**Naboth’s Vineyard**

**I Kings 20:35 – 21:29 (Lesson #18)**

***20:35 And a certain man of the sons of the prophets said to his fellow at the command of the LORD, "Strike me, please." But the man refused to strike him. 36 Then he said to him, "Because you have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, behold, as soon as you have gone from me, a lion shall strike you down." And as soon as he had departed from him, a lion met him and struck him down. 37 Then he found another man and said, "Strike me, please." And the man struck him —  struck hi***

***m and wounded him. 38 So the prophet departed and waited for the king by the way, disguising himself with a bandage over his eyes. 39 And as the king passed, he cried to the king and said, "Your servant went out into the midst of the battle, and behold, a soldier turned and brought a man to me and said, ‘Guard this man; if by any means he is missing, your life shall be for his life, or else you shall pay a talent of silver.’ 40 And as your servant was busy here and there, he was gone." The king of Israel said to him, "So shall your judgment be; you yourself have decided it." 41 Then he hurried to take the bandage away from his eyes, and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets. 42 And he said to him, "Thus says the LORD, ‘Because you have let go out of your hand the man whom I had devoted to destruction, therefore your life shall be for his life, and your people for his people.’" 43 And the king of Israel went to his house vexed and sullen and came to Samaria.***

Here in (I Kin 20:35) and then **nine more times** in **II Kings** we learn about a group of men called the **“sons of the prophets”** (II Kin 2:3, 2:5, 2:7, 2:15, 4:1, 4:38, 5:22, 6:1, 9:1).These appear to be younger prophets that had a clear connection to Elijah and Elisha. Further we learn there were groups located in different cities: II Kin 2:3 (**a group at Bethel**), II Kin 2:5 (**a group at Jericho**), and II Kin 4:38 (**a group at Gilgal**).

**Vs 35 -** Now, at first this seems totally disconnected to verse 34 and everything we just read, but I assure you that this is totally connected and completely relevant.

Here we learn about a “certain man” who was of the sons of the prophets. This man (a prophet) looks at one of his fellow prophets and says the Lord has commanded that you strike me.

Now prophets often taught important truth through graphic physical messages and pictures (think of David and the story by Nathan about the man with the sheep).

This other prophet, hearing from a fellow prophet says no, I will not strike you.

**APPLICATION:** This reminds us that we are to obey God’s Word, but more than that, it reminds that we at times have not obeyed God’s word!

**Vs 36 -** Now on the face this seems harsh.

**Two points:**

1. This man was a prophet and should have known to obey the word of God.
2. This highlights the significance God places on obeying His Word.

**APPLICATION:** Now let’s be honest, this is how things should work. Disobedience to God’s word should result in judgment. But because God is graceful, compassionate, long-suffering, and kind, what should happen does not happen immediately. Men and women are given chance upon chance upon chance.

**APPLICATION & MESSIAH:** Let’s not miss the point, Jesus had to die to redeem us, because we owed a debt we could not clear, because we had all disobeyed God’s word.

*“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned —  every one —  to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” (Isa 53:6 ESV)*

*“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” (Ro 3:23 ESV)*

**MESSIAH:** But understand, those who reject the Messiah, and die in that condition will be judged, and that without mercy!

**Vs 37 -** So, he found **another prophet** and likely said, strike me please for Yahweh has commanded it. The man struck him and wounded him.

**Vs 38 -** So the freshly wounded prophet places a bandage over his eye to help disguise himself and waits (by the way) for the King. The king knew this prophet by sight and knew he was a prophet, so the prophet is disguising himself!

**Vs 39-40** - The king passes by and the disguised prophet calls out to the King (this is a story, again much like Nathan did with David).

Here is the story in summation: I was in the fight against the Syrians and a soldier, right in the midst of battle, brought a Syrian fighter to me who he had captured and he said ***‘Guard this man; if by any means he is missing, your life shall be for his life, or else you shall pay a talent of silver.’*** Now I was busy, going here and there, and when I looked back the prisoner was gone. Unstated, I should not be required to give my life or to pay a fine, after all I was busy.

**Vs 40b** - Your own lips have sealed your judgement, you do not need to hear anything from me.

**Ahab’s determination:** *“You’ve just pronounced your own verdict.” (1Ki 20:40 Message)*

Before the king could shift his attention back to his chariot…

**Vs 41 -** The prophet then quickly removes the bandage from his eye, and the king instantly recognizes that he is one of the prophets.

Isn’t it just like God, that in spite of all that Ahab and Jezebel are doing and how hard they are pushing back against God, Yahweh has had his prophets there with them this whole time!

**Vs 42** - Then the prophet speaks, and **he speaks for Yahweh…** Thus says Yahweh. **I devoted Ben-hadad to destruction**. I am the one who was instrumental in bringing this all together, and **you chose to let free the one I intended to judge**, because of his sins. **You are guilty of the little story that you knew the correct answer when you heard.**

In the words of **Nathan the prophet** years earlier: **Thou art the man…** **I render the same judgment that you rendered… Your life for his life and your people for his people.**

**Vs 43 -** So the king heads back to the palace, back to Samaria. This petulant, evil, toad of a king goes back to Samaria, “vexed and sullen” rather than responding in **repentance before God**.

He is **sad** and **displeased**, he is **frustrated**. The Message translates it that he was in a **“very bad mood”** while the BBE indicates that he was **bitter and angry**.

**So he is not broken over his sins, he is not penitent over his rebellion against Yahweh.**

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***21:1 Now Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard in Jezreel, beside the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. 2 And after this Ahab said to Naboth, "Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near my house, and I will give you a better vineyard for it; or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its value in money." 3 But Naboth said to Ahab, "The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers." 4 And Ahab went into his house vexed and sullen because of what Naboth the Jezreelite had said to him, for he had said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers." And he lay down on his bed and turned away his face and would eat no food.***

So having defeated the Syrians, now twice, there is a time of peace that Ahab and Israel enjoys. Somewhere along the line, he leaves the palace in Samaria and goes back to the palace in Jezreel.

**Vs 1 -** So Naboth, lived in Samaria, next door to the palace and we are told that he had a vineyard.

**Vs 2 -** The **“after this”** is after Ahab returns from the battle of Aphek, after he returns from releasing the enemy of God, and after his trip to Samaria.

Ahab takes a liking to the location of Naboth’s vineyard. He decides he wants it so that he can have his own **“vegetable garden”** in his side yard. **This seems so frivolous for the King of Israel to be engaged in, but as we will see, it gets much worse.**

He looks at Naboth and says give me your vineyard and I will give you a better vineyard, of I will pay you its value in money.

**Premia Facia –** (On the face) this seems like a good deal and the chance for Naboth to score a few dollars.

**Vs 3 -** Notice what Naboth says. **Yahweh forbid!** Not No, because he could not part with the dirt, not no, because he loved his vineyard in the side lot of the palace. It is Yahweh forbid that I should go against God’s law and give away the inheritance that I received from his ancestors!

What he is saying is that God allotted this land, this is my allotment, in fact it is loaned to my family from God, He is the actual owner of the land and it would be sin against God to give or sell it to you.

*“"The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine. For you are strangers and sojourners with me.” (Le 25:23 ESV)*

There was in place a set of very complex laws to ensure land stayed in the correct families (Deut 25:5-10). Under certain emergency situations, they could sell land, but all sales like that were temporary and every 50th year all the land that had been sold would revert back to the original (Lev 25:23) (Num 36:7):

*“"The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine. For you are strangers and sojourners with me.” (Le 25:23 ESV)*

**Ahab’s plan shows his continued disregard for God’s word and Naboth’s response shows his submission to God’s word.**

There is another issue here isn’t there? He was coveting his neighbor’s property:

*“"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 ESV)*

**APPLICATION:** Our real allegiance to God’s word is not in what we say, but what we actually do. Naboth could have used this opportunity to attempt to get a better vineyard, or a better piece of property. But in so doing would have been going against God’s revealed will on the matter.

Ahab, could have used this opportunity to stopping sinning against God, but instead.

**APPLICATION: Of all the sins, coveting is the hardest for us to detect. Yet it is spiritual rat poison.** For what it is really saying is God I am not satisfied with your provision. You are not taking care of me. If I were God, I would take much better care of a servant (like me).

**So Ahab leaves the side yard. Let’s see what happens next!**

**Vs 4 -** After the interaction with Naboth, Ahab the king of Israel is “**vexed and sullen” Same exact two Hebrew words we saw at the end of chapter 20.** The King of Israel, king over 10 tribes is He is sad and displeased, he is sulking, he is in a bad mood, he is upset, he is not eating. He is on a hunger strike.

All because he could not get the piece of dirt located next to the palace that he so desperately desired.

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***5 But Jezebel his wife came to him and said to him, "Why is your spirit so vexed that you eat no food?" 6 And he said to her, "Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and said to him, ‘Give me your vineyard for money, or else, if it please you, I will give you another vineyard for it.’ And he answered, ‘I will not give you my vineyard.’" 7 And Jezebel his wife said to him, "Do you now govern Israel? Arise and eat bread and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."***

**Vs 5** - Jezebel struts in from whatever wickedness she has been up to and she strolls in the dining room and the servants inform her that King Ahab is upstairs and **“his spirit is so vexed”** that **he will not even eat**.

It appears the silliness has taken on a serious tone when Ahab explained it to the servants. **He is sullen or vexed in his spirit!** Therefore, he is not eating because he has this heavy spirit.

**Vs 6 -** Then he tells her the **whole sad story**. Naboth will not give me want I want. If I cannot have that spot, I am just going to die!

I offered him and amazing deal and he said: ***‘I will not give you my vineyard.’"***

**Well now hold on forked tongue Ahab, actually that is not what he said and he made it clear in his response why!**

But it seems like all of Ahab’s stories are missing a great deal of key information.

**Imagine a woman as mean, assertive, aggressive, and evil as Jezebel is likely to tell the baby king to grow up.**

**Vs 7** – Do you see what she is saying? Are you not the king around here? Are you not in charge around here?

I can tell you, if this happened in my daddy’s kingdom (you remember him -EthBaal), he would not have tolerated this type of disregard for his kingly status or position. **Are you not the king here?**

**Vs 7b –** Jezebel says be happy, I will get you the vineyard. **Now we must admit, if you are looking for an aggressive despot, Jezebel seems to be a much better choice. She is more decisive, more clever, more unscrupulous, and more deadly than winey Ahab!**

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***8 So she wrote letters in Ahab’s name and sealed them with his seal, and she sent the letters to the elders and the leaders who lived with Naboth in his city. 9 And she wrote in the letters, "Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth at the head of the people. 10 And set two worthless men opposite him, and let them bring a charge against him, saying, ‘You have cursed God and the king.’ Then take him out and stone him to death." 11 And the men of his city, the elders and the leaders who lived in his city, did as Jezebel had sent word to them. As it was written in the letters that she had sent to them, 12 they proclaimed a fast and set Naboth at the head of the people. 13 And the two worthless men came in and sat opposite him. And the worthless men brought a charge against Naboth in the presence of the people, saying, "Naboth cursed God and the king." So they took him outside the city and stoned him to death with stones. 14 Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, "Naboth has been stoned; he is dead."***

**Vs 8 – She writes letters in Ahab’s name and seals them with is seal.** she is disguising her communications to appear as communications from the king. **This is forgery!**

She sent it to the elders and leaders in Jezreel.

Now we must assume that she had to ask Ahab for his signet, and Ahab is silently compliant.

**Vs 9** - ***Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth at the head of the people.*** A fast, a **solemn assembly**, is generally a time of **repentance**, a time of deep contrition over sin, but Jezebel is anything but penitent.

Many examples in the Old Testament: David prayed and fasted for the child born to Bathsheba (II Sam 12:16), Jehoshaphat ordered a fast when the Moabites and the Ammonites came out against him and the nation (II Chr 20:3), Ezra as he sought the Lord’s guidance when going back to Jerusalem fasted (Ezr 8:21), we see the people fast under Nehemiah in (Ne 9:1) and of course others.

But here, this is not like any of those! **This is religious hypocrisy.** Let’s see what she does!

**Vs 10 - S**et two worthless fellows, two men who will bear false witness, two liars. Set two Yahweh hating, law-breaking lairs. Then have the hired liars say that of Naboth: ***‘You have cursed God and the king.’***

So have these men agree together and bear false witness against God and against Naboth. **This is perjury as directed by this wicked queen!**

This is **forgery, hypocrisy, and perjury**. In fact, this is a **high-level** **conspiracy!**

Jezebel, who hates Yahweh, abhors his word, is here using God’s law, the very thing that she cared nothing about, to bring about an unlawful execution of a follower of Yahweh.

**This is not just forgery, hypocrisy, perjury**, and **high-level conspiracy!** This is the **height of evil!**

Now this story is loaded with villains, I will leave it to you to determine the most atrocious, the most barbaric, the most wicked, of these villains.

Here is our line-up:

1. **Jezebel** in hatching this wicked plan involving forgery, hypocrisy, perjury and a conspiracy that makes her an accomplice (before the fact) to murder.
2. The **two hired liars** who lied for money or worse (for fun).
3. The **city leaders** who actually deployed this wicked and evil plan knowing full well this was all to execute an innocent man, because they believed the king directed it.
4. **King Ahab**, who could care less who, what, or how, as long as he got his way!

**Vs 11-13 -** Then, the leaders of the city, did what they were asked. They launched a wicked conspiracy and ultimately executed an innocent man.

They set up the whole kangaroo court and executed Naboth as outlined in (Lev 24:16).

What a picture of the gospel, what a picture of the Lord Jesus. This story as tragic as it is, this story reminds us of the gospel. Here we see an innocent man dies, because of trumped up charges. He too, dies outside the city.

**It is interesting how God haters will sometimes use God’s law to punish an innocent man.**

**APPLICATION:** Naboth suffered for righteousness’s sake (I Pet 3:14). He could have went along to get along.

**Vs 14 - This is heartbreaking**. But more than that it is **scandalous**, it is **shocking**, **outrageous**, **appalling**, and **evil**!

Now when you think of all the evil this pair of wicked villains have executed against Yahweh, against His prophets, and against the nation of Israel, this event, as you will see is the proverbial straw that broke the camel’s back!

This is a scandalous story? So is the gospel! In fact, the gospel is this very story! An innocent man executed with layers of guilty parties!

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***15 As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, Jezebel said to Ahab, "Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money, for Naboth is not alive, but dead." 16 And as soon as Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, Ahab arose to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it. 17 ¶ Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 18 "Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who is in Samaria; behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone to take possession. 19 And you shall say to him, ‘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."’"***

**Vs 15 -** WOW, there is little I can say that will add to your understanding of how ruthless Jezebel is that this text fails to convey all on its own!

**Vs 16 -** There is little I can say that would indicate how **complicit** Ahab is in **Jezebel’s sins** that this text does not already convey!

**His heart** was as corrupt as Jezebel’s heart. We will see God’s commentary here in a few verses.

We can picture Ahab roaming through the vineyard, soon to be vegetable garden, imagining where he will plant the beans and the lintels, the cabbage and the squash.

Now, you may be thinking, I guess Naboth did not have any children or even close relatives to pass his property to, that at his death it would be up for grabs like this.

Well, let me share with you something the writer of Kings says in II Kings that he does not mention here:

***26*** *’As surely as I saw yesterday the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons —  declares the LORD —  I will repay you on this plot of ground.’ Now therefore take him up and throw him on the plot of ground, in accordance with the word of the LORD."” (2Ki 9:26 ESV)*

**Vs 17-19 -** Once again, the word of Yahweh comes to Elijah and Yahweh dispatches Elijah to meet Ahab. Yahweh tells Elijah, specifically what he is to say.

**Vs 19 -** Ahab may have assumed no one was watching and even if they were, his hands were clean in the matter. He not only had nothing to do with the **forgery, hypocrisy, perjury**, and high level **conspiracy,** he actually did not have **firsthand knowledge**. No court in the land would have found Ahab guilty of anything.

But, Yahweh was watching, Yahweh was stirred to anger, and Yahweh the judge of the high court in heaven held Ahab accountable for all that had happened!

***In the place where the dogs licked up Naboth blood, they will lick up your own blood.*  Keep this tucked away in the back of your mind. As the dog licked up Naboth’s blood, so shall they lick up yours!**

Remember, each statement of judgment is a potential chance for grace. This stern judgment is a call for repentance and faith…

**Remember…** *“****7*** *If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it,* ***8*** *and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it.” (Jer 18:7-8 ESV)*

**Ahab is in the vineyard; he peaks over the grapevine and guess who he sees?**

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***20 Ahab said to Elijah, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" He answered, "I have found you, because you have sold yourself to do what is evil in the sight of the LORD. 21 Behold, I will bring disaster upon you. I will utterly burn you up, and will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, in Israel. 22 And I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the anger to which you have provoked me, and because you have made Israel to sin. 23 And of Jezebel the LORD also said, ‘The dogs shall eat Jezebel within the walls of Jezreel.’ 24 Anyone belonging to Ahab who dies in the city the dogs shall eat, and anyone of his who dies in the open country the birds of the heavens shall eat."***

Can you imagine when Ahab peaked over the grape vines and he saw Elijah! It has likely been years since he last saw the prophet, and here he is again, in Naboth’s vineyard, within minutes of Ahab taking possession!

**Ahab knew exactly why Elijah was there!** We see that this wicked king speaks first!

**Vs 20a** - Here the one who last referred to Elijah as the **“troubler of Israel”** here refers to Elijah as **“his enemy”.** The implication is that Ahab is being a good guy and Elijah, for reasons that cannot be imagined, has a problem with this great king!

Vs 20b - Elijah answers, I have found you, I have tracked you down: ***because you have sold yourself to do what is evil in the sight of the LORD.***

Elijah’s point, you may think **your name is not on the letter**, you **did not hatch the plan**, you did not **direct the false testimony**. Yahweh says just the opposite. You have SOLD YOUSELF to do evil!

**Vs 21-24 -** As you will see in a moment that the prophet is speaking for Yahweh, and he provides a **very harsh judgment against the house of Ahab:**

**Let’s walk through the pieces:**

1. I will bring **disaster (calamity) upon you.**
2. I will **burn you up** - The Hebrew is I will burn or consume what follows behind…
3. I will **cut-off** from Ahab every male!
	1. Most other versions state something like this:
	2. I will ***sweep away every descendant, or I will cut off every male descendant***
4. I will make your house like the House of Jeroboam and the House of Baasha

**These are two families that have been completely removed from the registry of Israel!**

1. Jezebel – **Vs 23 -** **The dogs will eat Jezebel within the city walls of Jezreel!**
2. **Vs 24 -** ***Anyone belonging to Ahab who dies in the city the dogs shall eat, and anyone of his who dies in the open country the birds of the heavens shall eat.***

**Jezebel may have thought Ahab was going to get something for nothing, but in the end, she too would pay, with her own life!**

**APPLICATION:** Be sure your sins will find you out (Num 32:23) for God is not mocked whatsoever a person sews, that shall they reap (Gal 6:7)

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***25 (There was none who sold himself to do what was evil in the sight of the LORD like Ahab, whom Jezebel his wife incited. 26 He acted very abominably in going after idols, as the Amorites had done, whom the LORD cast out before the people of Israel.) 27 And when Ahab heard those words, he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his flesh and fasted and lay in sackcloth and went about dejectedly. 28 And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 29 "Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself before me, I will not bring the disaster in his days; but in his son’s days I will bring the disaster upon his house."***

Here we have a parenthetical added by the writer of kings, but one I have mentioned on multiple occasions.

**Vs 25-26 -** No king acted as evil as Ahab acted, all in the sight of Yahweh. He was a wicked, toad of a king, who stood as the rust standard for all the kings of Israel.

Notice he **“sold himself”** to do evil. Jezebel, that wicked queen **“incited”** the word could be translated **incite**, **stir**, or **lure**. She stirred him to additional evil and we read in Vs 26.

They were the perfect combination of evil and she worked greater evil in a man who was already evil! They were the **Bonny and Clyde** of their day!

**Vs 26 –** He acted VERY ABOMINABLY, in going after various idols as the Amorites, who by the way, Yahweh cast out of the land because of their sins.

**Vs 27 –** When Ahab heard this **horrific prophecy of destruction…**

He **tore his clothes**

He **put on sackcloth**

**He fasted…**Not like the one Jezebel ordered but really fasted. He lay, likely days in sackcloth!

And he went about **“dejectedly”** the Hebrew word is **אט** (‘at). The word means **soft**, **gentle**, or **quiet**. He was not pouting or wining, **he was mourning, he was quiet.**

Scholars disagree if he was really repentant! I will leave to you to decide if you believe this was true repentance or simply worldly sorrow over getting caught in his sin.

**But, here is what we do know:** If any person, will confess their sins God is faithful and just and will forgive that person of their sins and cleanse them from all unrighteousness (I Jo 1:9), We know that Godly sorrow works repentance unto salvation, but the sorrow of the world works death (II Cor 7:9-10).

**Vs 28-29 -** The word of Yahweh **comes to Elijah.** Yahweh asks: **Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before me?**

Because of this, I will not bring disaster in his days, but rather in the days of his son! Disaster delayed, because Ahab humbled himself.

Here we see that judgement is at least delayed, but it appears that it is not cancelled.

**In spite of all the Ahab has done, in spite of his wickedness God is still willing to send mercy and grace!**

**This is the message or reconciliation:** *“"Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.” (Isa 1:18 ESV)*

**What another amazing picture of grace, we find in the man of rust (Ahab)!**

**In closing the mercy of God cannot be explained, but it can be received!**

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I want to remind you of a similar story and a similar parable:

*“****57*** *¶ Then those who had seized Jesus led him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had gathered.* ***58*** *And Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and going inside he sat with the guards to see the end.* ***59*** *Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death,* ***60*** *but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward* ***61*** *and said, "This man said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.’"* ***62*** *And the high priest stood up and said, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?"* ***63*** *But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God."* ***64*** *Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."* ***65*** *Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy.* ***66*** *What is your judgment?" They answered, "He deserves death."” (Mt 26:57-66 ESV)*

Or a similar parable (Mat 21:33-45).