

Who was Jezebel in the Bible?

"Jezebel" is a name synonymous with evil; she is the epitome of the wicked woman. So infamous is her name that, to this day, no one names their baby daughter "Jezebel." To call a woman a "Jezebel" is the greatest insult imaginable. Jezebel was the daughter of Ethbaal, a priest of the cruel, sensuous, false god Baal. Ethbaal, the priest-king of Tyre who murdered his own brother to take over the throne, was hardly a good father figure. But Jezebel followed in her father's footsteps and was herself a power-hungry murderer who stopped at nothing to get what she wanted.

The king of Israel at the time was Ahab, a weak, self-pitying man who abdicated his authority to his bride, the princess Jezebel. In spite of God's laws forbidding idolatry and the worship of any god but the Lord, Ahab married this princess who brought to Israel with her hundreds of priests of lewd Baal worship, a cult that tended to destroy manhood and drag womanhood into shame. Jezebel was such a domineering person that she soon became master over her weak husband. One of her first acts was to order the extermination of the prophets of the Lord (1 Kings 18:4, 13) and set up altars to Baal. So pervasive was her idolatrous influence in Israel that Jesus later used her name to refer to a woman who led the church at Thyatira into immorality and the worship of false gods (Revelation 2:20).

Jezebel's strongest enemy was the great prophet Elijah, who defied her and opposed her evil rule. First, he pronounced the punishment of God upon Israel in the form of a drought which lasted three years (James 5:17). This culminated in a contest on Mount Carmel between the powers of Israel's true God and the Baals. After the 450 priests of Baal and 400 priests of Asherah spent the day beseeching their gods with wailing and self-mutilation to end the drought, all to no avail, Elijah prayed to his omnipotent God

who responded by accepting the sacrifice, having the false prophets slaughtered, and providing an abundance of rain (1 Kings 18:16-46). Instead of acknowledging the awesome power of the one true God, Jezebel was enraged and vowed to kill Elijah (1 Kings 19:1-2). Elijah fled from her wrath to the wilderness (1 Kings 19:3-8).

In the meantime, Jezebel was proving herself to be the greedy, murderous, evil woman she truly was. A righteous man named Naboth owned a vineyard next to Ahab's palace. Ahab offered to buy the vineyard, but Naboth, honoring God's command to keep inheritances within the family, rightly refused to sell. Ahab became "sullen and angry" and went home to sulk on his bed. Jezebel ridiculed him for his weakness and told him to cheer up for she would get the vineyard for him. She plotted with two lying scoundrels to have Naboth falsely accused and denounced, then put to death. Then she calmly declared to Ahab that the vineyard was his (1 Kings 21:1-16). Here we see the formula for a disastrous marriage: a weak, childish man who allows his evil, domineering wife to rule the home. This is the exact opposite of God's plan for marriage: a loving husband who leads his family, and whose care for his wife mirrors that of Christ and His church (Ephesians 5:25-26, 28-29), and a godly woman who submits to her husband "as to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:22), each submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ (Ephesians 5:21; Colossians 3:18-19; 1 Peter 3:7).

As with all who defy the Lord, Jezebel's end was not a pretty one, although it was more gruesome than most, perhaps as an object lesson to all who set themselves up against the one true God. Her doom was sure, having been prophesied by Elijah in 1 Kings 21:23. Even as she saw her death approaching, she remained defiant to the end, painting her face and adorning herself in queenly garments. She looked out the window and shouted her defiance to Jehu, the next king of Israel who came to take his throne (2 Kings 9:30-37). Jehu

commanded her to be thrown out the window to her death, where she was trampled by the horses' hooves and almost entirely consumed by dogs. Her thirty years of tyranny over Israel had ended. The terror visited upon Jezebel was a testimony to the Israelites, and to us, that God's power is supreme and those who defy Him will meet a terrible end.