



Jezebel

The Most Wicked
Queen In The
Bible

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Overview

JEZEBEL RANKS AS THE MOST EVIL WOMAN IN THE BIBLE

Jezebel's story is told in 1 Kings 16:31-2 Kings 9:37. Her name is used as a synonym for great evil in Rev. 2:20.

The Bible is as honest about the lives of its heroes as it is about those who rejected God. Some Bible characters found out what God can do with failures when they turned to him. Many, however, neither admitted their failures nor turned to God.

Jezebel ranks as the most evil woman in the Bible. The Bible even uses her name as an example of people who completely reject God (Rev. 2:20, 21). Many pagan women married into Israel without acknowledging the God their husbands worshiped. They brought their religions with them. But no one was as determined as Jezebel to make all Israel worship *her* gods.

To the prophet Elijah, she seemed to have succeeded. He felt he was the only one still faithful to God until God told him there were still 7,000 who had not turned from the faith. Jezebel's one outstanding "success" was in contributing to the cause of the eventual downfall of the northern kingdom—idolatry. God punished the northern tribes for their idolatry by having them carried off into captivity.

Jezebel held great power. She not only managed her husband, Ahab, but she also had 850 assorted pagan priests under her control. She was committed to her gods and to getting what she wanted. She believed that the king had the right to possess anything he wanted.

When Naboth refused to sell Ahab his vineyard, Jezebel ruthlessly had Naboth killed and took ownership of the land. Jezebel's plan to wipe out worship of God in Israel led to painful consequences.

Before she died, Jezebel suffered the loss of her husband in combat and her son at the hand of Jehu, who took the throne by force. She died in the defiant and scornful way she had lived.

Daughter of Ethbaal, a Zidonian, and wife of Ahab

1 Kings 16:31

And as though it were not enough to live like Jeroboam, he married Jezebel, the daughter of King Ethbaal of the Sidonians, and he began to worship Baal.

Ahab's evil wife, Jezebel, came from the Phoenician city of Tyre where her father had been a high priest and eventually king. Jezebel worshiped the god Baal. In order to please her, Ahab built a temple and an altar for Baal (1 Kings 16:32), thus promoting idolatry and leading the entire nation into sin.

Jezebel was an idolatress and persecuted the prophets of God

1 Kings 18:4

Once when Jezebel had tried to kill all the Lord's prophets, Obadiah had hidden one hundred of them in two caves. He had put fifty prophets in each cave and had supplied them with food and water.

Although Elijah was alone in his confrontation with Ahab and Jezebel, he was not the only one in Israel who believed in God. Obadiah had been faithful in hiding 100 prophets still true to the Lord.

The Lord's prophets hidden from Jezebel

1 Kings 18:13

Has no one told you, my lord, about the time when Jezebel was trying to kill the Lord's prophets? I hid a hundred of them in two caves and supplied them with food and water.

Jezebel's prophets taken to Mount Carmel

1 Kings 18:19

Now bring all the people of Israel to Mount Carmel, with all 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah, who are supported by Jezebel."

Ahab brought 850 pagan prophets to Mount Carmel to match wits and power with Elijah. Evil kings hated God's prophets because they spoke against sin and idolatry and undermined their control over the people. With the wicked kings' backing, many pagan prophets sprang up to counter the words of God's prophets. But Elijah showed the people that speaking a prophecy wasn't enough. One needed the power of a living God to fulfill it.

The pillar of Baal removed

2 Kings 3:2

He did what was evil in the Lord's sight, but he was not as wicked as his father and mother. He at least tore down the sacred pillar of Baal that his father had set up.

King Joram seeks help from Elisha

"I want no part of you," Elisha said to the king of Israel. "Go to the pagan prophets of your father and mother!"

But King Joram said, "No! For it was the Lord who called us three kings here to be destroyed by the king of Moab!"

The family of Ahab and Jezebel destroyed

2 Kings 9:7

You are to destroy the family of Ahab, your master. In this way, I will avenge the murder of my prophets and all the Lord's servant.

Elisha's statement fulfilled Elijah's prophecy made 20 years earlier: all of Ahab's family would be killed (1 Kings 21:17-24). Jezebel's death, predicted by Elijah, is described in 2 Kings 9:30-37.

Joram questions Jehu.

2 Kings 9:22

King Joram demanded, "Do you come in peace, Jehu?"

Jehu replied, "How can there be peace as long as the idolatry and witchcraft of your mother, Jezebel, are all around us?"

Jezebel vowed to kill Elijah

1 Kings 19:1-3

When Ahab got home, he told Jezebel what Elijah had done and that he had slaughtered the prophets of Baal.

So Jezebel sent this message to Elijah: "May the gods also kill me if by this time tomorrow I have failed to take your life like those whom you killed."

Elijah was afraid and fled for his life. He went to Beersheba, a town in Judah, and he left his servant there.

Jezebel was enraged about the death of her prophets because they had told her everything *she* wanted to hear, prophesying her future power and glory. Their job was to deify the king and queen and help perpetuate their kingdom. Jezebel was also angry because her supporters had been eliminated and her pride and authority damaged. The money she had invested in these prophets was now lost.

Elijah, who caused the prophets' deaths, was a constant thorn in Jezebel's side because he was always predicting gloom and doom. Because she could not control his actions, she vowed to kill him.

As long as God's prophet was around, she could not carry out all the evil she wanted.

Elijah experienced the depths of fatigue and discouragement just after his two great spiritual victories: the defeat of the prophets of Baal and the answered prayer for rain.

Often discouragement sets in after great spiritual experiences, especially those requiring physical effort or involving great emotion.

To lead him out of depression, God first let Elijah rest and eat. Then God confronted him with the need to return to his mission—to speak God's words in Israel. Elijah's battles were not over; there was still work for him to do.

When you feel let down after a great spiritual experience, remember that God's purpose for your life is not yet over.

Jezebel wickedly accomplishes the death of Naboth

1 Kings 21:5-16

"What in the world is the matter?" his wife, Jezebel, asked him. "What has made you so upset that you are not eating?"

"I asked Naboth to sell me his vineyard or to trade it, and he refused!" Ahab told her.

"Are you the king of Israel or not?" Jezebel asked. "Get up and eat and don't worry about it. I'll get you Naboth's vineyard!"

So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, sealed them with his seal, and sent them to the elders and other leaders of the city where Naboth lived. [9] In her letters she commanded: "Call the citizens together for fasting and prayer and give Naboth a place of honor.

Find two scoundrels who will accuse him of cursing God and the king. Then take him out and stone him to death."

So the elders and other leaders followed the instructions Jezebel had written in the letters.

They called for a fast and put Naboth at a prominent place before the people. Then two scoundrels accused him before all the people of cursing God and the king. So he was dragged outside the city and stoned to death. [

The city officials then sent word to Jezebel, "Naboth has been stoned to death."

When Jezebel heard the news, she said to Ahab, "You know the vineyard Naboth wouldn't sell you? Well, you can have it now! He's dead!" So Ahab immediately went down to the vineyard to claim it.

When, instead of a help meet, a man has an agent for Satan, in the form of an artful, unprincipled, yet beloved wife, fatal effects may be expected.

Never were more wicked orders given by any prince, than those Jezebel sent to the rulers of Jezreel. Naboth must be murdered under color of religion.

There is no wickedness so vile, so horrid, but religion has sometimes been made a cover for it.

Also, it must be done under color of justice, and with the formalities of legal process. Let us, from this sad story, be amazed at the wickedness of the wicked, and the power of Satan in the children of disobedience.

Let us commit the keeping of our lives and comforts to God, for innocence will not always be our security; and let us rejoice in the knowledge that all will be set to rights in the great day.

Jezebel devised a scheme that appeared legal to get the land for her husband. Two witnesses were required to establish guilt, and the punishment for blasphemy was death by stoning. Those who twist the law and legal procedures to get what they want today may be more sophisticated in how they go about it, but they are still guilty of the same sin.

Death of Jezebel foretold

1 Kings 21:23

The Lord has also told me that the dogs of Jezreel will eat the body of your wife, Jezebel, at the city wall.

Death of Jezebel at the hand of Jehu

2 Kings 9:30-37

When Jezebel, the queen mother, heard that Jehu had come to Jezreel, she painted her eyelids and fixed her hair and sat at a window.

When Jehu entered the gate of the palace, she shouted at him, "Have you come in peace, you murderer? You are just like Zimri, who murdered his master!"

Jehu looked up and saw her at the window and shouted, "Who is on my side?" And two or three eunuchs looked out at him.

"Throw her down!" Jehu yelled. So they threw her out the window, and some of her blood splattered against the wall and on the horses. And Jehu trampled her body under his horses' hooves.

Then Jehu went into the palace and ate and drank. Afterward he said, "Someone go and bury this cursed woman, for she is the daughter of a king." But when they went out to bury her, they found only her skull, her feet, and her hands.

When they returned and told Jehu, he stated, "This fulfills the message from the Lord, which he spoke through his servant Elijah from Tishbe: 'At the plot of land in Jezreel, dogs will eat Jezebel's flesh.

Her body will be scattered like dung on the field of Jezreel, so that no one will be able to recognize her.' "

Why did Jezebel refer to Zimri? Zimri was an army commander who, some 40 years earlier, had killed Elah and then had declared himself king of Israel (1 Kings 16:8-10). Jezebel was accusing Jehu of trying the same treachery.

Jezebel's skull, feet, and hands were all that remained of her evil life—no power, no money, no prestige, no royal finery, no family, no spiritual heritage.

In the end, her life of luxury and treachery amounted to nothing. Power, health, and wealth may make you feel as if you can live forever. But death strips everyone of all external security. The time to set your life's course is now, while you still have time and before your heart becomes hardened. The end will come soon enough.

FIGURATIVE

Rev. 2:20

Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

A woman in the church in Thyatira was teaching that immorality was not a serious matter for believers. Her name may have been Jezebel, or John may have used the name Jezebel to symbolize the kind of evil she was promoting.

Jezebel, a pagan queen of Israel, was considered the most evil woman who ever lived (see 1 Kings 19:1-2; 1 Kings 21:1-15; 2 Kings 9:7-10, 30-37; and her Profile).

Why is sexual immorality serious? Sex outside marriage always hurts someone. It hurts God because it shows that we prefer to satisfy our desires our own way instead of according to God's Word, or to satisfy them now instead of waiting for his timing.

It hurts others because it violates the commitment so necessary to a relationship. It hurts us because it often brings disease to our bodies and adversely affects our personalities. Sexual immorality has tremendous power to destroy families, churches, and communities because it destroys the integrity on which these relationships are built.

God wants to protect us from hurting ourselves and others; thus we are to have no part in sexual immorality, even if our culture accepts it.

In pagan temples, meat was often offered to idols. Then the meat that wasn't burned was sold to shoppers in the temple marketplace.

Eating meat offered to idols wasn't wrong in itself, but it could violate the principle of sensitivity toward weaker Christian brothers and sisters who would be bothered by it (see 1 Cor. 8 and the note on +Romans 14:2).

Jezebel was obviously more concerned about her own selfish pleasure and freedom than about the needs and concerns of fellow believers.

Life Application

When comparing Jezebel and Elijah, we have to see each one's strength of commitment.

The big difference was *to whom* they were committed. Jezebel was committed to herself and her false gods; Elijah was totally committed to the one true God. In the end, God proved Elijah right.

To what or to whom are you most committed? How would God evaluate your commitment? It is not enough to be committed or sincere. Where our commitment lies makes a great difference. Rejecting God always leads to disaster.

Key verse:

“There was never a man like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord, urged on by Jezebel his wife” (1 Kings 21:25).

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

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Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*.

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Matthew Henry Concise Bible Commentary