

Aim of lesson

To show the results of selfishness and greed, and that God cares about justice.

Bible background

1 Kings 21.

Outline of lesson

An innocent beginning

Ahab was not planning to do anything wrong. He just wanted a vegetable garden. Naboth's land was the obvious place, and he offered him very reasonable terms. However, Naboth did not want to sell. This was his family inheritance – a trust he had been given and would pass on to his children. If Ahab had been able to accept the answer 'No' there would have been no problem, but, like a spoilt child, he sulked. He knew enough of God's way to know that he could not legally take the land, but not enough to be content without it.

Jezebel

Jezebel, as we saw before in her treatment of the prophets of the Lord, was not the sort of person to be put off by the fact that something was wrong. She shows no sense of right or wrong at all. Self-interest is her only law. She seems amazed that the king should not just take anything he wanted. Since she had no respect for God, she also had no respect for his law.

The events

The chapter is dramatic and the events are clearly portrayed by reading the whole chapter in parts. Voices for a narrator, Ahab, Jezebel, the scoundrels, the Lord and Elijah will be needed.

Alternatively, the events of the chapter could be summarised.

Ahab's diary

The workbook has an outline of Ahab's diary so that the class can put in their own words the change in Ahab's thinking. They should note his humility and repentance at the end of the chapter. The death of Ahab is recorded in 1 Kings 22:29-38, and the death of Jezebel in 2 Kings 9:30-37. In both cases the words of the Lord which had been prophesied about them are mentioned.

Justice and mercy

You may like to remind the class that 'bearing false witness' is one of the things forbidden in the Ten Commandments. This is what Jezebel had arranged in order to get Naboth killed. Deuteronomy 19:16-21 gives the punishment for such an act. The one who lies in order to cause harm to another should receive the harm that he planned for the other. The class could consider how God brought this punishment on Jezebel and Ahab. Note also that Elijah states quite clearly that Ahab is guilty of murder and theft (1 Kings 21:19). It was no less his crime because he had let others do it for him. Nevertheless, when Ahab changes his attitude and walks humbly before God, God does take note and amends the punishment that had been promised.

Digging deeper

What can we give to God?

This section shows that what we think of as our possessions already belong to God.

Relevance to our lives

Ahab's selfishness and greed are more likely to be found in our lives than his acts of false witness and murder. Is this just because we are not in the position of authority and power which the king of Israel had? Selfishness and greed can destroy our lives as effectively as they did that of Ahab. The class may like to compare the three attitudes of Elijah, Ahab and Jezebel. One who accepted God's ways which became his own way of thinking, one who knew they were right but preferred his own way, and one who seems to have no awareness of right and wrong at all. The class could see which of these attitudes they can find in their friends at school or people on the television. It is particularly important for the class to learn the lesson of not choosing as a companion someone with the moral sense of Jezebel. Ahab might have been a better person if he had been encouraged by his wife when he did right, rather than being led into sin.

Prayer

'Lord, help us to encourage one another to do right, and not to lead the others into sin.'

The class could write a prayer Elijah might have said for Ahab after these events.

Other suggestions for activities

- The newspaper of the time of Elijah could be continued.
- A television programme of 'This Is Your Life' could be done for Ahab. Different characters could come forward and tell of their contact with the king.
- The class may like to discuss why James said Elijah was like us (James 5:17) when he seems to us to be so brave and powerful.