

All About Jezebel!

*St Mary's, Kidlington
Open Space Service
with Communion*

Sunday 19th July 2026

***Entry Music – followed by the song
“Jezebel” by Frankie Laine from 1951***



Welcome & Opening Prayer

Question: “Who was Jezebel?”

The name Jezebel has become an insulting term used against women from biblical times to the present day. Used in literature, lingerie lines and as a WW2 missile.

The dictionary definition is: -

An immoral, sexually promiscuous women.

A woman who leads others into idolatry and sin

An immoral woman who deceives people in order to get what she wants.

An impudent, shameless or morally unrestrained women.

Quite an indictment! But how did she get such an epithet? Is it deserved? Is she treated more unfairly because she is a woman? Is this condemnation justified? We are going to find out.

Jezebel is only mentioned around 20 times in the bible. She is not a heroic fighter like Deborah, a devoted sister like Miriam, a cherished wife and daughter-in-law like Ruth. There are other women in the bible like Delilah or Potiphar's wife who are not vilified in the same way as Jezebel.

Question: “What does the Bible tell us?”

Jezebel was the daughter of Ithobaal, King of Tyre and Sidon, and in an obviously political move, was married off to King Ahab of Israel.

She was clearly intelligent, a cunning political manipulator and wielded great power in the kingdom of Israel.

She was a follower of the god Baal, the religion of her homeland - indeed Baal is part of her name when written in Hebrew, as it was part of her father's name.

She decided to bring her religion with her, which was indeed her right, but when she decided to impose it on the whole nation of Israel and to oppose Judaism, she came into conflict with the prophet Elijah.

She hosted a dinner for 450 prophets of Baal, and 400 prophets of Asherah, a female Canaanite deity. Meanwhile, 100 prophets of God were hiding from her persecution in a cave.

In one of the most famous stories about the prophet Elijah, he challenged the prophets of Baal and Asherah to offer a sacrifice without the use of fire on Mount Carmel. Despite their repeated entreaties to Baal, their sacrifice remained unconsumed. Elijah then placed a sacrifice upon the altar, doused it with water and called out to God. A fire rained down from heaven and consumed not only the sacrifice but slaughtered the prophets of Baal. When Jezebel heard of it, she threatened to kill Elijah, and he fled, prophesying that she would be eaten by dogs.

Many years later, Ahab died and his and Jezebel's son Joram inherited the kingdom. Jehu, a follower of Yahweh, killed Joram. Jezebel taunted Jehu who came to her suite of rooms. As he approached, Jezebel put kohl on her eyes and did her hair. He commanded that she be thrown from her window, horses trampled her to death, and dogs ate her body.

Nowhere does it tell us that she was unfaithful to Ahab, or in any way sexually promiscuous! Her reputation for glamour comes from that final acting of preparing herself to meet the man who has just killed her son. So, is she really a harlot? Just where she got that reputation from is, however, linked to her sinfulness and we will come on to that shortly.

But first we will have a look at the sins she did commit – and one in particular:

The Story of Naboth's Vineyard - A Dramatized Reading.

Sins can be categorized in many ways, but for this purpose, we can look at a three-way classification: **Sexual, Social, and Spiritual**. It is clear that Jezebel was not a sexual sinner, at least we have no evidence of it.

She was, in the eyes of the writer of Kings, a Spiritual sinner. She not only did not follow the true God Yahweh, but tried to impose the worship of Canaanite deities, and worse, she killed the prophets of the true God. She was described by Jehu as 'zonah': this is a word that is sometimes used to describe someone sexually promiscuous but also is used to describe someone who betrays or abandons the true God. Maybe her harlotry was spiritual and not sexual.

She did also commit Social sins: these can be described as acts of injustice, cruelty, abuse of power and of these she was certainly guilty. If we consider her treatment of Naboth, of Elijah, of the prophets of Yahweh, we can see her abusing her power as the queen of Israel.

Her Social sins are perhaps her most egregious, and certainly the story of Naboth's vineyard is regarded as a most heinous crime, committed by a powerful woman to impress, or maybe humiliate her husband.

Abuse of power is still one of the most common sins in today's society: child abuse, domestic abuse, modern slavery are all too familiar. But the abuse of

power does not have to be on such a scale as these crimes. Bullying, spite, even selfishness can all be caused by individuals abusing their personal power in any social context.

We are going to do an activity now, to help us reflect on the abuse of power in our own lives.

A “Reflection”

During this time, you are encouraged to think about times you have been the victim of the abuse of power: overt and covert, implicit and explicit.

You might also wish to consider times you have abused your own power over someone else.

Now is the time to discard the abuse of power in our lives or acknowledge our part in it. To offer these reflections to God, maybe in a time of silent prayer.

Confession & Absolution:

**God of mercy,
we acknowledge that we are all sinners.
We turn from the wrong that we have thought
and said and done.
And we are mindful of all that we have failed to do.
For the sake of Jesus, who died for us,
forgive us for all that is past
Help us to live each day
In the light of Christ our Lord.
Amen**

May the God of love and power
forgive you and free you from your sins,

heal and strengthen you by his Spirit,
and raise you to new life in Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayers – ending with The Lord’s Prayer:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

Hymn – Behold the Lamb

[words and tune by Keith & Kirstin Getty & Stuart Townend]

Behold the lamb who bears our sins away,
slain for us - and we remember
the promise made that all who come in faith
find forgiveness at the cross.
So we share in this bread of life,
and we drink of His sacrifice
as a sign of our bonds of peace
around the table of the King.

The body of our Saviour Jesus Christ,
torn for you - eat and remember;

The wounds that heal, the death that brings us life
paid the price to make us one.
So we share in this bread of life,
and we drink of His sacrifice
as a sign of our bonds of love
around the table of the King.

The blood that cleanses every stain of sin,
shed for you - drink and remember
He drained death's cup that all may enter in
to receive the life of God.
So we share in this bread of life,
and we drink of His sacrifice
as a sign of our bonds of grace
around the table of the King.

And so with thankfulness and faith we rise
to respond - and to remember
our call to follow in the steps of Christ
as His body here on earth.
As we share in His suffering,
we proclaim Christ will come again!
And we'll join in the feast of heaven
around the table of the King.

Eucharist:

The Lord be with you
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts
We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God
It is right to give thanks and praise.

Lord of all life, you created the universe,
where all living things reflect your glory.
You give us this great and beautiful earth, to discover and to cherish.

You give us your love, even when things go wrong.
Jesus knew hurt and pain. Through him you wipe away our tears,
and fill us with your peace.

You give us happy times and things to celebrate.
In these we taste your kingdom, a feast for all your children.

We thank you, loving Father, because when we turned away, you sent Jesus,
your Son.
He gave his life for us on the cross and shows us the way to live.

Send your Holy Spirit that these gifts of bread and wine
may be for us Christ's body and his blood.

On the night before he died, when darkness had fallen, Jesus took bread.
He gave thanks, broke it, and shared it with his disciples, saying:
"This is my body, given for you. Do this to remember me."

After they had eaten, he took the cup of wine,
gave thanks, and shared it with his disciples, saying:
"This is my blood, poured out for you and for many, for the forgiveness of
sins."

So Father, with this bread and this cup we celebrate his love, his death, his
risen life.

As you feed us with these gifts, send your Holy Spirit,
and change us more and more to be like Jesus our Saviour.

Help us, Father, to love one another,
as we look forward to that day when suffering is ended,

and all creation is gathered in your loving arms.

And now with all your saints we give you glory,
through Jesus Christ, in the strength of the Spirit,
today and forever. **Amen.**

Songs During Communion:

‘Soften my Heart’

[words and tune by Graham Kendrick]

Soften my heart, Lord;
soften my heart;
from all in difference
set me apart;
to feel Your compassion,
to weep with Your tears -
come soften my heart,
O Lord, soften my heart.

‘Create in Me’

[words and tune by David Fellingham]

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit in me.
Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit in me.
Wash me, cleanse me, purify me,
make my heart as white as snow.
Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit in me.

Blessing:

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God**

**and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all, evermore. Amen.**

Hymn – Amazing Grace

[words by John Newton; tune - New Britian]

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now I am found
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears relieved
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils and snares
We have already come
'Twas grace has brought us safe thus far
And grace will lead us home.

Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease
I shall possess, within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.

When we've been there ten thousand years
Bright, shining as the sun:
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we've first begun.

Minister: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord
All: **In the name of Christ. Amen.**

Exit music: Saint-Saens “Bacchanale” (Belly dancing optional!)