

Rotten Rulers

By David Feddes

1 Kings 16:29-33

²⁹ In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab son of Omri became king of Israel, and 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 and did more to arouse the anger of the Lord, the God of Israel, than did all the kings of Israel before him.

^{21:25} There was never anyone like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord, urged on by Jezebel his wife. ²⁶ He behaved in the vilest manner by going after idols, like the Amorites the Lord drove out before Israel.

^{22:39} As for the other events of Ahab's reign, including all he did, the palace he built and adorned with ivory, and the cities he fortified, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel?

Rotten Rulers

- What is the standard?
- What are the problems?
- What do they listen to?
- What happens to them?

I want to ask four questions. What's the standard that you use to measure a ruler, by which you decide whether they're rotten or great? What are the problems with a rotten ruler? What do they listen to—what gets the ear of a rotten ruler? And what happens to them? Four simple questions.

What's the standard?

I've been to Israel, and some of the most impressive sites were the ruins of some of the cities. There is a great tunnel cut through solid rock in Megiddo. It was made during the time of Omri and Ahab. They built up Megiddo, but the Bible says nothing about it. There are other places that Ahab and Omri built up. The Bible doesn't mention them. The Bible does mention in passing that Omri—Ahab's dad—moved the capital to Samaria. He made it a great city, and built marvelous palaces. There are still ivory artifacts in Samaria connected with some of those palaces. This period seemed like a great time for the nation of Israel. What's the standard—how big the palaces are and the amount of ivory and other stuff that could pile up?

The Bible says, "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin condemns [or is a reproach or disgrace] to any people" (Proverbs 14:34). The standard is righteousness. That's how these kings of Israel are

measured. God's law—his covenant standard—is the standard for rulers. They are measured by God's covenant. Other achievements don't count for much.

And by that measure, Ahab and Jezebel were the worst ever. They sold themselves out to sin. Omri, Ahab's dad, built up all these things, and Ahab continued in making the nation richer and stronger. They made an alliance, figuring, "Hey, you know what? If we were strongly allied with Sidon, then our trade would increase vastly because Sidon has a bunch of seafaring people—the Phoenicians. And if we could just line up with them, we would get rich." So Ahab marries Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, the king of the Sidonians. And it works—the money is flowing.

And as the money flows in with Jezebel, so do other gods: Baal and Asherah and the gods of the Sidonians. So what does God think of the whole deal? Well, he says Ahab and Jezebel were the worst—the absolute worst. And if you want to read about the other stuff they did, read about it somewhere else. If you want to read about the palaces, the ivory, the yada yada yada—the stuff that the historians look at—read about it somewhere else.

The books of 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings in the Bible are not just comments or annals of stuff that happened. They are God's assessment of it. The Hebrew Bible lists them among the Former Prophets. The Former Prophets are the books of Samuel and Kings—it's what the prophets thought of the kings.

The standard for assessing rulers is simply God's law—his righteousness. You don't measure a nation's greatness by how well its military is doing lately. That military can be defeated just like that if God decides. You don't decide how great a nation is by how the economy is doing lately. God can take it all away in an instant.

Think of Ahab: "Oh, all my alliances are going great, the money's flowing in." Oops—it stopped raining for three years. God decided, "I'm going to stop sending rain on them for a while, and maybe they'll get the hint that something is wrong with the country" (1 Kings 17:1). Nowadays, of course, there would never be major droughts or wildfires or anything like that. Nowadays, there would never be terrible diseases that would waste away countries that thought they were very prosperous and doing great. But back in the day, such stuff happened. (I'm being sarcastic.)

There are standards that God has, and standards by which rulers are measured. And by God's standard, Ahab and Jezebel were the worst rulers that ever governed Israel.

What are the problems?

If they were the worst, what were the problems?

They worshiped God in the form of golden calves. That was the original sin of Israel. Right after God got them out of Egypt and gave them the Ten Commandments, they demanded a god they could see and touch. And so a golden calf was made, and Aaron said, "This is the god who brought you out of Egypt. Let's have a festival to the Lord" (Exodus 32:4–5). They still said they were worshiping the Lord God who got them out of Egypt—except it's the golden calf that represents God.

Later Jeroboam took control of ten tribes, who no longer wanted to be ruled by David's descendants in Jerusalem. Jeroboam said, "If they go back to Jerusalem and worship at the temple there, things could go south—literally go south. People will go south to Jerusalem and maybe tie in with the king of Judah again. I need something different." God had already promised Jeroboam that if he was faithful, he'd have those ten tribes forever (1 Kings 11:38). But God's word wasn't good enough for him. So he sets up two shrines, each with its own golden calf, at Dan and at Bethel (1 Kings 12:28–30). That's how you worship God—by Jeroboam's kind of priests with Jeroboam's kind of images.

Ahab and Jezebel continue all that. "We've got the golden calf thing going. That's how you worship when you want to worship the Lord: you go worship one of those golden calves at Dan or Bethel." But they went further: "We gotta hedge our bets." Jezebel comes from a land where they worship Baal and Asherah. And so Ahab and Jezebel decide that they're going to set up an altar, and they build a temple to Baal (1 Kings 16:31–32). They're going to not only worship God in the wrong way—using graven images—but they're going to worship other gods as well. Some of these gods demand the sacrifice of babies from their worshipers in order to send prosperity. They're gods of sex, of fertility, of prosperity.

Of course, being very modern people, we would never kill babies. We would never go chasing after our own notions of how to get prosperity and pursue sex. But back in the day, they did such things. Actually, in any given year, more babies are killed in the United States than were killed in the entire history of Israel. When your nation has aborted countless millions of babies, you might not be too quick to sneer, "Ahab and Jezebel were rotters. I'm glad we're not like them."

What did they do wrong? They depicted Yahweh as a golden calf. They imported Jezebel's religion of worshipping other gods and goddesses. They worshiped Baal and Asherah. They had these vile gods of sex and prosperity. As someone said, "How can there be peace as long as all the idolatry and witchcraft of Jezebel abound?" (2 Kings 9:22).

If you think the Old Testament is old-fashioned, you might want to realize that even Jesus spoke of Jezebel religion. In the book of Revelation, Jesus said to one of the churches, "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. I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. So I will cast her on a bed of suffering and bring ruin and death" (Revelation 2:20–23). That's what Jesus says to those who are following Jezebel religion.

Just this past week, I was watching the Olympics and got a taste of Jezebel religion. The TV network spent quite a bit of time on a British diver who happened to be gay. They also spent a lot of time on a guy who came in 15th, and on how he had been adopted by a gay dad. They spent about 15 seconds on the American gold medal winner of the shot put, but they lots of time talking about somebody who didn't even get anywhere near winning. Why? They wanted to highlight and promote homosexuality.

Then there are the commercials. One drug was advertised with the message that if you're promiscuous and you're going to bed with whoever and whatever, this drug would reduce the probability of getting a really nasty disease. The commercial shows two men kissing. Then

there's another commercial with a voice-over. It's a different drug but the same goal: sleep around and don't die of it. This drug will do it. It shows men and the voiceover says that it's been tested—but not tested on “people assigned female at birth.” That's what the commercial said. Who are these “people assigned female at birth.” Those are what used to be called “girls and women.” It would be a horrible phrase to say “girls and women,” so the commercial spoke of “people assigned female at birth.”

Our rulers issued some government guidelines that involved “birthing people.” That's who you mothers are now. You're birthing people. You've got drugs everywhere to protect from the consequences of Jezebel behavior. But “birthing people” and “people assigned female at birth” should feel relieved that we stand for women's rights—except we can't say the word “woman” anymore.

Ahab and Jezebel have not only worshiped other gods—these gods of sex and baby sacrifice and whatever goes with it—but they also will do whatever to whomever to get what they want.

Ahab sees a vineyard and he really likes it. Location is great. Vineyard looks healthy. One little problem—somebody else owns it. And another little problem—the guy won't sell. Naboth owns this vineyard and he likes it, and he's got this crazy notion that God gives allotments to different people. This allotment was assigned to his family, and he wants to keep it in the family. Ahab comes with his checkbook in hand—he's a generous guy. He says, “I'll pay you,” but Naboth says, “Not for sale” (1 Kings 21:1–3). What a downer! Ahab is sulking. And Jezebel, being a good wife, says, “Honey, what's the matter?” He says, “I wanted a vineyard and the guy won't sell.” Jezebel replies, “Are you king of Israel or what? How does a king act? Does a king take no for an answer? I'll show you how a king behaves. Give me your seal and I'll take care of it.”

So she writes a letter, seals it with the king's seal, and sends it off to the village where Naboth lives. The letter says, “Pay a couple of guys to make some false accusations against Naboth. Tell the witnesses to commit perjury. Then stone Naboth to death. Tell me when it's done.” So they rig the false testimony and kill Naboth. And Jezebel reports back to Ahab: “Hey, welcome to your vineyard” (1 Kings 21:4–16).

They broke the first commandment: no other gods. They broke the second commandment: graven images (Exodus 20:3–4). Then in one sweep, with just the Naboth incident—and this is just one sample of how these two operate—they break the command against coveting: Ahab wants the vineyard. They break the command against stealing: They take what belongs to somebody else. They break the command against perjury: they arrange for false testimony. And they break the command against murder (Exodus 20:13–17). They broke at least four of the Ten Commandments in just one incident. And who knows how often they did that to various people in Israel when they wanted something?

Ahab goes to enjoy his vineyard. That is how a king acts—he ignores the law. He makes it up as he goes. He doesn't take God's law as something set in stone, even though it was etched in stone by God himself. The law evolves to suit the king. So he's got his vineyard. Just when he's plucking his first grape, somebody is standing there. It's that rotten Elijah. Ahab snarls, “You found me, my enemy?” Elijah replies, “I found you, all right. And in the place where they licked

up Naboth's blood, the dogs are going to lick your blood. And by the way, Jezebel is going to get eaten by dogs" (1 Kings 21:17–24). That's not great news when you're riding high and thinking you're the king of the world and things are going your way. The dogs are going to lick your blood, and that witch you're married to is going to be dog food.

What's the standard? God's covenant law. What are the problems? The problems are idolatry and breaking every commandment under the sun. And that brings us to our next question.

What do they listen to?

What kind of message do Ahab and Jezebel prefer? They like to be told what they already wanted to hear. And so they like to talk to each other. Ahab and Jezebel seem to get along pretty well. They seem to be on the same page a great deal of the time. They are comfortable together as partners in crime. And so they keep encouraging each other in all the evil deeds that they want to do. They listen to each other because they're hearing what they already want to hear.

They also listen to their cheerleaders. Jezebel has 450 prophets of Baal who dine with her—who she feeds every day (1 Kings 18:19). And those prophets of Baal—they're exciting, they're dramatic, they're prayer warriors. They can really go at it when it's time to pray. Elijah challenges them to a showdown. They have 450 prophets of Baal, 400 prophets of Asherah—and then there's Elijah over there. 850 to one. "Yahoo! Now we know we're right, because we've got 850. The Lord has only one."

They are cutting themselves and they're praying to Baal, but there's one little glitch—nobody answers. Elijah is outnumbered, but he has this in his favor: he offered one short prayer, and somebody answered. Kablooney! Fire comes from heaven, burns up the sacrifice, the stones, the water, everything around—and the people are yelling, "The Lord, he is God! The Lord, he is God!" (1 Kings 18:36–39).

And Jezebel repents? No. She says, "Elijah, you are a dead duck." She sees Elijah call down fire from heaven, and what does she want to do? Kill the guy. You don't listen to somebody who can pray and stop the rain for three years (1 Kings 17:1), or call down fire from heaven (1 Kings 18:38), because he's not on the same page as you are. He's got to get with the program.

Ahab and Jezebel have this great and mighty prophet of God who preaches what God tells him to say, but they do not want to hear the Word of God. They want to hear, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace (Jeremiah 6:14). They don't want a prophet speaking truth; they want cheerleaders.

When it comes time to go to war again, they have an alliance they want to make with the king of Judah. He's actually a good and godly king but not too bright when it comes to his alliances. Ahab and Jezebel want godly King Jehoshaphat of Judah to join them for battle. The kingdom, as you may remember, has been divided. The northern part has the ten tribes, the southern part has Judah and Benjamin. Jerusalem is the capital of the southern kingdom; the northern tribes have their capital at Samaria. Over to the east is Ramoth Gilead. That used to be part of Israel's

territory, but right now the Syrians control it. Ahab wants it back. He wants to go to Ramoth Gilead, and he wants Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, and his forces to go with him.

Jehoshaphat agrees to go but then says, “Let’s first ask the Lord” (1 Kings 22:5). So Ahab says, “Easy peasy. I’ve got 400 prophets right here.” The 400 prophets are led by a guy named Zedekiah. He’s a fantastic preacher. He’s Ahab’s kind of guy, and he has 400 cheerleaders along with him. Zedekiah and his 400 colleagues preach, “Go up to Ramoth Gilead, for the Lord is with you and you will triumph!” “Ahab, Ahab, he’s our man! If he can’t do it, no one can!” Then Zedekiah—the top cheerleader—comes forward, and he’s got two horns that he’s made out of iron. One is going to be King Ahab, the other is going to be King Jehoshaphat. He takes those two horns and he says, “With these two horns, the Lord is going to gore the king of Syria” (1 Kings 22:11). Wow, he’s dramatic! He’s not just a preacher; he’s an actor who can present a gripping drama. You can’t top a guy like that. No wonder this prophet is popular! He’s got a positive message and an exciting way of presenting it.

Jehoshaphat is sitting there, and something doesn’t quite feel right to him. So he says, “Anybody else? Do you have any other prophets? Um... is there a real prophet of the Lord here?” Jehoshaphat’s been around long enough to smell a rat. Ahab says, “There is one other guy, Micaiah. We can bring him in if you want. But I hate his guts because he never says anything good about me” (1 Kings 22:8).

So a guy goes to get Micaiah and says to him, “All the prophets are saying that we’re going to win. You go say the same thing.” Micaiah says, “No can do. I have to say what God tells me. Can’t say anything else” (1 Kings 22:13–14). He was one of those old-fashioned guys. As the New Testament describes it, “Preach the word; in season and out of season” (2 Timothy 4:2). Only two times you’ve got to preach the word: when it’s popular and when it’s not. Preach the word. “I’m only going to say what the Lord tells me.”

At first, when Micaiah arrives, he actually does speak the message Ahab wants to hear: “Go up, for the Lord is with you” (1 Kings 22:15). Ahab says, “Oh come on. That’s not what you really want to say, is it?” And Micaiah says, “I saw Israel scattered like sheep without a shepherd. And they said, ‘The ruler’s gone. Everybody go home’” (1 Kings 22:17).

“Didn’t I tell you?” says Ahab to Jehoshaphat. “The guy never has anything good to say.” Micaiah goes on, and he says, “I saw the Lord. I saw the divine council. I saw into heaven. And the Lord said, ‘Who will get Ahab to go to Ramoth Gilead and die?’ One said one thing, one said another. Finally somebody in the divine council comes and says, ‘I’ll take care of it. I’ll get some lying spirit to go into the mouths of Ahab’s prophets. He’ll listen to them, and he’ll go, and he’ll die’” (1 Kings 22:19–22).

Zedekiah, the popular preacher of positive thinking, did not like that prophecy of Micaiah. He smacks Micaiah across the face and says, “When did the Lord leave me and go to you?” Micaiah says, “You’ll find out when you’re cowering in a room somewhere after this is all over” (1 Kings 22:24–25). The Micaiah says to the people, “You mark my words. If that king ever comes back safe, the Lord has not spoken through me” (1 Kings 22:28).

It's simple enough. Why not just go home and not attack? God has just sent his prophet and spoken through him, warning of defeat and death. But Ahab hates him and won't listen. When Elijah first found Ahab after the three-year drought, Ahab says, "Is that you, you troubler of Israel?" And Elijah said, "I haven't troubled Israel. You and your father's house have troubled Israel" (1 Kings 18:17–18). When Ahab is found in Naboth's vineyard by Elijah, he says, "You found me, my enemy!" Elijah didn't choose to be Ahab's enemy. Ahab chose to be God's enemy. And now here, Ahab again refuses to listen to any message he doesn't like. Micaiah will only say what God tells him. He tells Ahab two visions: one of everybody scattered on the battlefield; another, a vision of heaven itself, and the decree that a lying spirit has gone into the mouth of Ahab's prophets.

There comes a point at which God lets you have what you want. If you want to listen only to those who bring the message of "Peace, peace," when there is no peace—maybe God will actually let them keep yapping and let you listen.

I'll take another example. Just this week, I read the weekly reflection of a local pastor. "Good news—God doesn't require you to be a Christian. You can still experience heaven if you're not. I was taught that the only way to attain eternal life in God's presence was to claim Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior. Is this the God we want to worship? Well, that's not the God I worship—not anymore. We each find God on our unique path. One's doctrine does not affect one's salvation. However you discover God, discover God that way, even if it's not directly through Jesus of Nazareth. The way of your walk will involve a transformation of some sort. If there's only one road leading to heaven, it's entirely possible that everybody's on it." In this kind of thinking, Ahab is on the road to heaven. He's experiencing transformation. He can follow Baal and go to heaven. Asherah will lead you right into the pearly gates. Jezebel is headed for heaven. God will not judge anyone.

A preacher can say that Jesus isn't the only way, that there are many roads to heaven. Saying it doesn't make it true. If you're Ahab, you can have a preacher say, "Go to Ramoth Gilead and triumph, for the Lord is with you!" In fact, you can have 400 prophets saying that—and it still won't make it true. Jesus said, "Broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many are walking on it" (Matthew 7:13).

"He who listens to a life-giving rebuke will be at home among the wise" (Proverbs 15:31). "It is better to heed a wise man's rebuke than to listen to the song of fools" (Ecclesiastes 7:5). The cheerleaders say, "Ahab, Ahab, he's our man! If he can't do it, no one can!" Then there's Micaiah, the guy that Ahab hates, who won't ever tell Ahab what he wants to hear. But whose message would do Ahab more good, the cheerleaders or Micaiah? You can't just go by which message you enjoy more. You have to ask which one is speaking from God and which one isn't.

"A man's own folly ruins his life, yet his heart rages against the Lord" (Proverbs 19:3). The rage that Ahab had against Elijah and Micaiah was not actually just directed at those two prophets. It was the God they spoke for. Ahab hated God. When the drought came, it was God's fault. When bad stuff happened, it was always God's fault. God was merciful to him. There was a time when Ahab, after the Naboth incident, actually repented for a short time. He put on sackcloth and ashes and was sad at that news that the dogs were going to lick his blood. God had also said that his

entire family was going to be wiped out and vanish from the face of the earth. God sees this phony-baloney, half-hearted, temporary repentance of Ahab and says, “Ahab humbled himself. I won’t do all the bad stuff while he’s still alive. I’ll let him die first” (1 Kings 21:27–29). God extends mercy even to such worthless repentance. He gives more mercy than it deserves.

Ahab had opportunities, God sent prophet after prophet to rebuke him. Even when there's a lying spirit in the mouths of the prophets, God tells Ahab exactly what's going on: “Those guys are lying, and you are headed to your death” (1 Kings 22:20–23). Ahab gets one last chance, one last message from God. But Ahab remains stiff-necked. “A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed—without remedy” (Proverbs 19:3; 29:1).

What happens to them?

What happens to Ahab and Jezebel? Spoiler alert—it’s not good.

Ahab gets into his chariot and heads for battle. He puts a bullseye on the chest of his ally, King Jehoshaphat. Ahab says, “I’m so glad we have an alliance. You dress up like a king. You ride around in a royal chariot. And I’ll go into battle dressed as an ordinary soldier.” Sounds like a good arrangement, right? Like I said, Jehoshaphat was godly but not too bright. So he goes out there in his royal robes, and Ahab is in disguise.

Meanwhile, the king of Syria has given orders. He says, “Let’s not turn this into a bloodbath. Let’s just target their king. Let’s kill him. Then the battle will be over” (1 Kings 22:31). So the Syrian soldiers see Jehoshaphat in his royal robes, and they go after him. Jehoshaphat cries out, and they recognize that he’s not actually the king of Israel that they’re after. So they wheel around and leave him alone. They’re scratching their heads and thinking, “Where is that king of Israel we’re supposed to get?” One of their bored troops hauls out his bow and fires a random arrow in the direction of the Israelites. Ahab has only one little spot in his armor that’s not covered. That arrow was a guided missile and hit Ahab in that very spot. They wheeled him out of the battle. He watched from the sidelines and died toward evening (1 Kings 22:34–35). They washed out the chariot in a pool where the prostitutes bathed, and the dogs licked his blood as Elijah had said (1 Kings 22:38).

“The Lord works out everything for his own ends—even the wicked for a day of disaster” (Proverbs 16:4). “There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the Lord” (Proverbs 21:30). Ahab thinks, “I’ve got a plan. Bullseye on Jehoshaphat. I’m in disguise.” But God’s guided missile is not fooled at all. The random arrow gets him, and Ahab is gone. No plan will succeed against the Lord. No plan can avoid his judgment. When the Lord has determined that you’ve had enough time, it’s over.

And Jezebel? Years later a fierce general named Jehu comes along. He kills the king of Israel, the son of Ahab and Jezebel. He kills the son of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, on the same day. Then Jehu rides off to Jezreel. There, from a window, Jezebel sees him coming. Like the goddess Asherah—there are many portraits in ancient carvings of her standing in a window—Jezebel, the worshiper of Asherah, is standing in a window.

Jehu rides into the city, and he says, “Who is on the Lord’s side? Throw her down!” (2 Kings 9:32–33). And because Jezebel is such a well-beloved queen, who has been so kind to the people who work for her all those years—they grab her and throw her down. And she splats on the pavement. Jehu rides his chariot over top of her. He’s not a very nice guy. He goes in and feasts. A bit later Jehu says, “I’ve had enough to eat. Somebody go out and bury that woman. She was a king’s daughter, after all.” His men go out to bury her, but all that’s left of Jezebel are her skull and her hands. The dogs have eaten Jezebel (2 Kings 9:35–36). Ahab and Jezebel’s entire family is gone. That’s what happens to those rotten rulers. They didn’t want to listen to God’s Word. They preferred their favorite preachers. And they finally reaped the rewards.

The New Testament says, “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction. The one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life” (Galatians 6:7–8). There are two roads. One leads to life. The broad one—with 400, 450, however many cheerleaders you want—they’ll be cheering you on. But it will be lying spirits who are cheering you down the broad road to destruction.

When you read the book of Kings, you can read it a couple of different ways. One is you can do the math and say, “You know what? That all happened about 2,800 years ago. Times have changed. Religion has gotten nicer over the years.” You can try that one out. Or you can say, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). He still isn’t very fond of idols. He still isn’t very fond of child sacrifice. He still isn’t very fond of promiscuity. He still loves people and sends them urgent warnings. And even the least sign of repentance is enough to arouse his mercy.

But there does come a day of reckoning. “I am sending one last warning. I’ll make it clear what’s going to happen. If you ride to Ramoth Gilead for battle, you’re dead.” If you choose to ride on in the face of God’s warnings, there is no further opportunity.

We have our own preachers of our own time proclaiming that all roads lead to heaven. But all roads lead to hell—except one. That’s the message of the prophets. That’s the message of the apostles. That’s the message of God himself. God came in the person of his Son to be our Savior. He didn’t do that because there were a lot of other options. He didn’t do that because there were a thousand and one other ways to be saved. Do you think Jesus went to the cross and died in agony because there were all kinds of ways we could go to heaven? He went there because he is the way, the truth, and the life. “No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

Prayer

Father, clear our minds and convict our hearts. Help us realize that all the rulers and supreme courts, all those in whom people put their trust, must answer to the one ruler, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, who alone is immortal, who dwells in light unapproachable (1 Timothy 6:15–16). And so we pray, Father, turn our hearts towards you.

We pray for those who are rulers in our own country and those who are governing at a local level—that they may have hearts for you and turn away from the ways of wickedness. We pray

for our culture and our society, which spends too much time listening to flatterers and not enough time listening to the Word of the living God. Turn our hearts to you, that we may receive mercy, that we may receive grace, that we may be transformed through repentance and new life.

Fill us, Lord, with your Holy Spirit. Have mercy on our land and send your Holy Spirit in mighty revival to turn us away from our wickedness before it's too late and we fall in the manner of the kings of Israel and of Judah before us.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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- What happens to them?

Standard

Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin condemns any people. (Prov 14:34)

- God's law is the standard for rulers.
- Ahab and Jezebel sold out to sin.
- Political deals, palace, ivory, cities, and military don't impress God.

Rotten Rulers

- What is the standard?
- **What are the problems?**
- What do they listen to?
- What happens to them?

Jezebel religion

- Depict Yahweh as golden calf
- Worship Baal and Asherah, vile gods of sex and prosperity

How can there be peace as long as all the idolatry and witchcraft of Jezebel abound? (2 Kings 9:22)

Jezebel religion

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. I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. (Revelation 2:20)

Rotten Rulers

- What is the standard?
- What are the problems?
- **What do they listen to?**
- What happens to them?

Rebuke

He who listens to a life-giving rebuke will be at home among the wise. (Proverbs 15:31).
It is better to heed a wise man's rebuke than to listen to the song of fools. (Ecclesiastes 7:5)

Stubborn folly

A man's own folly ruins his life, yet his heart rages against the LORD.
A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed—without remedy. (Proverbs 19:3; 29:1).

Rotten Rulers

- What is the standard?
- What are the problems?
- What do they listen to?
- **What happens to them?**

Day of disaster

The LORD works out everything for his own ends—even the wicked for a day of disaster...
There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the LORD. (Proverbs 16:4; 21:30)