

# Christ Is Most Precious To Me

Read I Kings 21

In I Kings 21 we are introduced to a man by the name of Naboth. The word *nabata* in Arabic means "vineyard," and so Naboth's name may have been derived from fruitful holdings in his vineyard. Naboth in ancient Israel was synonymous with a fine vineyard. His vineyard was located on the eastern slope of Jezreel.

The Easton's Bible Dictionary observes, "Described as a small "plat of ground," the vineyard seemed to have been all Naboth possessed and was close to the palace of King Ahab of Israel, who wished to acquire it for a garden of herbs (probably as a ceremonial garden for Baal worship)."

King Ahab became deeply depressed at not being able to obtain Naboth's vineyard, and returned to his palace, lying on his bed, his face to the wall, and refused to eat.

His wife, Jezebel, after learning the reason for his depression, promised that she would obtain the vineyard for him. To do so, she plotted to kill Naboth by mock trial, and he was sentenced to death by stoning. After Naboth was dead, Jezebel then told Ahab to take possession of the vineyard as the legal heir.

As punishment for this action, the prophet Elijah visited Ahab while he was in the vineyard, pronouncing doom on him. Ahab humbled himself at Elijah's words, and was spared accordingly, with the prophesied destruction being visited instead on his son Joram.

The vineyard represented more to Naboth than just a parcel of land. It was his family inheritance. It was his stewardship that God entrusted him with. What trust! What responsibility! What devotion Naboth showed to his vineyard and to his God.

What is the most precious thing in your life? Fortune? Family? Fame? What can we learn and apply from Naboth's vineyard? Indeed Naboth loved his vineyard very much but he loved Christ even more. For Naboth Christ was more precious to him than anyone or anything. I believe if Naboth were

alive today his testimony would be, "Christ Is Most Precious To Me." Is Christ most precious to you? Let us look at three things in the life of Naboth that show how truly precious Christ was to him.

### **1. Christ was most precious to Naboth in his temptation.**

King Ahab approached Naboth, the owner of the vineyard, and offered to give him a better one for it or to purchase it for cash. That seemed like a fair offer: but in reality it was a subtle temptation.

We read in Lev. 25:23, "The land shall not be sold forever (outright): for the land is Mine."

In Numbers 36:7 we read, "so shall not the inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe: for every one of the children of Israel shall keep himself to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers."

It did lay not within the lawful power of Naboth to dispose of his vineyard. But for that, there could have been no harm in meeting the reasonable offer of Ahab, no it had been discourteous, to refuse his sovereign. But however desirous Naboth might be of

granting the king's request, he could not do so without violating the Divine Law which expressly forbade a man's alienating any part of the family inheritance. Thus a very real and severe test was now presented to Naboth: he had to choose between pleasing the king and displeasing the King of kings.

There are times when the believer may be forced to choose between compliance with human law and obedience to the Divine Law. The three Hebrews were faced with that alternative when it was demanded that they should bow down and worship an image set up by Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 3:14, 15). Peter and John were confronted with a similar situation when the Sanhedrin forbade them to preach any more in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:18).

We read in verse three of Naboth's answer, "And Naboth said to Ahab, The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee." He stepped back with horror from such a proposal, looking upon it with alarm as a temptation to commit a horrible sin. Naboth took his stand on the Word of God and refused to act contrary against it, even when solicited to do so by the king himself.

A Christian commentator observes, “He (Naboth) was one of the seven thousand whom the Lord had reserved unto Himself, a member of the "remnant according to the election of grace." Hereby do such identify themselves, standing out from the compromisers and temporizers. A "Thus saith the Lord" is final with them: neither monetary inducements nor threats of punishment can move them to disregard it. "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye" (Acts 4:19), is their defence when browbeaten by the powers that be. Settle it in your mind, it is no sin, no wrong, to defy human authorities if they should require of you anything which manifestly clashes with the Law of the Lord. On the other hand, the Christian should be a pattern to others of a law-abiding citizen, so long as God's claims upon him be not infringed.”

Naboth held the Word of God above earthly profit. The king's offer to Naboth was attractive. But for Naboth there were things that money couldn't buy. His vineyard was not for sale! Naboth lived according to Habakkuk 2:4, Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38, “The just shall live by faith.” Naboth's faith was tried by Ahab and he could say,

“Christ is most precious to me.” Is Christ most precious to you when sin tempts you, and calls your name? How do you respond? Is your response, “Take the world, but give me Jesus. In His cross my trust shall be, Till, with clearer, brighter vision, Face to face my Lord I see,” words from Fanny Crosby’s great hymn.

Christ was most precious to Naboth in his temptation.

## **2. Christ was most precious to Naboth in his trial.**

When Naboth told King Ahab that the vineyard was not for sale Naboth thought it was the end of the matter. But it wasn’t. A plot was hatched to murder Naboth and steal his vineyard.

We read in verses 5 and 6, “But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said unto him, Why is thy spirit so sad that thou eatest no bread? And he said unto her, Because I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him, Give me thy vineyard for money; or else, if it please thee, I will give thee another vineyard for it: and he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard.”

A puritan author writes, "How easy it is to misrepresent the most upright. Ahab made no mention of Naboth's conscientious grievance for not complying with his request, but speaks of him as though he had acted only with insubordination and obstinacy. On hearing that statement, Jezebel at once revealed her awful character: "Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth" (v. 7).

As Matthew Henry expressed it, "Under pretence of comforting her afflicted husband, she feeds his pride and passion, blowing the coals of his corruptions."

Jezebel sympathized with his unlawful desire, strengthened his feeling of disappointment, tempted him to exercise an arbitrary power, and urged him to disregard the rights of another and defy the Law of God. "Are you going to allow a subject to balk you? Be not so squeamish: use your royal power: instead of grieving over a repulse, revenge it," was Jezebel's advice to Ahab.

The most diabolical strategy was now planned by this infamous woman in order to wrestle the inheritance of Naboth from him. First, she resorted to forgery, for we are told "she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and

sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that were in his city, dwelling with Naboth" (v. 8).

Secondly, she was guilty of deliberate hypocrisy. "Proclaim a fast" (v. 9), so as to convey the impression that some horrible wickedness had been discovered, threatening the city with Divine judgment unless the crime were expiated.

Thirdly, she selected men to testify falsely: "set Naboth on high among the people (under color of giving him a fair trial by legal prosecution), and set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king" (v. 10).

Now imagine what Naboth must have felt and thought when he was brought before the judges of the court? The things said about him were untrue and totally unfounded. The so called evidence came from false witnesses. There was not a shred of evidence against Naboth to find him guilty of any crime, and yet he was found guilty and charged with the crime of blasphemy against God. He was punished for a crime he did not commit. He received the harshest sentence for a criminal, death by stoning. What



outrage of injustice against an innocent man! How the trial and treatment of Naboth was similar to Christ.

We read in Matthew 26:59-67, “Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses,

And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.

And the high priest arose, and said unto him,

Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace, And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their

hands.”

I Kings 21:13 has little to say about the trial of Naboth. We read, “And there came in two men, children of Belial, and sat before him: and the men of Belial witnessed against him, even against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth did blaspheme God and the king. Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died.”

Naboth’s words were not recorded during the trial. Perhaps this was done deliberately by the Holy Spirit to show us how Christ-like Naboth was at the time of his trial. Naboth did not understand why all this was happening to him. But he never stopped believing in the Lord. Christ was precious to Naboth in his greatest trial .

Is Christ precious to you in trials?

James 1:2, “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.”

1 Peter 1:6-9 “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your

faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”

Christ was most precious to Naboth in his trial.

### **3. Christ was most precious to Naboth in his death.**

In historical times, the laws for stoning in Judaism dictated that two reputable people must have witnessed the offense (and must witness the stoning).

Tom Head is an author who wrote an article entitled, “Death by Stoning” How It Works: The prisoner is buried either up to his waist (if male) or up to her shoulders (if female) and then pelted with stones by a crowd of volunteers until obviously battered to death.

Under the terms of most fundamentalist courts, the stones must be small enough that death cannot reasonably be expected to result from only one or two blows, but large enough to cause physical harm. The average execution by stoning is extremely painful, lasting at least 10 to 20 minutes.

Death by stoning resulted in great pain and agony for the victim. Facing such cruel and brutal treatment, how could Naboth or any man for that matter hold Christ so dear and precious?

We read about another man who faced the same end as Naboth in Acts 7:54-60. Stephen was being stoned for preaching Christ. “When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”

Psalm 116:15 tells us, “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.”

Both Stephen and Naboth died from stoning, and they both could say, “Christ was most precious to me in death.” Will that be your testimony when you die?

We read in 1 Corinthians 15:54-55, “So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”

Christ is precious to believers in death because “we are confident to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.” (2Corinthians 5:8)

“Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you (2 Corinthians 4:14).”

Christ was most precious to Naboth in his death.

We have seen how Christ was precious to Naboth in his temptation, in his trial, and in his death. Is Christ precious to you? May the Lord help us all to examine ourselves in light of His Word, and might we all be able to say, “Christ is most precious to me.” Let us pray.