

Elijah -Introduction (1 Kings 16-17)

God wants his people to live in the light, and Satan wants us to live in darkness.

Much like a dimmer switch – Satan and his demonic forces know that if they simply flipped everything straight from light to darkness, it would be too obvious and stark.

So evil forces work in the world to slowly turn things darker and darker – hoping that – over the course of years and generations, the darkness will slowly come without even being noticed.

This is precisely the backdrop for the ministry of Elijah. Things had grown dimmer and darker for generations, and Elijah comes to turn the light on.

Pray

Background – the book of 1 Kings tells us about the end of the period called the United Kingdom. King David had ruled over a United Kingdom.

But by the time Elijah comes on the scene, we have a divided kingdom. Elijah comes from the North, and he proclaims the Word of the Lord to the evil Northern King, Ahab. It was a demonic atmosphere in which Elijah ministered (map).

And so we're going to jump right into 1 Kings chapters 16-17.

We're going to see generational patterns as we look at five generations of King Ahab's family.

(When you look back at yourself and your family, you find patterns.

Generationally, there are families that are consumed by sin, and families that are blessed.

So it's a good practice to look back and see if there are any patterns, and then to say, "What new course do I want to send my future family on – increased blessings, or increasing brokenness, one generation after another?"

So – we get a quick snapshot of five generations of King Ahab's family.

We start with Ahab's great, great, great, great grandfather – **King Jeroboam**. And we work forward from there.

Here's what the Bible says about him – verse 16 – He sinned, and he made Israel to sin (15:26). That's Jeroboam!

Next generation – **Nadab** – 15:25-26 –

He did evil in the eyes of the Lord, following the ways of his father and committing the same sin his father had caused Israel to commit.

That tells us, for good or ill, your children are modeling after you.

The future of our families, of our communities, our nation – is in the hands of fathers. Right?

Then we read about Ahab's great, great grandfather, **King Baasha** – chapter 15:34

³⁴He did evil in the eyes of the Lord, following the ways of Jeroboam and committing the same sin Jeroboam had caused Israel to commit.

²⁹As soon as he began to reign, he killed Jeroboam's whole family. He did not leave Jeroboam anyone that breathed, but destroyed them all.

In addition, it says in **chapter 16:3-4**, God says

So I am about to wipe out Baasha and his house Dogs will eat those belonging to Baasha who die in the city, and birds will feed on those who die in the country.

Not even a dignified burial, because these men were without dignity.

Then we are told about **Ahab's great grandfather, Elah**

When he was at Tirzah, drinking himself drunk . . . Zimri came in and struck him down and killed him . . . provoking the Lord God of Israel to anger (1 Kings 16:9-10, 13).

His tombstone epitaph would be, "He drank himself to death."
That's all we know about this man.

Then we read about Zimri, Ahab's grandfather

1 Kings 16:15, 18-19 - **Zimri reigned in Tirzah seven days.** That's all God could take of this man.

He "**set the palace on fire around him . . . because of the sins he had committed, doing evil in the eyes of the Lord and following the ways of Jeroboam and committing the same sin Jeroboam had caused Israel to commit.**" (You see, it's generational).

Then we read about **Ahab's father, Omri**

²⁴He . . . built a city on the hill, calling it Samaria."

He built Samaria. (God told him that Jerusalem was supposed to be the center of the nation, the place of worship – but he did it his way and built up Samaria as the center.

But Omri did evil in the eyes of the Lord and sinned more than all those before him (1 Kings 16:24-25).

He created his own nation, his own government, his own demonic, pagan religion. (By the time of Jesus, the Jews wouldn't even walk through that region. It took Jesus to do that, where he met a woman at the well and told her about eternal life). But until then, it was a detestable place from this one man's legacy.

And then we get to **King Ahab** – 1 Kings 16:29-33

²⁹ . . . he reigned in Samaria over Israel twenty-two years. ³⁰ Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any of those before him. ³¹ He not only considered it trivial to commit the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, but he also married Jezebel daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and began to serve Baal and worship him. ³² He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria. ³³ Ahab also made an Asherah pole . . .

Sometimes you look at a man's son and you go, "he's got his father's eyes." Well, you could say of Ahab, "He's got his father's lies." All the corruption, the moral depravity, the idolatry of the dad was in the son. He resembles his father.

Ahab takes a wife – Jezebel (whose name means "unhusbanded" – she's not answering to anybody – and "Baal is my prince.") She's raised in a dark, demonic culture – so there are generations at work in her too (in fact Jezebel had a daughter, Athaliah – who become a murderer).

Verse 31 says that Jezebel was the daughter of Ethbaal meaning, "with Baal." And they worshipped Baal (the fertility God).

And it tells us that Ahab set up an Asherah pole – this was an ancient phallic symbol for people to arrive at their worship place and have all kinds of illicit sexual activity.

And the results were, they would take the children born of their illicit activity and sacrifice them to demon gods – because when you worship sex, you murder and abuse children.

And so we read that Ahab – 1 Kings 16:33

. . . did more to arouse the anger of the Lord, the God of Israel, than did all the kings of Israel before him.”

And so this is a five-generation family, and we’re going to see in a moment that Elijah steps into this family disaster to deal with the man Ahab and his wife, Jezebel.

So we’re going to talk about the Ahab Spirit, the Jezebel Spirit, and the Elijah Spirit. Three spirits.

Though we don’t have these people with us, their spirits are very much still alive through different people. **This pattern of passive and weak men like Ahab, and controlling, seductive women like Jezebel** continue to this very day.

Let’s look first at Ahab, who “did more evil than any before him.”

An Ahab spirit is marked by passivity and cowardice.

An Ahab **avoids confronting evil when confrontation is what’s needed the most.**

Secondly – **he’s a very spoiled man, very self-indulgent.** Any time he wanted something, he presumed he should have it.

In chapter 21, he sees a piece of land by his palace that doesn’t belong to him, and he presumed that he should have it – and he couldn’t sleep until he did. (Just like any man that can’t stop eating, drinking, stealing, or gambling until he gets what he’s after). Because at the end of the day he’s very self-consumed.

And so Ahab steals a piece of land from a poor man named Naboth. It doesn’t belong to him! He has no right to it. And here’s what he does to get it – when Naboth says, “You can’t have it,” he goes to his wife Jezebel and cries and whines and mopes around – and she consoles him. Why? **Because he’s weak, and he likes being coddled.**

(And by the way – this is how many men get into very unhealthy, dysfunctional relationships.

Ahabs have a sense of entitlement. And so to get his way, he sulks and whines. What is that? That’s the spirit of Ahab at work in a grown man who has become weak when God calls him to be a man of strong leadership.

And so Ahab is supposed to be the head of his family and the head of the nation – but he is the head of neither. (Now he will pretend to be the head – but ultimately Jezebel is the neck who controls him in every way).

And the sad part is - Jezebel is thoroughly evil. You’ll see that she falsifies government documents, she murders, she steals a poor man’s piece of land, she closes all the churches, she butchers the prophets, she closes the Bible teaching schools, she opposes the name of God – and Ahab never says a thing. **Why? Because he knows – if you engage you will enrage.**

How different is that from the Spirit of men like Joshua – “as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!”

Or Paul – “I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith!”

Or the worthy woman of Proverbs 31 who is “clothed with strength and dignity!”

And so we see these two spirits at work – first as we’ve seen through Ahab, and secondly through Jezebel.

And before we look at her, I want to say – a man or woman can have an Ahab spirit, or a Jezebel spirit. Some men are passive, and some women are passive. Some women are overly controlling, and some men are overly controlling. So a Jezebel spirit can operate in men and women.

So let’s look more closely at Jezebel (mentioned 22 times in the Old and New Testaments), the evil power behind the throne.

When Jezebel married, she was young, beautiful, sensual, and evil.

Her father was a Sidonian king. He’s the high priest of Asherah, a demonic female deity of fertility and sensuality.

Her father’s name – “Ethbaal” – means “with Baal” (who is the male fertility god). Baal is a demonic false god.

The Jezebel Spirit is manifested in the following ways: The spirit of -

1. Manipulation and control (1 Kings 21:7-10)

There’s one thing that makes a Jezebel happy. It’s not health, wealth or success. It’s control. This spirit is fiercely independent and does not like any authority over his or her life.

Her name literally means “unhusbanded.” In a marriage it is manifested by a spouse who controls the other through emotional manipulation, or who only thinks about their own needs with very little understanding for the feelings and needs of their partner. In the workplace it could be a leader who uses deceit and manipulation to maintain power.

[7 Unmistakable Signs of a Jezebel Spirit | Crosswalk.com](#) - images

2. Resistance to spiritual authority (1 Kings 18:4)

The Jezebel spirit resists godly leadership and despises correction. They may cry, argue, throw a fit, be a lot of drama.

That’s why spirit is hard to root out. Why? Because this man or woman wants to be in control, but the key to being free from bondage is to let God control you.

The only way to be holy, the only way to have relational and emotional health, is to let God control you, to be under the ruling authority of Jesus Christ.

But a prideful spirit in any of us is harder to defeat, because it’s about what? It’s about control.

And so following Jesus is about being UNDER authority, not being IN authority. It’s about being controlled by the Holy Spirit, not controlling others.

And it’s not about dominating, it’s about surrendering. That’s how you become a Christian. “Not my will, Father, but yours. God, you’re in charge, not me. You tell me what to do, I don’t tell everybody else what to do. I don’t try to control other people, I try to care for the needs of other people.”

But because the Jezebel tendency is about control, it is more difficult to defeat.

[Guided by The Gospel – Issue 168 \(Questions of Faith: How Do I Testify to People Who Are Outright Against Christianity?\)](#)

King Jehu. Thirdly, her weapons are:

3. Intimidation and Fear (1 Kings 19:1-3)

This person uses threats, passive-aggressive behavior, and domineering attitudes to control others.

People literally hid in caves because they were afraid of her wrath.

Fourthly – the Jezebel spirit seeks to manipulate and control through:

4. Sexual immorality and seduction (2 Kings 9:22)

How Do Cannabis and Seduction Work Together? | Leafly

Uses seduction as a weapon of influence and control, seeking to lure men and women away from their families, marriages, values and beliefs.

This spirit involves lust, perversion, pornography, obsession with self on social media, excessive emphasis on outer appearances that underemphasize the spiritual life of a person).

In 2 Kings 9, we see Jezebel, right before she takes her last breath, painting her eyes and arranging her hair in an attempt to seduce King Jehu.

And it's important to note that this shows up not just in the OT, but in the New – in the Book of Revelation, chapter 2.

It's a different woman – a thousand years removed from Jezebel – but there is a woman in the church at Thyatira that is leading people astray through seduction:

²⁰ Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. ²¹ I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. ²² So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways.

Now notice something: there are two spirits at work here.

We see the spirit of Ahab at work through tolerance. “You tolerate her evil.”

Tolerance is another word for “passive.” Those who operate in the Ahab spirit tolerated evil.

Jesus calls them out, not because they promoted immorality, but because they ALLOWED IT.

This is the problem with the Ahab spirit, whether it be a man to a woman, or a woman to a man. The Ahab spirit is passive, so it tolerates.

You don't want to **engage**, because you know it will **enrage**. So you say, “I'll just take a hands off approach. I don't want to enrage him, so I'll disengage with him.” “I'll disengage, so I don't enrage.” And all of the time, the destructive cycle gets worse and worse and worse.

Jesus rebukes the church a thousand years later – so we know it's not the same person, but it's the same spirit working through a different person.

Jesus says, “I have this against you.” So what's the first thing he does? He confronts it. “Stop tolerating that spirit!” Why?

Because if you tolerate, it will dominate.

If you don't speak, they will speak.

If you don't lead, they will lead.

If you don't activate, they will dominate.

If you don't condemn it, you effectively condone it.

Now – Ahab traits and Jezebel traits can be true of men AND woman.

But when you look at them together, Ahab is passive, and Jezebel is controlling.

You see this is their relationship in 1 Kings 21 -

Ahab, who abdicates his authority. He whimpers. He wines. He acts more like a son than a husband. And she dominates and controls.

In a good marriage, you give to your wife, and she gives to you. You share everything. But it's unhealthy when one gives, and the other takes. When one wins, and the other partner loses.

In a healthy marriage, two people love each other – they give to each other – they lose themselves in one another, putting the feelings and rights of the other often above their own. There is empathy and understanding.

But with an Ahab and Jezebel, you have two people who take from each other. You have two people who support and defend one another, even when one or both are wrong.

SO I WANT TO BE CLEAR ABOUT THIS -

Ladies: your primary goal is not to defend your husband. And men - your primary goal is not to defend your wife.

YOURS – and your spouse's goal – must be, had to be - to defend RIGHTEOUSNESS! Because if one partner is entangled in sin, and you defend that – OR – you ignore it like the Ahab and the folks at Thyatira – your entire household, will go under. It will!

This is true in childrearing. A child gets in trouble, and they think: mom, dad – you need to take my side! NO! The correct answer is – you need to take the side of truth and righteousness.

I listened to a parent just the other day who said, “I tell my kids, I’m not for or against you. I’m for the Lord, and I want you to be on that side of the line.” Because if you take the side of the line that’s not right, I cannot and will not stand on that side with you.

(But how many parents will just take the side of a child, without first getting **all of the facts and understanding the whole story?**

You see – here’s the thing – we can DEFEND one another, and in the process always OFFEND the Lord!

And so there’s one thing I am sure if – if I am living unrighteously, if I am unkind, if I am mean spirited – if I am dishonest (and I’ve known this from the beginning) – my wife will not defend me. She will correct me! (As she should – and has done many times). She’s not on my side – she’s on the Lord’s side. She will not defend me if I’m wrong, she will correct me, and if necessary rebuke me.

So who are you loyal to?

What did Joshua say? “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!” That’s a leader right there – whether male or female. He says, “Everybody else – do what you’ve got to do! But I’m going to serve the Lord!

NOW – it’s into this demonic world that God calls a man to speak – the central figure in our series.

3. Elijah. We have Ahab – we have Jezebel – and thank God, we have Elijah.

James 5 says “he was a man just like us.” That’s encouraging. He was a man of incredible spiritual strength. His prayers could move the heavens.

But he struggled with discouragement too, because all of his life he had to run from wicked Jezebel, who constantly tracked him down seeking to kill him.

He gets discouraged – you know why?

Because a person with a Jezebel spirit will wear you down (whether it's a male or a female). After he defeated the prophets of Baal on Mt Carmel, Elijah runs away and says, "I just can't go on anymore."

He's overwhelmed. He's exhausted. Because this spirit will exhaust you. It will confuse you. It will disorient you. It will cause you to give in to a spirit of fear.

Now he recovers from it – but it's a tough road for a while. (And I just love that God loves him so much, he gives him 40 days to recover, and he feeds him and shows his might and grace to Elijah).

Elijah – sometimes he struggled – but he just stayed on mission and kept speaking truth.

So let's read 17:1 -

This dude walks out of the woods, gets right in the face of the king. Didn't even schedule an appointment. And he says, "As the Lord, the God of Israel lives." He's like, **"This is not between you and me, this is between you and God! I didn't write the message, I'm just delivering the mail."**

Here's what the Lord, before whom I stand, says – "For 3.5 years (we learn later), there will be neither dew nor rain." (You think it's bad around here after a month).

Elijah comes in and says, "Unless some things change around here, unless you lead your family, unless you worship the one true God, unless you get rid of this passivity and stand up and be a man

of God, it WILL NOT RAIN, and you and all of those like you will suffer the consequences of your sin."

Now – who's in control?

So that's what's going on at the physical level – but there's something going on at a much deeper level – a spiritual level.

At the spiritual level, the conflict is between Baal and Asherah, and the true God.

Baal and Asherah are the demonic false Gods being worshipped. Baal was considered the chief male deity, Asherah the chief female deity. And these demonic forces are at war against God and the prophet of God.

In addition, Baal is considered the god of rain. He oversees fertility and crops. And if you want rain, it was believed that you pray to Baal.

He was regarded as the source of life, the god of rain, the one who would bless through nature, through rain, the crops of the people. And he was worshipped as such.

And what God is doing here is – he's picking a fight with Baal.

And what Elijah is saying is, "My God rules over your God – so let's see who God really is!" (And that comes to a head on Mt. Carmel in chapter 18).

You see – Satan is not equal with God. God is over Satan and demons. And so Ahab, Jezebel – these people, are going to see who the boss is, and who's in control. Because God is fed up – with the ungodliness of these wicked people who refuse to bow their knee and who trample on the lives of the innocent.

So – we know about Ahab. We know about the five generations. We know about Jezebel – that her father was a high priest to the demon god Asherah.

Guess what – we know nothing about Elijah’s family. Nothing.

We don’t know anything about his life’s history. We don’t know his credentials – did you go to school? Where? Did you go to Bible college?

We know nothing about Elijah, because in the end this isn’t about Elijah. Elijah’s not even about Elijah. Elijah is about the Lord.

He doesn’t spend a lot of time talking. He doesn’t talk about himself. He talks about his God. (In fact his very name means “my God is Jehovah.” It means literally, “I live by the strength of my God.”)

Every once in a while –especially if your going your own way and you know you’re going against the grain of God’s Will – God will sometimes send you a messenger! A messenger from God! And you better listen to him. You better listen!

Because there’s a difference between God’s patience, and God’s tolerance. God has been very patient with you and with me, but it’s not because he’s okay with you. He doesn’t want anyone to perish. But God is patient, not because he’s okay with where you are, he’s just tolerating it. And you never know when that will run out.

The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. You need to be ready.

Here’s this guy – he just walks out of the woods. (We don’t know where he is from – his hometown is Thisbe in Gilead. Some people ask, “Where is that? We have no idea. It’s such a bump in the road that it doesn’t exist.)

And here is Elijah - He has no driver’s license, no social security card. He has no digital footprint. He pays cash for everything. He’s tough and rugged.

And everything Ahab isn’t, he is. He’s tough, not soft. He can skin a buck and run a trot like. He’s a country boy that can survive.

We read in scripture that he wore a garment of camel hair and a leather belt around his waist. Elijah didn’t tuck in his shirt or wear skinny jeans. He wasn’t that guy.

He speaks, and then once he speaks the word of the Lord, he gets a word FROM the Lord – he walks away:

(Last part – **verses 2-6** - I wonder of the Ravens had like a DoorDash or UberEats logo):

Now – what we see here is this – **separation for preparation.**

Some of you right now, you’re in a season like this. You’re like, “god is calling me out of one thing, into another thing. But now, I’m in that in-between time. I’m not sure what will happen next, but I know I’m going to have to trust him right now!”

He will feed me – not myself. I’ll have to lean hard on Him. HE will be my strength, not me!

In fact – it’s interesting, that Cherith means “cut off” or “cut down.”

Elijah’s been cut off from society, and he’s been cut down.

It’s kind of like going into the military (some of you know). You don’t get off the bus for basic and they ask, “What’s your personality type? Do you have any allergies? What do you like to do? What makes you feel fulfilled? What’s your personal vision for life?

No – they herd you off the bus, run you through the shot line – you’re lucky if you get to call to your mama for 30 seconds and tell her you made it – they yell at you and stick you in the barracks – they separate you, prepare you, cut you off and cut you down, and then they rebuild you as a soldier.

(we see that all through the Bible – Jesus was in the wilderness – 40 days – the Apostle Paul, same thing – three years in the wilderness – Moses, same thing – 40 years in the desert).

So here is Elijah – and I want to say this, because it’s important. If you’re in the wilderness today, it’s not because God is done with you, what’s he’s doing is rebuilding you.

You know why? Because he wants to use you – so that he can resend you!

He’s not done with you. He’s just preparing you. Getting you ready for the next season. (You see, you need to know the next step forward during a season of preparation. God does not reveal the totality of his plan from A-Z. So don’t ask what is Z. Ask: what is B? Start there. And when you take a good step each day, God will reveal his plan for you as you walk along).

Our God prepares Elijah. Because – drought is when the roots go down.

But lastly - God not only prepares, he protects.

God says, ‘your life is going to be in great danger because you’ve spoke to power – but I will protect you.’

MEN AND WOMEN – never underestimate how God will supply what you need! (Phil. 4:19 – “And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus).

The book dries up. And some of you know what it feels like when your brook dries up. We’ve all been there. Some of you are there right now – “look, I had a job – that dried up. I had a relationship, a marriage – and that dried up. My old friendships aren’t flowing anymore. My pay, my position – it’s not flowing anymore.’

I have learned that there are two things you need to do when your books dries up. **You’ve got to pray, and you’ve got to pivot.**

You’ve got to pray – pray like you’ve never prayed before – down on your knees, on your face before the Lord. “Lord, where do YOU want me to go, what do YOU want me to do? Where’s the new brook? I can’t see it, but I know you’ll provide it.”

Pray! Pivot! Adjust your thinking. Look forward, not backward. Get your head in the new game! Don’t look back, go forward with the mighty hand of God. He’s not done with you yet!

Thank God for the bread (if that’s all you have) – and trust God for the next brook!

Write this down: Before God can use is, he must first break us.

And so Satan and his forces are at work, but God is also working to create generational legacies. Here we see in Ahab’s family five generations of evildoers. But it’s going to say in the last book of the OT, God is going to send Elijah once again.

says, “Behold, I will send you Elijah.” That’s Elijah the prophet. That means someone in the spirit of Elijah, which is, “the one who tells the truth.”

“See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction” (Malachi 4:5-6).

Here’s what he is saying: a nation is doomed, a culture is doomed, a family is doomed, a church is doomed, a legacy is doomed, a future generation is doomed – unless there’s an Elijah.

GOD, give us men!

A time like this demands

Strong minds, great hearts, true faith and ready hands;

Men whom the lust of office does not kill;

Men whom the spoils of office can not buy;

Men who possess opinions and a will;

Men who have honor; men who will not lie . . . (God give us men!)

And God give us women – who have a heart for Jesus. Who are humble, and loving, and who care about their children and their husbands, and the broken. Who are spiritual leaders with great strength.

God – send Elijah! My prayer – is that we capture the heart of Elijah as we go through our study – and let God reveal the places in our hearts that need to be exposed and refined.

I want to close with 2 Timothy 1:7 – say with me!

For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power and love and self-discipline.