

Elijah and the anointing of Elisha and Naboth's vineyard

LESSON Five 1 Kings 21:1-29

Last lesson was God sending Elijah back over the 250 miles where he found Elisha who was to be his successor. Elisha was the son of Shaphat and he was ploughing in his fields. Obviously his family were wealthy and employed farm labourers to help with the ploughing. The bible tells us there were twelve yokes of oxen and there are 2 oxen per yoke. Elisha himself was driving the twelfth pair.

As Elijah passed he threw his mantle over him. A cloak was the most important article of clothing a person could own. It was used as protection against the weather, as bedding, as a place to sit, and as luggage. It could be given as a pledge for a debt or torn into pieces to show grief. Elijah put his cloak on Elisha's shoulders to show that he would become Elijah's successor. Later, when the transfer of authority would finally be completed Elijah would leave his cloak to Elisha thus transferring his authority to him **2 King 2:11-14**

Elisha ran after Elijah and said "Please let me kiss my Father and my Mother then I will follow You" Elisha was prepared to "upticks" and go with Elijah without question. But Elijah told him to go back. Elisha then took his pair of oxen and sacrificed them, burned the plough and its equipment to cook the meat then gave it to the people who ate.

This was more than just a feast; it was an offering to the Lord who had chosen Elisha to be his prophet. Without the oxen Elisha was burning his boats and could no longer go back to being a wealthy farmer. He then arose and followed Elijah and ministered to him. This was when Elijah's loneliness was addressed because he was now working alongside other prophets.

Other prophets were involved when the King of Ahab went to war with the King of Aram. All these wars had been prophesied by Elijah. Two years later Ahab returns to his home in Samaria sullen and vexed as things had not gone his way.

As he was walking in the palace he looked out a window and saw the vineyard of Naboth. The vineyard was in Jezreel and was close to the palace. Since it was so close Ahab thought he would buy it from Naboth and turn it into a vegetable garden.

"In exchange for your vineyard I will give you a better one or I will pay you whatever this one is worth" said Ahab. "No, I can't give it to you as the Lord forbids me to get rid of my inheritance which has come down to me through my ancestors" Naboth replied. Ahab returned to his palace in a huff puff because Naboth wouldn't sell him his vineyard. He went into strop and refused to eat. He lay down on his bed and turned his face to the wall. "Why are you not eating?" Jezebel asked him. Ahab said he had offered Naboth money to buy his vineyard or give him another in its place and he wouldn't do it. "Is this how you act as king" said Jezebel "Get up and eat and cheer up. I'll get you the vineyard of Naboth!"

So she wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal and sent them to the elders and nobles who were living with Naboth in his city. She told them to proclaim a day of fasting and to put Naboth in a prominent place among the people and seat two scoundrels opposite him and they would testify that Naboth had cursed both God and King then take him out and stone him to death. Jezebel had devised a scheme that appeared legal to get the land for her husband.

By law two witnesses were acquired to establish guilt and the punishment for blasphemy was death by stoning. Those who twist the law and legal procedures to get what they want today may go about it in a more sophisticated manner but they are still guilty of the same sin as she was.

Elijah and the anointing of Elisha and Naboth's vineyard

The elders did exactly what Jezebel had told them to do then sent word to the queen that he was dead. As soon as she heard that she said to Ahab "Get up and take possession of the Vineyard. Naboth is no longer alive." Ahab did exactly as Jezebel said. Ahab's willing compliance with Jezebel made him also guilty of murder and theft.

Meantime God "phoned" Elijah. "Get up and go down to meet Ahab King of Israel who is in Samaria. He is in the vineyard of Naboth where he has gone to take possession of it!" "Speak to him saying – Have you murdered and also taken possession? Thus says the Lord "In the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth the dogs will also lick up your blood!" This came to pass in 1 kings 22:37–38.

Elijah then speaks to Ahab who replies you have found me my enemy. "I have found you because you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the Lord, because of that God is going to bring disaster upon you. All your descendants will be swept away every male both bond and free in Israel." The lineage of Ahab would be wiped out. The lord has spoken also of Jezebel "The dogs will eat Jezebel in the district of Jezreel."

The dogs would eat anyone belonging to Ahab who died in the city and anyone belonging to Ahab who died in the country would be devoured by the birds of the air. When Ahab heard these words he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and fasted. He lay in sackcloth and went about looking despondent.

The lord said to Elijah "Do you see how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself before me I will not bring the evil in his days, but will bring the evil upon his house in his son's days." Ahaziah Ahab's son became king on the death of his father and was as evil as his father and mother had been, and sinned and served Baal. He only reigned for two years. 1 kings 22:51-53.

Three years had passed in peace when there was another war when the prophecy of Ahab's death was fulfilled and just as Elijah had said his blood was licked up by the dogs. You can read about these wars for yourselves in 1 Kings 22: The wars took part during the life of Elijah but he wasn't actively involved so we are just concentrating on the life of Elijah.

After the death of Ahab Moab rebelled against Israel. Ahaziah, Ahab's son fell through the lattice of his upper room in the summer palace in Samaria and he injured himself and became ill. He took to his bed and decides to send messengers to Baal-zebub the god of Ekron to see if he would recover from his injury.

The lord sent an angel to Elijah and told him to go up and meet the messengers that Ahaziah had sent. "Is it that there is no God of Israel that you are having to send to Baal-zebub the god of Ekron?" Then said God you will not leave the bed you are lying on – you will surely die!" The messengers returned to Ahaziah and reported everything that Elijah had said to them. The king asked what the man looked like and they described him whereupon Ahaziah recognised that it was Elijah the Tishbite.

The king sends one of his captains with a company of fifty men to ask Elijah to come down off the hill he was sitting on and come and see him. Elijah replied to the captain, "If I am a man of god let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your men!" and it did. The king sent another captain and his fifty men to demand that Elijah come down at once and the same thing happened to them.

Elijah and the anointing of Elisha and Naboth's vineyard

For a third time the king sends another captain and another fifty men but the third captain knew what had happened to the previous two and he fell on his knees before Elijah saying, "Man of God, please have respect for my life and the lives of these fifty men your servants."

The angel of the Lord said to Elijah not to be afraid but to go down with them so Elijah went with them to the King. Elijah said to Ahaziah "Is it because there is no God in Israel for you to consult that you have sent messengers to consult Baal-zebub the God of Ekron – well, because you have done this you are never going to leave that bed – You will surely die." And he did. Because Ahaziah had no son, Jehoram his brother, succeeded him as king and reigned for twelve years.