

For better or for Worse Lesson 11 3Q 2007

Ahab and Jezebel: Abuse of Authority

SABBATH

Read first paragraph – thoughts?

Are there some marriages “made in hell”? In other words are there some marriages not blessed by God? Some marriages where God has not joined two people together? Would there be any spiritual problem with divorcing in a case like this? Or would the spiritual problem be in staying married?

Once he had made the mistake of marrying Jezebel would Ahab have made a better spiritual choice to divorce her rather than staying married to her, even if she never had sexual relations with another man?

Ahab is described as weak willed – what makes someone weak-willed? What are the factors that lead someone to not stand up for themselves or the truth? Fear – fear of rejection, fear of pain and suffering, fear of ridicule – consider Herod when Salome requested the head of John the Baptist – was he weak-willed? Why? Fear of what others might think. What about Pilate when he was convinced that Jesus was innocent, was he weak-willed? Why? Fear of losing his power or position.

Our responsibility is to do what is right regardless of feelings of fear and insecurity – what can enable us to do this?

The greater our confidence in God, which is based on the more intimately we know Him, then the greater our ability to stand firm for what is right, reasonable and healthy.

Jezebel is described as power hungry – what drives someone to be power hungry? Fear and selfishness, fear of not getting what they deserve, fear of being taken advantage of, selfish entitlement believing self is better or more deserving than others –

Is God power hungry – what did Jesus reveal – Philippians 2:5-11

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:  
 Who, being in very nature God,  
 did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,  
 but made himself nothing,  
 taking the very nature of a servant,  
 being made in human likeness.

And being found in appearance as a man,  
 he humbled himself  
 and became obedient to death--  
 even death on a cross!  
 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place  
 and gave him the name that is above every name,  
 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
 in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
 to the glory of God the Father.

What is God's power, the power upon which His government rests?

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. Romans 1:16

God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power. {DA 759.1}

Did Ahab and Jezebel wield this type of power?

What about today? Are Christians in danger of using Satan's coercive methods rather than the power of truth, love and freedom?

How can we protect ourselves from abusing authority in Christ's name?

SUNDAY

Read last paragraph – thoughts?

Is it hard to understand from our perspective? What was their root problem?

Romans 1:18-28 – the truth about God was rejected and their minds became darkened, foolish, depraved – would we say this fits the description of Ahab and Jezebel?

What about in Christ's day – were the religious leaders practicing idolatry like Ahab and Jezebel? No, but were they misrepresenting the truth

about God, had they accepted lies about God and did they teach those lies? And were they leading people away from God just as surely as Ahab and Jezebel? Did they crucify God when He dwelt among them?

Christ said about them, "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are. Matt 23:15

Was this any better than Ahab and Jezebel? Or worse, for it gave the appearance of godliness and made it harder to see the error?

What about today – do we find religious people who reject the truth about God and instead accept Satan’s allegations of God? What about in our church? Do people in our church reject the truth about God and promote distortions about God leading people away from God? Any examples?

In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. When men broke the law of God, and defied His will, Satan exulted. It was proved, he declared, that the law could not be obeyed; man could not be forgiven. Because he, after his rebellion, had been banished from heaven, Satan claimed that the human race must be forever shut out from God's favor. God could not be just, he urged, and yet show mercy to the sinner. {DA 761.4}

Do you ever hear teaching that suggest that God must use His power to inflict pain and suffering on His children – this is Satan’s argument, God’s government does not rest on the use of power and might but on truth, love and freedom.

Every false religious system of the world has a god who uses power in coercive ways – God does not, and thus Christian teachings that put God in the role of executioner, that suggest God is the source of suffering and death, that God must use His power to inflict harm on the wicked are doing the same work as Ahab and Jezebel – leading people away from the knowledge of God.

February 2007 Ministry Magazine - Why did God the Father choose a cross to be the instrument of death? Why did He not choose to have Christ instantly beheaded or quickly run through

with a spear or sword? Was God unjust in executing judgment on Christ with a cross when He could have done it by beheading, a noose, a sword, a gas chamber, a bolt of lightening, or a lethal injection?"

But what does EGW say about this?

It was generally believed by the Jews that sin is punished in this life. Every affliction was regarded as the penalty of some wrongdoing, either of the sufferer himself or of his parents. It is true that all suffering results from the transgression of God's law, but this truth had become perverted. Satan, the author of sin and all its results, **had led men to look upon disease and death as proceeding from God,--as punishment arbitrarily inflicted on account of sin.** Hence one upon whom some great affliction or calamity had fallen had the additional burden of being regarded as a great sinner. {DA 471.1}

Thus the way was prepared for the Jews to reject Jesus. He who "hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows" **was looked upon by the Jews as "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted;"** and they hid their faces from Him. Isa. 53:4, 3. {DA 471.2}

**God had given a lesson designed to prevent this.** The history of Job had shown that suffering is inflicted by Satan, and is overruled by God for purposes of mercy. But Israel did not understand the lesson. **The same error for which God had reproved the friends of Job was repeated by the Jews in their rejection of Christ.** {DA 471.3}

What was the error of Job's friends? Believing that Job was being punished by God, believing God was the one inflicting punishment upon Job. What was the error of the Jews in Christ's day, believing that God punished Christ? And what is the error of the majority of Christians today including many in our own church? That God punished Christ, that God, who is the source of all love, goodness and life is the source of pain suffering and death.

Satan saw that his disguise was torn away. His administration was laid open before the unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe. **He had revealed himself as a murderer. By shedding the blood of the Son of God,** he had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings. Henceforth his work was restricted. Whatever attitude he might assume, he could no longer await the angels as they came from the heavenly courts, and before them accuse Christ's brethren of being clothed with the garments of blackness and the defilement of sin. The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken. {DA 761.2}

Why is this important? As we read in Romans 1 – the mind cannot be healed as long as we hold to lies about God, when we reject the truth about God and accept false versions of God it damages the mind and character.

TQ – page 127 “Jezebel’s bio reads like a rap sheet for extortion, genocide, murder, idolatry, blackmail. Her forceful personality dominated her husband. What happens in a marriage when one spouse dominates the other?”

Three predictable consequences occur –

1. love is damaged and eventually destroyed
2. a desire to rebel is instilled
3. if freedom not restored, the submissive partner loses individuality

Additionally, in such relationships the dominate party loses interest in the submissive party because the submissive party becomes a shadow of the dominate one, stops having original thoughts, ideas, beliefs, is no longer spontaneous and or interesting but is merely a reflector of the domineering partners thoughts.

## MONDAY

Read third paragraph “Already so filled...” thoughts?

Do such things happen in our church? Do people wield power in the church for personal gain or personal reasons? How?

A wealthy family told the pastor they would donate a large amount of money to the school in exchange for two seats on the school board – how should a pastor respond?

A business man calls church leaders and suggest that if certain individuals are included in upcoming programs then their funding will be pulled – the concerns are not theological but personal – how should church leaders respond? How do you think they would respond? How did Christ respond to the powerful and rich in His day when they suggested He was including the wrong people in His ministry?

What types of power do people have and how can it be abused?

1. money – bribes, threaten to pull funding,
2. might – physical violence – especially in families, beast system will use physical might to coerce

3. knowledge- others weaknesses/sins, scientific knowledge
4. position – teacher/pupil, doctor/patient, pastor/ parishioner
5. situation – Here rumors, and don't redirect the person but act on the rumor
6. competence – a doctor can abuse his authority as expert witness, a nutritionist can assert competence regarding neuropsychiatric issues
7. personality – power of persuasion

How did Jesus use power? What kind of power did He use?

How did Jesus respond to those in “power” when they tried to intimidate Him into doing things their way? When they tried to influence who should be included in His ministerial team? Is there a lesson for us?

Read bottom green section – thoughts?

Just as coming to into the light from darkness takes time to adjust to the light – whether it is physical light or the light of truth, the mind takes time to adjust and be able to handle it. Can anyone testify that it takes time to comprehend new truth and get the mind operating on new wisdom? Likewise, when one is in the light it takes time to adjust to the darkness, in other words, people generally don't become reprobate in an instant but by a series of slow compromises they slowly sear their consciences, damage the reason and blind themselves.

## TUESDAY

Jezebel and Elijah – do you think it was easy for Elijah to stand up to the king and queen? If you were Elijah do you think you might have had some anxiety?

What lesson is there for us? When we are doing God's will do we need to base our decisions on the size of forces lined up against us?

Should we compromise our ministry in order to garner support from the rich and powerful?

## WEDNESDAY

Read all three paragraphs – thoughts?

Read bottom green section – are there people in society today using religion for political reasons? What political reasons is religion being used for? How can you identify it? What is the Christlike response?

## THURSDAY

Read first paragraph – thoughts? Was God wrathful in this situation? What is God’s wrath? Romans 1:18-28 – God’s wrath is “letting go” and allowing people to reap the consequences of their choices.

Did God let go in this situation or did God intervene to expose the impotence of Baal and win the people back to Him? Then this was not an example of God’s wrath and to label it as such misrepresents God and darkens our minds about God.

## FRIDAY

Question 3 read and discuss – what impression of the kind of God we serve would a visitor get?

Read summary – did He save them from ruin? Why not?