

## 2 Kings 10:1-36

### Jehu Continues His Grim Elimination of the House of Ahab

Jehu acts as a type of Christ in his role as end-time avenger against rebellious humanity.

This aspect of Christ is hinted at in the prophets. In **Isaiah 63** He is pictured as coming from the cities of Edom/Adam with his clothing splattered with blood:

- **Isaiah 63:1-6** - "Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come."

Fulfilled in Christ at His coming in judgment:

- **Revelation 19:11-16** - "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

(From these scriptures we get the lyrics from the Battle Hymn of the Republic: "He shall trample out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored...")

In this chapter, Jehu continues his retribution on Jezebel, Ahab's house and the Baal worshippers. But every type is imperfect.

Ahab's descendants were not only under the curse from God, but would have constituted a significant danger to Jehu's own personal hold on the throne of Israel. It was common during a change of regimes to eliminate a previous king's children and any other possible pretenders to the throne.

We will see in this chapter how Jehu becomes more and more enamored of his mission, boasting of his zeal for God and yet failing to get rid of idolatry completely from Israel.

### Seventy Heads in 70 baskets

Jehu sends a sarcastic letter demanding that the remaining elders and governors of Israel prepare to fight for whoever they choose to succeed Jehoram as king. He knew

they would be terrified. And in fact they wrote back that they wouldn't oppose him, rather they accepted him as king.

**2 Kings 10:6-7** - "Then he wrote a letter the second time to them, saying, If ye be mine, and if ye will hearken unto my voice, take ye the heads of the men your master's sons, and come to me to Jezreel by to morrow this time. Now the king's sons, being seventy persons, were with the great men of the city, which brought them up. And it came to pass, when the letter came to them, that they took the king's sons, and slew seventy persons, and put their heads in baskets, and sent him them to Jezreel."

These were the sons and grandsons of Ahab.

Some scholars note that Ahab had sent for baskets of grapes out of Naboth's vineyard at Jezreel; and now the heads of his sons are fittingly brought there in baskets.

God's word as delivered through Elijah's prophecy was being fulfilled.

**2 Kings 10:10** - "Know now that there shall fall unto the earth nothing of the word of the LORD, which the LORD spake concerning the house of Ahab: for the LORD hath done that which he spake by his servant Elijah."

Over centuries and millennia these scriptures show that God's prophetic word has not failed:

- **1 Samuel 3:19** - "And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground."

- **Jeremiah 1:12** - "I am watching over My word to perform it."

- **Isaiah 55:11** - "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

**2 Kings 10:11** - "So Jehu slew all that remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, and all his great men, and his kinsfolk, and his priests, until he left him none remaining."

On his way to Samaria, Jehu accidentally runs into 42 relatives - probably cousins - of Ahaziah king of Judah, who they didn't realize Jehu had just killed. They were on a friendship/ diplomatic mission to pay their respects to the 70 sons of Ahab that Jehu also had just massacred.

As relatives of Ahaziah - who was a grandson of Ahab - they too were legitimate targets for the curse pronounced on the house of Ahab. Ahaziah was a descendant of King Ahab through his mother (who was the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel).

**2 Kings 10:14** - "And he said, Take them alive. And they took them alive, and slew them

at the pit of the shearing house, even two and forty men; neither left he any of them."

The body count is starting to pile up. And Jehu is starting to think too highly of himself.

### **Joined by Jehonadab**

**2 Kings 10:15** - "And when he was departed thence, he lighted on Jehonadab the son of Rechab coming to meet him: and he saluted him, and said to him, Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart? And Jehonadab answered, It is. If it be, give me thine hand. And he gave him his hand; and he took him up to him into the chariot."

Jehonadab was a Rechabite, descended from Jethro the father-in-law of Moses. He is mentioned years later by the prophet Jeremiah:

- **Jeremiah 35:5-7** - "Then I set pitchers full of wine and some cups before the men of the house of the Rechabites, and I said to them, "Drink some wine." "We do not drink wine," they replied, "for our forefather Jonadab son of Rechab commanded us, 'Neither you nor your descendants are ever to drink wine. Nor are you ever to build a house or sow seed or plant a vineyard. Those things are not for you. Instead, you must live in tents all your lives, so that you may live a long time in the land where you wander.'"

The Rechabites were considered almost on a par with the Nazarites in piety. Jehonadab was a man of renowned godliness, and Jehu was glad to have him at his side when he entered the royal city of Samaria.

**2 Kings 10:16-17** - "And he said, Come with me, and see my zeal for the LORD. So they made him ride in his chariot. And when he came to Samaria, he slew all that remained unto Ahab in Samaria, till he had destroyed him, according to the saying of the LORD, which he spake to Elijah."

Someone who says "Come with me, and see my zeal for the LORD" is already getting way too puffed up about his religious status. Jehu's prideful spirit is coming to light. His mission to eliminate the descendants of Ahab had gone so smoothly that perhaps he imagined himself now as a peerless warrior and tactician, when really it was all God's doing. The glory should go to Him.

### **Invited to the Big Baal Bash**

Now Jehu spins a deception to kill all the remaining followers of Baal. He depicts himself as a true Baal worshipper despite his violence against the house of Ahab.

**2 Kings 10:18** - "And Jehu gathered all the people together, and said unto them, Ahab served Baal a little; but Jehu shall serve him much."

**2 Kings 10:19** - "Now therefore call unto me all the prophets of Baal, all his servants, and all his priests; let none be wanting: for I have a great sacrifice to do to Baal; whosoever shall be wanting, he shall not live. But Jehu did it in subtilty, to the intent that

he might destroy the worshippers of Baal."

Ironically, the "sacrifice" would be themselves, slaughtered within the Temple of Baal.

The Targum says he did this "with wisdom." But other rabbis say it was done "in deceit" on a par with Jacob's deception to supplant Esau.

**2 Kings 10:20-21** - "And Jehu said, Proclaim a solemn assembly for Baal. And they proclaimed it. And Jehu sent through all Israel: and all the worshippers of Baal came, so that there was not a man left that came not. And they came into the house of Baal; and the house of Baal was full from one end to another."

The Baal worshippers would have been relieved that the new king was also a fellow "believer."

### Having on the Right Garment

**2 Kings 10:22** - "And he said unto him that was over the vestry, Bring forth vestments for all the worshippers of Baal. And he brought them forth vestments."

Normally only the priests would wear these vestments. Jehu distributes them to all the worshippers. They would be happy with this honor. But their purpose is really to distinguish them and mark them out for death.

This scene was probably the template for the "Red Wedding" episode of *Game of Thrones*.

But it also reminds us of the opposite celebration in Jesus' parable of the wedding feast. The tradition was for the master of the feast to supply wedding garments for the guests:

- **Matthew 22:8-14** - "Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen."

In this case, those WITHOUT the proper garment are cast out into outer darkness.

The spiritual contrast is between "garments of righteousness" and leprous garments "spotted by the flesh."

- **Jude 1:23** - "...And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the

garment spotted by the flesh."

The vestments given to the Baal worshippers represented the "garments spotted by the flesh."

**2 Kings 10:23** - "And Jehu went, and Jehonadab the son of Rechab, into the house of Baal, and said unto the worshippers of Baal, Search, and look that there be here with you none of the servants of the LORD, but the worshippers of Baal only."

This is also the flip side of that Cold War story/myth about Communist soldiers raiding an underground church meeting and demanding that anyone who wasn't completely loyal to Christ leave. Once they are alone with the "true believers" they put down their rifles and explain they are Christians too.

Jehu's massacre here also contains some echoes of Samson's last act of bringing down the temple of Dagon on himself and all the pagan Philistine worshippers (**Judges 16:30**).

This is also the opposite of the call:

- **2 Corinthians 6:17** - "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."

- **Revelation 18:4** - "Come out of her, My people, so that you will not share in her sins or contract any of her plagues."

Jehu instead was calling Baal worshippers to "come in."

**2 Kings 10:24** - "And when they went in to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings, Jehu appointed fourscore men without, and said, If any of the men whom I have brought into your hands escape, he that letteth him go, his life shall be for the life of him."

Eighty men are stationed to cover all the exits. There is a sobering warning here - if you don't "revenge the disobedience" your own life will be forfeited.

This recalls the prophetic warning to the watchmen on the wall:

- **Ezekiel 33:6** - "But if the watchman sees the sword coming and fails to blow the horn to warn the people, and the sword comes and takes away a life, then that one will be taken away in his iniquity, but I will hold the watchman accountable for his blood."

**2 Kings 10:25** - "And it came to pass, as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, that Jehu said to the guard and to the captains, Go in, and slay them; let none come forth. And they smote them with the edge of the sword; and the guard and the captains cast them out, and went to the city of the house of Baal."

"the city of the house of Baal" probably refers to the surrounding buildings where the

Baal priests lived with their families.

**2 Kings 10:26-27** - "And they brought forth the images out of the house of Baal, and burned them. And they brake down the image of Baal, and brake down the house of Baal, and made it a draught house unto this day."

The Baal temple was turned into a public latrine. Just as Jezebel's remains were cast as dung in the field, the Baal temple would receive a steady stream of dung into its precincts.

### **Jehu's Shortcomings**

**2 Kings 10:28-29** - "Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel. Howbeit from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them, to wit, the golden calves that were in Bethel, and that were in Dan."

Jehu could distinguish between worship of Baal and Yahweh, but not between illicit worship of Yahweh by way of the golden calves and His true worship with no image or idol associated.

Probably politics takes over here. The false worship of the true God through the golden calves in Bethel and Dan was the hallmark of the northern kingdom's national identity, part of its founding tradition distinguishing it from Judah. Jehu was a good patriot for Israel, but this is where patriotism falls short.

**2 Kings 10:30** - "And the LORD said unto Jehu, Because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in mine heart, thy children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel."

The rabbis say this prophecy was delivered by Jonah (Seder Olam Rabba).

Jehu's descendants Jehoahaz, Joash, Jeroboam and Zachariah, did reign, though the last reigned only six months, just enough to fulfill this promise.

### **Judgment on israel**

**2 Kings 10:31** - "But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin."

The scripture repeats Jehu's sins, adding that he "took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel."

**2 Kings 10:32-33** - "In those days the LORD began to cut Israel short: and Hazael smote them in all the coasts of Israel; From Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, and the Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Aroer, which is by the river

Arnon, even Gilead and Bashan."

All of Transjordan, the land originally given to the Gadites and the Reubenites, and the half tribe of Manasseh as well as Gilead and Bashan, was lost to Hazael.

### **Summary of Jehu's reign**

**2 Kings 10:34-36** - "Now the rest of the acts of Jehu, and all that he did, and all his might, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? And Jehu slept with his fathers: and they buried him in Samaria. And Jehoahaz his son reigned in his stead. And the time that Jehu reigned over Israel in Samaria was twenty and eight years."

- 28 years was longer than any king of Israel had reigned. But we have no record of what Jehu did or accomplished in those years.

### **Morally Challenged Servants of God**

We've seen God choose some very flawed characters to carry out his mission. How do we reconcile, for instance, the bloodthirsty tactics of Jehu - killing prisoners, slaughtering children, massacring civilians - with the moral commandments given by God?

We've studied the failings of the patriarchs. Samson was foolish and usually driven by lust. Even Jael, who drove a spike through Sisera's brain, violated a sacred tradition of hospitality toward a guest. Saul and David add other twists and turns of bad moral choices. We even saw Elijah mentally crater, fall into despair and long for death.

These stories are meant to cause inner tension within us. We watch God's will being carried out, but at the same time, from a New Testament perspective, we recoil at the tactics used. We can't wholeheartedly exult and celebrate. The stories challenge us to look at ourselves and hopefully drive us to humility and repentance, while recognizing that "no word of God will ever fall to the ground."

In one sense, until Jesus came to fulfill the law, God generally sent Israel judges and rulers that they deserved. For the most part, the leaders could never rise above the general level of enlightenment of the rest of the people at the time.

(See Isaac M. Kikawada and Arthur Quinn. "Before Abraham Was: The Unity of Genesis 1-11." Ignatius Press, 1989.)

The bottom line is that God's word is inexorably being fulfilled, even if by instruments who are unworthy and morally lacking. That's why we need Jesus. Only He is righteous.