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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1896 ~ Ahab Steals Naboth's Vineyard.

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Following God's dramatic response to Elijah's prayer on Mount Carmel, the Israelites were convinced that God Almighty was indeed alive and powerful, and far greater than the pagan Baal idols that the people had been worshipping. Wicked Queen Jezebel had promised to kill Elijah within 24 hours in revenge for Elijah ordering the death of all 450 of her 450 Baal prophets. Elijah fled from Israel for fear of his life. But God rescued Elijah in his distress, ministered to him and reinstated him as God's prophet with new tasks to do. So Elijah returned to Israel to do them.

After Elijah's return Ben-Hadad, king of Syria, along with his 32 conquered kings, twice threatened war on King Ahab and Queen Jezebel in Samaria in Israel. Both times, a prophet of God told King Ahab how to conduct the war and that God would give Ahab the victory. When the Syrians were defeated the first time, a prophet warned Ahab that they would be back in the spring time to fight again and that he should prepare for battle again. The Syrians believed in false gods and thought that the God of the Israelites was only stronger than the god in the hills; but if they fought Israel again on the plains, they would win. This proved untrue, but Ahab allowed Ben-Hadad to escape death when God commanded that he be put to death. As there was a more serious enemy to Israel north of Syria, in Assyria, Ahab may have thought that he could make an alliance with Ben-Hadad of Syria to help overcome his worst enemy of all.

In 1st Kings, Chapter 21, King Ahab was in his palace in Jezreel and selfishly wanted to obtain an allotment of land that had been in the owner Naboth's possession for many generations.

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Ahab was very pleased with his 2nd palace in Jezreel but he wanted a private garden close by it. He decided Naboth's vineyard was the perfect place for such a garden and so he coveted it. He yearned to possess it, but Naboth explained that the vineyard was his family's inheritance and by God's instructions to Moses, was not to be permanently transferred outside the family line. Different to the power of kings of other nations, Ahab was answerable to God and didn't have the authority under the law to do whatever he pleased. But Ahab's wife was the daughter of a king who did whatever he wanted. She couldn't understand why Ahab just didn't seize Naboth's vineyard instead of sulking in his bedroom over Naboth's reply.

As Ahab shows, coveting is such a strong motivator that the person who covets something forbidden will strive to have it by using any possible way to do so, even if it involves evil. Coveting must be distinguished from lust. Lust is a general desire. For example, greed is a lust for money and possessions. Coveting on the other hand, is a focused desire to have a particular thing that belongs to a particular person. Ahab coveted Naboth's property for himself.

Coveting is a selfish desire; it wants to gain personally at the expense of others. It's destructive and dangerous, because a covetous person destroys himself as well as the others around him. Covetousness also hinders the generosity which God requires of His people. In Proverbs, Chapter 10, it says: "The hopes of the godly result in happiness, but the expectations of the wicked come to nothing."

There are some aspects of coveting that we should be aware of: a covetous person is conscious of their deliberate desire and therefore, they're responsible in how they deal with it. In effect, the individual is held accountable for discovering their covetous sin, and repenting of it. This is necessary because no other human being knows our thoughts; only God does. So God thus holds us responsible for what we determine in our hearts and minds.

The Ten Commandments begin with forbidding idolatry and end with a total ban on covetousness, which is also called idolatry. In Ephesians, Chapter 5, it says: "But do not let immorality or any impurity or greed even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience."

The term 'covet' for most of us is a loaded one, suggesting only evil desires. In the Scriptures, however, 'covet' may be used both positively and negatively. A person may covet in a good sense or a bad one depending on the context in which the term is used. In Luke, Chapter 22, our Lord strongly desired to eat the Passover meal with His disciples. We covet most those things which we value most.

If God is the greatest good there is and of infinite value, then we people should covet having fellowship with Him and making whatever sacrifice is required to attain and enjoy this fellowship. If we agree that God is the greatest good, then He must be our highest goal to pursue. Whatever sacrifices a Christian must make in knowing God and having fellowship with Him is worth the price.

To covet anything more than God, is to place that thing that we covet above God, which is idolatry. Coveting anything above God makes that thing our god and heart's desire. Understanding coveting gives us the means of avoiding the evils which stem from coveting. The reason why we do the wrong thing, when we know it's wrong, is because we want or covet the thing more than we covet being right with God. Coveting what is wrong causes us to be willing to sacrifice what is right to attain what we want, even if it is sin. Once our heart is turned toward something forbidden as our highest and most desirable goal, we become willing to sacrifice whatever we think less to attain it. We have to ask ourselves: are we deluding our minds to think we hold God as the highest in our lives but live each day with other priorities?

Although King Ahab was wealthy, powerful and had pleasures in abundance, he couldn't have this one thing of Naboth's that he desired, and so he remained extremely unhappy in himself. If Christians fall into a trap like this, start counting your blessings! Remember what God's Word instructs us to do – put to death a covetous heart in the power of Christ's death on the cross, and humbly seek God's face instead. When we count our blessings, we soon realise that God has provided so many things for us that we can live without something that He hasn't given us. God is good and He has our best interests at heart.

Ahab wanted Naboth's vineyard at any price, so he let Jezebel do a number of things that she had no right to do: 1. she took the king's authority by using his name and his seal to write letters; 2. she expected the city elders to set up a false trial that cheated Naboth out of his rightful possession, and 3. she incited the city elders to kill Naboth and his sons, as recorded in 2nd Kings, Chapter 9. Then there were no heirs to inherit Naboth's vineyard. How did Jezebel do this? Jezebel had the city elders get two scoundrels to lie and falsely accuse Naboth of cursing God and the king. In Leviticus, Chapter 24, such cursing and blaspheming of God was punishable by death. The death sentence could only be carried out on the testimony of two or more witnesses, as listed in Deuteronomy, Chapter 17. Small wonder that God sent Elijah to announce judgment on Ahab, his wife and family!

Do you ever ask yourself why God let Ahab and Jezebel win against a just man like Naboth? Naboth paid with his life and his sons' lives by doing what was right. It's a fact of history that many innocent people have loved God and did what was right have been killed for their right living. Persecution of God's faithful people is still happening today in many countries around the world. This ongoing battle between right and wrong will continue until the Lord Jesus comes back to earth with the authority to rule all the nations. Only then will Satan and his demons, and his human helpers like Jezebel, be stopped for good.

When Ahab was told that Naboth was dead, he cheered up and went and took possession of the vineyard. Although Jezebel had been the active party to the crimes, Ahab was also just as guilty, for he'd looked the other way and asked no questions. So who should come to the Ahab's vineyard to spoil his happiness but Elijah himself, with the Lord's words of punishment! Although Ahab was Israel's most evil king, at Elijah's words, the Bible says that he was filled with remorse. He humbled himself before the Lord, even though there was no indication that he truly repented of his evil desires and deeds. Once more, the Lord showed mercy to this evil man and delayed Ahab's punishment due to come on his family until the next generation.

Do you see some of Jezebel's controlling ways in your own life? Manipulating others by putting a guilt trip on them, slandering someone else to make yourself look good, being jealous of others by nature, being resentful of those in a position of leadership or authority. There's only one clear way to rid yourself of these tendencies in your life: true repentance and humility under God's righteous hand destroys a spirit of Jezebel. Christ died and was resurrected again to break the power of sin over our lives; instead, Christians are to live free from sin and alive to Christ. Praying through Psalm 51 for a period of time is also very beneficial. We must ask the Holy Spirit for God's enabling to live our lives consistently for the Lord, so there are no grounds for accusations by others that we are living double standards in our private lives. True fervent prayer causes hearts to change from pride and self-importance, to repentance and humility.

In Psalm 51, Verses 10 and 12, it says: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, Renew a loyal spirit within me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you."

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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