

"rose up." **To go down to the vineyard of Naboth.** No one can study this lesson and its connection without remembering that as the chariots of Ahab and his bodyguard descended

the slopes between Samaria and Jezreel there were in the company Jehu and Bidkar, who heard the awful prophet pronounce a doom which those two men were destined to help carry out.

CRITICAL AND HOMILETICAL NOTES.

Unbridled covetousness usually bears fruit quickly. The primary incident of this lesson is apparently unimportant, and but for the weak king, the unscrupulous queen and her wicked accomplices nothing would ever have been known of it. But the incident led to the downfall of the house of Ahab, for the vacillating king, going down to possess the coveted vineyard, has another unexpected encounter with Elijah, who plainly declares to the king that in the place where the dogs licked the blood of the innocent and murdered Naboth they should also lick his blood, and that as for the wicked Jezebel, the dogs should eat her by the wall of Jezreel. This was the legitimate fruit of the covetousness of a man of whom the prophet said, "Thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord."

Verse 4. The word. The king's displeasure was unreasonable. Naboth held the vineyard as "the inheritance of his fathers," and he was not justified in parting with it, even though the king should offer more for it than it was worth in the market. The law would not countenance such a transaction, and Naboth was bound by God's commandment to keep his land. The king's demand was, therefore, illegal, and he probably trewn it.

5. But Jezebel. This terrible woman, an idolatress and a relentless persecutor of God's people, had no religious or moral scruples. If the king hesitated at wickedness, she reveled in it. The comparison between her and Eschylus's Clytemnestra and Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth is very striking. When the king allowed her to handle their case their ruin became inevitable; he, in his abject moral weakness, became a participant in her base treachery and awful criminality.

7. Dost thou govern? This has the appearance of a malignant, defiant taunt, quite unbecoming a woman and queen. But she evidently was a thoroughly bad woman as well as a disloyal queen. Lange aptly says, "As a righteous spouse in the court of a great lord is a sun, giving light throughout the land and doing much good work by her example, in the same proportion is an unholy woman mischievous."

8. With his seal. It is quite clear that the seal must have been given to her by Ahab, who

must have known that she intended to use it in some dishonest and unlawful way. He, then, became a party to her crime. Her letters bearing the king's seal passed as authentic royal mandates, and compelled obedience on the part of the local authorities.

10. Sons of Belial. This expression becomes clearer when the word "Belial" is not used as a proper name. It should not be so used in the Old Testament, and should be translated "worthlessness" or "uselessness." The expression may be understood as signifying "simply a worthless, lawless fellow." The accusation brought against Naboth, blasphemy against God, seems strange in view of the fact that Jezebel was an idolatress and had no respect for Jehovah herself. In her pursuit of innocent Naboth she trampled under foot the divine commands against killing, stealing, and bearing false witness.

11. Did as Jezebel had said. The murder of Naboth was followed by the killing of his sons, in order that his heirs might not interfere with Ahab when he should take possession of the property, although according to the law the property of a criminal reverted to the king. Thus crime was made to bolster up crime.

16. Ahab rose up. The impediment now being removed, and his vineyard having fallen into the king's hands according to law, Ahab hurries to gloat over his ill-gotten gains, but divine vengeance is dogging his footsteps. Jehu, who is to be the means of Ahab's punishment, rides with him to Jezreel, and in the midst of the vineyard the terrible prophet will denounce him and prophesy his awful death.

Thoughts for Young People.

Thoughts on Naboth's Vineyard.

1. How much evil and trouble come from worldly possessions! Naboth's vineyard cost its owner a great price. What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? He who sells himself to work evil gets small returns for his pains.

2. How much of harm comes from looking with covetous desire upon the things of others. "Thou shalt not covet" is the only one of the Ten Commandments which does not condemn or command an overt act. Almost any other desire may be