

1 Kings 16:1-34

A Bloody Scramble for the Throne in Israel and the Rise of Ahab

During the reign of Asa in Judah, King Baasha in Israel dies after receiving a dark warning of God's judgment from the prophet Jehu, the son of Hanani:

1 Kings 16:2-3 - "Forasmuch as I exalted thee out of the dust, and made thee prince over my people Israel; and thou hast walked in the way of Jeroboam, and hast made my people Israel to sin, to provoke me to anger with their sins; Behold, I will take away the posterity of Baasha, and the posterity of his house; and will make thy house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat."

Then follows a bloodbath, with Baasha's son Elah, who was then massacred by his servant Zimri. But Zimri's reign lasted only seven days. The army made its general Omri king, and besieged Zimri in his palace.

1 Kings 16:18 - "And it came to pass, when Zimri saw that the city was taken, that he went into the palace of the king's house, and burnt the king's house over him with fire, and died,"

Then another leader - Timri - gathered a faction to promote himself as King. Omri's forces prevailed against Timri, which left Omri securely in charge. He bought land on a mountain that would become Samaria, and established his capital there.

Omri actually became a powerful leader, and extended the boundaries of Israel. He brought stability in the north, and even made peace with Judah under King Jehoshaphat. The Moabite stone, discovered in 1868, refers to him as the conqueror of Moab. Assyrian inscriptions make mention of him as a great warrior. For years the Assyrians referred to Israel as 'the house of Omri.'" But the Bible gives him only a little space because of his promotion of idolatry.

Omri's son Ahab also made peace with the Sidonians through his marriage to Jezebel (**1 Kings 16:31-32**), but this began an influx of Phoenician and old Canaanite influences to his court, that resulted in a popularizing of Baal worship.

Up to this time, the two calf idols set up by Jeroboam were ostensibly still objects that venerated Yahweh, but with a new priesthood that replaced the traditional Temple services, and the Levites and the priestly descendants of Aaron.

But Omri and his son Ahab ushered in a new spiritual low. Soon the land would be filled with thousands of "priests of Baal."

Solomon had been influenced to idolatry by his wives. Jeroboam had introduced idols into what he still considered worship of Yahweh. Now Omri made edicts and statutes commanding the people to worship idols, according to a denunciation by the later prophet Micah:

- **Micah 6:16** - "For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels; that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing: therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people."

But Ahab would be even worse than Omri. He worshipped Baal, with no pretense of honoring Yahweh.

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

Jezebel, Ahab's wife, receives even greater condemnation than he does in the scriptures. "zebel" means "dung" in Hebrew. She appears as a symbol of false teachers and the Great Whore of Babylon.

Jesus says to the church at Thyatira:

- **Revelation 2:20** - "But I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads My servants to be sexually immoral and to eat food sacrificed to idols."

She is also associated with witchcraft and sorcery in **2 Kings 9:22**.

Ahab and Jezebel become sort of the false, inverted shadow of Christ and the Bride. She manipulates Ahab into most of the evil he is guilty of.

This is often the same pattern we see in our own lives. We interject our own will and ideas into what God has revealed, which leads us further and further away from him and into more blatant idolatry.

An Addendum

1 Kings 16:34 - "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."

After the destruction of Jericho, Joshua had issued a prophecy:

- **Joshua 6:26** - "Cursed be the man before the LORD who rises up and builds this city Jericho; he shall lay its foundation with his firstborn, and with his youngest he shall set up its gates"

Some scholars think Ahab wanted to show this prophecy was invalid, by instructing Hiel the Bethelite to rebuild the city. But the prophecy proved to be true - both the firstborn and the youngest son of Hiel died.

It should have been a warning to Ahab that he was on the wrong path. But Ahab ignored this warning.

To counter this new serious threat to His people, Gad prepares to raise up a mighty prophet, Elijah.