



INTRODUCTION

Today the sin of coveting will have devastating consequences for all involved. Brainstorm other episodes in Scripture where coveting led to disaster.

NABOTH'S VINEYARD

1 Kings 21:1-16 Some time later there was an incident involving a vineyard belonging to Naboth the Jezreelite. The vineyard was in Jezreel, close to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. ² Ahab said to Naboth, “Let me have your vineyard to use for a vegetable garden, since it is close to my palace. In exchange I will give you a better vineyard or, if you prefer, I will pay you whatever it is worth.” ³ But Naboth replied, “The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers.”

⁴ So Ahab went home, sullen and angry because Naboth the Jezreelite had said, “I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers.” He lay on his bed sulking and refused to eat. ⁵ His wife Jezebel came in and asked him, “Why are you so sullen? Why won’t you eat?” ⁶ He answered her, “Because I said to Naboth the Jezreelite, ‘Sell me your vineyard; or if you prefer, I will give you another vineyard in its place.’ But he said, ‘I will not give you my vineyard.’”

⁷ Jezebel his wife said, “Is this how you act as king over Israel? Get up and eat! Cheer up. I’ll get you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.” ⁸ So she wrote letters in Ahab’s name, placed his seal on them, and sent them to the elders and nobles who lived in Naboth’s city with him. ⁹ In those letters she wrote: “Proclaim a day of fasting and seat Naboth in a prominent place among the people. ¹⁰ But seat two scoundrels opposite him and have them testify that he has cursed both God and the king. Then take him out and stone him to death.”

¹¹ So the elders and nobles who lived in Naboth’s city did as Jezebel directed in the letters she had written to them. ¹² They proclaimed a fast and seated Naboth in a prominent place among the people. ¹³ Then two scoundrels came and sat opposite him and brought charges against Naboth before the people, saying, “Naboth has cursed both God and the king.” So they took him outside the city and stoned him to death. ¹⁴ Then they sent word to Jezebel: “Naboth has been stoned and is dead.”

¹⁵ As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned to death, she said to Ahab, “Get up and take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite that he refused to sell you. He is no longer alive, but dead.” ¹⁶ When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, he got up and went down to take possession of Naboth’s vineyard.

1.) We might wonder why Naboth would refuse such an uncharacteristically generous offer from King Ahab, but to understand his reasoning we need to remember the Lord's rules regarding inheritance in Israel.

Numbers 33:54 "Distribute the land by lot, according to your clans. To a larger group give a larger inheritance, and to a smaller group a smaller one. Whatever falls to them by lot will be theirs. Distribute it according to your ancestral tribes."

Numbers 36:7 "No inheritance in Israel is to pass from tribe to tribe, for every Israelite shall keep the tribal land inherited from his forefathers."

Leviticus 25:23 "The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants."

Leviticus 25:8-10 "Count off seven sabbaths of years—seven times seven years—so that the seven sabbaths of years amount to a period of forty-nine years.⁹ Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land.¹⁰ Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each one of you is to return to his family property and each to his own clan."

2.) In polite terms Naboth told King Ahab that his request was unlawful/sinful. How did Ahab respond? (v. 4-6) What makes coveting (an "innocent" sin of the mind) so dangerous?

James 1:13-17 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;¹⁴ but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.¹⁵ Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.¹⁶ Don't be deceived, my dear brothers.¹⁷ Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

James 4:1-3 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?² You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God.³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

Luther's Large Catechism: "Thus God has aimed these [Ninth and Tenth] commandments especially against jealousy and miserable avarice, his purpose being to eradicate the roots and causes from which spring the things which we injure our neighbor. Therefore he puts it clearly in the words, "You shall not covet," etc. For, above all the other commandments, this commandment, too, constantly accuses us and shows us what our righteousness really amounts to before God."

3.) In Sidon, where Jezebel was from, the king owned all the property. So she hatches a scheme to have Naboth murdered in a circumspect and apparently "judicious" way without getting her hands dirty (cf. David's plot to have Uriah killed). Who was all involved in this web of murder? What additional detail does 2 Kings 9:26 provide?

2 Kings 9:26 "Yesterday I saw the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons, declares the LORD, and I will surely make you pay for it on this plot of ground, declares the LORD."

4.) What do you imagine was Ahab's mood on his way to Naboth's vineyard? What did he need?

1 Kings 21:17-29 Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite: ¹⁸ "Go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who rules in Samaria. He is now in Naboth's vineyard, where he has gone to take possession of it. ¹⁹ Say to him, 'This is what the LORD says: Have you not murdered a man and seized his property?' Then say to him, 'This is what the LORD says: In the place where dogs licked up Naboth's blood, dogs will lick up your blood—yes, yours!'"

²⁰ Ahab said to Elijah, "So you have found me, my enemy!" "I have found you," he answered, "because you have sold yourself to do evil in the eyes of the LORD. ²¹ I am going to bring disaster on you. I will consume your descendants and cut off from Ahab every last male in Israel—slave or free. ²² I will make your house like that of Jeroboam son of Nebat and that of Baasha son of Ahijah, because you have provoked me to anger and have caused Israel to sin." ²³ And also concerning Jezebel the LORD says: 'Dogs will devour Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.' ²⁴ Dogs will eat those belonging to Ahab who die in the city, and the birds of the air will feed on those who die in the country." ²⁵ (There was never a man like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, urged on by Jezebel his wife. ²⁶ He behaved in the vilest manner by going after idols, like the Amorites the LORD drove out before Israel.)

²⁷ When Ahab heard these words, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and fasted. He lay in sackcloth and went around meekly. ²⁸ Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite: ²⁹ "Have you noticed how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself, I will not bring this disaster in his day, but I will bring it on his house in the days of his son."

1.) "So you have found me, my enemy" (v. 20). Elijah's wasn't Ahab's enemy, but he was there to point out his sin. Our sinful natures don't like others confronting us in our sin. List some excuses the sinful nature can devise so that we don't take admonition to heart.

2.) How did Ahab respond to the LORD's decree that his royal house and whole family line would be cut off? Give evidence as to whether his response was sincere or feigned?

3.) In Elijah's day people showed their grief and remorse in physical ways such as wearing sackcloth and sitting in ashes. How do people today physically/visibly display the same emotions? In your opinion, is this a good or bad thing?

THE END OF AHAB

1 Kings 22:1-28 For three years there was no war between Aram and Israel. ² But in the third year Jehoshaphat king of Judah went down to see the king of Israel. ³ The king of Israel had said to his officials, "Don't you know that Ramoth Gilead belongs to us and yet we are doing nothing to retake it from the king of Aram?" ⁴ So he asked Jehoshaphat, "Will you go with me to fight against Ramoth Gilead?" Jehoshaphat replied to the king of Israel, "I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses." ⁵ But Jehoshaphat also said to the king of Israel, "First seek the counsel of the LORD."

⁶ So the king of Israel brought together the prophets—about four hundred men—and asked them, "Shall I go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?" "Go," they answered, "for the Lord will give it into the king's hand." ⁷ But Jehoshaphat asked, "Is there not a prophet of the LORD here whom we can inquire of?" ⁸ The king of Israel answered Jehoshaphat, "There is still one man through whom we can inquire of the LORD, but I hate him because he never prophesies anything good about me, but always bad. He is Micaiah son of Imlah." "The king should not say that," Jehoshaphat replied.

⁹ So the king of Israel called one of his officials and said, "Bring Micaiah son of Imlah at once." ¹⁰ Dressed in their royal robes, the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah were sitting on their thrones at the threshing floor by the entrance of the gate of Samaria, with all the prophets prophesying before them. ¹¹ Now Zedekiah son of Kenaanah had made iron horns and he declared, "This is what the LORD says: 'With these you will gore the Arameans until they are destroyed.' " ¹² All the other prophets were prophesying the same thing. "Attack Ramoth Gilead and be victorious," they said, "for the LORD will give it into the king's hand."

¹³ The messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah said to him, "Look, as one man the other prophets are predicting success for the king. Let your word agree with theirs, and speak favorably." ¹⁴ But Micaiah said, "As surely as the LORD lives, I can tell him only what the LORD tells me." ¹⁵ When he arrived, the king asked him, "Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?" "Attack and be victorious," he answered, "for the LORD will give it into the king's hand." ¹⁶ The king said to him, "How many times must I make you swear to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?" ¹⁷ Then Micaiah answered, "I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd, and the LORD said, 'These people have no master. Let each one go home in peace.' " ¹⁸ The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Didn't I tell you that he never prophesies anything good about me, but only bad?"

¹⁹ Micaiah continued, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne with all the host of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left. ²⁰ And the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there?' One suggested this, and another that. ²¹ Finally, a spirit came forward, stood before the LORD and said, 'I will entice him.' ²² 'By what means?' the LORD asked. 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets,' he said. 'You will succeed in enticing him,' said the LORD. 'Go and do it.' ²³ So now the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours. The LORD has decreed disaster for you."

²⁴ Then Zedekiah son of Kenaanah went up and slapped Micaiah in the face. "Which way did the spirit from the LORD go when he went from me to speak to you?" he asked. ²⁵ Micaiah replied, "You will find out on the day you go to hide in an inner room." ²⁶ The king of Israel then ordered, "Take Micaiah and send him back to Amon the ruler of the city and to Joash the king's son ²⁷ and say, 'This is what the king says: Put this fellow in prison and give him nothing but bread and water until I return safely.' " ²⁸ Micaiah declared, "If you ever return safely, the LORD has not spoken through me." Then he added, "Mark my words, all you people!"

1.) How did Jehoshaphat and Ahab demonstrate where their spiritual allegiance lay?

1 Kings 21:29-40 So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah went up to Ramoth Gilead. ³⁰ The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "I will enter the battle in disguise, but you wear your royal robes." So the king of Israel disguised himself and went into battle. ³¹ Now the king of Aram had ordered his thirty-two chariot commanders, "Do not fight with anyone, small or great, except the king of Israel." ³² When the chariot commanders saw Jehoshaphat, they thought, "Surely this is the king of Israel." So they turned to attack him, but when Jehoshaphat cried out, ³³ the chariot commanders saw that he was not the king of Israel and stopped pursuing him.

³⁴ But someone drew his bow at random and hit the king of Israel between the sections of his armor. The king told his chariot driver, "Wheel around and get me out of the fighting. I've been wounded." ³⁵ All day long the battle raged, and the king was propped up in his chariot facing the Arameans. The blood from his wound ran onto the floor of the chariot, and that evening he died. ³⁶ As the sun was setting, a cry spread through the army: "Every man to his town; everyone to his land!"

³⁷ So the king died and was brought to Samaria, and they buried him there. ³⁸ They washed the chariot at a pool in Samaria (where the prostitutes bathed), and the dogs licked up his blood, as the word of the LORD had declared. ³⁹ As for the other events of Ahab's reign, including all he did, the palace he built and inlaid with ivory, and the cities he fortified, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel? ⁴⁰ Ahab rested with his fathers. And Ahaziah his son succeeded him as king.

1.) Ahab is mortally wounded by a “random” stray arrow shot by an anonymous “someone” (v. 34). What does this tell us about the LORD’s control of world events and events in our own lives? Should we be looking for signs or clues from God?

2.) Given the events of Ahab’s reign, how do you imagine the people of Israel remembered him?

PRAYER