

# Sermons on 1 Kings:

## Deal or No Deal (1 Ki 21:1-21)

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### I. INTRODUCTION.

A. If you're a game show buff, you'll remember when hosts like Bob Barker, Wink Martindale and Monty Hall doled out cash and prizes to overexcited retirees, housewives and military men on leave.

1. Winners pocketed a few hundred bucks or, if they were really lucky, won the Showcase Showdown on The Price is Right (complete with a new car and a lifetime of Rice-a-Roni) or reached the top of Dick Clark's \$10,000 Pyramid.

2. Losers at least went home with a "parting gift" of some household gadget.

B. But as everything in our culture has become bigger, faster and overhyped, so has the game show.

1. People flipping out over the possibility of winning a fast million have become a fixture on primetime television.

2. With the help of technology that enables people from around the country to apply as contestants, shows like "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire" hit the airwaves early in the 21st century with the promise of bigger payouts and national exposure.

C. While Regis Philbin and that particular show became overexposed and drifted back to a daytime slot, Millionaire did spawn a rabbit like multiplication of other big money shows like NBC's widely popular "Deal or No Deal."

1. While the name evokes memories of Monty Hall's "Let's Make a Deal," where contestants dressed up like Halloween rejects and agonized

over whether to choose Door No. 1, or 2, or 3, “Deal or No Deal” is more serious business, at least in terms of how much cash is at stake.

2. Contestants can pocket a million bucks just by randomly choosing the right briefcase—no knowledge of trivia required.

a. Premiering in the UK, “Deal or No Deal” has been adapted by countries on every continent, making it a worldwide sensation.

b. All you need to do is pick the right briefcase, have faith that your case has the million dollars, and stand to the very end and you’re an instant millionaire.

D. Greed is really what “Deal or No Deal” is all about, and that alone accounts for the audience appeal.

1. Sometimes you can’t believe the greedy choices a contestant will make, giving up tens of thousands of dollars hoping to score more. And that’s the game: No matter how much you have, the game is driven by the potential of having more.

2. And in life, the constant drive for more can cause us to lose perspective and can drive us into manic mode—at best screaming, crying, and stressing like a game

show contestant or, at worst, going to the dark side where we’ll do absolutely anything to have what we want.

a. Covetousness and greed are all about the pursuit of what’s in it for me.

b. Well did Paul write, “The love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and

pierced themselves with many pangs” (1 Tm 6:10).

E. That brings us to the episode of Ahab and Naboth in 1 Kings 21.

1. Ahab, King of Samaria, comes off looking like a jilted game show contestant here, but the stakes are much higher.

2. This episode is a primetime reminder that when we open our lives to greed we not only deal away the rights and property of others; we also deny the reality that

everything belongs to God in the first place.

3. Tonight, let's think about the Deal or No Deal.

## II. NO DEAL, vv 1-4.

A. Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard beside the palace of King Ahab.

1. Ahab had two palaces—the one in Jezreel and one in Samaria.

a. We know the king had a palace in Samaria, for that was the place from whence he reigned: “Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years” (1 Ki 16:29).

b. Because Ahab is called the King of Samaria, there are some who believe that the palace at Jezreel was the summer palace of Ahab—hence his desire for a vegetable garden.

2. Ahab makes Naboth a deal, quite like the banker calling Howie Mandel on “Deal or No Deal”: “Let me have your vineyard for a vegetable garden, and I will give

you either a better vineyard or money for it.”

a. The term “vegetable garden” appears only one other time in the OT:

- Moses tells the Israelites: “The land that you are entering to take possession of it is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and irrigated it, like a garden of vegetables. But the land that you are going over to possess is a land of hills and valleys,

which drinks water by  
the rain from heaven”  
(Deut 11:10-11).

- The phrase  
“irrigated it” is  
literally in Heb  
“watered it with your  
feet” & likely refers  
to foot pumps the  
Israelites had to use to  
help the  
Egyptians water the  
land. Moses contrasts  
that hard work of  
irrigation with the  
divine blessing in the  
Promised Land.

b. Whereas “vegetable garden”  
occurs only once in reference to  
Egyptian bondage, vineyards were a  
sign of divine blessing.

- “There I will give  
her her vineyards and  
make the Valley of  
Achor a door of hope.  
And there she shall  
answer as in the days  
of her youth, as at  
the time when she  
came out of the land  
of Egypt” (Hos 2:15).

- I believe it’s simply  
a coincidence that  
Ahab wants a  
vineyard for a  
vegetable garden, but  
I don’t believe it’s a  
coincidence that the  
author of Kings  
made sure he uses  
these two different  
words—Ahab wants  
to take a divine  
blessing and turn it in

to a symbol of  
captivity.

3. However, Naboth, in the name of the LORD,  
refuses to give the king the inheritance of his  
fathers.

a. At first glance, we might be  
outraged—how dare a subject not do  
what the king asks? After all, we're  
to honor those in authority.

b. However, Naboth had no right to  
sell his vineyard to Ahab for the  
king's purposes.

- Property could be  
sold if one became in  
need, but in the year  
of Jubilee, whoever  
owned the land was to  
return it to its original  
owner (Lev 25:23-  
28). It seems that  
Naboth understood  
that this was not to be  
a temporary deal but  
that Ahab wanted a  
permanent  
arrangement.

- Furthermore,  
inheritances were not  
to be transferred from  
one tribe to another  
(Num 36: 7-9).

4. Ahab went home and pouted.

B. What do we need to learn Naboth?

1. Obedience is more important than money.

a. We do not know how much money  
Ahab was willing to pay for this  
vineyard.

- The Heb here is  
literally "silver," and  
it is certainly possible  
that coins were not  
yet used in Israel.

- Nonetheless, silver was an accepted currency, and Naboth could likely have made out like a bandit.

b. But, Naboth knows that his obligation to God outweighs any desire for wealth.

- Do we know that our obligation to God outweighs any desire for wealth?

· Do we dishonor what God says about teaching right and wrong because we work long hours to make an extra buck?

· Do we neglect to visit the hospital or nursing home because our good job—the one that provides nice vacations, a nice house, and a nice car—keeps us too busy?

- Jesus would have us know that our obligation to God outweighs any desire for wealth.

· “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where

thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Mt 6:19-21).

· “Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you” (Jn 6:27).

c. Let us always remember that obedience is more important than money!

2. Government does not have all power.

a. The king of God’s people comes to Naboth to ask for his vineyard, but Naboth says, “No deal!”

b. Naboth understood that even though King Ahab had asked him to do something, the King of kings had spoken on the subject.

c. We must always remember that our allegiance to God outweighs by far our allegiance to our government.

- Fortunately, I live in a nation where I can safely say that—but whether those words can be spoken safely or not, they are the truth of God.

· “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God” (Rm 13:1). The obvious implication

is: Since God gives government authority, if government institutes laws which violate Scripture, government is in error and we don't obey.

· That is spelled out clearly in Acts 5:29: "We must obey God rather than men."

- While none of us has ever faced that challenging dilemma of Christ or Caesar, may we always be those who pledge allegiance to Jesus Christ regardless of the consequences!

### III. DEAL, vv 5-16.

#### A. Ahab and Jezebel make a deal.

1. No, it wasn't with Naboth, for he refused to deal with the evil king and his vile wife.
2. They make a deal with one another, with the elders of the city, and in reality, they make a deal with the devil.

#### B. When Jezebel saw that Ahab was pouting and not eating, she came and asked what the problem was.

1. Ahab responded that he had spoken to Naboth about the vineyard but that the Jezreelite had refused to sell it to him.
2. Jezebel said, "Look you're the king. Get up, eat, and I'll get you Naboth's vineyard."
  - a. It's almost as if Jezebel is one of the friends a contestant on "Deal or No Deal" is allowed to bring with him, Ahab has just wiped out the million, the banker has lowered his offer, but Jezebel says, "There's still big money on the board. Let's go for it!"

b. And, go for it they do!

C. Jezebel writes letters in Ahab's name to the elders of Jezreel instructing them to proclaim a fast, place Naboth had the head of the table, set worthless man on either side of Naboth and accuse him of cursing God and the king and then stone him to death.

1. The elders do as they've been instructed.

2. When Jezebel hears that Naboth is dead, she informs Ahab who goes and takes possession of the vineyard.

D. What do we need to learn from Ahab and Jezebel's deal?

1. Sin leads to sin.

a. Ahab, you understand, had no right to covet Naboth's vineyard: "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's" (Ex 20:17).

- Because Ahab allows his covetousness to fester, he asks Naboth for his vineyard, contrary to the will of God, and he conspires with Jezebel to kill Naboth, contrary to the will of God.

- It's certain that Ahab was involved in the plot to kill Naboth, for God told Elijah to say to Ahab, "Have you killed and also taken possession?" (v 19).

· As you read through the text, it becomes clear that it was because of Naboth's

death that Ahab  
himself died.

· Thus, if Ahab had  
stopped coveting that  
which was not his, he  
would not have killed  
Naboth and died  
when and how he did.

b. In Rm 1, we see that many sins  
stemmed from idolatry—e.g.,  
homosexuality, murder, deceit,  
gossiping, and disobedience to  
parents.

c. We know this principle—if we lie,  
for example, we know that we must  
keep lying to cover up the original  
sin.

d. Let us be ever so careful that we  
do not fall deeper and deeper into  
sin!

2. We also learn that coveting comes from pride.

a. When Jezebel enters this episode,  
she strokes Ahab's pride. She says at  
verse 7: "Do you now govern  
Israel?"

- Do you catch what  
she's saying?

- She's saying, "What  
just a minute Ahab:  
Naboth is not the  
King of Israel—you  
are! If you want that  
vineyard, let's get it.  
We're too  
important not to have  
what we want."

- Jezebel then  
concocts a devious  
plan to get the  
vineyard.

b. We often see covetousness and  
pride—selfishness—going hand in  
hand.

- When Achan confessed his sin at Jericho, he says to Joshua, “When I saw among the spoil a beautiful cloak from Shinar, and 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels, then I coveted them and took them” (Josh 7:21).

- Achan was too important to devote all the spoil of Jericho to destruction as God had said—he saw what he wanted, and he was going to take it.

- Because of Achan’s sin, “the men of Ai killed about thirty-six of their men and chased them before the gate as far as Shebarim and struck them at the descent. And the hearts of the people melted and became as water” (Josh 7:5). Thirty-six people died because Achan thought he was more important than God.

- Simon the magician faced similar pride.

- Prior to his conversion, Simon was a man who had amazed the Samaritans with his tricks, and he claimed

to be someone great  
(Acts 8:9).

· “Now when Simon  
saw that the Spirit  
was given through the  
laying on of the  
apostles’ hands, he  
offered them money,  
saying, ‘Give me this  
power also, so that  
anyone on whom I lay  
my hands may receive  
the Holy Spirit’”  
(Acts 8:18-19).

o  
Simon  
is  
import  
ant! He  
has  
wowed  
the  
Samari  
tans  
with  
his  
great  
tricks.

o He  
sees  
true  
power,  
and he  
has to  
have a  
part of  
it!

c. Anytime we covet, does it not  
come from pride?

- If I see you in your  
nice, new, big SUV &  
I have to have one  
too, aren't I saying,  
that I'm more  
important than you

and that I deserve a  
big SUV as much, if  
not more, than you  
do?

- If you get a  
promotion and I covet  
your new position,  
aren't I in essence  
saying that I work  
hard too and I deserve  
that promotion?

- Coveting is never  
about you—it's  
always about me!

3. We also learn that we need to be careful whom  
we marry.

a. It was Jezebel who came up with  
this scheme; it was Jezebel who sent  
the letters instructing the elders on  
how to carry out this scheme.

b. Ahab made a very poor choice  
when he married Jezebel.

- About Ahab's  
marriage to Jezebel,  
we read, "And as if it  
had been a light thing  
for him to walk in the  
sins of Jeroboam the  
son of Nebat, he  
took for his wife  
Jezebel the daughter  
of Ethbaal king of the  
Sidonians, and went  
and served Baal and  
worshiped him" (1 Ki  
16:31).

- God had previously  
commanded his  
children not to make  
such marriages: "You  
shall not intermarry  
with them [pagans],  
giving your  
daughters to their

sons or taking their daughters for your sons, for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods.

Then the anger of the LORD would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly” (Deut 7:3-4).

- Ahab could have avoided much heartache and rebellion in life if he had simply chosen his wife more carefully.

· He likely would not have served Baal, he likely would not have killed Naboth, and he may have even been a good king.

· But, all those possibilities were shot when he married Jezebel.

c. We need to be careful in choosing a mate.

- Jesus says, “No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other” (Mt 7:24).

· Obviously, in context, Jesus speaks of the love of money versus the love of God.

· Yet, the principle is applicable in the context of marriage— if I’m trying to please both God and my spouse, my loyalties are often going to be called into question. Serving God is going to be that much more difficult.

- Much heartache in life could be avoided if people chose spouses more carefully!

4. We also learn that judgment comes.

a. Because Ahab participated in his wife’s scheme, God sent Elijah to say, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Have you killed and also taken possession?’ And you shall say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD: “In the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick your own blood””” (v 19).

b. In the next chapter, we read of that judgment: “They washed the chariot [in which Ahab died] by the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood, and the prostitutes washed themselves in it, according to the word of the LORD that he had spoken” (22:38).

c. We know that God still judges sin:

- “He will render to each one according to his works . . . for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury” (Rm 2:6, 8).

- “We know him who said, ‘Vengeance is mine; I will repay.’ And again, ‘The Lord will judge his people.’

It is a fearful thing to  
fall into the hands  
of the living God”  
(Heb 10:30-31).

- Do you need to  
come tonight and  
make a deal with God  
that you may avoid  
God’s wrath?

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