

Lifemessage

by David Orton

THE SPIRIT OF JEZEBEL

IDOLATRY, DECEPTION, & CONTROL

PART 7 of 7

An excerpt from Chapter 8 in David Orton's book,
"Snakes in the Temple: Unmasking Idolatry in Today's Church"

"...I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants..."

JEZEBEL & AHAB IN PARTNERSHIP

Remembering that Ahab represents the leader who gives ground to the spirit of Jezebel, let's see how they work together. The first book of Kings, chapter 23 shows us.

Subverts the authority structure

First, through the senior leader, *she subverts authority and the chain-of-command* - she "wrote letters in Ahab's name...to the elders and nobles in Naboth's city" (v 8). A spirit of witchcraft seeks to operate under the aegis, the protection, of the senior authority ("*wrote letters in Ahab's name*"), subverting it, to control the established authority structures ("*the elders*"). Rarely will an Ahab-leader dirty their own hands to implement their Jezebelic plans. Using either a *chain-of-command* or a *sphere-of-influence*, they prefer to set others up, and operate from behind the scenes. The well-used cry from perpetrators of wartime atrocities, "*I was only obeying orders!*", now makes sense.

Creates an appearance of spirituality

Secondly, *she creates an appearance of spirituality* - they were "to proclaim a fast" (v 9). This was the platform for launching the attack on Naboth. Using smoke and mirrors, the spirit of witchcraft creates an aura of spirituality while performing its diabolical deeds.

Creates an appearance of justice

Thirdly, *she creates an appearance of justice*, by not only subverting the authority structure (the

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elders) but also the justice process (witnesses). She appointed two witnesses in accordance with the Mosaic law. But, unfortunately, for Naboth, they were *false* witnesses. To add insult to injury, the elders compromised by Jezebel, packaged the false accusations in Scripture. They were directed by Jezebel to prime the false witnesses to “testify that he has cursed both God and king”(v 10), obviously in violation of the law of Moses: “Do not blaspheme God or curse the ruler of your people” (Ex 22:28 NIV).

Naboth’s refusal to sell his property to Ahab was purposely misconstrued as blasphemy against God. By implication therefore, the king had in effect become God; which is always the case under spiritually abusive leadership. Rather than faithfully representing God, the leader takes the place of God. And to touch the leader, is to touch God. Naboth’s righteous motivation to honour God in the law of inheritance, was intentionally misconstrued by his accusers and used to justify his elimination. Controlling and abusive authority always recasts obedience to God as rebellion. But maligned motives and false accusations betray, beyond doubt, the Satanic source of the attack, who himself is “the father of lies” (Jn 8:44) and “the accuser of the brethren” (Rev 12:10).

The death of Christ was, likewise, achieved through a compromised authority structure. He was brought before the council consisting of Caiaphas and the elders, including false witnesses, who also accused him of blasphemy.¹⁵⁶ Throughout redemptive history attacks, inspired by the spirit of Jezebel, on true spiritual leaders have always come through compromised leadership structures, giving an appearance of legitimacy. Just as Jesus was falsely accused through the religious leaders of his day, so today. “Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate. Hence, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach” (Heb 13:12-13 NASB).

Commits murder and robbery

Fourth, *she commits murder and robbery*. Jezebel, by subverting the authority structures and their decision making processes, had Naboth murdered, in the name of justice. She instructed them to “Take him out and stone him to death” (v 10), which, under the law was the penalty applied to idolaters, for their practical denial of God.¹⁵⁷ What a violation of justice! The real idolaters were the ones executing the judgment. To the naked eye, Naboth’s death was a judicial execution, but in reality was a case of murder for personal gain.

The death of Naboth was a work of Satan, who is “a murderer from the beginning” (Jn 8:44). The spirit of witchcraft has not changed. However, the threat is not so much from without, but from within. Satan masquerades as an angel of light and his servants as servants of righteousness.¹⁵⁸ He subverts leadership and uses it to fulfil his own designs - to destroy and kill. What is designed by God to be a channel of blessing and protection for his people is not only subverted, but also, perverted. It becomes an avenue for wickedness and spiritual abuse.

Church conflicts invariably display these dynamics. Ambitious leaders, driven by the spirit of Jezebel, secure their positions by progressing from subtle device to naked power. When

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Naboth's vineyard cannot be obtained by negotiation the Jezebel spirit resorts to more desperate measures – to lies and murder. By using legitimate channels of authority her treacherous schemes are shrouded in an aura of respectability. But, back stage, the spirit of control has already compromised the process and prejudiced the outcome.

Jesus prophesied that his followers would be put out of the synagogues and killed by those thinking they were serving God.¹⁵⁹ This, however, required the formal process of excommunication.¹⁶⁰ Controlled by the spirit of Jezebel, the religious power structures would be used to legitimise the elimination of individuals who were a threat. By securing footholds in the lives of Ahab-leaders the spirit of Jezebel can subvert whole church boards and denominational structures to assassinate, by innuendo or false accusation, the reputations of truly prophetic or reforming leaders. Church history is replete with this process.

In the next chapter we will discover how the Jezebel spirit infiltrated the church through idolatrous authority structures from as early as the second century.

¹⁵⁶ Mtt 26:65

¹⁵⁷ Deu 13:6-11; 17:5

¹⁵⁸ 2 Cor 11:14, 15

¹⁵⁹ Jn 16:2

¹⁶⁰ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John, NICNT*, p 692

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