

Jezebel

Scripture quotations are from the New Century Version.

© 1991 Word Publishing, Dallas, Texas

- a. **Time & Place**
- b. Time: About 850 BC
- c. Place: Northern Israel (divided kingdom)
- d. **Meet Jezebel** 1 Kings 16:29-30
- e. Jezebel's husband (v.29)

²⁹ Ahab son of Omri became king of Israel... Ahab ruled Israel in the city of Samaria for twenty-two years.

Kings of other nations in the Middle East respected Ahab's father, Omri, very highly. They called northern Israel "Omri Land." Omri built the new permanent capital city for Israel, and he named it *Samaria*. However, Bible says very little else about Omri:

²⁵ But Omri did what the LORD said was wrong; he did more evil than all the kings who came before him.

What did Omri do that was so wrong? He encouraged Israelites to worship idols. As bad as Omri was, his son Ahab was even worse:

³⁰ More than any king before him, Ahab son of Omri did many things the LORD said were wrong. ³¹ He sinned in the same ways as Jeroboam son of Nebat, but he did even worse things. He married Jezebel daughter of Ethbaal, the king of Sidon. Then Ahab began to serve Baal and worship him.

We see many references to "Jeroboam son of Nebat," who was northern Israel's first king (when Israel split in two, after the death of King Solomon). Jeroboam's way of keeping his citizens away from the Lord's temple in Jerusalem was to set up idols - golden calves - for the people to worship instead. Every northern king after him encouraged this same idolatry.

- f. **Jezebel's nation & city of origin (v.31)**
Nation: Phoenicia
City: Sidon

- g. **Jezebel's religion brought to Israel (vv.32,33)**
Jezebel imported her religion from Phoenicia -- the worship of the war god Baal and the fertility goddess Asherah. Ahab accepted this religion and aggressively promoted it:



³² He built a temple in Samaria for worshiping Baal and put an altar there for Baal.³³ Ahab also made an idol for worshiping Asherah. He did more things to make the LORD, the God of Israel, angry than all the other kings before him.

h. Meet Elijah Jezebel's pest

Jezebel's #1 enemy was the prophet Elijah.

i. 1 Kings 17 - the famine

¹ Now Elijah the Tishbite was a prophet from the settlers in Gilead. "I serve the LORD, the God of Israel," Elijah said to Ahab. "As surely as the LORD lives, no rain or dew will fall during the next few years unless I command it."

The famine continued for three and a half years.

j. 1 Kings 18 - the contest of the gods

In the introduction to this story, we learn more about Jezebel.

⁴ When Jezebel was killing all the LORD's prophets, Obadiah [Ahab's chief of staff, who "was a true follower of the Lord"] hid a hundred of them in two caves, fifty in one cave and fifty in another. He also brought them food and water.

Later it becomes even more clear that real ruler of Israel is Jezebel, not Ahab.

¹⁶ ...Then Ahab went to meet Elijah.

¹⁷ When he saw Elijah, he asked, "Is it you—the biggest troublemaker in Israel?"

¹⁸ Elijah answered, "I have not made trouble in Israel. You and your father's family have made all this trouble by not obeying the LORD's commands. You have gone after the Baals. ¹⁹ Now tell all Israel to meet me at Mount Carmel. Also bring the four hundred fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table."

Who's table? Yes, Jezebel. These prophets were on the government payroll.

²⁰ So Ahab called all the Israelites and those prophets to Mount Carmel. ²¹ Elijah approached the people and said, "How long will you not decide between two choices? If the LORD is the true God, follow him, but if Baal is the true God, follow him!" But the people said nothing.

Notice that the people were "open minded," and accepted both religions -- Baal and the Lord.

²² Elijah said, "I am the only prophet of the LORD here, but there are four hundred fifty prophets of Baal."

Where are the 400 prophets of Asherah? It seems that Jezebel didn't let them attend the party.

Now Elijah gives the rules for the contest between Baal and the Lord.

23 "Bring two bulls. Let the prophets of Baal choose one bull and kill it and cut it into pieces. Then let them put the meat on the wood, but they are not to set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull, putting the meat on the wood but not setting fire to it. 24 You prophets of Baal, pray to your god, and I will pray to the LORD. The god who answers by setting fire to his wood is the true God."

All the people agreed that this was a good idea.

25 Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "There are many of you, so you go first. Choose a bull and prepare it. Pray to your god, but don't start the fire."

26 So they took the bull that was given to them and prepared it. They prayed to Baal from morning until noon, shouting "Baal, answer us!" But there was no sound, and no one answered. They danced around the altar they had built...

Now Elijah makes fun of the Baal prophets.

27 At noon Elijah began to make fun of them. "Pray louder!" he said. "If Baal really is a god, maybe he is thinking, or busy, or traveling [to the bathroom]! Maybe he is sleeping so you will have to wake him!"

28 The prophets prayed louder, cutting themselves with swords and spears until their blood flowed, which was the way they worshiped. 29 The afternoon passed, and the prophets continued to act like this until it was time for the evening sacrifice. But no voice was heard; Baal did not answer, and no one paid attention.

Now it is Elijah's turn to pray, and show what the Lord can do.

30 Then Elijah said to all the people, "Now come to me." So they gathered around him, and Elijah rebuilt the altar of the LORD, which had been torn down. 32 ...Then he dug a ditch around the altar... 33 Elijah put the wood on the altar, cut the bull into pieces, and laid the pieces on the wood.

Elijah even make it "harder" for God, just to prove he wasn't cheating.

34 Then he said, "Fill four jars with water, and pour it on the meat and on the wood." Then Elijah said, "Do it again," and they did it again. Then he said, "Do it a third time," and they did it the third time. 35 So the water ran off the altar and filled the ditch.

36 At the time for the evening sacrifice, the prophet Elijah went near the altar. "LORD, you are the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel," he prayed. "Prove that you are the God of Israel and that I am your servant. Show these people that you commanded me to do all these things. 37 LORD, answer my prayer so these people will know that you, LORD, are God and that you will change their minds."

³⁸ *Then fire from the LORD came down and burned the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, and the ground around the altar. It also dried up the water in the ditch.* ³⁹ *When all the people saw this, they fell down to the ground, crying, “The LORD is God! The LORD is God!”*

⁴⁰ *Then Elijah said, “Capture the prophets of Baal! Don’t let any of them run away!” The people captured all the prophets. Then Elijah led them down to the Kishon Valley, where he killed them.*

Soon after this it started to rain.

k. **1 Kings 19:1-3 - Jezebel's threat**

¹ *King Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how Elijah had killed all the prophets with a sword.* ² *So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “May the gods punish me terribly if by this time tomorrow I don’t kill you just as you killed those prophets.”*

Wow, was Jezebel mad! She was not at all impressed that Baal failed and the Lord won.

How did Elijah respond to Jezebel's threat?

³ *When Elijah heard this, he was afraid and ran for his life*

Where is his faith in Almighty God!? Elijah went to hide in the same place where Moses got the Ten Commandments 700 years earlier - Mt. Sinai, also called Mt. Horeb. There God more lessons to teach Elijah. But that is another story that doesn't directly involve Jezebel... yet

l. **Meet Naboth** Jezebel's victim (1 Kings 21)

Here we see more clearly how much Jezebel is running the government.

The story begins with King Ahab coveting something that didn't belong to him, something that he couldn't have.

¹ *...A man named Naboth owned a vineyard in Jezreel, near the palace of Ahab king of Israel.* ² *One day Ahab said to Naboth, “Give me your vineyard. It is near my palace, and I want to make it into a vegetable garden. I will give you a better vineyard in its place, or, if you prefer, I will pay you what it is worth.”*

³ *Naboth answered, “May the LORD keep me from ever giving my land to you. It belongs to my family.”*

God gave specific rules about land ownership and inheritance in Leviticus 25:

²³ *“The land really belongs to Me, so you can’t sell it for all time. You are only foreigners and travelers living for a while on my land.* ²⁴ *People might sell their land, but it must always be possible for the family to get its land back.*

Ahab made a fair offer to Naboth, but it was not what God permitted. Naboth wanted to follow God's law.

How did Ahab respond? He pouted, just like a little child.

⁴ Ahab went home angry and upset, because he did not like what Naboth from Jezreel had said. (Naboth had said, "I will not give you my family's land.") Ahab lay down on his bed, turned his face to the wall, and refused to eat.

⁵ His wife, Jezebel, came in and asked him, "Why are you so upset that you refuse to eat?"

⁶ Ahab answered, "I talked to Naboth, the man from Jezreel. I said, 'Sell me your vineyard, or, if you prefer, I will give you another vineyard for it.' But Naboth refused."

⁷ Jezebel answered, "Is this how you rule as king over Israel? Get up, eat something, and cheer up. I will get Naboth's vineyard for you."

m. **Jezebel's conspiracy**

Now Jezebel takes over and runs the government.

⁸ So Jezebel wrote some letters, signed Ahab's name to them, and used his own seal to seal them. Then she sent them to the older leaders [elders] and important men who lived in Naboth's town. ⁹ The letter she wrote said: "Declare a day during which the people are to give up eating [fasting]. Call the people together, and give Naboth a place of honor among them. ¹⁰ Set two troublemakers across from him, and have them say they heard Naboth speak against God and the king. Then take Naboth out of the city and kill him with stones."

Notice how Jezebel sets up Naboth in two steps.

(verse 9) Jezebel makes Naboth very popular for the people.

(verse 10) Jezebel falsely accuses Naboth, making him very unpopular, so the people react against him.

Jezebel understood group psychology. Have you noticed how some folks in politics may be popular today, but in a few years the people who loved them now hate them. This often happens to sports heroes, too.

This same thing happened to other people in the Bible:

Jesus in Jerusalem

"Hosanna!" on Palm Sunday (Mark 11:9-10)

"Crucify Him!" on Good Friday (Mark 15:12-14)

Paul in Lystra (Acts 14:8-20)

They called Paul the Greek god "Hermes" and offered a sacrifice to him (v.11-13)

Then they turned against him and tried to stone him to death (v.19)

Jezebel's plan worked.

¹¹ *The older leaders and important men of Jezreel obeyed Jezebel's command, just as she wrote in the letters.* ¹² *They declared a special day on which the people were to give up eating. And they put Naboth in a place of honor before the people.* ¹³ *Two troublemakers sat across from Naboth and said in front of everybody that they had heard him speak against God and the king. So the people carried Naboth out of the city and killed him with stones.* ¹⁴ *Then the leaders sent a message to Jezebel, saying, "Naboth has been killed."*

¹⁵ *When Jezebel heard that Naboth had been killed, she told Ahab, "Naboth of Jezreel is dead. Now you may go and take for yourself the vineyard he would not sell to you."* ¹⁶ *When Ahab heard that Naboth of Jezreel was dead, he got up and went to the vineyard to take it for his own.*

n. **Prophecy against Ahab & Jezebel (v.23)**

¹⁷ *At this time the LORD spoke his word to the prophet Elijah the Tishbite. The LORD said,* ¹⁸ *"Go to Ahab king of Israel in Samaria. He is at Naboth's vineyard, where he has gone to take it as his own.* ¹⁹ *Tell Ahab that I, the LORD, say to him, 'You have murdered Naboth and taken his land. So I tell you this: In the same place the dogs licked up Naboth's blood, they will also lick up your blood!' "*

²⁰ *When Ahab saw Elijah, he said, "So you have found me, my enemy!"* *Elijah answered, "Yes, I have found you. You have always chosen to do what the LORD says is wrong.* ²¹ *So the LORD says to you, 'I will soon destroy you. I will kill you and every male in your family, both slave and free...*

²³ *"And the LORD also says, 'Dogs will eat the body of Jezebel in the city of Jezreel.'*

²⁴ *"Anyone in your family who dies in the city will be eaten by dogs, and anyone who dies in the fields will be eaten by birds."*

Did that prophecy come true? Ahab died in battle (1 Kings 22). Jezebel continued to reign Israel through her sons as kings.

o. **Meet Jehu Jezebel's assassin (2 Kings 9)**

This story actually begins in 1 Kings 19:15-16, when the prophet Elijah ran away from Jezebel, fearing for his life. While Elijah was hiding on Mt. Horeb (Sinai), God spoke to him. God told Elijah to do three things:

[1] Anoint (pour oil on) Hazael, to become king over Syria.

[2] Anoint Jehu, to become king over Israel.

[3] Anoint Elisha, as prophet to replace Elijah.

Elijah was not happy to hear about #1. Syria was Israel's enemy, and Hazael would bring much suffering on Israel.

Elijah was not eager to do #2. Ahab and Jezebel were still king and queen. If Elijah did as God commanded, he would be committing treason and his life would be in greater danger.

Elijah was real happy to hear about #3. He didn't want to be prophet any more. So Elijah skipped #1 and #2, and went straight to #3, to make Elisha a prophet so Elijah could resign. Things did not turn out the way Elijah had planned. God didn't let him resign. But because of Elijah's disobedience to God's command #2, Ahab, Jezebel, and their sons continued to reign over Israel for many years.

After Elijah was gone, Elisha finally did command #1, anoint Hazael as king over Syria (2 Kings 8:7-15). Later Elisha sent one of his assistants to do command #1, anoint Jehu as king over Israel.

p. 2 Kings 9:1-13 -- anointed king

¹ At the same time, Elisha the prophet called a man from the groups of prophets. Elisha said, "Get ready, and take this small bottle of olive oil in your hand. Go to Ramoth in Gilead. ² When you arrive, find Jehu son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi. Go in and make Jehu get up from among his brothers, and take him to an inner room. ³ Then take the bottle and pour the oil on Jehu's head and say, 'This is what the LORD says: I have appointed you king over Israel.' Then open the door and run away. Don't wait!"

⁴ So the young man, the prophet, went to Ramoth in Gilead. ⁵ When he arrived, he saw the officers of the army sitting together. He said, "Commander, I have a message for you."

Jehu asked, "For which one of us?"

The young man said, "For you, commander."

⁶ Jehu got up and went into the house. Then the young prophet poured the olive oil on Jehu's head and said to him, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel says: 'I have appointed you king over the LORD's people Israel. ⁷ You must destroy the family of Ahab your master. I will punish Jezebel for the deaths of my servants the prophets and for all the LORD's servants who were murdered... ¹⁰ The dogs will eat Jezebel at Jezreel, and no one will bury her.' "

Then the young prophet opened the door and ran away.

¹¹ When Jehu went back to his master's officers, one of them said to Jehu, "Is everything all right? Why did this crazy man come to you?"

¹² ...Jehu said, "He said to me, 'This is what the LORD says: I have appointed you to be king over Israel.' "

¹³ Then the officers hurried, and each man took off his own coat and put it on the stairs for Jehu. They blew the trumpet and shouted, "Jehu is king!"

q. vv. 22-26 -- assassinates King Joram (Ahab's son)

With Jehu's army and officers backing him up, he marched against King Joram. It happened that Jezebel's son-in-law, Ahaziah, King of Judah (southern Israel) was visiting Joram.

21 ...Joram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah went out, each in his own chariot, to meet Jehu at the property of Naboth the Jezreelite.

22 When Joram saw Jehu, he said, "Is all in order, Jehu?"

Jehu answered, "There will never be any order as long as your mother Jezebel worships idols and uses witchcraft."

23 Joram turned the horses to run away and yelled to Ahaziah, "It's a trick, Ahaziah!"

24 Then Jehu drew his bow and shot Joram between his shoulders. The arrow went through Joram's heart, and he fell down in his chariot.

Jehu ordered his soldiers to dump Joram's dead body in Naboth's field, because of what Ahab and Jezebel had done to Naboth (1 Kings 21). They chased Ahaziah, and killed him, too. Then they went to get Jezebel.

r. **v. 30-37 -- assassinates Jezebel**

30 When Jehu came to Jezreel, Jezebel heard about it. She put on her eye makeup and fixed her hair.

She wanted to look her best for her own execution.

Then she looked out the window. 31 When Jehu entered the city gate, Jezebel said, "Have you come in peace, you Zimri, you who killed your master?"

32 Jehu looked up at the window and said, "Who is on my side? Who?" Two or three servants looked out the window at Jehu. 33 He said to them, "Throw her down." So they threw Jezebel down, and the horses ran over her. Some of her blood splashed on the wall and on the horses.

Obviously, Jezebel was not very popular as Israel's queen mother. Her own servants and army officers turned against her when they finally had a chance to join a rebellion. Remember that she wasn't Jewish. She was the daughter of a foreign king.

34 Jehu went into the house and ate and drank. Then he said, "Now see about this cursed woman. Bury her, because she is a king's daughter."

35 The men went to bury Jezebel, but they could not find her. They found only her skull, feet, and the palms of her hands. 36 When they came back and told Jehu, he said, "The LORD said this through his servant Elijah the Tishbite: 'The dogs will eat Jezebel at Jezreel. 37 Her body will be like manure on the field in the land at Jezreel. No one will be able to say that this is Jezebel.' "

Jehu got rid of all the shrines and temple of Baal. He even organized a festival for Baal in order to identify the Baal worshippers -- then he killed them (2 Kings 10). But Jehu

was not obedient or faithful to the Lord, and he still promoted other forms of idol worship.

s. **Meet Athaliah** Jezebel's daughter

t. Jezebel's evil influence spreads to Judah (southern Israel)

Remember that after the death of King Solomon (David's son), Israel split into two nations. The northern part kept the name ISRAEL, while the southern part was called JUDAH. All the southern kings were descendants of David, ruling in Jerusalem. Ahab and Jezebel ruled in the northern part. Sometimes the king of the north and the king of the south were enemies. But during this period of time they were friends. And finally they became relatives. It started with the southern king named *Jehoram*.

u. 2 Kings 8:16-19 Husband: King Jehoram/Joram of Judah

¹⁷ *Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he began to rule, and he ruled eight years in Jerusalem.* [That's not a very long time.] ¹⁸ *He followed the ways of the kings of Israel, just as the family of Ahab had done, because he married Ahab's daughter.* *Jehoram did what the LORD said was wrong.* ¹⁹ *But the LORD would not destroy Judah because of his servant David. The LORD had promised that one of David's descendants would always rule...*

v. 2 Kings 8:26-27 Son: King Ahaziah

²⁴ *Jehoram died and was buried with his ancestors in Jerusalem, and Jehoram's son Ahaziah ruled in his place...*

²⁶ *Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he ruled one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Athaliah, a granddaughter of Omri [Ahab's father] king of Israel.* ²⁷ *Ahaziah followed the ways of Ahab's family. He did what the LORD said was wrong, as Ahab's family had done, because he was a son-in-law to Ahab [and Jezebel].*

Just like her mother, Athaliah promoted Baal worship through Judah. Just like her mother Jezebel, Athaliah became the queen mother, ruling Judah through her son Ahaziah. But notice he lived only one year as king. Remember how he died: Ahaziah was visiting his brother-in-law in the north, when Jehu killed both of them (2 Kings 9).

w. 2 Kings 11 (and 2 Chronicles 22-23)

Queen Athaliah's reign of terror... and her unhappy end.

¹ *When Ahaziah's mother, Athaliah, saw that her son was dead, she killed all the royal family.*

Wow, what a nice person! She killed off all her own children, grandchildren, neices and nephews... anyone who could claim right to the throne, just so she could keep her power. (Her husband Jehoram, now dead, had already killed his own brothers for the same reason.) Well, she killed almost everyone.

² But Jehosheba, King Jehoram's daughter and Ahaziah's sister, took Joash, Ahaziah's [infant] son. She stole him from among the other sons of the king who were about to be murdered. She put Joash and his nurse in a bedroom to hide him from Athaliah, so he was not killed.³ He hid with her in the Temple of the LORD for six years. During that time Athaliah ruled the land.

Joash was Ahab and Jezebel's great grandson. His aunt Jehosheba had married a faithful priest, Jehoiada. The two of them raised Joash and taught him the Word of God. Then when Joash was seven years old, uncle Jehoiada the priest organized a revolt against Queen Athaliah.

¹¹ Then each guard took his place with his weapons in his hand. There were guards from the south side of the Temple to the north side. They stood by the altar and the Temple and around the king [Joash].¹² Jehoiada brought out the king's son and put the crown on him and gave him a copy of the agreement [covenant]. They appointed him king and poured olive oil on him. Then they clapped their hands and said, "Long live the king!"

¹³ When Athaliah heard the noise of the guards and the people, she went to them at the Temple of the LORD.¹⁴ She looked, and there was the king, standing by the pillar, as the custom was. The officers and trumpeters were standing beside him, and all the people of the land were very happy and were blowing trumpets. Then Athaliah tore her clothes and screamed, "Traitors! Traitors!"

¹⁵ Jehoiada the priest gave orders to the commanders of a hundred men, who led the army. He said, "Surround her with soldiers and kill with a sword anyone who follows her." He commanded this because he had said, "Don't put Athaliah to death in the Temple of the LORD."¹⁶ So they caught her when she came to the horses' entrance near the palace. There she was put to death.

Was this now finally the end of Jezebel's evil influence? No.

As long as Uncle Jehoiada the priest was alive to advise Joash, he was a good king, faithful to the Lord. But after Jehoiada died, Joash turned his back on God and became worse than his great grandfather Ahab. (2 Corinthians 24:17-25)

Family Tree

