* to ignore many of Ahab's/Jezebel's evil deeds and corrupt dealings (God actually kept track of it all), He moved rather quickly on this one. No, God did not stop Naboth from being killed, but God immediately told Ahab through Elijah what was going to happen to him (and his wife), because of Naboth's murder. Ahab actually humbled himself and repented in response. But notice he did *not* return the vineyard to Naboth's family. What good is repentance without attempts to make things right (cf Luke 19:1-10)?

While we might be tempted to say that Ahab was pretending, we would be wrong because God told Elijah of Ahab's *sincerity* (1 Kings 21). However, this was not enough for God to set aside the entire sentence against Ahab, who would eventually die. The majority of what God pronounced on Ahab would not occur until *after* Ahab's death, on his own sons. Jezebel also died a very ignoble death, with the stray dogs eating her.

I will admit that there are times when I wish for the same thing to happen to some of the most corrupt, evil people alive today, don't you? Yet, I have to keep myself from going there because unlike Ahab, Jezebel, the false prophets who lived then and the two lying witnesses who caused the death of Naboth, I am learning to *fear* the Lord. What this means is ultimately having to watch very evil people walk through life creating huge problems for other people, many of whom have done them no wrong, but are simply in the way.

Our free will is inherent in the way God created us, to do what we will. We were also created in God's image (which is something *not* said about the angels including Lucifer/Satan, making them irredeemable). This is *the* main reason God often *waits* before He metes out His justice. Clearly, He will exact justice whether in this life or the next. It will happen for all people; all the Ahabs, the Jezebels, the false witnesses and the false prophets and the rest of the unsaved as He sees fit and in His time.

In the meantime, we must put up with the Ahabs, the Jebezels and the rest, trusting that though they are fully corrupt and evil, God's will is still going to take place. That is difficult, isn't it? As Christians, we want justice. We want things done the right way in our lives and in other people, even among those who don't yet know Him or ever will. We tire of inequity and lawlessness. Imagine what it must have been like during Noah's day when things were patently much worse.

During the Millennial Kingdom, things will be fairly close to perfect. Even so, I find myself feeling a bit sorry for those who are born and grow up during that time and who will need to receive salvation from Jesus. Imagine, they will never understand what we went through because they aren't around now. They will never grasp how difficult it is to live by faith in this life because of the near-perfection of the coming Millennial Kingdom. Their "faith" will be "sight" and yet, in spite of that, many will ultimately side with Satan once he is released from imprisonment in the bottomless pit at the end of the 1,000 reign of Jesus (Revelation 20:1-3).

In spite of the evil and corruption that seems to flow through society like a fast-moving stream, we Christians have one job really (which incorporates several):

*Praise ye the LORD. Blessed is the man that feareth the LORD, that delighteth greatly in His commandments. (Psalm 112:1 KJV)*

If we live to praise and grow in fear of our Lord, we will increasingly be living the life God wants us to live, which also means we will naturally be fulfilling the Great Commission of Matthew 28 because of the testimony we will carry with us and broadcast.

It would be easy to get discouraged regarding the evil that plagues the world, but we cannot allow ourselves. We must remain focused just as Naboth did though he lost his life because of it.

[1] <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahab>