

## Ahab, King of Israel

### 1 Kings 16:29-34

1 Kings 16:29-34: *“In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab the son of Omri became king over Israel; and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years. Now Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him.*

*And it came to pass, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took as wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians; and he went and served Baal and worshiped him. Then he set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a wooden image. Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him.*

*In his days Hiel of Bethel built Jericho. He laid its foundation with Abiram his firstborn, and with his youngest son Segub he set up its gates, according to the word of the LORD, which He had spoken through Joshua the son of Nun.”*

### Background Notes

1 Kings 16:29-34 contains a description of one of the worst kings who ever occupied the throne of the northern kingdom of Israel. This passage sets the stage for the coming of the prophet Elijah in 1 Kings 17.

Ahab came to the throne in the thirty-eighth year of Asa, king of Judah (v29). Remember, when the United Kingdom under Saul, David and Solomon split in about 931BC, the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah were established. The first king of the northern kingdom of Israel was wicked King Jeroboam I. He was the king who set up the golden calf shrines in Dan and Bethel. He was the king who started a new unscriptural priesthood to serve in the shrines. He is the king whom the Old Testament describes as “the king who made Israel sin.”

But look at what the Bible says about Ahab: he was **worse** than Jeroboam! Ahab was even more wicked than Jeroboam. To Ahab, the sins of Jeroboam were trivial, or child's play. In fact, Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him (v33).

Ahab deliberately married Jezebel, a Phoenician princess, who worshiped the pagan god Baal. Baal was a male Canaanite deity, and the wooden image, Asherah, was Baal's female counterpart. And through the instigation of his cruel and crafty wife, Jezebel, Ahab plunged himself into the idolatrous and immoral worship of Baal. Even worse, Ahab was not only involved in Baal worship - he actually built a temple and an altar for Baal in Samaria, the capital city of the northern kingdom.

During the reign of wicked King Ahab, a man named Hiel was allowed to rebuild the walls and gates of Jericho (v32). This action was in direct defiance of what the Lord had declared through Joshua: the walls that had fallen in Joshua's day were never to be rebuilt (Joshua 6:26). God didn't forbid people to live in the Jericho area, but the walls and gates of the city that God had miraculously destroyed were not to be rebuilt. But in defiance and open rebellion against God, King Ahab permitted Hiel to rebuild Jericho.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. God is faithful to His promises of judgment.

We like to think of God's faithfulness to His promises of blessing - but what about His promises of judgment? God is faithful to His promises of blessing, but He is faithful to His promises of judgment as well. More than 500 years before Ahab's time, God had promised through Joshua: *"Cursed before the Lord is the one who undertakes to rebuild this city, Jericho: At the cost of his firstborn son he will lay its foundations; at the cost of his youngest he will set up its gates."*

What does that mean? It means that the firstborn of any person who rebuilt Jericho's walls would die an untimely death when the foundations of the walls were laid, and the youngest child would die when the wall was completed and the gates were hung. Sure enough, God's promise of judgment came true 500 years later. Abiram, the Hiel's firstborn son, died when the foundations were laid, and Segub, his youngest son, died when the gates were hung.

In ancient times, when a building project was begun and completed, human sacrifice was a pagan practice that guaranteed good fortune from the pagan gods, so it's possible that Hiel actually sacrificed his sons. We don't know. But we do know that God's judgment was upon Hiel for rebuilding Jericho. God is faithful to His promises of judgment.

I believe that doctrinal truth is also brought out in 2 Timothy 2:11-13. *"This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself."* What does verse 13 mean - *"If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself"*? It means that God is faithful to His promises of judgment. If we are faithless, He remains faithful to His promises of judgment. He must be faithful.

God must be faithful to His own character. He cannot deny Himself. To the unbeliever, God has promised the judgment of hell. That's not a pleasant subject, and God doesn't want to send people to hell. But if a person refuses to accept Jesus Christ as personal Savior, God must be faithful to His promises of judgment.

And God is faithful to His promises of judgment to the believer as well. If we, as Christians, get ourselves involved in a life of sin and disobedience, Hebrews 12 says that our Father must discipline us as His children. And He will! Maybe not immediately, but judgment will surely come.

So if you are involved in some secret sin, you can expect God's judgment. You may be getting away with it now, but it won't be long before His discipline comes, because God is faithful to His promises of judgment.

## 2. God is provoked to anger by man's sin.

Verse 33 says that Ahab did *"more to provoke the Lord God to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him."* Man's sin provokes God to anger - His **righteous** anger. God loves the sinner, but He hates sin. He is angry because of human sin.

Psalms 7:11 says that God is angry with wickedness every day. We like to think of God as gracious, merciful and loving, and we tend not to think of Him as being provoked to anger. Praise the Lord - God is gracious and merciful, and God is love (1 John 4:8). But God also exhibits righteous anger, and He is provoked to anger by man's sin.

John 3:36 says, *"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."* The wrath of God remains on him! Why? Because of sin. God hates sin! God is provoked to anger because of mankind's sin.

## Practical Applications

### 1. Who you follow will have a great effect on your life and lifestyle.

Ahab followed in King Jeroboam's footsteps. He *"walked in the sins of the Jeroboam, son of Nebat"* (v31). In fact, he went even further into sin than Jeroboam did! Who you follow will have a great effect on your life and lifestyle.

It's not wrong to have role models. In fact, it's a good thing to follow role models, if they're good role models. Paul was a good role model for Timothy, and for the believers of the early church (1 Corinthians 4:15-16). In Titus 2, older women were asked to be good examples for younger Christian women - not only in what they say, but also in their lifestyle.

Both my father and my father-in-law were wonderful role models for me to follow. They were great examples by setting proper priorities, by their exemplary lifestyle, by their faithfulness in Christian service, and by being loving husbands and fathers. And now - believe it or not - I'm seeking to follow their example of how to be a good grandfather!

Look around at your church. I'm sure there are some great role models for you to follow. You'll see dedicated Christian men and women serving the Lord. You'll see dedicated Christian parents raising their children in the instruction of the Lord. You'll see brothers and sisters working out their differences and living in harmony with one another.

Unfortunately, though, there are lots of bad role models in our culture. Our culture is inundated with role models from TV, movies, fashion magazines, computer games – and obviously most of them are not godly role models. Young people (even Christian young people) tend to follow cultural role models - and negative models may have a devastating effect on their lives. Who you follow will have a great effect on your life and lifestyle.

## 2. Who you marry will have a great effect on your life and lifestyle!

Ahab married Jezebel. Jezebel was an unbeliever. She was malicious and revengeful, and she greatly affected Ahab's life and lifestyle, as we'll see.

Who you marry will have a great effect on your life and lifestyle. Scripture is quite clear that Christians should only marry believers. But **which believer** you marry is very important! The person you marry will have a great effect on your life and lifestyle.

Some of you who are listening to this Talk are single young people. Statistically speaking, most of you will be married within ten years. In fact, you may be sitting next to your future spouse! You know as well as I do that if you marry an unbeliever, that unbeliever will negatively affect your life and lifestyle. Marrying a Christian will have a great effect on your life and lifestyle as well – a positive effect! But make sure you wait for the Christian spouse who is **God's** choice! Don't jump too quickly!

Every year some of my students want to move too quickly in this area. Emmaus Bible College is a pretty good place for Christian men and women to meet each other - but I always tell my students that they don't necessarily have to marry the first Christian guy or girl who makes their hearts skip a beat! That person is not necessarily **God's** choice!

A couple of months ago a Christian couple came to me for marriage counseling. They were about to become engaged. Both are solid believers, both are committed to having a Christ-centered marriage and home - but there's one significant area of difference. The young man is a medical doctor, and he feels God is calling him to serve in missions in another country. She, on the other hand, does not sense that same call. She sees herself as being involved with her husband in a ministry in this country.

So how did I counsel this young couple? My counsel was – wait! Don't get engaged - at least not yet. Wait until God gives both of you a similar vision. If a husband and wife are not in agreement on very important matters, their marriage can end up in sorrow - with two Christians who are disillusioned, unfulfilled, and bitter.

Who you marry will have a great effect on your life and lifestyle!