

## Checkin' Out My Walk

### Lesson #12 - Thyatira - Allowing & Tolerating False Teaching

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, to teach and seduce (lead out of the right path) My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.

A. He Confronts This Church - Problem > The church in Thyatira was being led away from the Lord by the teachings of an influential woman in their congregation. Jesus exposes her, her teachings and her judgment in these verses.

B. He Confronts The Tolerance Of This Church - Because You Allow

According to Jesus, the church of Thyatira's sin was they 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.

For more than two thousand years, Jezebel has been saddled with a reputation as the bad girl of the Bible, the wickedest of women. This ancient queen has been denounced as a murderer, prostitute and enemy of God, and her name has been adopted for lingerie lines and World War II missiles alike. But just how depraved was Jezebel?

I. Who was Jezebel - "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

A. Name Meaning—(1) This heartless woman with a bloody history belied the name she bore, for Jezebel means, "chaste, free from carnal connection." However, by nature she was a most licentious woman. She was a voluptuary, ( a person devoted to luxury and sensual pleasure.) with all the tawdry arts of a wanton woman. (Lascivious or promiscuous; Exciting or expressing sexual desire: a wanton pose. Marked by unprovoked, gratuitous maliciousness; capricious and unjust)

Thus no name could have been more inappropriate for such a despised female.

(2) Jezebel means 'Where is the Prince?'" a ritual cry from worship ceremonies in honor of Baal during periods of the year when the god was considered to be in the underworld.

(3) Jezebel > Dictionary > evil, shameless woman > lowest level of society

B. Family Connections—As the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians, and both king and priest of Baal worshipers, she sprang from an idolatrous stock. Ethbaal had murdered his predecessor, Pheles, to seize the throne. The Phoenicians were a remarkable race, and outstanding as the great maritime peoples of the ancient world, but they were idolaters who regarded Jehovah as only a local deity, "the god of the land."

C. 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)

His rash and impious act resulted in evil consequences.

As a Jew, Ahab sinned against God's Law in taking as his wife a heathen and her father's name, Ethbaal, 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.

D. She Possessed an Extraordinary Force of Character

Her demeanor attracted immediate attention. As we read "between the lines" of the Biblical account, we cannot fail to see her as a woman of prodigious force of intellect and will.

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.

E. 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.

1. 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.

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

3. Ahab builds a sanctuary for Baal in Israel's capital city of Samaria near the palace.

4. He erected an altar to Baal in the temple of Baal.

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.

5. 450 prophets of Baal were installed in the magnificent temple to the Sun-god, Baal.

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.

6. 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.

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.

7. 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 19:1-2 "And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets (of Baal) with the sword. 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: Her stubborn refusal to see and submit to the power of the living God would lead to her hideous end.

Note: Elijah fled for his life across the kingdom of Judah, leaving the haughty queen, for the time being, in undisputed possession of the stage.

8. Note: Ahab and Jezebel ushered in the worst period in Old Testament history.

Baal worship lived on. For over 60 years idolatry made terrible inroads upon the life and ways of the Hebrews, dragging the nation to new depths of degradation.

#### F. She Was a Dominating Wife

Ahab, pliant and weak, was like a puppet in the hands of his overpowering wife who found it easy to achieve her murderous designs. How could worthless and spineless Ahab resist the evil scheming of his unscrupulous partner?

Jezebel became the feared commander in Israel and not the cowardly husband.

All the other sins of Ahab were light compared with his marriage to Jezebel and the serving and worship of Baal that followed.

Micah 6:16 All the works of Ahab's house *are done*; and you walk in their counsels,  
That I may make you a desolation, and your inhabitants a hissing.  
Therefore you shall bear the reproach of My people."

#### G. She 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. How appropriate are the lines of Shakespeare as we think of Jezebel who was a veritable prototype of Catherine de Medici... "A strong adversary, an inhuman wretch, incapable of pity, void and empty from every drachm of pity. '

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.

#### H. She 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. Her father, Ethbaal, murdered his predecessor. Brought up in a home of intrigue and massacre what else could we expect but a she-devil as Jezebel became?

Ahab's self-will becomes even more evident in an incident involving the king and his vegetable garden. 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.

Clarence E. Macartney in his volume on *Bible Characters* in dealing with Naboth says: "His refusal was the introduction to one of the strangest, most powerful, and most terrible Bible dramas: a drama, on the one side, of innocence, courage, independence, and the fear of God, and, on the other side, of covetousness, avarice, cruelty, perjury, death and terrible retribution."

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 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.

1. Jezebel ordered, by letter, stamped with the royal seal, a public fast. (throw in religion)
2. Seat Naboth with high honor among the people.
3. Seat two men, scoundrels, to bear witness against him for blasphemies against God and the king.
4. They took him outside the city and stoned him with stones until his innocent life was beaten out of him.
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."
6. Ahab took possession of the much-coveted vineyard.
7. The blood of godly Naboth did not cry out in vain. God called Elijah to go to Ahab and pronounce the fearful doom awaiting the murderous pair and their unholy seed.

Note: This incident is a perfect example of the Inquisitions taking place during the period of church history known as "The Dark Ages."

In the place where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine. Concerning Jezebel, Elijah said, "The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel." This prophecy was fulfilled to the very letter.

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.

1. Idolatry - The 1<sup>st</sup> two commandments declare that the Lord is the only true God and true worshipers do not worship and serve other gods, whether things in God's creation or things they make themselves. (Ex. 20:1-6)  
A.W. Tozer - "The essence of idolatry is the entertainment of thoughts about God that are unworthy of Him."
  - a. Jezebel brought Baal worship into Israel. Ahab permitted it to spread throughout the land.

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

2. Covetousness - I Kings 21:1-4 - Ahab and Jezebel had a summer palace at Jezreel, and Ahab wanted a vegetable garden 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.

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

Note: The 1<sup>st</sup> 9 focus on forbidden outward conduct - making and worshiping idols, stealing, murdering, etc., but this commandment deals with the hidden desires of the heart.

Ahab went home to bed and pouted

3. False Witness - I Kings 21:5-10 - "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor" is the 9<sup>th</sup> commandment. Truth is the cement that holds society together. When truth is gone, everything starts to fall apart.

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.

4. Murder - 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.

To curse God was a capital crime (Lev. 24:13-16). To curse the king was dangerous because he was God's appointed ruler. (Ex. 22:28; Acts 23:5)

5. Stealing - 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 his wife stirred him up.

As Ahab's evil genius, Jezebel was the absolute negation of all God meant woman to be, namely, a true help-meet of man. Jezebel retained her obstinate, unbending character to the very end. The death of the man whose life she polluted brought no repentance. What a different story would have been written if only she had learned how to "stir up her husband and children to love God and follow good works."

II Timothy 1:6 Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you  
Her misdirected talents, however, brought upon her a curse.  
The evil she perpetrated was done under the guise of religion.

When 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! 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! Some churches pride themselves on their tolerance. God expects His people to be different from the world around them. When we compromise our standards to appeal to the world, we are turning our backs on truth. When we open the door to let the world come in, do not be surprised if the Lord walks out!