

16 And it came to pass, when A'hab heard that Na'both was dead, that A'hab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Na'both the Jezreel-elite to take possession of it.

17 And the word of the LORD came to E-l'jah the Tishbite, saying,

18 Arise, go down to meet A'hab king of Is-ra-el,

General Statement.

From the many crimes of Ahab and Jezebel one is selected as a typical case, though not more wicked than many others. The king of Israel, from his palace windows on the wall of Jezreel, looks upon a vineyard along the terraced hill-side. He desires to add it to the royal domain by purchase, but his offer is rejected by its owner, who in the spirit of Israelitish fidelity to the customs of the fathers, refuses to alienate the estate from his family. The king receives his refusal in the spirit of a sulky child, and lies down angry upon his couch. But Jezebel, always equal to circumstances, always defiant, men at once forms a plan for the possession of the desired vineyard. She resolves upon the murder of Naboth, and makes his own towns-people her accomplices. A fast is proclaimed, as if a curse lay upon the land, which must be removed by religious serv-

which is in Sa-ma'ri-a: behold, he is in the vineyard of Na'both, whither he is gone down to possess it. 19 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 Na'both shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.

ices, and the punishment of the guilty. Naboth is summoned before the elders of his town to answer an accusation, and in presence of all the people two men stand forth and declare that they heard him blaspheme God and his king. The sentence is declared, and an innocent man, with his innocent children, is dragged forth to death. The next day dawns, and Ahab stands upon the vineyard exulting in his possession, when suddenly a strange but well-known form is seen striding toward him. The king glances upon the intruder, and turns pale. "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" starts from his ashen lips. He is smitten by a curse from the God of Israel, and a warning that he, too, shall lie where the body of Naboth lies, in a deeper, because deserved, shame.

Explanatory and Practical Notes.

Verse 4. Ahab came. From an interview with the independent land-owner, Naboth. **Into his house.** The royal palace, which stood close by the wall of Jezreel, overlooking the field of Naboth. **Heavy and displeased.** (1) *The man who thinks only of his own interests and lives only for his own pleasure will have many miserable hours.* Naboth the Jezreelite. He was an honest, sturdy citizen, who had dared to stand upon his rights in the face of a king's desire; and we can almost infer from his reference to Jehovah (ver. 3), and from the ground of his refusal, that he was one of the seven thousand faithful ones, who had not bowed to Baal. **The inheritance of my fathers.** The law of Moses forbade the alienation of an estate from the family to which it belonged, so that every Israelite might have an interest in the land, and an attachment to it. **Turned away his face.** Instead of reclining on his couch toward the table, he turned away from it, in the ill-humor of a spoiled child. (2) *The king who cannot govern himself is not fit to govern others.*

5. Jezebel his wife. We see in this lesson all the force and energy of her nature, her absolute want of principle, her cruelty, and the universal fear which she inspired, none daring to withstand her will. Her influence for evil, reaching through generations, shows how great might have been her power for good.

6. I spake unto Naboth. He had proposed to make Naboth his accomplice in a violation of God's law, and was vexed, not merely at Naboth's independence, but more at his righteousness. (3) *A God-fearing man is a constant rebuke to the godless.*

7. Dost thou now govern? Jezebel felt a contempt for her weak husband, and coming from despotic Tyre she could not comprehend the constitutional government of Israel. Her words are an implied taunt: "Are you, or Naboth, the master of Israel?" **Let thine heart be merry.** "Do not give yourself any concern about the matter." **I will give thee.** "If you cannot obtain it, I can." She is equal to any emergency, and ready for any crime.

8. She wrote letters in Ahab's name. Though the king did not enter into the transaction, he tacitly gave his consent to it. (4) *Just so every man is responsible for all the evil done in his name, if he can prevent it and fails to do so.* **With his seal.** The seal is still used in the East more than the signature to authenticate documents. **Elders and nobles.** The rulers were the representatives of the tribe-families having hereditary possessions in the place; nobles were leading men in social position.

9. Proclaim a fast. To atone for some imagined disgrace, and thus give the prosecution of Naboth a religious ground. (5) *In every age religion has been used as a cloak for crime.* **Set Naboth on high.** Not as if in honor, but in sight of all the people, to be tried for crime.

10. Two men. Two witnesses were necessary for conviction. **Sons of Belial.** Not a proper name, but a word signifying *worthlessness*; hence the expression is the Hebrew form for "worthless, wicked men." Such these false witnesses would need to be. **Thou didst blaspheme God.** Even an idolatrous people pretend to have some respect for the name of God. (6) *What, then, shall be said of profane swearers' now?* **And the king.** To curse the king would be treason, and subject his property to forfeiture. **Carry him out.** Death was always inflicted outside the walls of the city. **Stone him.** The usual method of execution among the Israelites. The two witnesses were required to cast the first stones.

11. The men of his city. It shows the depth of natural depravity, when men in official station could be found to deal so unjustly and so cruelly with an innocent fellow-townsmen. **Did as Jezebel had sent.** Every indication points to the absolute power which this wicked woman possessed in Israel. No hand was raised to protect Elijah from her hate (see Lesson VIII), and no elder ventured to forewarn Naboth of his danger. (7) *How much more noble is the Christian standard of obedience to God rather than men!*

12, 13. They proclaimed a fast. They entered heartily into the plot, as if accustomed to crimes like it. **There came in two men.** Satan is ready with his tools when they are needed by his workmen. **Sat before him.** They sat during the trial, and then stood up with their testimony. **Stoned him with stones.** From 2 Kings 9, 32, it is evident that his sons were put to death with him, as was common in Oriental countries.

14, 15. They sent to Jezebel. Having imbued their hands in blood at her command, they hasten to send her word, hoping to receive some reward. **Jezebel said to Ahab.** Her manner of receiving the news and of repeating it to Ahab shows a conscience utterly seared and past feeling.

16. Ahab rose up. His promptness to profit by a crime shows that he, too, was thoroughly unscrupulous. **To go down.** He went in state, in the royal chariot, and behind him rode the very man who in after years was the instrument of his punishment, Jehu the future king of Israel (2 Kings 9, 35). (8) *So the sentence follows close upon the crime.*

17. The word of the Lord. It is needless to say that one can tell how the message came to the prophet. **Elijah the Tishbite.** He had not been seen for some time, and Ahab may have thought that he was dead. **The Tishbite** probably refers to the place of his birth, an unknown Tishbe in Gilead.

18. Which is in Samaria. This refers to Ahab's place of residence and seat of government, and does not mean that he was at that time in Samaria. **He is in the vineyard.** Naboth was dead, but his avenger

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