

# THIS WEEK'S SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

**ELIJAH REBUKES AHAB**  
(Lesson for May 16)  
Golden Text—Thou shalt not cover—Exodus 20:17  
**THE LESSON AS A WHOLE**  
By J. C. Macaulay, D.D.  
Approach to the Lesson

Elijah is strangely absent from the twentieth chapter of 1 Kings. Three times in that chapter Ahab received a prophetic message, but on none of those occasions was Elijah the messenger. Instead, two anonymous prophets (one of them described as "a certain man of the sons of the prophets"—v. 35) were employed. What reason can be offered for this? Perhaps the events of chapter 19 are part of the answer. Elijah was "back in school", having a post-graduate course. Or perhaps we should say that he was in the hospital, recuperating from the wounds of battle—not physical wounds, but spiritual. How long he was out of commission we do not know, but when he did return to duty, he had with him a companion and helper, Elisha, whose quieter, milder spirit must have been a comfort to the more fiery Elijah. The answer may also be in part the events of chapter 18. That victory must have given courage to the fearful ones. Doubtless there were prophets and "sons of the prophets" who felt shame that they had so hidden their light under a bushel and left Elijah to fight alone. Now they buckled on their armor and openly stood

for God and righteousness. So it is actually cheering to see Elijah's monopoly broken, and more of the Lord's people being used in the sacred office. But Ahab's seizure of Naboth's vineyard created a crisis which called Elijah back to duty, and in this week's lesson we see the conflict between the king and the prophet resumed with fierce intensity. God had spoken in the fire of Carmel, but Ahab had not hearkened. He was still his selfish, willful self, and still the weakling, allowing his wife Jezebel to exert her baneful influence in the kingdom. That theft, accompanied with blood, sealed Ahab's judgment, and Elijah was chosen to pronounce it.

Verse by Verse  
1 Kings 21:1—"Naboth . . . had a vineyard . . . in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab." Ahab had made Jezreel a royal residence, and was seeking to enlarge and improve the grounds. Jezreel was in the territory of Issachar, near Mt. Gilboa, and so north of Jeroboam's residence at Tirzah.

Verse 2—"Give me thy vineyard . . . for a garden of herbs. I will give thee for it a better vineyard, or money." On the fact of it, it seemed a reasonable request, on an equitable terms.

Verse 3—"The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee." While some might have regarded it as a high honour to be approached by the king

with such a request, Naboth saw the other side of the matter. It would mean the surrender of the family inheritance, which he regarded as a sacred trust for the generations to come.

Verse 4—"Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased . . . laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread." What a picture of a puffed king! Instead of admiring the spirit of his subject, he indulged in a royal pout.

Verse 5-15—These verses tell of Jezebel's diabolical plot to secure for her pouting husband what he could not secure by bargain. The plot, of course, was successful. Or was it?

Verse 16—"Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth . . . to take possession of it." The death of Naboth and his sons opened the way for Ahab to take personal possession of Naboth's vineyard, without fear of dispute.

Verse 17—"And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite." Elijah was again ready for service after the experiences of chapter 19.

Verse 18—"Arise, go down to meet Ahab . . . he is in the vineyard of Naboth . . . to possess it." Apparently Ahab was at his Samaria residence (the capitol) when Naboth was killed. It was probably part of the strategy for the king not to be in the vicinity of Jezreel when the deed was perpetrated.

Verse 19—"Hast thou killed, and also taken possession . . . where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood." The deed was to have retribution in kind. However, see verse 29 and chapter 22:38. So there was a partial staying of the sentence.

Verse 20—"Hast thou found me, O mine enemy . . . thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord." The evil deed regards God, and therefore God's faithful servant, as his enemy. Elijah, the prophet, stands for the Word of God, which searches out the sin of man. Notice the striking phrase, "sold thyself." What did he make out of the deal? See verse 25 and Romans 7:14.

**The Heart of the Lesson**  
Elijah's former controversy with Ahab had to do with the national life. Now the prophet stepped into the king's private affairs. But does a king have a private life? Can any of his private life be called private? When Edward VIII of England wanted to marry Mrs. Simpson, he reckoned that it was his private affair. But Mr. Baldwin, the prime minister, did not think so. And the Archbishop of Canterbury did not think so. What may be a private affair to a private person is a national affair in the life of a king. So Ahab's seizure of Naboth's vineyard was a matter of national justice. No man's inheritance could be secure if the king could take possession at will.

There is an old adage to the effect that "the king can do no wrong." God does not regard the saying, nor did His prophet Elijah. What is wrong is wrong, whether done by king or commoner. So, just as God had sent Nathan to deal with David about his double sin of adultery and murder, so God sent Elijah to deal with Ahab's double sin of murder and theft. Notice that the fact that Jezebel had schemed the affair is not mentioned here. "The king is held responsible." "Hast thou killed, and also taken possession?" (v. 19.) But there was this difference between David and Ahab. David had not so hardened himself in sin that he regarded God's prophet as his enemy. Rather he received him as a friend, whose rebuke was welcomed and accepted, though it cut to the quick. The penitence of David, also, was deep and true, so that it gave to the saints one of the greatest of the Psalms—the fifty-first, the Song of the Penitent. Ahab, on the other hand, wanted no interference from God's prophet. Elijah was his "enemy" (v. 20) as was anybody who would challenge the royal whim. It is true that Ahab humbled himself on hearing the terrible condemnation which his sin had brought on him, but we cannot fail to see that it was the reaction of the moral weakling, who did not really hate his sin, but feared the consequences. He did not make friends of the true prophets of God thereafter, but continued to surround himself with sycophants who aimed to please rather than to be true.

Yet the mercy of the Lord was abundant toward this craven monarch. The sentence uttered by Elijah was modified in the case of Ahab himself, so that he received burial, and only the blood which stained his chariot of war was licked by the dogs—not of Jezreel, but of Samaria (v. 38). But because the repentance was not complete, and because the house of Ahab was unfit for continuance, the full force of the judgment fell upon his son Jehoram (2 Kings 9:21-26). What a monster is sin, destroying lives and houses and souls!

## PINE ORCHARD

(Thursday, May 6th)

Mr. and Mrs. Mason attended the Hollywood Ice Revue at Maple Leaf Gardens last week.

Mr. and Mrs. E. Birdsall and Marlene are moving to Vivian this week. We wish them the best in their new home.

Mr. and Mrs. Rae McClure and children spent Sunday in Toronto.

Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Mason of Toronto spent the weekend with his brother and family here.

Our boys have entered a team in the Simcoe Soft Ball League. There's no better way to keep the young lads in the community than a snappy ball team and it also gives the proud grandfathers a subject for conversation. Good luck boys.

Mrs. Bob Middleton (nee Betty Sytema) was given a lovely shower at her parents home on Thursday afternoon. The pretty bride was assisted in opening her gifts by her sister, Mrs. Ron Stickwood, also a recent bride. Betty and Bob moved to their new home in King on Friday with our best wishes.

Miss Lillian Berg has accepted a position at a Toronto Radio Station.

## CEDAR GROVE

Even the weather lived up to expectations last Saturday and the official opening of the new Township offices was an event no-one should have missed. With the sod down and the road laid (the road was finished in record time minutes before the ceremony began) the new buildings took on a warm and attractive appearance. There were far too many old papers and documents and relics of pioneer days to mention all, but one or two unusual ones might be given a little space.

A cherry-pitter, for instance, was not only an efficient-looking tool but a lovely thing to see—it looked like an old French chair. A beeswax seal on one of the official papers was a good half inch thick and perhaps three to four inches across. Cedar Grove was well represented in the collection with some of Mr. Clendenen's blacksmith tools, a picture of the famous old Black Walnut Tree and several other items.

In appreciation for her assistance with the exhibits, Blodwen Davies was presented with a tray made of King's pine and carved by Alfred Perry in a brilliant design. It was interesting to note the Township colours so beautifully worked into Mrs. Timbers' bouquet. This, I understand, is credited to Mrs. James.

Everyone seemed to find the Women's Institute History Books well worth examining. Since there is no institute in this particular region it might not be a bad idea for Cedar Grove to have a History Book underway.

### NOTES ABOUT NEIGHBOURS

Mr. and Mrs. Keith Jones and family, from Whitehorse, were visitors at Mr. A. Milroy's home recently, accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. E. Jones of Toronto. Marian McCowan is mobile again and was back at her post in the choir last Sunday.

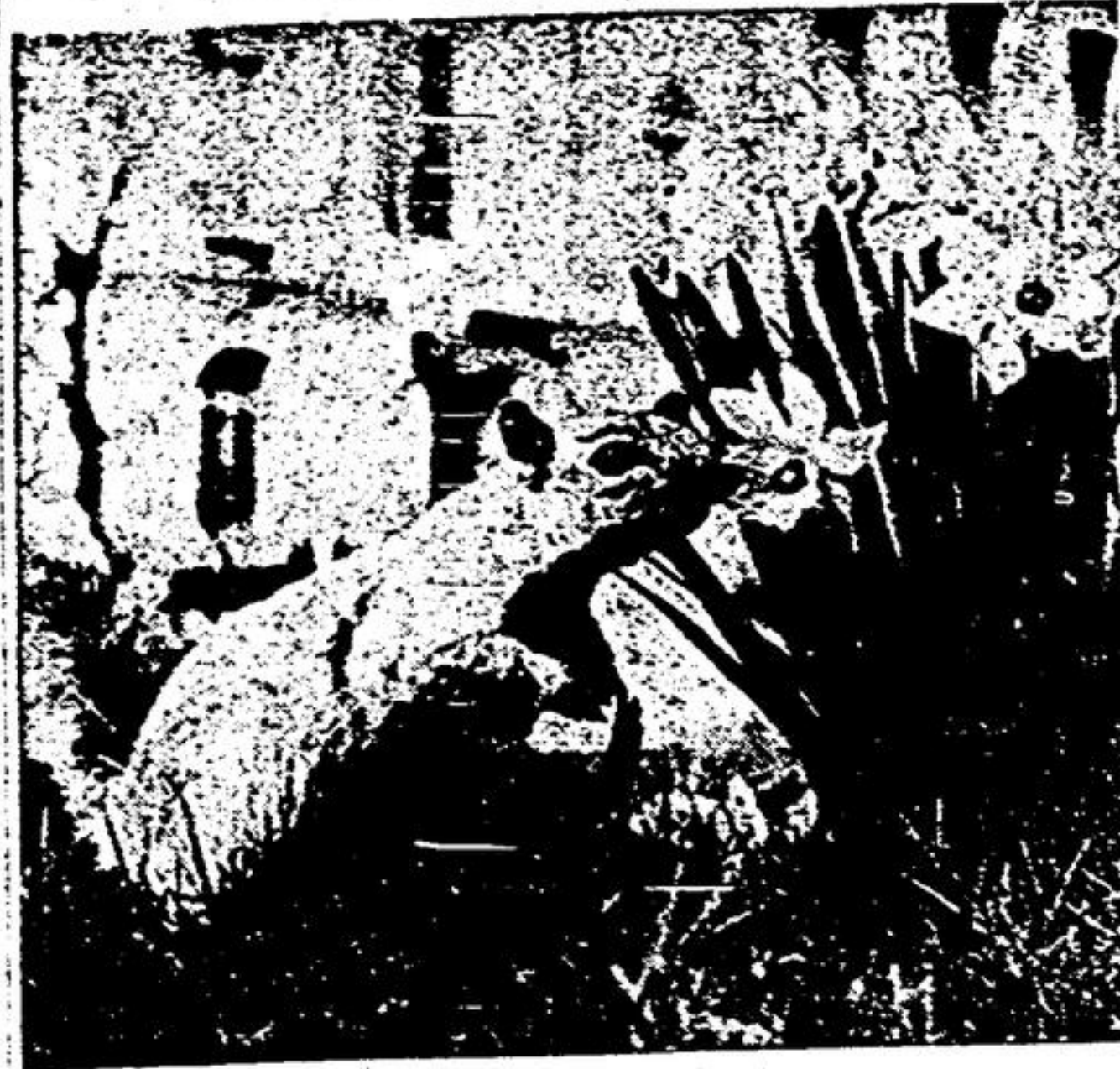
George often recently underwent a disc operation and is improving slowly but well. Mrs. Clendenen had been ill this week.

Have you seen Archie Little's new Lincoln? He is the envy of carlovers in the village.

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## Nutty Method In His Madness



Squirrels are better known for their love of nuts, not nature, so this might be the only photo ever taken of a squirrel sniffing flowers, in this case jonquills growing in a Washington park. The squirrel was enticed into the photo by a method

only brought to light when the photographer sent an itemized expense account to his newspaper. The expense account read: "Special assignment; stuffing peanuts into jonquills—peanuts, 25 cents. Total expense: 25 cents."

## Canvass for Blind Continuing

The counties division of the C.N.I.B. Building Fund has reached the half-way mark toward its quota of the \$3,150,000 total objective, it was announced this week.

Two of the 45 communities in which local appeals are being conducted have gone over the top. They are Roche's Point, in York County, with 133% in Ontario County, with 103.8%. Other leaders are Dunbarton and Uxbridge in Ontario, Sutton, Newmarket, Queensville and Thornhill in York, Tottenham in Simcoe and Oakville in Halton.

Last week, however, it was announced by general chairman D. W. Ambridge that work on the proposed new six-building service centre for the blind had been temporarily postponed.

Originally scheduled for May 12, ground-breaking at the 10-

acre North York site now will be delayed until sufficient funds are on hand to permit the start of construction. All volunteer canvassers are urged to complete their work within the next week in order that work might proceed on this urgently needed project before the end of the month.

By the end of this week, total results are expected to near the \$2,400,000 mark.

"In the very early stages of the C.N.I.B. Building Fund," Mr. Ambridge said, "we decided that plans for the new centre should be ready in time to start construction this month, if the public responded to our appeal for support."

The building plans are now ready, and the support to date has been excellent. However, the work of our thousands of volunteer canvassers is not complete by any means, and until it is we cannot be sure that these urgently needed buildings can be constructed as planned."

Mr. Ambridge pointed out that while the Building Fund

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# Stouffville CO-OP

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is still almost three quarters of a million dollars short of its objective, further support is still anticipated from governments, corporations and individuals. Canvassing in the five counties adjacent to Toronto and among employee groups is now well under way, and appeal is being extended until all reports are complete.

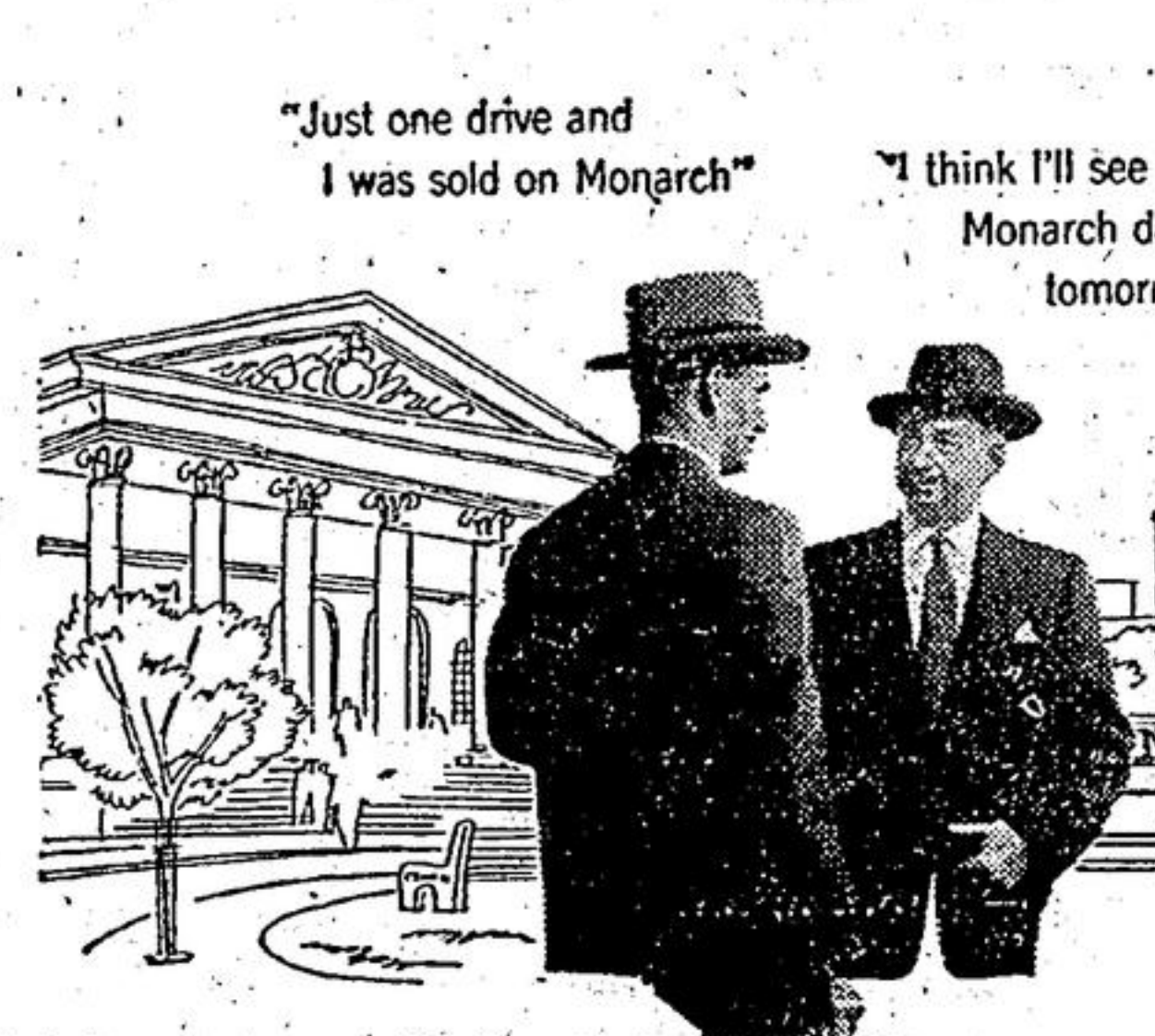
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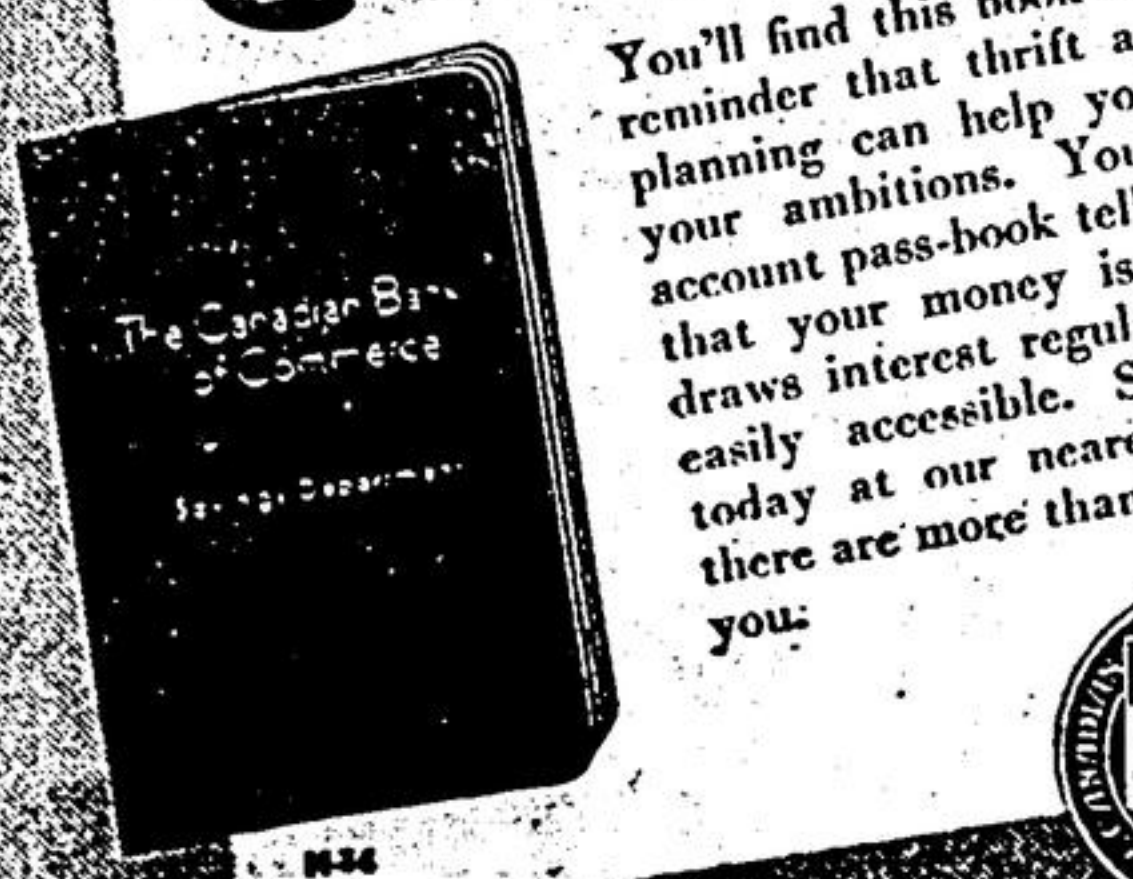
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