

Wicked

Ahab's Poor Start

1 Kings 16:29-34

July 1, 2018 am

HDBC

This Wednesday America we will celebrate its 242 birthday. On July 4, 1776, representatives from the American colonies signed a document declaring their independence from the empire of England in order to begin the process of starting a new nation. In doing so they were committing treason in the eyes of England, but patriotism in the eyes of future generations of Americans.

There are all kinds of ways to look at history. I just returned from my 4th trip to Israel, a land that celebrates its history in terms of millenniums rather than decades or centuries. But, I can assure you, all the people who currently live in that geographic region do not view its history through the same eyes. Every subject of history can be viewed through multiple lenses.

Your family history can be tracked through its ethnic origins, its education advancement, its geographic locations, its occupational pursuits, and more.

A church's history can be viewed through its pastors, its growth, its facilities, its missionary pursuits, its budgets.

A nation's history can also be viewed through a variety of perspectives. Our nation can be viewed through its physical expansion, its social and political movements, its spiritual revivals and awakenings, its technological advancements, and much more.

The O.T. provides a look at the history of Israel in a variety of ways. One of the simplest ways is by reviewing its spiritual and political leaders. The O.T. does just this by providing a chronological list of those leaders. The books of Kings and Chronicles do just that. In those books we read about the kings and prophets who shaped the ancient people of Israel.

This morning we start a new series by looking at one of those kings. He was not a good one. In fact he was **WICKED**. His wife was worse. They go down in history as one of the most evil, vile, wicked couples the world has ever known.

So, for the next several weeks I want us to dive into their lives, their actions and the things that drove them. We do so, not to emulate them, but to learn from them. And, most importantly to learn lessons that God has for us. Their names? Ahab and Jezebel!

Today we begin with *Ahab's Poor Start*. Read 1 Kings 16:29-34

1. His Heritage (29)

The text simply says he began to rule over Israel during the 38th year of Asa, king of Judah. This is a typical designation in the Biblical record of the kings of Israel. Each one is seen ruling in relation to the others before and after them and with the kings of the other part of the country. A bit of history . . .

Saul was first king of Israel. They asked for a king and God gave them one.

David was second king. Saul was a dud and David took his place. Great.

Solomon followed David. He was good king. Ruled well.

At his death the kingdom was divide, north (Israel) and south (Judah). From that time forward each king was listed in relation to the number of years the king in the opposite land had ruled. The books of Kings and Chronicles.

Most were not very good. Some downright evil.

Ahab was one of the worst. He was the 8th king of Israel (northern nation).

He was the son of Omri. Omri had been the commander of the army of Israel under King Elah. After a violent coup, led by Zimri, Omni was made king by the people. Zimri only ruled for 7 days. He clearly underestimated the support of the people Omni reigned Israel for 12 years. He founded the city of Samaria. He was not a good man. In fact he did more evil than all the rulers before him. His principle evil? Idolatry! Upon his death he was buried in Samaria. His son, Ahab ascended to the throne.

Ahab's character was shaped by a very bad father!

2. His Legacy (30)

What do you do if you have a terrible mom or dad? You can follow their lead and continue the legacy of evil and immorality. Or you can break the chain and start a new legacy. Verse 30 makes it clear that Ahab chose the former. He not only learned from his daddy, but he took wickedness to a new level. He broke Omni's record of evil! He was worse!

Your life impacts other people. There are people watching, learning and emulating you! Parents, teachers, friends, mentors. How you live matters not just for you but for others. So, what kind of impact are you making?

Your goal is not to leave a great legacy! Those who focus on their legacy usually do not live well. Too self-centered. Your goal is to live a life that is yielded to the lordship of Jesus Christ. As followers of Christ we have one mandate . . . obey our Lord in everything!

However, you should be aware that you are leaving a legacy in the lives of those watching you. Your children, your grandchildren, those who are watching your life are shaped by your actions, attitudes and character. When they stand before God, will they be grateful for the influence of your life upon them, or will they be sorry for it?

3. His Marriage (31)

After a summary statement of his legacy, the text begins to offer some details about his life. Begins with a bad decision related to marriage. May I offer a suggestion? You are better off not marrying than marrying the wrong person!

He married Jezebel. Three words that would shape his leadership and life. The decision to marry such a vile, wicked, manipulating person would haunt his life & mar his legacy. Forever, he would be linked to this woman who killed the prophets, stole from the poor and seem to be without a conscience.

Be careful who you marry! Other than the faith commitment to follow Christ, there is no other more important decision in life. No husband is better than a bad husband. No wife is better than a bad wife.

4. His Idolatry (32-33)

He built a house for Baal worship and erected an altar in it. His idolatry was influenced by his wife, who's father's name was Ethbaal (Baal is with him). This was a very appealing and influential god in that region. This god is mentioned throughout the O.T.

He was known as the god of the storm who granted fertility. He was a popular alternative to those who rejected the true God. They were an agricultural culture and desperately depended upon rain.

Ahab was the first Israelite king to worship Baal. Not only did he worship him, but set up a place of worship. We later learn that Jezebel actual gave oversight to 400 prophets of Baal. We will learn more about them later.

Some believe Asherah was his female companion. The text indicates that Ahab created a wood image to this deity. So, he was completely committed to a life of idolatry. He totally rejected the true God. No doubt where he stood.

5. His Influence (34)

This section concludes with a statement about the rebuilding of Jericho. Two children die in the process either through the vile religious act of human sacrifice or through the divine judgment of God.

Note the phrase *in his days*, implies that Ahab approved of it.

Joshua had pronounced a curse on anyone who rebuilt Jericho. Joshua 6:26 reveals that curse which involved the death of one's firstborn and second-born sons. Who in the world would endorse the rebuilding of the city, resulting the death of a father's sons? Ahab approved it.

Leadership matters. This is true at every level of society. Ahab was an immoral, idolatrous leader and that impacted the nation. He may have done some things that helped Israel. He may have even been popular among some. But his wickedness infected the nation and led them into all kinds of wickedness.

Ahab needed what every leader needs:

1) Someone to pray consistently for him

One of the best things you can do for a leader is to pray. Pray for those whom you helped elect and pray for those who you opposed.

2) Someone to speak courageously to him

Ahab needed that. Every leader needs this. Unchecked power led to unchecked immorality and idolatry.

We are blessed to live in a country where this is not only allowed but encouraged. Even if you help elect a particular president, don't fall into the trap of thinking you have to defend everything he does. Some evangelical Christians have hurt the cause of Christ by defending the indefensible in our national leaders. You can support a position without defending immoral character. Let's be Biblical in our discernment.

Fortunately, as we will see in the coming weeks, there were some who did those things.

Takeaways:

1. Idolatry always leads to other sins

Ahab's sin started with idolatry, but it did not end there. It never does. Sin never sleeps. It is never contained. It always grows, expands and changes forms. As we go through this series we are going to see a picture of depravity that is ugly. It all starts with idolatry. If your worship is wrong, everything else will be affected.

2. Your influence matters more than you know.

Ahab's example was Omri. He was the worst of all who were before him. Ahab learned from the best, just how to be bad. By the time he finished his life. He was the worst. Don't miss this. One generation tends to go further than the generation before it. This is especially true when it comes to wickedness. One generation is indifferent to sin, the next is friendly toward

the sin, the next embraces sin, the next is enslaved by sin. Your life can affect generations!

3. Your past is no excuse for your present.

Having said that, I want to make it clear that your past is no excuse for your present. Just because you had bad influences in your life does not excuse your present sin. You can be the one to break the chain, the change the course of your family tree.

Christ can set you free and alter the direction of the generations that will come behind you.