

Ahab and Jezebel: Abuse of Power



SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 8

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 1 Kings 16:28–34; 1 Kings 17; 1 Kings 18.

MEMORY VERSE: “Do not be joined to unbelievers. What do right and wrong have in common? Can light and darkness be friends?” (2 Corinthians 6:14, NirV).

IN THE BIBLE THERE WAS A COUPLE WHO SHOULD NEVER BE OUR MODEL (EXAMPLE) OF HOW TO ACT OR LIVE. They were Ahab and Jezebel. Talk about a marriage made in hell! Suppose you have one weak king and add to him a power-hungry woman. Then the result will not be good.

In many ways, this week's study is about power and authority.¹ But really it is about the abuse of power and authority.

Power and authority are gifts from God. Those who have them have the God-given responsibility² to use that power and authority in the right way. When they do not use them in the right way, they are sinning. They sin against people and against God Himself. As we will see this week, Ahab and Jezebel used their power and their authority against the will of God. They reaped (“earned”) the results too. There is a good lesson here for all of us about how we must use carefully whatever power we have been given.

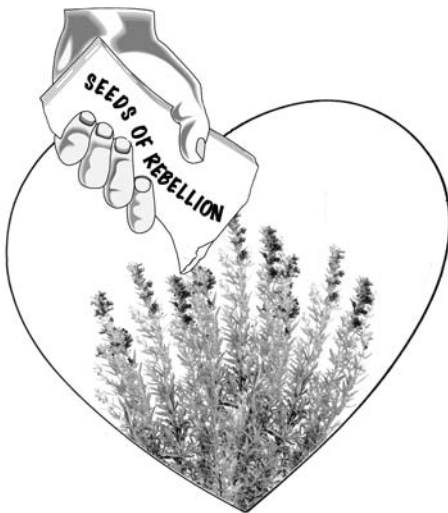
THIS WEEK'S STUDY UP CLOSE: Ahab and Jezebel were a husband-and-wife team that brought out the worst in each other. That is bad enough for any marriage. But when the husband and wife happen to be the leaders of a nation, the results are even more terrible.

1. authority—power that creates respect and trust; the skill to make someone obey.

2. responsibility—being expected to take care of something or being expected to do something; duty.

SUNDAY—SEPTEMBER 9**AHAB (1 Kings 16:28–30)**

Last week we looked at David’s sin against Bathsheba. David’s sin led to much pain and suffering, not just for himself but for his nation. Indeed, David’s sin weakened his position (power) as king. It also helped plant the seeds of rebellion³ in his own house. That helped open the way for the nation to divide (break apart) into two separate kingdoms during the time that David’s grandson was king.



Sin plants the seeds of rebellion (evil) in our hearts.

What does 1 Kings 16:28–30 tell us about the character of Ahab?

What were some of the things in

1 Kings 12:25–33; 1 Kings 13:33, 34; 1 Kings 14:22–27; 1 Kings 15:26, 34; and 1 Kings 16:15–20, 25 that kings in the past had done? How does this help us know how much wickedness was found in Israel when Ahab was king?

“Two years before the death of Asa, Ahab began to rule in the kingdom of Israel. From the beginning Ahab’s rule was filled with terrible backsliding.⁴ Ahab’s father, Omri, the founder of Samaria, had ‘sinned more than all the kings who had ruled before him’ (1 Kings 16:25, NIV). But the sins of Ahab were even greater. He [Ahab] ‘did more to make him [the Lord] angry than all of the kings of Israel had done before him. . . . Ahab thought it was a small thing to commit [do] the sins that Jeroboam,⁵ the son of Nabat, had committed [done].’ Verses 31, 33, [NIV]. Ahab wanted to do more than just encourage the false forms of worship at Bethel and Dan. So, he boldly led the people into the worst kind of heathenism.⁶ He put aside the worship of God for Baal⁷ worship.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Prophets⁸ and Kings*, p. 114.

From our way of thinking, it is hard to understand how these kings could have fallen into such sin and backsliding. But that is the problem, because we are thinking about these

3. rebellion—an armed fight against the government (ruling power) of one’s own country.

4. backsliding—separation from God. Doing again the things that do not please Him.

5. Jeroboam—the first king of the separated northern kingdom of Israel.

6. heathenism—the worship of false gods and idols.

7. Baal—worshiped by the Canaanites as the god of storms and thunder; in some places, Baal was worshiped as the god of the sun.

8. prophets—men and women sent by God to warn us about what will happen in the future.

things from our experience, not theirs. Who knows what any of us might have done were we in their place. These stories should serve as a warning to all of us about how easily we can fall away from the living God.

What daily steps can you take in your own life so that you do not slowly, steadily move away from a saving relationship⁹ with Jesus Christ?

MONDAY—SEPTEMBER 10

POWER COUPLE (1 Kings 16:31–33)

As if everything Ahab had already done were not bad enough, he added to his sin by marrying Jezebel (1 Kings 16:31). Jezebel was the pagan¹⁰ princess who has become famous for being evil.

This more than likely was a marriage for political¹¹ reasons rather than for love. Most of Ahab's 22-year rule was filled with war, mostly with Aram¹² under Ben-hadad.¹³ This war involved becoming allies (friends) with other neighbors threatened by Ben-hadad and resulted in Ahab's marrying Jezebel. Jezebel was the daughter of

Ethbaal, king of Sidon, who also served as a priest of Astarte.¹⁴ Some time later Ahab's daughter Athaliah helped cement (strengthen) ties with the kingdom of Judah through marriage with Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat and crown prince of Judah.

Right after Ahab married Jezebel, what does 1 Kings 16:31–33 say he started doing?



Ahab helped his pagan wife spread the worship of Baal in the nation of Israel.

9. saving relationship—our special connection (tie) to Jesus that gives us the hope of one day living always with Him. It begins when we ask Him to forgive our sins. Jesus also promises to watch over us. In a saving relationship, He lives out His life through us so that we may love and serve Him. And He gives us the power not to fall back into sin.

10. pagan—having to do with the worship of idols or nature instead of God. Jezebel was a pagan princess who did not worship the true God.

11. political—having to do with ruling a country; having to do with government.

12. Aram—a country mentioned in the Bible. Aram is part of Syria today. In Bible times Aram included the kingdom of Damascus, which is now a city of Syria. Aram was located northeast of Israel in Bible times.

13. Ben-hadad—a ruler of the kingdom of Damascus from about 870 B.C. to 842 B.C. Ben-hadad fought against King Ahab of Israel.

14. Astarte—worshiped by the Canaanite people as the goddess of sexual love, motherhood, and giving birth.

Already Ahab was filled with sin, So, he was ready to help his pagan wife serve Baal.¹⁵ And Ahab was ready to spread the worship of Baal in the nation of Israel. Was Jezebel spreading Baal worship because she was a true believer in her god? Or was she doing it to make herself more powerful? If the followers of God were in charge of things, she would probably be dead, not queen. She wanted to turn the people of Israel away from God and get them to serve her god Baal. Then how easy it would be for her to get all the power she wanted.

What proof do we have in 1 Kings 18:4, 13; 1 Kings 19:1, 2; and 1 Kings 21:25 that Jezebel tried to wipe out the worship of the true God and put Baal worship in its place?

One sin led to another and another. Before long the king had reached the lowest level of sin. Not even he himself could have thought he could stoop so low! What lessons can we learn from this sad story that can help us not make the same kind of mistakes?

TUESDAY—SEPTEMBER 11

JEZEBEL AND ELIJAH (1 Kings 18:17–21)

Review the famous story of the power struggle between Elijah and Jezebel in 1 Kings 18. What did Jezebel hope to gain? What did Elijah hope to prove?

There was a powerful struggle between Elijah and Jezebel. As queen, Jezebel held political¹⁶ power. In Israel she carried on the work of her father, king and priest of Baal and Astarte¹⁷ in the cities of Tyre¹⁸ and Sidon.¹⁹ Ahab built a temple to Baal for Jezebel. The temple had a “seminary” (school) for the training of priests. Jezebel herself was in charge of the Baal cult²⁰ in Israel. She made Baal worship the state religion (religion of the government).

How did Jezebel show her support in 1 Kings 18:19 for the prophets²¹ of her Baal cult?

Four hundred of these prophets ate

15. Baal—worshiped by the Canaanites as the god of storms and thunder; in some places, Baal was worshiped as the god of the sun.

16. political—having to do with ruling a country; having to do with government.

17. Astarte—worshiped by the Canaanite people as the goddess of sexual love, motherhood, and giving birth.

18. Tyre—an important city located in the country of Phoenicia in Bible times along the Mediterranean Sea. Tyre was located about 23 miles south of the city of Sidon.

19. Sidon—an important city located in the country of Phoenicia in Bible times along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

20. cult—a way of worshiping; the religious rites and acts and beliefs of a group.

21. prophets—religious leaders who served the god Baal. These prophets claimed that Baal gave them messages and warnings to share with his followers.

at her table. This means that they could enter the royal household at any time, all with Ahab's support (help). Jezebel clearly had power over her husband.



Elijah appeared before Ahab and said there would be no dew or rain in Israel for three years.

In the face of this serious backsliding,²² Elijah led the struggle to keep the worship of God alive. Elijah's name meant "my God is Yahweh [God]." The religious struggle reached a crisis²³ when Elijah suddenly appeared to King Ahab. Elijah told the king that there would be no dew or rain except at God's word (1 Kings 17:1). This was an attack on Baal,²⁴ god of rain and fertility (making crops grow). Ahab called Elijah the "troubler²⁵ of Israel" (1 Kings

18:17, NIV). But Elijah turned the label back at him. Elijah was not the cause for the drought.²⁶ The cause was Ahab's backsliding from the worship of God (1 Kings 18:16–18). Later, on Mount Carmel (when Jezebel was not there but Ahab was), Elijah proved that Baal had no power. Elijah also showed the power of God over rain. Ahab was as powerless (weak) as Baal. Helplessly Ahab watched the defeat of Baal worship and the killing of the hundreds of priests of Baal. Back at home, Ahab had to tell Jezebel why she did not have to have food ready the next day for all the priests of Baal.

What harmful influences²⁷ are around you? What can you do, as much as possible, to remove those influences?

WEDNESDAY—SEPTEMBER 12

NABOTH'S VINEYARD²⁸ (1 Kings 21:1–4)

How did Ahab let things get so bad under his rule? The story of Naboth's vineyard helps us to better understand what happened. What do we see about the character²⁹ of Ahab in 1 Kings 21:1–4 that explains so much?

22. backsliding—separation from God. Doing again the things that do not please Him.

23. crisis—a time of great trouble or hardship.

24. Baal—worshiped by the Canaanites as the god of storms and thunder; in some places, Baal was worshiped as the god of the sun.

25. troubler—a person who makes problems for other people; troublemaker.

26. drought—when no rain falls for a long time.

27. influences—things that have the power to affect or change persons or things.

28. vineyard—a piece of land where grapevines are grown.

29. character—who you are; all the things that a person does, feels, and thinks are what a person is made of; your character is the sum of the choices you make, such as a choice to be honest or to cheat.

In 1 Kings 21:5–7 we see how Jezebel answered. What a sharp difference! No wonder she was able to rule the kingdom. Ahab went home defeated,³⁰ ready to give up. But Jezebel encouraged him to get what he wanted. She asked him, “Are you king of Israel, or what?” Again we see proof that Jezebel wanted power and to be in charge. Jezebel was firm in not letting her husband stop her from getting power and control.³¹



Jezebel plotted to kill Naboth and steal his vineyard for her husband.

How did Jezebel go about reaching her goals in 1 Kings 21:8–16? What very clever ploy (trick) did she use? What does this tell us about her?

Jezebel seemed to know Israelite law. So, she was able to use it to get what she wanted. She called for a fast.³²

30. defeated—to feel as though there is no way to get what you want; to have no hope; to lose the struggle for or against something; to not win.

31. control—the strength or power to rule people or a country.

32. fast—the act of not eating food for a certain length of time.

33. Baal—worshiped by the Canaanites as the god of storms and thunder; in some places, Baal was worshiped as the god of the sun.

This meant that some horrible sin had been done and needed to be dealt with. Then she had Naboth accused of a crime that would lead to his death (Leviticus 24:16). Finally, she made sure at least two witnesses would be there when Naboth was accused (Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:6). This was required according to Israelite law. Jezebel knew exactly what she was doing. Even though she did not follow the religion of God, she knew how to use its law to help her get what she wanted.

The rest of the chapter (1 Kings 21:17–29) shows that Jezebel was to blame for this crime. But the Lord found Ahab guilty too. Ahab knew what was going on and did nothing to stop it. He was as guilty as his wife of this crime.

Think about how easy it would be for a person to use religion to make others do what one wants and to use them to get what one wants. How might you have been tempted to use faith to push people to do what you want? Why must we be very careful not to let ourselves fall into that trap?

THURSDAY—SEPTEMBER 13

**THE END COMES . . .
(1 Kings 22:51–53)**

Ahab and Jezebel’s actions in causing Israel to worship Baal³³ made

God very angry. On top of that, Ahab and Jezebel ignored all rules of good and fair government.³⁴ They were guilty of the cold-blooded murder of the innocent Naboth. Their marriage was the worst kind of union:³⁵ a weak king married to a very sinful, power-hungry woman. No wonder there was trouble for Israel.

How did both Ahab and Jezebel finally meet their end in 1 Kings 22:29–40 and 2 Kings 9:30–37?

The sad fact is that the influence³⁶ of Ahab and Jezebel did not end with their deaths. They passed on their evil influence to their children.

What does 1 Kings 22:51–53 tell us about the continued (ongoing) influence of these two wicked people?

“During his father’s [Ahab’s] reign, Ahaziah had seen the wonderful works of God. He had seen the terrible results of breaking God’s law. Ahaziah had acted as if these awful results were but idle [foolish] tales. Ahaziah did not humble his heart

before the Lord. Instead, he had followed after Baal. And at last he took part in his most daring act of rebellion³⁷ against God. Ahaziah was rebellious³⁸ and not willing to repent.³⁹ He died, ‘according to the word of the Lord which Elijah had spoken.’ ”
—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Prophets*⁴⁰ and *Kings*, pp. 209, 210.

In what ways have you been influenced by⁴¹ the sins of others? What Bible principles⁴² and promises can you claim to help lessen the harm or hurt done?

FRIDAY—SEPTEMBER 14

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, “Exercise [Showing] Authority [Power] With Humility,”⁴³ p. 215, in *The Adventist Home*.

“Ahab was a weak man when it came to serving God and doing what was right. His marriage with an idol-worshipping woman of strong character⁴⁴ led to terrible results for both himself and the nation. Without principles and a high standard of rightdoing,

34. government—laws by which a country or city is ruled.

35. union—act of joining together so as to make one; a marriage.

36. influence—power to affect or change persons or things.

37. rebellion—a fight or struggle against any kind of power.

38. rebellious—fighting or struggling against authority (laws or rules) or any kind of control (power).

39. repent—to say you are sorry for sinning and to turn away from sin with the help of the Holy Spirit.

40. prophets—men and women sent by God to warn us about what will happen in the future.

41. influenced by—affected or changed by the power of another person or thing.

42. principles—laws or rules upon which other laws are based.

43. humility—not having any pride; meekness.

44. character—who you are; all the things that a person does, feels, and thinks are what a person is made of; your character is the sum of the choices you make, such as a choice to be honest or to cheat.

Ahab's character was easily influenced by⁴⁵ the strong spirit of Jezebel. Ahab's selfish nature could not understand the mercies of God to Israel. Nor did Ahab understand his own duties to protect and watch over and rule the chosen people of God."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Prophets*⁴⁶ and *Kings*, p. 115.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ In many ways, this week's lesson was a lesson about the use of power. What are the rights that come with power? What are the dangers? As a class, talk about the kind of power that comes through religion. What dangers must we stay away from in the use of the power connected with religion? Why can this kind of power

be the most dangerous, if used in the wrong way? How can we as a church help protect ourselves and others from this kind of abuse?

❷ Another lesson we can learn from this week's study deals with the power of influence.⁴⁷ In class, talk about the kind of influences we have as individuals (persons) and as a church. What can we do to make sure that our influence is a good one, both in the world and in the church?

❸ Imagine you are a visitor coming to your church for the first time. What kind of church would you find? What are its strong points? What are its weak points? What can you do as a class to help make a person's first visit as good as it can be?

45. influenced by—affected or changed by the power of another person or thing.

46. prophets—men and women sent by God to warn us about what will happen in the future.

47. influence—power to affect or change persons or things.

Hosea and Gomer: Forgiving the Unfaithful¹



SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 15

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Hosea 1–3.

MEMORY VERSE: “The Lord said to me, ‘Go. Show your love to your wife again. She is loved by another man. And she has committed adultery.² But I want you to love her just as I love the people of Israel. They turn to other gods. And they love to offer raisin cakes to Baal³ and eat them’ ” (Hosea 3:1, NIV).

MANY BELIEVE THAT THE STORY OF HOSEA AND GOMER IS NOT TRUE. Such people believe that the story should be understood as an allegory in which the people and things that happen in the story have hidden meanings.

But why? God used other people's family lives to show their messages. So, why not this one? Isaiah pointed out that he and his children were signs in Israel from God (Isaiah 8:18). Jeremiah was told not to marry or to have children. This was meant to help make clear his message of doom [bad news] (Jeremiah 16:2–4). God foretold (made known) the death of Ezekiel's wife before she died. And when she died, God told Ezekiel not to show sorrow for her death (Ezekiel 24:16).

Thus, we may take the story of Hosea and Gomer as a true experience of a prophet who had a wife. He lost her to other men but lovingly took her back.

THIS WEEK'S STUDY UP CLOSE: The story of Hosea and Gomer powerfully shows God's love for His people. God still loves His people even when they fall into sin.

1. the unfaithful—persons who break their marriage vows; persons who are not true or loyal to God.

2. committed adultery—breaking the marriage vows by having sex with a person who is not one's spouse; not being faithful.

3. Baal—worshiped by the Canaanites as the god of storms and thunder; in some places Baal was worshiped as the god of the sun.