

Auburn Baptist Church

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The House of Ahab

Part 4: The Co-Regents and the Nemesis

1 Kings 18:19; 1 Kings 21:25; 1 Kings 20:32-34, 38-42

Our study of The House of Ahab is showing us that the ancient Kingdom of Israel is a foreshadow or example of our own modern nation of America. Many of the same events that occurred in ancient Israel have occurred and are continuing to occur in our country today.

Not only do Ancient Israel and Modern America mimic each other in an overall national sense, but even our leaders are following the same pattern. Specifically, we saw that when Ancient Israel found itself under the reign on the house of Ahab the nation began a swift and deep decent into apostasy. In modern America, we too began to see a swift and deep decent into apostasy under the leadership of a specific political dynasty: the Clintons.

What was interesting was how closely the ancient king of Israel, Ahab, and the modern President, Bill Clinton, mirrored each other in character, will, actions, and influence. Then last week we saw that the same could be said about their respective wives: Queen Jezebel and First Lady Hillary Clinton. (If you have missed any of the previous teachings in this series you can pick up a copy of them from the vestibule table or download and print them from our website: www.auburnbaptist.net.)

The echoes continue this morning as we begin looking at the reign of the co-regents Ahab and Jezebel as well as the nemesis their ancient kingdom faced and marvel at how closely the Clinton presidency and our own national enemy mirrors our predecessors.

I. THE CO-REGENTS

A. ANCIENT ISRAEL

The reign of King Ahab of Israel was unlike any that had come before it. Not only was his rule driven by a radical agenda to transform the nation's culture, but for the first time in the history of Israel it involved two regents. It was not just the reign of the king; it was the reign of the king and his queen.

Jezebel broke the norms and standards concerning Israelite queens. She was not content in the role of wife or in playing a supportive or complementary role. She would be co-regent in her own right. For the first time, Israel found itself with two monarchs instead of one, and both of them were united in waging war against the ways of God.

There is a passage in **1 Kings 18:19** which gives us some insight into Jezebel's role as queen. **"Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the**

four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table."

What I want you to notice about this passage is not only are Ahab and Jezebel supporting and promoting prophets of a violent pagan religion within the courts of Israel's highest political power but notice whose table is mentioned that is feeding them. It's Jezebel's.

This passage is showing us that Jezebel had established her own court, her own sphere of influence and power within the government. She has her own attendants, her own working staff. And the large number of those under her power, (at least the 850 mentioned plus many more in other positions) can help explain how she could wield such power and influence over her husband, the king. She established herself as a monarch in her own right within her husband's palace.

Israel found itself with co-regents, and the queen appears to have been more iron-willed, harsh, implacable, and consumed with ambition than her husband.

1 Kings 21:25, "There was never a man like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord, urged on by Jezebel his wife."

This passage makes clear which of the co-regents wielded the greatest power. It was Jezebel who was the power behind the throne. She would use her husband's office to accomplish her goals of changing the Israelite society and morals to match what she thought was proper. She was a woman who continually influenced, incited, persuaded, enticed, and moved her husband to do her bidding. At times she would rule through him and at other times she would rule apart from him.

Under the reign of Ahab and Jezebel the queen heavily influenced the king to champion the worship of Baal and the practice of child sacrifice. She sought to compel the people of Israel to support this new morality for the purpose of obtaining material benefits from the deaths of their children - teaching that the sacrificing of their children to Baal and Ashteroth would bring them prosperity.

The king and queen would also endorse a new value system in Israel that would embrace sexual immorality and the confusion of gender as exemplified by the male and female prostitutes of Canaanite worship.

B. MODERN AMERICA

Now take the ancient foreshadow and see how well it was mirrored in the Clinton Presidency in modern America. As with the reign of Ahab and Jezebel, the age of the Clintons was unlike any other America had ever seen. Hillary Clinton was not content to be known as Bill Clinton's wife or to play the traditional supporting role of the First Lady (Cahn 42). She would co-lead the country with her husband. Even while campaigning for the presidency, Bill Clinton told the voters they would be getting two for the price of one (Genovese).

Hillary would break all precedents. She took on the most powerful official position ever given to any first lady in any administration. She would work out of an office in the West Wing of the White House and would exercise unprecedented authority in major matters of national policy.

Just as Jezebel did, in the palace of Ahab, Hillary Clinton maintained her own people, her own staff, and her own power base in her husband's administration. The area in which her staff worked was even given its own name: 'Hillaryland'" (Chozick). The time of the Clinton reign was actually labeled as a co-presidency.

Just as Jezebel guided many of Ahab's decisions, the same dynamic was observed in the Clinton presidency. Those closest to the couple reported that there was never a major decision made without her, and rarely, if ever, did they witness the president overruling her. And when there was a difference between them, rarely, if ever, did they see him prevail (Baker).

Under the Clinton presidency, against counsel recommendations, but prodded by his wife, Bill Clinton would sign executive orders that stripped away safeguards preventing the advance of abortion around the world (Bill Clinton on Abortion). In June 1993 he would strike down the ban against using tissue from the bodies of unborn children for the purpose of experimentation (Bill Clinton on Abortion).

In the mid-1990's both houses of Congress banned the gruesome procedure of partial-birth abortion, but Clinton overturned that ban with a presidential veto (Cahn 44).

Along with the sacrificing of children, the Clinton era also saw the normalizing and endorsing of the practice of homosexuality (Cahn 44). Just like during the reign of Ahab, Clinton opened the door for the complete overturning of the values that had undergirded Western civilization since ancient times. Clinton announced: "We are redefining in practical terms the immutable ideals that have guided us from the beginning" (Clinton Makes Keynote Speech Before Gay-Lesbian Group).

II. THE NEMESIS

There is another area in which Ancient Israel under the House of Ahab and modern America under the presidency of the Clintons share common ground. We both had an enemy bent on destroying us from the outside.

A. BEN-HADAD

While the marriage of Ahab and Jezebel cemented an alliance between Northern Israel and its northwestern neighbor, Phoenicia, their relations with their neighbor to the east was a different story.

To the east of the Jordan River and extending as far north as the border of the Assyrian Empire was a kingdom known as Aram-Damascus who had as its ruler a man named Ben-Hadad. He was Israel's nemesis, their archenemy, and an ever-looming threat to their security and peace.

"He would pose a growing threat and danger to the nation's safety in the latter part of Ahab's reign. He would plot attacks, invasions, and incursions into the land. He would issue threats against Ahab and the kingdom. In the face of his threats Ahab would vacillate between weakness and sudden shows of strength. Throughout all this, as the Scripture records, God showed grace to Israel and its king by saving them from the full measure of destruction Ben-Hadad was capable of bringing."

In one such invasion attempt, God allow Ben-Hadad to actually fall into the hands of King Ahab, but Ahab did something totally unexpected.

1 Kings 20:32-34, "Wearing sackcloth around their waists and ropes around their heads, they [officials from Ben-Hadad's court] went to the king of Israel and said, 'Your servant Ben-Hadad says: 'Please let me live.' "

The king answered, 'Is he still alive? He is my brother.'

Then the men took this as a good sign and were quick to pick up his word. 'Yes, your brother Ben-Hadad!' they said.

'Go and get him,' the king said.

When Ben-Hadad came out, Ahab had him come up into his chariot. 'I will return the cities my father took from your father,' Ben-Hadad offered. 'You may set up your own market areas in Damascus, as my father did in Samaria.'

Ahab said, 'On the basis of a treaty I will set you free.' So he made a treaty with him, and let him go."

King Ahab didn't kill his enemy. He didn't even punish or torture or imprison him. He made a treaty with him and let him go. And this was the Lord's response to that action. He sent a prophet to meet King Ahab on his return home from the battle and treaty-making.

1 Kings 20:38-42, "Then the prophet went and stood by the road waiting for the king. He disguised himself with his headband down over his eyes. As the king passed by, the prophet called out to him, "Your servant went into the thick of battle, and someone came to me with a captive and said, 'Guard this man. If he is missing, it will be your life for his life, or you must pay a talent of silver.' While your servant was busy here and there, the man disappeared,"

"That is your sentence," the king of Israel said. "You have pronounced it yourself."

Then the prophet quickly removed the headband from his eyes, and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets. He said to the king, "This is what the Lord says: 'You have set free a man I had determined should die. Therefore, it is your life for his life, your people for his people.'

Sullen and angry, the king of Israel went to his palace in Samaria."

Ahab's decision to let Ben-Hadad go after God had delivered him into his hands would be fatal. It would spell disaster for Ahab and for the nation of Israel. Ben-Hadad would go on to threaten and endanger the nation's security. And in future days he would invade the land again and bring great calamity to the people.

B. OSAMA BIN LADEN

America likewise, had a nemesis, and enemy that threatened our national safety and security through the Clinton presidency and beyond. Less than 30 days before Clinton was sworn in as president America faced a terrorist attack from our enemy. On December 29, 1992, American soldiers staying at the Gold Mohur Hotel in Aden, Yemen on their way to take part in Operation Restore Hope in Somalia left the hotel only moments before a terrorist group known as al Qaeda detonated a bomb their which was designed to kill them. This event is believed to be the first act of terrorism involving America's archenemy, Osama Bin-Laden (Osama Bin Laden: A Chronology of His Political Life).

It was during the Clinton years that Bin Laden's hatred for America and everything it represented would progressively intensify. In the middle of his presidency, Bin Laden would issue a public declaration of war against the United States.

Ben-Hadad had come from the east of Israel to wage war against it. He came from a Semitic people and would have spoken a form of Aramaic, a Semitic language. Osama Bin Laden came from the east to wage war against America. He was an Arab, a Semitic people. His language was Arabic, a Semitic tongue.

The danger of Ben-Hadad intensified in the latter years of Ahab's reign. So, too it was in 1998, the final years of Clinton's presidency when Osama Bin Laden was placed on the FBI's most wanted list after masterminding the bombing of two America embassies in East Africa, resulting in the death of hundreds and injuring thousands.

It wasn't until November 27, 2002, when the 9/11 panel was established to investigate the events leading up to the September 11th attack that it was uncovered that President Clinton followed in the footsteps of Ahab once again. Clinton had had the chance to apprehend or kill our national enemy, Bin Laden, but had decided to pass on the opportunity. He let him go free.

The panel found that Clinton or the Clinton administration was given this chance not once but on nine separate occasions. Each time Clinton or someone under his authority either passed on the opportunity or missed the chance. Each time resulting in Bin Laden slipping through their hands (Kessler).

Ahab's decision to let Ben-Hadad go would bring calamity to the nation Israel. One such result would be an attack on his principal city. So, too, Clinton's decision to pass on the chances of ending the threat of Bin Laden would end up bringing calamity to American shores in the form of attacks on our own soil in our principal cities.

After his presidency, Clinton would speak about his decision not to kill Bin Laden in order not to risk killing innocent people. He said, "I nearly got him, and I could have killed him" (Good). He made this statement on September 10, 2001. Within hours al Qaeda agents struck our country and nearly 3000 innocent Americans were killed as a result. The decision to let Bin Laden go would result in calamity and death on American soil just as the decision to let Ben-Hadad go would result in calamity and death on Israeli soil thousands of years ago.

"What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun," Ecclesiastes 1:9.

There is nothing new under the sun. History repeats itself even thousands of years later. God demands that His people remain holy and set apart and obedient to Him. When we don't the judgment falls, not because God is vindictive, but because we chose judgment rather than obedience. May we learn from our predecessors and repent before it is too late.

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