

THAT WE MAY EAT IT AND DIE

1 KINGS 16:30 – 18:17

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~ Our Spiritual Safari was introduced to Ahab and Jezebel in our previous report; and they represent the worst of the worst characters the Bible has to offer. They are an irrefutable example of the total depravity of mankind. Ahab's father, Omri, was the most corrupt king Israel had come to the throne - until Ahab came to power. Ahab outdid old man Omri in every conceivable aspect of evil. Well, Jezebel is capable of far more despicable acts than Ahab can dream up. When you put the two together, you have the worst possible combination of people found in the entire Word of God. Even Mr. and Mrs. Haman, in the Book of Esther – who were very bad – somehow don't appear quite as debauched as Ahab and Jezebel. In the secular realm, Ptolemy and Cleopatra or Philip I of Spain with his wife Bloody Mary were Sunday school children compared to Ahab and Jezebel.

There are myriad prominent historical examples in which the wife is dominant and diabolical by unholy design; such as Catherine de' Medici and Henry II of France – and Lucrezia Borgia, the daughter of Pope Alexander VI, Lady Macbeth and Louis XV, not to mention Maria Antoinette or Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who all stand out on historical pages as evil - but none exceed Ahab and his Jezebel. She was the daughter of a king and priest of Baal who murdered his own brother. Interestingly, "Jezebel" means "unmarried!" The marriage of Ahab and Jezebel was certainly not made in Heaven – they may have never married in God's eyes – although I'm sure there was a shamefully expensive "wedding" of some sort.

Jezebel was so beautiful the men had difficulty looking away. She was a masculine woman, but with a veneer of sweet charm. She was strong intellectually and had a mad passion for her evil ways. She was unapproachable, strong-willed and dominant with no moral compass whatsoever. She was hardened into insensibility, totally unscrupulous, and certainly the most wicked person in history by far. When the Lord Jesus Christ speaks to the church at Thyatira, He says to them, *"I have this against you that you suffered this woman Jezebel to teach!"* That was a

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church without natural affection, friends. So, that's the big picture of the woman Jezebel.

I don't think it's too difficult to imagine how Ahab and Jezebel got together. If you have ever been to a young person's conference, you'll know the bad boy is *ALWAYS* with the most beautiful woman available; and she is typically the bad egg of the two. It just happens that way. Well, we have another indicator of exactly how ominous and desperate the days were in Israel at the time in which we are studying as we read verse thirty-four of chapter sixteen. At the time of the destruction of Jericho, Joshua said, "*.... cursed be the man who buildeth Jericho!*" Jericho had not been rebuilt until this time.

So, God chose a man at this time specifically to speak on His behalf to these two ilk on the throne of Israel; and God knew His man had to be one who could withstand some pressure. Elijah was prepared and ready; and he is one of the greatest men to walk across the pages of Scripture. Elijah will return to witness to the earth in the last days, as the Lord Jesus instructed us. In the last days, there will be so many weak-kneed, spineless men compromising the Word of God that a man such as Elijah will have to be sent. I wonder how close we are to that day. What I know for sure is: Elijah *NEVER* compromised....

XVI

30 And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him.

31 And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him.

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

33 And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.

34 In his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun.

XVII

1 And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

~ So, Ahab and Jezebel are already ruling in the northern kingdom as we are introduced to Elijah. Elijah walks onto the pages of Scripture and into the palace court with a dramatic announcement concerning God's latest weather report. He says it's not going to rain now; and it's never going to rain again until he says so – and Elijah walks out and leaves town. I don't think Ahab and Jezebel were prepared for that. I'm sure they never dreamed anyone would speak to them this way. I believe they were so taken aback it took them a few moments to regain composure and think of what to say next, but Elijah was already gone! That was what he had to say, and he wasn't interested in conversing about it.

Elijah must have been a rugged individual who also loved the True and Living God and trusted Jehovah; but, even so, God had to train Elijah properly, correctly and completely. The method God uses when training His man is to take them into the desert, friends. That's God's method, every time. That's where God took Abraham, Moses, David, John the Baptist, and Paul the apostle, who was also sent into the desert of Arabia for at least two years. Elijah receives harsh training in several areas he needed to learn. God is about to take Elijah as far into the wilderness as he can go....

2 And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying,

3 Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.

4 And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.

~ Two methods were used by God in dealing with Elijah. First, *natural* means were used – the brook. The other is *supernatural* – having the ravens bring food. Of course, Elijah had proclaimed the drought would happen, so, when the brook began to dry up and the famine ensued, I don't think he was very surprised. I do believe he questioned himself, though. I can almost picture Elijah waking up every morning and going down to the brook, and it being just a little lower each day. I'm sure Elijah marked the water level to track the decline, and had it worked out mathematically to determine exactly when he would die of thirst. We all do that. We don't trust God as we should. Well, maybe you do. I can only speak for myself. I would have seen the water level go down to nothing and panicked. That just happens to be the sin of statistics today, too, by the way. I have plenty to confess.

Anyways, The condition of our modern-day churches is determined by statistics, too. In the church, if the offerings have been good, and if attendance is up each month, that must mean the church is a success. Unfortunately, exactly the opposite is likely true. The preacher calls on the treasurer to give a report so they can know what the "*status-quo*" is. Well, the status quo is code for "*the mess that we're in!*" Statistics generally appear strangely good in churches that are really in a royal mess. One cannot place the condition of a church in the form of a bank statement, my beloved. There is no computer in the world that can form an algorithm that correctly identifies the proper spiritual condition of ministerial efforts. Even a revival couldn't be counted in mere numbers.

Well, the cold statistics Elijah deduced didn't account for the spiritual fire happening in his life. I thank God for that, personally. God allowed the brook to dry up in order for Elijah to learn a spiritual lesson. And that lesson was that Elijah's life was a dried-up little stream. See, friends, we are nothing but channels of dust through which living water can potentially

flow. If the living water doesn't flow, then we are just dried up brooks. Your level goes down every day unless the rain from the Word of God fills you back up. If we neglect Bible study, we'll dehydrate spiritually completely. The Lord Jesus said, "whosoever shall drink of this water shall thirst again but whosoever drinketh of the water I give them shall never thirst!" There is a hymn entitled "Make Me a Channel of Blessing" – and I am sure nine out of ten people singing that song have no earthly idea what they're talking about. Only as the Water of Life – the Word of God – flows through us do we have life. Outside of that, we are completely spiritually dead. That dependence is the lesson Elijah had to learn; and deep spiritual lessons are only taught one way: the hard way. You can just write that down. God has chosen the weak things of the world for His plan and purpose. The great missionary Dr. Hudson Taylor insisted to his subjects when they came to him they were nothing except what God could do through them. Most people balk at the notion they are nothing. Well, you might as well take it on faith that we are nothing; because it just happens to be true....

5 So he went and did according unto the word of the LORD: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.

6 And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook.

7 And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.

8 And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying,

9 Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.

10 So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.

11 And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand.

12 And she said, As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.

13 And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.

14 For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth.

15 And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days.

~ To believe the Word of God is to believe God sustained these people out of an empty flour barrel. I think that's where many people draw the line with Jesus. If it's easy for you to trust Him, then you're not. See, there comes a time when you'll have to decide if you honestly believe the Bible is the Word of God. Elijah should have sung the doxology every day during this time; because that barrel was as fertile as the corn fields of Iowa. I don't think that happened. I believe Elijah was deeply concerned every day that starvation would kill them, or Jezebel would find them. These were not days of rosewater and sunshine for Elijah.

Not only are we empty flour barrels, but we're also dried up brooks. I hear so much chatter about consecration and giving our talents to the Lord; but, my friends, you and I have *NOTHING* to offer God – *NOTHING* at all. At the wedding in Canaan, the most important thing that day wasn't the brides dress – it was the empty water pots. Only when they were filled with water at the command of Jesus were they of use to serve the guests. Today, we have spiritual floor shows in our churches that are the equivalent of religious night clubs. They have no more spiritual life than a high school

football game. The football game will have more enthusiasm. Honestly, the modern-day church is simply sad and silly if you ask me. They don't teach the truth of how we are just plain empty inside....

16 And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah.

17 And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him.

18 And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?

19 And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed.

20 And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?

21 And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again.

~ There is a tremendous principle of resurrection in this passage. Elijah came into contact with the woman's son three times. Christianity means contact with the Lord Jesus Christ. If your Christian life isn't in contact with Him, then something is radically wrong with your relationship. We need to recognize this is one of the greatest miracles in Scripture. We would expect it from Jesus, but not from a prophet. You and I are lost sinners who are dead in trespasses and sins. If we say we are crucified with Christ that means we died with Him on the cross. Today, we are joined to the living Christ; and if you aren't joined to Him, then you are still dead in trespasses and sins. God can only use us when we recognize these facts, friends. God creates out of nothing; and until we realize we are nothing, then God can

do nothing with us. That's the biggest problem with a whole lot of people today. Most are simply too strong and have too much ability which renders them unusable to the Lord. Here, God is ready to use Elijah, and Elijah steps out in faith. Elijah has now realized he is nothing and God is everything. This is what leads to the most dramatic scene in the Bible as Elijah has a contest with the prophets of Baal; and we'll see that account in our next report....

22 And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived.

23 And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth.

24 And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth.

XVIII

1 And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth.

2 And Elijah went to shew himself unto Ahab. And there was a sore famine in Samaria.

3 And Ahab called Obadiah, which was the governor of his house. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly:

4 For it was so, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.)

5 And Ahab said unto Obadiah; Go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks: peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts.

6 So they divided the land between them to pass throughout it: Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself.

7 And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him: and he knew him, and fell on his face, and said, Art thou that my lord Elijah?

8 And he answered him, I am: go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here.

9 And he said, What have I sinned, that thou wouldest deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me?

10 As the LORD thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, He is not there; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not.

11 And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here.

12 And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the LORD shall carry thee whither I know not; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me: but I thy servant fear the LORD from my youth.

13 Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the LORD, how I hid an hundred men of the LORD'S prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water?

14 And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here: and he shall slay me.

15 And Elijah said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely shew myself unto him to day.

16 So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him: and Ahab went to meet Elijah.

17 And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?

~ We need the voice Elijah today, friends. After the church leaves this earth in the rapture, the people are going to need a voice; and they're going to have it because Elijah will be back. Three times Obadiah says Ahab will kill him when he tells him Elijah was back. Well, Ahab wanted to blame Elijah for causing this famine, but it wasn't Elijah causing trouble – it was Ahab who brought this upon Israel. The liberal always wants to blame the fundamentalists for causing divisions; but see, the church actually believed something at one time. The bifurcation that led the church away from its foundation was a liberal religious philosophy. I was denominational at one time, but I didn't leave them – they left me. I still believe exactly what I have always believed from the very beginning. I believe the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is the Gospel – that's what I teach in this Spiritual Safari - the liberal is the only one who rejects Him ~