

**ST. BARTHOLOMEW’S ANGLICAN PRO-CATHEDRAL IN THE TOWN OF TONAWANDA**

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Scripture: 1 Kings 16:29-34; 2 Kings 17:7-18

***“Responding to an Ever Present Evil”***

**THE BATTLE LINES ARE BEING DRAWN**

Two weeks ago I addressed the new law that was passed by our New York State government and signed by Governor Cuomo in Albany which expanded the right to have an abortion to the full nine months of pregnancy as long as the mother’s mental or physical health was in jeopardy. It also removed the penalty of homicide if a baby older than 24 weeks is killed in the womb during an assault. The language is clear. The new law states – a *“person, when referring to the victim of a homicide,”* is now defined as *“a human being who has been born and is alive.”* So the baby in the womb has no protection under the new law. I have provided copies of the new law for everyone to see the additions as well as the deletions to the existing public health law.

Since that time there have been a number of significant new developments. First, there are a number of states seeking to broaden their abortion laws as well. We saw one such example in Virginia where the legislator speaking on behalf of the bill admitted that this would allow a baby to be terminated after it had been delivered. The Virginia governor, though he said his words were taken out of context, also indicated that that would be a possibility depending on the circumstances. Thankfully, that bill was axed before it was even able to come to the floor for a vote. Our president, President Trump, emphatically declared in his State of the Union address that life should be protected in the womb and likened late-term abortions to the baby being ripped from its mother’s womb. He also called out the abhorrent cheers that erupted in the NY State Assembly when the new Reproductive Law was passed. The fact that he stated that the baby in or out of the mother’s womb is made in the “holy image of God” speaks volumes of where he stands on the issue.

Of course, the next day he was immediately criticized by op-eds in the NY Times and by CNN and, of course, Governor Cuomo for misstating and mischaracterizing the issue. Supposedly, “late term” abortion is incorrect verbiage, that such abortions only happen 1.3% of the time, and that the mother’s health can adversely be affected if things go wrong with her child internally so the new laws protect the mom. And yet, that ignores the bigger issue – does a child in the womb have any rights at all? Is it even a human being? And what about regulating the abortion industry itself? If you decriminalize the whole matter, there is no accountability! Look again at the NY State Law. That’s what it exactly does. It decriminalizes all actions directed to a baby in the womb. And the “health” of the mother, while certainly very important, is not defined at all. And notice how these folks have changed the language – they no longer call it abortion, but reproductive health. Sounds so innocent and good, doesn’t it?

Brothers and sisters, this is only the beginning. A number of doctor-assisted suicide bills are set to be possibly passed in several more states including New York. Recently in the state of Colorado,

lawmakers attempted to pass a bill mandating that the education curriculums of all schools include LGBTQ sex education.

In fact, this past week hundreds of people packed the State Capitol Wednesday to oppose a bill aimed at requiring the teaching of LGBTQ “sexual experiences” in public schools. The Colorado sex-ed bill would force the state’s viewpoint on sex and sexuality on every school, family, and child. It requires children to be exposed to explicit sexual content that teaches lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender sexual behaviors are a “normal” and “healthy” option for all our youth. If that isn’t enough, the state will also *ban* all views and content that contradict this ideology. This means sex-ed curriculums focused on only the scientific and biological aspects of sex and its consequences would be *illegal*. Curriculums promoting abstinence would be *illegal*. As we’ve seen in states like California and New Jersey, these comprehensive sex-ed bills are used to indoctrinate our children through graphic photos, language, and ideas that encourage our youth to explore their sexuality in ways most families believe are harmful and directly contradict their values. Make no mistake: These bills masquerade as “comprehensive sexual education” bills; but they unlawfully censor foundational views of sex and sexuality, oppress parental rights, and advance a radical social agenda at the expense of our children.

There is an old adage: follow the money. Who is behind this new-found assault on the unborn? Planned Parenthood and NARAL – *National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League*. These evil groups have targeted Democratically-led state legislatures in an attempt to not just solidify but expand abortion rights. And don’t think they will stop there. The nature of government and evil is to always expand its grip on society. Now don’t misunderstand me, I am not saying government is evil! But its nature is to always expand. Just look at how our governmental bureaucracy has expanded since 1776! Look at the tax code alone! But when the government becomes influenced by evil forces and those forces take root, you have a double whammy! You have not just the expansion of government but of evil government.

### **A LESSON FROM HISTORY**

But how did this happen? It didn’t happen overnight. The Word of God actually gives us a model for how things happen the way they do. It does so as a warning that history has a habit of repeating itself – there may be different characters and contexts, but the issues remain the same. It does so, so that the faithful will understand the nature of the battle; and it does so to give us direction on how we should respond.

There is a reason why I picked the Old Testament Lesson for today. It tells us about a King of the northern kingdom of Israel – one who has more chapters devoted to his reign than the other kings of the northern kingdom of Israel. And in his case it’s not a good thing. Why is that? We read from **1 Kings 16:29-34**: *“Now Ahab the son of Omri became king over Israel in the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years. 30Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD more than all who were before him.”*

***31It came about, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he married Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went to serve Baal and worshiped him. 32So he erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal which he built in Samaria. 33Ahab also made the Asherah. Thus Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel than all the kings of Israel who were before him.”***

**\*\*\*NOTE: I highly recommend the book, *The Paradigm*, by Jonathan Cahn, from which many of the points on the next two pages are based.**

Why was King Ahab so detested by the Lord? He made official the idolatry that had crept into the land of Israel. Although Israel had been given the covenants and the law of God, there had been a spiritual decline during the reigns of the kings before him. But now what had been in secret now was made official! He married a foreign princess named Jezebel. According to the ancient Jewish historian Josephus, her father was a high priest of the false polytheistic religion of the Canaanites. Baal was the chief male god in the pantheon of their gods – the “storm” god – the god of weather. And Astarte was Baal’s wife, the female deity. She was the goddess of fertility and war. In Babylon and Assyria she was called Ishtar. The Greeks would adopt her as Aphrodite and the Romans as Venus. The *Asherah* (in verse 33) was the grove made to honor the female goddess. Although Ahab knew the Law, although he knew the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he not only departed from it, but he replaced it with a new religion. But it really wasn’t new; it was the same religion God forbade the people of Israel to engage in after he delivered them from their bondage in Egypt!

This religion not only enabled blatant idolatry, but it involved sorcery and witchcraft – communicating with the dead, sexuality devoid from marriage – including homosexual and heterosexual prostitutes, and worst of all the sacrifice of children by fire before the god named Molech. To engage in such practices was to garner the favor of the gods and goddesses of the pantheon. It was for supposed self-gratification and prosperity. With the chief god being Baal, King Ahab built a temple to Baal and built an altar for Baal and also made the *Asherah* for the leading female deity. He would be heavily influenced by his wife, and Queen Jezebel. The apostasy that had crept into Israel now became official. And how did God respond? He sent Elijah the prophet to confront the king and his queen. He sent Elijah to preach repentance to all of Israel. But that message of repentance was not heeded.

We learn what happened 130 years later from **2 Kings 17:7-18**: ***“Now this came about because the sons of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up from the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and they had feared other gods 8and walked in the customs of the nations whom the LORD had driven out before the sons of Israel, and in the customs of the kings of Israel which they had introduced.9The sons of Israel did things secretly which were not right against the LORD their God. Moreover, they built for themselves high places in all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city. 10They set for themselves sacred pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree, 11and there they burned incense on all the high places as the nations did which the LORD had carried away to exile before them; and they did evil things provoking the LORD. 12They served idols, concerning which the LORD had said to them, “You shall not do this***

*thing.” 13Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah through all His prophets and every seer, saying, “Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments, My statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you through My servants the prophets.” 14However, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God. 15They rejected His statutes and His covenant which He made with their fathers and His warnings with which He warned them. And they followed vanity and became vain, and went after the nations which surrounded them, concerning which the LORD had commanded them not to do like them. 16They forsook all the commandments of the LORD their God and made for themselves molten images, even two calves, and made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal. 17Then they made their sons and their daughters pass through the fire, and practiced divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him. 18So the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them from His sight; none was left except the tribe of Judah.*

Is there a modern-day correlation between the reign of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel to our nation today? As I look back at the last 30 years and see how far we have descended morally as a nation, I see the turning point the day President Bill Clinton became President. Clinton was raised Southern Baptist in the Bible belt. He was governor of Arkansas. But he became a child of the sexual revolution of the 60’s and of the secular humanism of the universities. He made official what had been done behind closed doors. He was the first president to endorse abortion. On the first day of his presidency in January of 1993, he signed a number of executive orders officially expanding the practice of abortion: He released US tax dollars to support abortion overseas. He struck down the ban against using the tissue from the bodies of unborn children for the purpose of experimentation. He ordered that abortions be provided on US military bases. He vetoed the law passed by both houses of Congress that banned partial-birth abortion; not once but twice! And He selected Supreme Court Justices Beyer and Ginsburg who were and still are staunchly pro-choice.

His was the first presidency to normalize and endorse the practice of homosexuality. At an event dedicated to homosexual activism He declared, *“We are redefining in practical terms the immutable ideals that have guided us from the beginning.”* He was the first president in American history to dedicate an entire month to the celebration for all Americans to honor gay pride with ceremonies and activities of celebration.

He served as one who weakened absolutes, redefined values, and altered standards. His was a presidency of moral relativism. He was the first president to be publicly exposed to committing adultery while in office. His actions further encouraged sexual indiscretions among our young people. And his wife Hillary supported Bill every step of the way since their days in Arkansas. His agenda was her agenda but she would go a step further. She would get involved like no other first lady in our nation’s history. She sought to nationalize our health care system – remember Hillarycare? which included the funding of abortion by our tax dollars. She would call in new age gurus to communicate with the famous dead including Eleanor Roosevelt. Remember that? Jean Houston, a leading new age leader, would visit the White House several times.

Hillary would be fiercer than her husband; she would serve as Senator from New York twice, run for President, then after losing become Secretary of State, and then run for President again. Most would not trust her but many would love her message supporting women’s rights, including the right to have an abortion for all nine months of pregnancy. During her campaign she championed such an idea. She stated in 2017 that the future is female. And in that same year she received the *Champion of the Century* award from Planned Parenthood, our nation’s leading abortion provider, only months after she lost the presidential election.

So it shouldn’t surprise us that on Monday, January 7, 2009, as Governor Cuomo stood before female elected officials and cheering women filling the audience, he promised to protect women’s reproductive rights by expanding the state’s abortion laws within the first 30 days of the new legislative session. Who was standing at his right side? You guessed it! Hillary Clinton!

Cuomo did something no other New York governor has done before him. He turned his back on the Roman Catholic Faith of his fathers when he signed that abominable act into law. He became a modern day Ahab; following in the steps of Bill and Hillary.

### **THE PRAYER MODEL**

Before we saw the New York State Legislature endorse infanticide, I was doing a series on prayer. And if you recall, what are three angles of prayer that should always be present – we have a spirit of prayer – we seek God out in relationship and communion with Him, our prayer life is to be informed, and then we pray and put into practice that which we pray. Spirit, Soul, and Body. And that is exactly what we need to do at a time like this. Our spirit needs to be right, our souls need to be informed, and then we need to take action.

When Nehemiah heard that walls of Jerusalem had fallen and the city was in disarray, he was overwhelmed. How did he respond? He mourned, he wept, he prayed, and he fasted (**Neh. 1:4-10**). If we are to enter into this battle with the right spirit and armor, we must begin to pray and fast. And we must do so together. So I invite you to our next prayer meeting. We have been gathering for a couple years now. Know this – the way God has designed our life journey is that what we went through in the past prepares us for how we are to live in the present, and what we do in the present prepares us for the future. There will always be battles to be fought in this life. Why else would the Apostle Paul tell us that our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places? So take up the full armor of God. He didn’t say the battle is past or future; it is ever present, because evil is ever present!

But we don’t just gather together to pray as a church. We need to join with the other churches of our region and eventually the state. We need to come together as the Army of the Lord. We need to be proactive and not just reactive; we need to gird our loins with truth and spiritual determination. We need to fight the battle together.

And that is why I am working together with other church leaders to form a movement that would begin with mourning, prayer, and fasting and then would move forward with a proactive plan to stand for

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what is right; to stand for life and ultimately to point all people to the cross of Jesus Christ. It is only at the cross that we can see sin as the evil it is, it is only at the cross that we can truly appreciate the love of God, and it is only at the cross that we can be truly transformed and set free from the grip of our selfishness, lust, and idolatry. So I will need your help! I will need your prayers! I will need your time! I will need your sacrifice! But it is not I who really needs them. The truth is we all need each other and God needs us to be His hands and feet. To stand up for the defenseless, to stand up for the orphan, to stand up for the unborn! In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, AMEN!