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Omri: The Merger King



We live in an age of mega-mergers — a fraternization frenzy at every level. Across the globe, large corporations have been swallowing each other up like fish, becoming ever larger and far-reaching. In geopolitical circles, the forces of globalism and globalization are driving worldwide union.

We see countries entering into various alliances as they join and expand organizations such as NATO, the World Trade Organization and many others too numerous to mention. They are all mergers of convenience and opportunity, driven by motives of power, peace and prosperity. Not a single appeal is made to the statutes of the God of the Bible.

Even more worrisome mergers are underway — namely, the increasing combining and mixing of church and state, Christianity and paganism (ecumenism), and the bringing together of Mammon and the Kingdom of God by the Church. The past two columns have dealt with this lat-

ter development. All of the merger activity mentioned — all driven by a quest for influence and prosperity — has geared up to hyper-speed in our time. The price? Compromise, rampant deceit, increasing economic danger, and the abandonment of the Truth.

What will be the outcome for the world? Will a remnant of a faithful Church be preserved? The Bible tells of a similar era — that of Omri, king of Israel, and his dynasty. Among God's chosen people, the descendants of Jacob, he was the "king of mergers." It is illuminating to study the practices of this man and his descendant kings, Ahab, Ahaziah and Joram. Omri's dynasty provides

key lessons that speak to our endtime world.

The Omri Dynasty

King Omri was one of the most influential kings of the northern kingdom of Israel. It would be difficult to discern this from the Bible alone without careful study. As only 13 verses (1 Kings 16:16-28) recount the history of this man, it would be easy to overlook his significance. Unusually, no direct mention is even made of his reign in the books of Chronicles, apart from referring to his son, Ahab, and grandsons Ahaziah and Joram. The only biblical indication we get of the repute of his legacy is found in Micah 6:16. Though

The prophet Micah prophesied against the worship centers of Israel and Judah —Samaria and Jerusalem, respectively. Specifically, he accused them by saying, "You have observed the statutes of Omri and all the practices of Ahab's house, and you have followed their traditions" (Micah 6:16). Micah disapproved of three things: Omri's statutes, Ahab's practices, and their traditions.

Omri was only king of Israel for approximately 12 years, his reputation and systems endured for generations. In fact, for many years after his reign Israel was known as "mat bit-Humri" ("the house of Omri") by the Assyrians and the Edomites. His son Ahab carried on his practices and "did evil" in the sight of the Lord, as did his sons Ahaziah and then Joram (see 1 Kings 16:25, 33; 1 Kings 22:25, 52; and 2 Kings 3:2).

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1. statutes (KJV, NIV and most others);
2. works (KJV, NASB); and
3. devices (NASB) or counsels (AMP)

Just what were these statutes, practices and traditions? Scripture provides some indication, especially as we study the reign of Ahab. But first a brief history about Omri. He became king of

Israel following the murder of King Elah by Zimri, a fellow army captain who had usurped the throne. Omri, backed by popular public opinion, overthrew Zimri, ending his reign after only seven days. After he consolidated his position as undisputed king, he reigned 12 years. Apparently, he died quite early. Scripture has more to say about Ahab and his sons. We can learn the ways of the house of Omri by observing what they did. Actually, we will learn that Ahab's practices and devices would nominate him today as one of the most masterful of global statesmen.

The Techniques of the House of Omri

The Bible reveals much of the reign of Ahab's, the most powerful of Omri's descendants. He was a master politician and crafty in foreign affairs. He knew how to swing the consensus of public opinion in his favor. He influenced, cajoled and manipulated the elders of his inner council, false prophets and other foreign rulers to his ends. He knew how to play his opponents. The account of how he dealt with Ben-Haddad, the Syrian king, is a masterpiece of cunning foreign affairs. He entered a strategic alliance with Ethbaal,

king of Tyre, by marrying his daughter, Jezebel. By the standards of today's global politicians, this was a brilliant maneuver. In effect, he joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in order to secure a favorable trade status with this rich, world trading empire of the Phoenicians. The spiritual and religious implications were not regarded, however. Materialism was of primary importance; economic security his aim. Material prosperity was linked with issues of human rights and morality. These issues played second fiddle to the uppermost goals of prosperity and indulgence. After finally defeating Ben-Haddad, this Syrian king won clemency from Ahab by allowing Israel to set up shop in the marketplaces of Damascus. Again, we see a materialistic mindset ruling his policies. Through an unnamed prophet, God rebuked Ahab for allowing Ben-Haddad to live.

Apparently, indulgence was another practice of Ahab. He built a beautiful palace inlaid with ivory (1 Kings 22:39) and loved the good life, so much so that he even allowed Naboth's vineyard to be expropriated just so that he could have a private garden.

As a result of his union with Jezebel, paganism engulfed Is-



UN Photo #NICA 7660 by Sophie Paris



Interpreting Ahab's practices, we can include: tolerance, indulgence, craftiness, politicization, self-centeredness, expropriation, optimism about the works of man ... and the list could go on. As mentioned, he would be a successful global statesman today in the halls of the United Nations or around the conference tables of NATO or any other number of global policy and transnational organizations.

rael. Jezebel introduced the worship of Baal to Israel. As part of the alliance, King Ahab even built a temple to Baal in Samaria for his wife. In time, her lobbying for "freedom of worship" ended up as a massive campaign against God and the persecution of his prophets. She killed off any prophet that she could find. Apparently, this was acceptable to Ahab. No mention is made otherwise. Had he protested, he may have offended his foreign counterparts and perhaps jeopardized the status of his foreign emissaries abroad. His was a policy of tolerance. Any belief or value system was allowed, even sanctioned by his regime. Scripture records that Baal worship, Ash-toreth and the gods of the Amorites (1 Kings 22:25) were given rightful footing in the land.

Ahab was intolerant in only one respect: He opposed anyone who confronted him with correction or anyone who burst his bubble of humanistic optimism. Therefore, he hated Elijah and Micaiah, prophets of God. He accused them of pessimism, declaring that they never had anything good to say about him. It didn't matter that they spoke truth and eternal consequences.

We could examine many more characteristics of the house of Omri, but we may suffice it to conclude that Omri and his descendants were worldly rulers. Their policies were motivated by peace and prosperity. They pursued these goals in any way they thought best. Spiritual matters, purity of faith, the truth and imperatives of God's Word did not figure in the formation of their policies and statutes. Reviewing the character of all of his actions (48 of which are recorded in Scripture), the list is long. Interpreting Ahab's practices, we can include: tolerance, indulgence, craftiness, politicization, self-centeredness, expropriation, optimism about the works of man, laissez-faire policies, opportunism, ruling by consensus and worldly consultation ... and the list could go on. As mentioned, he would be a successful global statesman today in the halls of the United Nations or around the conference tables of NATO or any other number of global policy and transnational organizations.

The house of Omri practiced the exact reverse of all of the godly kings of Judah. The latter feared God first, generally walk-

ing without compromise in the ways of David. Everything else — peace and prosperity, for example — were added unto them as a consequence. These were not the initial motivations of their obedience to God. As Scripture counsels, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33). Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, said virtually the same thing to Ahab, "First seek the counsel of the Lord" (1 Kings 22:15).

The Statutes of Man

Just what was the nature of the statutes of Omri? Consider these facts about him and his descendants:

Omri was the sixth king of Israel. He ruled from Tirzah six years and another six years from the city of Samaria. He is recorded to have done or performed six things. His name is mentioned 12 times in the historical accounts of the kings of Israel and Judah (1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles [2 x 6]). He reigned for 12 years (2 x 6). His dynasty lasted 48 years (6 x 4 x 2).

The number six is the number of man, as God created him on

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the sixth day. However, the prevalence of this number with Omri doesn't stop here. Ahab, his son, whose name means "his father's brother" did more evil in the sight of the Lord than all the kings of Israel before him — more than six kings combined (1 Kings 16:33). He represents the very epitome of the works of man, as we have reviewed. Ahab is recorded to have taken 48 actions (6 x 4 x 2), eight times more than his father. Moreover, after Omri's dynasty ended, the house of Israel continued to walk in his statutes for another 120 years (6 x 20) until Samaria fell to the Assyrians. It just was prior to that time that Micah gave his prophecy that was quoted earlier from Micah 6:16. Amazingly, the prophecy indicting Omri's statutes was the sixth of the seven he spoke.

Could all these sixes and multiples of six be a coincidence? Perhaps. However, I take this pattern to be significant as every "jot and tittle" of Scripture (Matthew 5:18) is important and to be studied.

Clearly, Omri's statutes, the practices of Ahab, and their traditions are those of men. The measures and tests of their policies were "materialism" and "humanism." Any religion was something to barter with, to tol-

erate, to accommodate. On the other hand, the God of Jacob was only consulted when no other human option was available or when His pronouncements through His prophets were in alignment with Omri's wants. National prestige, strategic foreign policy, dialogue and arrangements of convenience were the rule of the day. The statutes of God were either bent or discarded.

We shouldn't be surprised all the statutes, practices and traditions of the house of Omri are playing out across the globe today in high form. They are today endorsed as sophisticated doctrines of foreign affairs and conferences of men. Everything is merging — countries, economies and religions — within and all together. The test of their efficacies is measured in terms of prosperity, wealth and economic power.

Current-Day Picture of Merged Christianity

To illustrate how the merging of religions and foreign policy is occurring in our time, we can take a brief glimpse at what is occurring in Iraq. In a sense, the occupation of Iraq is merely the latest outgrowth of this fellowship of religion, government and economy. Yes, Islamic ter-

rorists may be attacking the interests of America and therefore this nation is entitled to defend itself. But the Iraqi occupation has become much more than a defense operation. Somewhere along the way it turned into a "religious" campaign, perhaps even an economic one. They find alliance with the spreading of the doctrines of the "spirit of capitalism," democracy, and Mammonism. Worst of all, many of these devices and statutes have been widely endorsed by many church leaders. Most Muslims recognize these measures for what they are — the "values" of the supposed Christian West. Actually, these "values" are being imposed rather than proposed, reflecting an attitude not much different than that of the Crusaders of the Middle Ages or the Caliphate of Saladin, whose armies converted nations to Islam at the end of a sword. Specifically, even secular intelligence agencies have recognized the idealism that has been driving the campaigns in Iraq (also Afghanistan). Says Stratfor, an influential, non-partisan commentator upon political and global affairs:

"The essential point is that the invasion of Iraq ... should have had no interest — in the



internal governance of Iraq. This is the critical point on which the mission became complex ... Over time, this evolved to a new mission: the creation of democracy in Iraq.... The idea that the United States would be able to effectively preside over this society, shepherding it to democracy, was difficult to conceive even in the best of circumstances.”¹

Democracy is a benevolent system if the majority of people are moral and God-fearing. Apart from those conditions, it provides no sinecure. Other organizations working with governments are intent upon also introducing “free-market” capitalism and westernized financial markets to Iraq. While these systems can have their good uses, troubling is that their imposition is being widely supported by leading Christians as righteous, scripturally endorsed solutions for the good of these countries. Systems, like machines, can be used for both good and bad purposes. But, they need no scriptural imperatives. The Church needs only to preach and spread the Gospel of the One who alone is the Author of all that is good. On this basis, we see that the various supposed representatives of the Church have erred in their increasing fraternity with state, other religions, and materialism. We see that even the evangelical church is in cahoots with the “gospel of Mammon,” openly endorsing the imposition of this materialistic religion by force upon other nations.

They are promoting the “Statutes of Omri.”

Thoughts to Ponder

What was the result of the statutes of the house of Omri? All 70 of his offspring were put to death. Seventy is the number of a “king’s life” (Isaiah 23:15) and also represents the completeness of a dynasty or legacy. Seventy members of Jacob’s household went to Egypt (Genesis 46:2; Exodus 1:5) and Gideon had 70 sons who were eradicated by Abimelech (Judges 9:56). More examples could be cited. The conclusion is that our present world order of “seventy kings” today will also come to a similar end at Armageddon by the sword of the mouth of the Lord.

Another result of Omri’s dynasty was that even the house of Judah, who at least produced more than a few kings who walked with God, was infected with its treacheries. Omri’s granddaughter, Athaliah, married Jehoram, king of Judah. He and Ahaziah (his son with Athaliah) were among the few kings of Judah who “did evil in the eyes of the Lord” (2 Kings 8:18, 27). Athaliah nearly succeeded in cutting off the very line of David that was prophesied to produce the Messiah. She had proceeded to kill the entire royal family of Judah. Had Jehosheba, the daughter of King Jehoram, not hidden Joash for six years (another “six”, meaning until the threat of the works of man had sufficiently diminished), satanic purging of this royal line by the house of Omri would have succeeded. At the time, Joash

was the last living member of the lineage of David.

Ecumenism is occurring. Church and state, Mammon and the Kingdom of God are all merging into one negotiable mass. We can see all these streams are morphing into a single power structure of the last days. Revelation 17 and 18 provides a colorful description of this process, describing it as the great prostitute, mother of all harlotries and abominations. These chapters show a picture of a mutually reinforcing alliance of religion, political globalism and economy.

We return to our question at the outset of this article: Can a remnant of the true Church be preserved? God preserved the royal line of David by causing Jehosheba to hide away Joash. As such, he can be seen as a symbol of the last-day Church. It is persecuted by humanism and materialism — the works of man. Only a small number survives as the true Church.

The prophet Micah, who alerted us to the wiles and deceptions of the statutes of Omri, has the last word: “But as for me, I watch in hope for the Lord, I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me” (Micah 7:2). If we practice these statutes, God will be faithful. May we be found among the last-day believing remnant. 📖

ENDNOTES

- 1 George Friedman, *Strafor, Iraq: New Strategies*, May 17, 2004.