

# Finishing Well

Lesson #40

Thyatira: Spirit of Jezebel

Oct. 11, 2023

Rev. 2:18-25 And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, 'These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass: <sup>19</sup> "I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first. <sup>20</sup> Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. <sup>21</sup> And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. <sup>22</sup> Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. <sup>23</sup> I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works. <sup>24</sup> "Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. <sup>25</sup> But hold fast what you have till I come. And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations— <sup>27</sup> 'He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels'— as I also have received from My Father; <sup>28</sup> and I will give him the morning star. <sup>29</sup> "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Can you imagine what happened in the church in Thyatira when this letter was delivered and read? This is a real church, a real city and a real letter.

In Hebrews >God comes in judgment with fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. He has the power to perform devastating judgment. He has the holiness to not tolerate sin. They need to repent and change or there will be severe judgment.

Jesus Confronts The Problem in the Church The church in Thyatira was being led away from the Lord by the teachings of an influential woman in their congregation.

Acts 20:29-30 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. <sup>30</sup> Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

I Tim. 4:1 Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

## Jesus Confronts The Tolerance Of This Church

The church has allowed and tolerated this woman to lead the people away from the true worship of God by teaching them a false system of worship which entailed worshiping idols, and eating things sacrificed to idols.

*The Church Has Become Intimate With A False god And System Of Worship.*

Christ's Condemnation: Rev. 2:20 Nevertheless (in spite of all the good) I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess [has direct communication to God], to teach and seduce (lead out of the right path) My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.

This letter shows the depth of sin that compromise ultimately leads to...full-scale idolatry, full-scale immorality, and worst of all, tolerance of both. This church, infiltrated by the world, tolerated sin, absorbed sin and error and lived happily ever after with it.

It faced a problem that has troubled many churches through history >

- a strong internal movement advocating compromise with worldly interests.

Einstein: The world will not be destroyed by those who do evil, but by those who watch them and do nothing.

For more than two thousand years, Jezebel has been saddled with a reputation as the bad girl of the Bible, the wickedest of women. "The Woman Who Was A She-Devil"

Scripture References—I Kings 16:30-31; 18:4, 19; 19:1-21; 21:5-25; II Kings 9:10, 30, 36

Family Connections—As the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians who was both king and priest of Baal worshipers, she sprang from an idolatrous stock. Practiced witchcraft.

Ethbaal had murdered his predecessor, Pheles, to seize the throne. The Sidonians were idolaters who regarded Jehovah as only a local deity, "the god of the land."

Political Marriage It is believed the heathen Phoenician princess married Ahab, king of Israel, to seal a profitable trade alliance between Israel and Phoenicia.

- First time a king of Israel allied himself by marriage with a heathen princess.

As a Jew, Ahab sinned against God's Law in taking as his wife a heathen and her father's name, Ethbaal which meant "A Man of Baal."

Jezebel, ambitious and proud, eagerly seized the opportunity to share the throne of a king.

As queen, Jezebel exerted an evil influence in all public affairs of the northern kingdom and the worship of the God of heaven.

Ahab and Jezebel ushered in the worst period in Old Testament history by re-introducing the worship of Baal and the Asherah to Israel. [I Kings 16:31-33; I Kings 11:1-8].

For over 60 years idolatry made terrible inroads upon the life and ways of the Israelites, dragging the nation to new depths of degradation.

At first, it would seem as though Jezebel and Ahab were content with religious pluralism.

Israelites could worship Yahweh, or Baal, or both. It is this kind of pluralism we see in America today. The one thing that is intolerable is to make any exclusive claims regarding one's faith or one's "god."

To think your religion is a way to God is fine; to say your religion is The Way To God is intolerable. [John 14:6 I am THE WAY, THE TRUTH, THE LIFE...]

Jezebel was not content for Israel to have the option of serving whatever God or gods they chose; she wanted the worship of Yahweh eliminated. [spirit of Babylon]  
Its "unpardonable sin" was its exclusiveness. Israel's God was God alone, and to serve Him, one must serve no other gods. So Jezebel began to systematically kill off the prophets of Yahweh.

Jezebel, in full control of religion, teaches false doctrine.

- She was the queen and the religious leader in charge of many prophets who worked with her to control the religious climate.
- In Revelation, she calls herself a prophetess. She has enough influence to persuade the culture of Thyatira through her teachings.
- She has the characteristics of a teacher who is seductive and controlling.

Truth: We must be Bereans and study God's Word to detect false teachings and ideas.

Joseph A. Seiss says of spiritual Jezebel: "And in all history there is not another character which so completely represents the Papal system—its character, works and worship as the unclean wife of Ahab. She was a heathen, married to a Jew; and such is the character of the Papal system in its main elements—Paganism joined to an obsolete Judaism. She is described as calling herself a prophetess, and as undertaking to be the teacher of God's servants; and Popery claims and professes to be heaven's only infallible teacher of God's truth. She was a persecutor and murderess of God's prophets and witnesses; and the Papacy is marked by nothing more than its severity towards such as stood out against its impious pretenses, and its public and secret tortures and butcheries of the saints." [pp. 194, 195]

Attributes of Jezebel to look for: devoted to luxury, lascivious, malicious, unjust, evil, shameless, ambitious, proud, persuasive, revengeful, cruel, wicked, lead astray, false system of worship, massacre God's people, malice, corrupt, schemer, slander, covetousness, etc.

#### The Jezebel Spirit

- Seeks out other individuals they feel are weaker to control, influence & dominate.
- Has an unnatural sense of self-importance.
- Requires excessive admiration and attention.
- Shows arrogant, haughty behaviors or attitudes.
- Lacks self-control, unable to control emotional outbursts.
- Unconcerned with effecting others
- Exploitative, abusive, takes advantage of others to achieve his/her own goals
- Totally void of empathy; will falsely mimic empathy to seduce & control their victims.
- Jealous & envious of others, yet delusional in believing others are jealous/envious of them
- Defensive and combative whenever confronted about anything
- Fantasies about themselves having unlimited admiration, beauty, power and success.

## Characteristics of "spirit of Jezebel."

### A. Control, Manipulation & Domination

The desire to manipulate, intimidate and to control people.

- The fruit of Jezebel is people-control and even control the surroundings.
- Jezebel never produces self-control.
- A Jezebel spirit is cold and calculating and uses clever deceptions to manipulate others to achieve what it wants.

Jezebel spirit thrives where the leadership is weak.

- For every Jezebel, there is an Ahab who is passive and unwilling to confront Jezebel.
- God had to send Jehu to take her out because Ahab could not.
- Jezebel thrives in areas where the leadership is afraid of confrontation.

One trait is her obsessive passion for domineering and controlling others, especially in the spiritual realm.

*She Was an Ardent Idolater:* Baal had no more dedicated devotee than Jezebel.

Her zeal for the worship of Ashteroth the famous goddess of the Sidonians, was unmatched as zealous and liberal maintenance of hundreds of idolatrous priests clearly proves.

Guided by no principle, restrained by no fear of God or man, passionate in her attachment to her heathen worship, she spared no pains to establish idolatry in all its splendor.

- Consider: She is the outsider who comes into the land of Israel and is passionate and determined to establish HER RELIGION in the people of Israel.

I Kings 16:31b-33 Ahab took as wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians; and he went and served Baal and worshiped him.

- And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria.

II Kings 17:17 And they [Israel] caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

1. Ahab also made a 'sacred post;' - an Ashtoreth, an idol of the fertility goddess.

I Kings 16:33 - Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him.

2. 450 prophets of Baal were installed in the magnificent temple to the Sun-god, Baal.

3. Another 400 prophets of Ashtoreth were housed in a sanctuary Jezebel erected for them. These prophets were housed in the palace and fed in royal style.

Their duties were to promote the worship of Baal, with its cruel and licentious rites, and Ashtoreth throughout the land.

Note: The idol worship meant more to them than the breaking of the first two commandments of the law. Idolatry produced spiritual and moral disintegration which was accentuated by Jezebel's determined effort to destroy the worship of Jehovah.

- Not satisfied to establish her religion in Israel, Jezebel sought to stamp out every remnant of Jehovah worship and to kill every true prophet of God.

- Her goal > Exterminate the worshipers of Jehovah and ALL people in Israel serve Baal. She has an obsession for domineering and controlling others.  
Mass Murder: I Kings 18:4 Jezebel massacred the prophets of the LORD and replaced their altars with those of Baal. [Obadiah rescued 100]  
Note: She became the first religious female persecutor in history.  
Her ardent religious zeal inspired her to exterminate the worship of the true and living God. She almost succeeded in the attempt.

Her strongest enemy was Elijah, who challenged the 850 prophets of Baal and Ashteroth to a supreme test of power on the top of Mount Carmel. The contest ended in the triumphant vindication of Jehovah. The people seized the priests of Baal and massacred them. Despite hearing of the miraculous powers of Jehovah, Jezebel refused to repent and swore she would relentlessly pursue Elijah and take his life.

- Jezebel was guilty of malice in taking revenge against a prophet of God.

I Kings 19:1 "And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets (of Baal) with the sword.

Jezebel spirit causes fear, flight, discouragement and intimidation.

I Kings 19:2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying,

So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time."

Note: She didn't kill Elijah: she simply sent a messenger to discourage him and make him run in fear of his life. It worked! Elijah ran to Beersheba, left his servant there and walked another day into the desert. He came to a large bush, sat down in its shade and begged the Lord: "I've had enough. Just let me die." [I Kings 19:3-4]

- Elijah was a powerful man of God who brought fire down from heaven with his command. He seemed fearless. However, this threat instilled fear and depression. This event was shortly after he had a great victory on Mt. Carmel. [I Kings 18]

Truth: Many times despair and depression follow a great victory because the enemy is ready to attack.

Jezebel is not repentant.

- Revelation: God have her time to repent but she would not.

Note: Her stubborn refusal to see and submit to the power of the living God would lead to her hideous end.

## Extraordinary Force of Character

Savage and relentless, this proud and strong-minded woman carried out her foul schemes.

1. A gifted woman, she prostituted all her gifts for the furtherance of evil.
2. Her misdirected talents became a curse.
3. Persuasive, her influence was wrongly directed.
4. Resolute above other women, she used her strength of character to destroy a king and her own offspring, as well as pollute the life of a nation.

Consider: Jezebel has stamped her name on history as the representative of all that is designing, crafty, malicious, revengeful, and cruel. Jezebel—a name which means in all ages a striking proverb for seductive power, worldly subtlety and wickedness of the worst type.

## Jezebel Was a Corrupt Tree

Our Lord used a striking figure to illustrate the continuing influence of evil, emanating from a life destitute of Godly principles—

Matt. 7:16-20 Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? ... a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.... a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit.

Jezebel was rotten root and branch, and thus everything connected with her was contaminated. Her offspring imbibed and continued the wickedness they grew up in.

1. Jezebel's evil influence was revived in her daughter Athaliah of Judea.
2. Her malign character reappears in her eldest son, Ahaziah, a devout worshiper of Baal.
3. Her second son, Jehoram or Joram, was another corrupt fruit from a corrupt tree.

## Jezebel Was a Treacherous Schemer

The tragedy of Naboth and his vineyard reveals how despicable a woman Jezebel was.

Life was cheap to such a female who had murder in her veins.

They had a beautiful palace in Samaria called "the ivory house." They also built a second palace in Jezreel, 25 miles north, in a more moderate climate in the winter.

King Ahab coveted this fruitful vineyard which belongs to Naboth. Ahab offered to buy the vineyard, but it was not for sale. Israelite law and custom dictate his family maintain their land (*nachalah*) in perpetuity [Numbers 27:5-11]. God had forbidden the Jews to sell their paternal inheritance [Lev. 25:23-34]. Naboth was simply obeying the law of the Lord.

Note: As an Israelite, Ahab should have understood.

Thwarted in what he coveted, Ahab took to his bed and refused food.

Jezebel learns of the situation. With her Phoenician background where the wishes of a king were never questioned, Jezebel could not understand that even the king in Israel was subject to the laws of God.

I Kings 21:7 Then Jezebel his wife said to him, "You now exercise authority over Israel!

[You can take anything you want.] Arise, eat food, and let your heart be cheerful;

I [false religious system; harlot] will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."

## The Treacherous Scheme Unfolds - I Kings 21:8-24

Jezebel's false accusations and slander were a method to control people she hated or whose possessions she coveted. She was prepared to murder to gain the desired possession.

Forgeries of Jezebel: I Kings 21:8 So 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.

Inquisition: I Kings 21:10 And set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king. And then carry him out, and stone him, that he may die.

5. Jezebel tells 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."

Naboth's sons were also stoned to death, so there would be no heirs, and the land would revert to the possession of the king. Such a single-minded determination to have one's way, no matter who is destroyed in the process, is a characteristic of the Jezebel spirit.

Isa. 5:20 Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

*Consider the sins King Ahab and Jezebel committed and the commandments of God they disobeyed.*

Idolatry: Ex. 20:3-4 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image... [commandments 1 & 2]

a. Jezebel brought Baal worship into Israel. Ahab permitted it to spread throughout the land.

Truth: When you turn away from truth, it is evidence you're believing lies, then you start loving lies, and soon you're controlled by lies.

Covetousness Ex. 20:17 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's. [#10]

I Kings 21:1-4 - Ahab and Jezebel had a summer palace at Jezreel, and Ahab wanted a vineyard convenient to the palace. Powerful people acquire one thing after another, but in all their acquiring, there's never any real satisfaction.

Thoreau: "A man is rich in proportion to the number of things he can afford to let alone.

Superfluous wealth can buy superfluities only. Money is not required to buy one necessity of our soul." "Thou shalt not covet" is the last of the 10 Commandments, but perhaps it is the most difficult one to obey. It deals with the hidden desires of the heart.

A covetous heart often leads us to disobey all the other commandments of God.

False Witness: Ex. 20:16 "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." [#9]

Truth is the cement that holds society together.

When truth is gone, everything starts to fall apart.

Orwell: Truth: it's the new hate speech. "During times of universal deceit, telling the truth becomes a revolutionary act."

Isa. 59:14 Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands afar off;

For truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Jezebel was a resolute woman who never allowed the truth to stand in the way of what she wanted. She fabricated an official lie, on official stationery, sealed with the official seal. However, no amount of royal adornment could change the fact that Ahab and Jezebel were breaking God's law.

Murder - Ex. 20:13 Thou shalt not kill. [#6]

I Kings 21:11-13 - The procedure Jezebel outlined was in agreement with the law, [Deut. 17:6-7; 19:15; Num. 35:30] BUT the accusation was false, the witnesses were liars, and the judges had been bought off by royal intimidation. In every town there were "men of Belial - worthless fellows" who would do anything for money or to become important.

NOBODY but Ahab (possibly Jezebel) heard Naboth's refusal to sell.

There was NOTHING in his words that could be interpreted as blasphemy.

Stealing - Ex. 20:15 Thou shalt not steal. [# 8]

I Kings 21:14-16 - The weak rulers in Naboth's city followed Jezebel's orders, conducted their illegal trial, took Naboth and his sons [II Kings 9:26] outside the city, and stoned them.

Nobody in the family was alive who could inherit the land, so Ahab felt he was free to take it.

BUT the land did not belong to Ahab.

Truth: The vineyard did not even belong to Naboth - it belonged to the LORD.

Ahab was actually stealing property from God.

I Kings 21:25 But there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the LORD, because Jezebel [harlot; false religious system] his wife stirred him up.

Jezebel spirit is always in alignment with a religious spirit.

The evil she perpetrated was done under the guise of religion.

Uses her influence to lead God's people astray.

Her goal is always control.

Her spirit is motivated by its own agenda, which she relentlessly pursues.

She never accepts guilt, doesn't repent and is very defensive.

When a false doctrine is being preached, those who know the truth have a duty to stand up and do something about it! When we sit back and allow wickedness to go unchecked, we invite the anger and judgment of God!

Tozer: Never allow the majority to overrule the clear teaching of God's Word.

God expects His people to be different from the world around them.

II Cor. 6:17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.

When we compromise our standards to appeal to the world, we are turning our backs on truth.

Rev. 18:4 Come out of her [Babylon], my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

If we let down the wall just a little and compromise with the world, the world will not stop until it has everything we value. We will be left with nothing but the anger of a holy God!

When we open the door to let the world come in, do not be surprised if the Lord walks out!