

Fast and Furious 2 Kings 9-10

Playing off a popular commercial, a friend of mine dubs his dad as “the most interesting man in the world.” His dad was a Ranger and Green Beret. He was a trial lawyer. Now he is a professor. He has taught at three institutions in the area of Old Testament/Hebrew. He speaks nine languages. He once learned Russian in one month and then went to give a speech in Leningrad at a University, where they gave him a standing ovation. I think that tops the “Dos Equis Man.” As I looked at our main character, Jehu, I thought he might be called “the most interesting man in the world.” He drives like the actor (and my look alike!) Vin Diesel. He wipes out people like the Terminator, and he is as cunning as Jack Bauer. Liam Neeson could play him well should Hollywood try to make an action packed movie based on these two chapters. It is indeed filled with swift drama.

So who is Jehu? This is not the prophet Jehu, whom we met previously. This Jehu was a military commander whom God appointed as his agent of judgment. Unfortunately, not everything about Jehu is commendable, but he is interesting.

We are actually dealing with a very difficult, as we consider King Jehu’s bloody purge. I suppose some may wonder why you would even bother with such a story. Why study a book of the Bible like this? Do you not want to grow a church? Good question. I suppose there are many answers to this question. But I might offer three. To begin, we study the Scriptures, even hard passages, because we believe that God builds his church through his word, not through gimmicks or great personalities. There is a difference between building a church and building a crowd. We want God to really build a church, and if we attract a lot of people, then we are happy. But our goal is not to be flashy but faithful to Scripture.

Additionally, I think people are actually interested in such passages. Several articles have been written recently about how to keep Millennial in the church. One writer, Rachael Evans wrote an article entitled “Why Millennials Are Leaving the Church.” In it she says that they are leaving not because of style, but for lack of “substance.” She says, “Having been advertised to our whole lives, we millennials have highly sensitive BS meters, and we’re not easily impressed with consumerism or performances.” (<http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2013/07/27/why-millennials-are-leaving-the-church/comment-page-84/>). While you may not agree with her whole article (as usual with an opinion piece), I think people long for something more than a performance. They are longing for truth, meaning and community, which is found through knowing Christ.

Finally, passages like this are important because you need to know how to answer the skeptics of our day. Many argue that the Bible’s holy wars are just like Islamic Jihads. But this shows a lack of good interpretation of hard texts. How do we answer the Richard Dawkins of our day who says that “God is a moral monster” and Christians should stop trying to persuade people to believe in such a deity. While that question is very relevant for a book like Joshua, this passage in Kings is about judgment and taking out those *within* the leadership of Israel. These leaders avoided all the warnings and refused to repent. They turned people away from the living God. And they never received justice. Who among us do not think that those who kill the

innocent should not be held accountable? That does not seem like a moral monster, but a God of justice. So, one of the ways to be prepared to answer our friends is to deal with the Jehu sections of Scripture.

Context

To understand this story, you need to know the story of king Ahab. This king from the house of Omri was the most wicked of the kings of Israel. He married the foreigner Jezebel who brought with her the idolatry of Baal, along with all of its perversions. She basically evangelized for Baal and persecuted the prophets of Yahweh. One particular episode is very important for the text at hand: the story of Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21). Ahab and Jezebel murdered Naboth, a righteous Israelite. Ahab wanted Naboth's vineyard, but Naboth refused to sale it or trade it because he knew that the land was not his to sale, and to do so would be unrighteous. He knew that his land was God's, and he was a steward of it. Ahab then pouted like a spoiled kid. Jezebel decided to take matters into her own hands. She wrote letters to the men of Naboth's city instructing the leaders to stone Naboth (21:10-11). And they obeyed. Jezebel and Naboth then enjoyed their new garden for a while, but then God sent his prophet Elijah to confront Naboth. In his confrontation, we saw that God was on the side of the oppressed. He was aware of the situation, and he would act on Naboth's behalf. How so? Elijah promised Ahab that "the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick your own blood" (21:19). That was fulfilled in 22:38. But that was not the end. Elijah also promised that disaster would fall upon Ahab's house, and upon Jezebel. We were told, "The dogs would eat Jezebel within the walls of Jezreel." (21:23). Over twelve years have passed now. Ahab is gone, but the house of Ahab (or Omri) still reigns. But that comes to an end in 2 Kings 9-10. God raised up a new king, Jehu, as his instrument of judgment. Elijah had been told to anoint him previously (1 Kings 19:16-17). Now the time of reckoning has come. God appoints Jehu to clean Ahab's house.

So let us take a look at God's agent of judgment in these two chapters. We left off with the kings in Judah and Israel together. There was a battle in which Israel and Judah fought against Syria. King Joram of Israel was wounded and went back to Jezreel to take care of his wounds. King Ahaziah of Judah went to visit him. At this point, the kings of Judah are rebelling in that they have intermarried with Ahab's house, thus leaving the Southern kingdom in a very corrupt state (2 Kings 8:27).

It is a really easy section to outline, but a hard section to read for some to read because it is bloody. It is divided into three parts: (1) The Anointing (9:1-13); (2) The Avenging (9:14-10:27); (3) The Assessment (10:28-36). If you scan these sections you can see that breakdown. A young prophet anoints him, then he serves as God's avenger. He eliminates Joram, Ahaziah, Jezebel, Ahab's descendants, the worshipers of Baal. In the final verses of chapter 10 we are left to ponder the assessment of his reign. While that covers the story itself, I have chosen to go with a bit different outline: (1) Things that Differ; and (2) Things that Matter (HT: Terry Johnson). We need to make some distinctions between this story and our time period, but we also need to take some things very seriously that are still true for us.

We have to be careful in interpreting and applying stories like this, in which there is great violence and bloodshed. Should we just dismiss these chapters as morally repulsive and

practically irrelevant? No. Do they serve as another argument against religion? No. While many do use religion as an excuse for violence, we cannot make such a sweeping assessment of this story. It is true that Jehu is a flawed instrument of judgment, and we cannot hold him up as a perfect example. But God initiates the action, and commends Jehu for some actions (10:30) because he did what was according to God's Word (9:25-26; 36-37; 10:10; 10:17, 30). How is this situation different from ours, and what is it that we should learn from this story?

THINGS THAT DIFFER

Briefly, there are three distinctions we need to make. ***First, we must distinguish between Israel and the nations.*** What happened in Israel was in many ways unique. God placed his name upon this nation. They were special. Because of this reality, the judgment upon Israel was unique in its severity upon those who led the nation into wickedness. In addition, because of Israel's unique role, many of Israel's enemies were driven out of the land. This was for a unique purpose, that is, to preserve God's people, and bring for the Messiah that the nations may be saved. We are not like Israel in these ways. We are not driving out all the people in America who do not believe in Jesus. We are not going to start a Jehu ministry at Imago Dei! We are not going to go wipe out nations. We are going to love the nations. Israel had a unique, specific, limited calling in the Old Testament. There is continuity and discontinuity between the testaments and we need to remember that.

Secondly, we must distinguish between "God's special revelation" and "self-deception." Special revelation is that which God says. Many will say that God "told them" to kill and conquer, but that is "self-deception." We have few men who have been instruments for God's judgment (eg., Moses, Joshua, Elijah and Jehu). We await the final, ultimate one, Jesus. If anyone says today that they are killing in the name of the God, do not believe them. They are deceived. Many fruitcakes can say that – from Jim Jones to David Koresh to Bin Laden. They think God is on their side for a path of violence. God does grant civil authorities the sword, but that is not the same as calling to these particular representatives in Scripture. That was limited to a few who received God's special revelation.

Third, we have to distinguish between the agent's assignment and the actual execution of the assignment. Jehu is not a role model in every way because he does not follow God's word totally. He has his own interests in mind at times. He was not wholly devoted to Yahweh. Yet, God does use him, as broken as he is, but that does not mean that God approves of everything he does.

THINGS THAT MATTER

Having noted the things that differ, allow me to try to identify some timeless truths that really matter, as we walk through the passage. Things do matter here! The bloodshed should illustrate this. Christianity is not something to be lukewarm about. Six particular applications

emerge: (1) Justice Matters; (2) God's Word Matters; (3) Worship Matters; (4) Suffering Saints Matter; (5) Your Heart Matters; (6) The Coming of Christ Matters.

#1: Justice Matters (9:1-10)

In Psalm 99, the poet exults in the God's righteousness. He says, "The King in his might *loves* justice. You have established equity; you have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob. Exalt the Lord our God; worship at his footstool! Holy is he!" (99:4, my emphasis). Then, speaking of Old Testament leaders, "[Y]ou were a forgiving God but an avenger of their wrongdoing" (99:9). God is forgiving and God is just. Yet, He will not sweep sin under the rug. In response, we should "tremble" at our holy God (Ps 99:1) and worship him.

We should stand in awe of God's sovereignty in his justice. God's sovereignty is over human history. We see this fact in how his word is carried out in the anointing of Jehu.

Elisha carries out the command given to his successor, Elijah, and anoints Jehu, the commander as King, but he does not do it himself. He sends one of the "sons of the prophets" to do so (9:1). Who were these guys? Ira Price summarizes his biblical survey of the prophets saying:

In conclusion, we have found in this brief discussion that the sons of the prophets 1) were collected together in bands or schools; 2) in six different localities, viz., (a) Ramah, (b) Bethel, (c) Gilgal, (d) Jericho, (e) Carmel, (f) Samaria; 3) under the tuition of (a) Samuel, (b) Elijah and (c) Elisha; 4) with instruction in (a) prophesying-worship, (b) sacred music, (c) practical matters of their day; 6) with their time wholly occupied in (a) study and worship, (b) doing errands for their masters and God, (c) performing the regular duties of a prophet; 6) largely dependent for their support upon the charity of the people." (Price, "The Schools of the Sons of the Prophets," JSTOR)

He gives him the instructions in verses 2-4. It may have seemed a bit bizarre. He was to anoint commander Jehu, where they were fighting against the Syrians, in Ramoth-gilead. Despite the awkward timing, the young "seminarian" goes any way. God can intervene, and intrude when he deems it appropriate. He is sovereign. When the seminarian arrives there, he asks to speak with Jehu, who is sitting with his men. He meets with Jehu, pours the oil over his head, and delivers the following message from Yahweh:

"Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, I anoint you king over the people of the Lord, over Israel. 7 And you shall strike down the house of Ahab your master, so that I may avenge on Jezebel the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the Lord. 8 For the whole house of Ahab shall perish, and I will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, in Israel. 9 And I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah. 10 And the dogs shall eat Jezebel in the territory of Jezreel, and none shall bury her."

Immediately after delivering the message, the young man obediently “opens the door and flees” (10b, 3). Jehu is anointed. God sovereignly appoints his king. The Psalmist says that God puts men up, and sits them down. “For not from east or from west and not from the wilderness comes lifting up, but it is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another” (Ps 75:6-7). God sovereignly exalts Jehu to this position, and puts down Joram.

We should also stand in awe of God’s vengeance. Notice the clarity of this declaration in verses 6-10. The house of Ahab and Jezebel will be put to death. Notice also that though Jehu is the human instrument for this plan, God is clearly the primary one responsible for executing judgment. The messenger reports Yahweh’s words saying, “I may avenge” (7), “I will cut off” (8), “I will make.” This is God’s plan and action.

Paul reminds Christians, “Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay says the Lord” (Rom 12:19; cf., Deut 32:35). You and I are not Jehu. We are not God’s chosen instruments for judgment. But we are to trust that God is totally committed to seeing justice being done. The Psalmist says, “righteousness and justice are the foundation for his throne” (Ps 89:12). God must and will judge sin. Sinners will be eternally judged or they repent and turn to Jesus, where Christ paid the debt for sinners. But forgiveness does not mean an absence of punishment. God forgives sinners through putting Christ forward as the substitute for sinners. Let us stand in awe of his vengeance.

We should also stand in awe of his timing. An interesting feature of this story is that it seems to take a long time since the prophecy of Elijah to happen. Then, it seems like a strange time to execute the plan (while Israel is at war with an ongoing opponent). But this story illustrates God’s merciful patience. His judgment is mingled with mercy. Peter says, “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” (2 Pet 3:9). It seems like he is slow, or delayed like a flight leaving the Atlanta airport. But Peter says that God is giving unbelievers an opportunity to repent before final judgment. But that day of reckoning will come. When? Peter goes on to say, “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief” (3:10a). We are instructed in the New Testament to “be ready” for the coming of Jesus (Matt 24:36-25:13). We should stand in awe of the fact that the King will come. Are you ready? Have you responded to the gospel in faith? Are you using your days wisely? Many wonder when this will be, but we do not know. Some have charts to speculate. You do not need to be concerned with charts, you better be concerned with your heart.

#2: God’s Word Matters (9:11-16)

Next, Jehu’s men wonder what happened. They ask, “Is all well? Why did this mad fellow come to you?” (11a). Notice they call the young prophet a “mad fellow” (11b). Prophets were often viewed as “crazy.” Today, pastors are viewed the same way by a certain segment of society as well. But they are in good company. Paul was perceived as being “out of his mind” and Jesus

was the object of mockery (cf., Acts 26:24; 2 Cor. 5:13; Matt 26:29b). But we are reminded in this story, that God will fulfill his word though it may seem crazy to people.

After the officers anxiously inquire, Jehu tries to down play the event for some reason (perhaps testing them, or thinking this was their idea?). He says, "You know the follow and his talk." But they press him for an answer, "That is not true; tell us now" (11c-12a). When he tells them, "Thus says the LORD, I anoint you king over Israel" (12), they immediately submit to that word, and crown him king. The writer says, "Then in haste every man of them took his garment and put it under him on the bare steps, and they blew the trumpet and proclaimed, 'Jehu is King.'" (13). They give a spontaneous, secretive coronation for the new king.

But what is done in secret soon comes out in public. Jehu says that it is time to mount up on go to Jezreel, where the kings of Judah and Isarel are located (14-16). The news will be told, as the hour of judgment has come for Joram and Ahaziah.

What matters in this story? Truth. God's word takes precedence over national politics, a war, and popular opinion. God's word was also the catalyst for human history. Even though people may laugh to God's message and messengers, his word will stand forever.

Take a cue from this young man. Speak God's word to people though you may be CPU Ted as a fool to people. Paul told the Corinthians, "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing" (1 Cor 1:18a). We believe in a crucified, Galilean who lived 2,000 years ago can take away our sin and give us eternal life. And that he will one day return as the better Jehu to establish his kingdom forever, where we will live in total peace. We believe that those who do not bow the knee to Christ in this life, will do so later, but it will be too late. And this message is the most important message available today. Just remember that you may be considered crazy, but you are in good company (cf., 1 Cor 4:13). So were the prophets and Jesus. Remember that God's truth matters more than your comfort, when you are opposed or persecuted. Great is your reward in heaven. We must never allow our sin to be a stumbling block for people, but we must remember that many will struggle with embracing God's truth. Such a problem has existed since the Garden of Eden. Follow the example of this lad, and speak God's truth faithfully.

#3: Worship Matters (9:17-22)

As Jehu heads to Jezreel, Joram sends two different men to meet Jehu and ask, "Is it peace?" (17-18, 19). Jehu retorts each time, "What do you have to do with peace?" (18, 19). This was not the day for peace. Each troop is told to join king Jehu and get behind him. After these two episodes, the watchmen says, "He reached them, but he is not coming back. And the driving is like the driving of Jehu, son of Nimshi, for he drives *furiously*" (20, my emphasis). Jehu "felt the need for speed." We might compare him to a skilled tank commander. Apparently, he had a reputation for amazing maneuvering in warfare.

Joram does not know what is going on, which is why he asks, "Is it peace?" (or "Is all well?"). He may have thought that Jehu was bringing news from the battlefield, of either victory or defeat. But his messengers never returned. So he is alarmed, but he does not know what is up; as a result, he goes out to meet Jehu. Ironically, they meet at the property of Naboth. Joram asks the same reoccurring question, "Is it peace, Jehu?" Jehu's response revealed that he was not coming with news about the battle with the Syrians. He was coming to clean house. Notice carefully what he says, "What peace can there be, so long as the whorings and the sorceries of your mother Jezebel are so many?" (22). Let us pause there and point out another important matter.

These "whorings" refer to worshipping other gods (Ex 34:16; Lev 17:7; Deut 31:16). Since Baalism involved sexual pervasion, this was a particularly apt description (House). "Sorceries" probably refer to cultish practices. Notice the relationship between idolatry and judgment. The reason Israel was to drive out the nations was not because Jeroam was a republican or democrat, it was because these leaders had lead Israel into false worship. Israel was instructed as they came into the land not to follow the practices of the nations (Deut 18:9-14). God was preserving this people, and using them to bring for the Messiah that the nations may be saved. Remember that the problem with the intermarriage with the Egyptians was not race, but idolatry (1 Kings 11:2). At the end of the chapter, we see that the problem with Jehu was he led Israel into sin because he failed to remove the golden calves. The writer says, "He did not turn from the sins of Jeroboam, which *he made Israel to sin*" (10:31, my emphasis, cf., 1 Kings 22:52, 1 Kings 16:33). The problem was similar to what Jesus said in the Gospels. "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea" (Mark 10:42). He warned against those who sought to lead others away from God's law, and those who sought to destroy the faith of believers.

God takes worship seriously. All of us are worshipers of something or someone. "Who is my God?" is the most important question you will answer. How can we make sure we are worshipping rightly? Notice in the narrative the repeated emphasis on "peace." This Hebrew word "shalom" occurs nine times in chapter 9, more than any other chapter in the Old Testament (Olley, 261). How do you get peace? Peace comes from God. Jehu knew that there could be no peace while idolatrous practices were present (9:22). Why? It is because peace can only come through a right relationship with God. The problem is that removing those who support idolatry from a place does not remove the idols of the heart. Jehu never took his revolution far enough or deep enough.

We need a peace deeper than mere removal of external threats to peace. We need a purging from within the heart. We need internal peace. Jesus came to bring us peace right now, and promises peace in the future when he returns. You want peace? Look to Jesus. Paul says, "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 5:1). Turn from idolatrous practices and experience the satisfying peace of knowing Christ as Lord and the supreme treasure of your heart. Jesus said, "My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives" (John 14:27). Only one king could bring the peace we need.

#4: God's Suffering Saints Matter (9:23-10:11)

Picking up with the narrative, we see the elimination of Joram, Ahaziah, Jezebel and the sons of Ahab. God is avenging the blood of his "servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the Lord" (9:7) and, of course, the blood of Naboth.

In verse 23, Joram tries to flee, but Jehu shot him between the shoulders, piercing him in his heart, and Joram sank in the chariot (24). The irony continues. Jehu says, "Take him and throw him on the plot of the ground belonging to *Naboth* the Jezreelite" (25a, my emphasis). He then quotes the prophecy of Elijah, given over twelve years previously. "As surely as I saw yesterday the blood of *Naboth* and the blood of his sons [notice the previous slaying of Naboth's sons] -- declares the Lord -- I will repay you on this plot of ground. Now therefore take him up and throw him on the plot of ground, in accordance with the word of the Lord" (26, my emphasis).

Who is Naboth? He was nobody to Ahab. He was garbage to Jezebel. But now judgment has come full circle because God's suffering saints matter to him. He will avenge the blood of his people. This truth is echoed throughout Scripture. When Israel was mistreated in Egypt, God says to Moses, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmaster. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them (cf., Ex 3:7-8a). Psalm 10 illustrates the cry of the oppressed. While evil men afflict God's people, "payday someday" is coming (cf., 2 Thess 1:5-9).

In verses 9:27-29, we find that Ahaziah also tries to flee, but suffers the same fate as Joram. He flees south. Jehu's men wound him in between Jezreel and Samaria. Ahaziah then dies in Megiddo (27). He then receives a burial in the city of David (28). He was killed either because Jehu viewed him as a threat, or more likely, because Jehu believed he deserved judgment for marrying in to Ahab's daughter. Others say that it was because Jehu thought Ahaziah would try to avenge the death of Joram. But we do not read of this being "according to God's word." What are we to make of this? The Chronicler seems to help us by saying, "But it was ordained by God that the downfall of Ahaziah should come through his visit to Joram" (2 Chron 22:7).

Next up: Jezebel (9:30-37). She decides she will go out in style. She hears that Jehu is coming, and so she gets all dolled up (30). She wants to die as an evil queen. But it will be her last day to put on make up. She asks the same question, "Is it peace?" and then insults Jehu by calling him Zimri (31). Do you remember him? He was a commander who took the Elah's throne by force, and reigned for a whole week. Jezebel is comparing Jehu to him since he had conquered Joram. The difference of course was that Zimri was never told start a revolution. Though she may look like a powerful queen, she is betrayed by two or three eunuchs who throw her out of the window (32). Like the deaths of Joram and Ahaziah, Jehu acts swiftly.

The writer then says that her blood splattered on the wall and the horses trampled her. Jehu demonstrates his reign then by going in to eat and drink in her palace (34). As an

afterthought, he orders a burial, but the servants discover that there was not much left of her. They found nothing but her skull, feet, and palms of her hands (35). Dogs had consumed the rest of her. The men realize that this was a fulfillment of Elijah's word (26, cf., 1 Kings 21:23). Naboth's death has now been avenged. The only remaining act is to eliminate Ahab's descendants. Once again, Naboth meant nothing to Jezebel previously, but God's suffering saints matter to him.

The book of Revelation promises that God will avenge the blood of his righteous servants. Evil men may prosper on earth for a short time, but God will have the last word. Dogs may not consume modern day Jezebels every time, but their future judgment is certain. God will avenge the blood of his persecuted people eventually and finally (cf., Deut 32:43; Nahum 1:2; Isa 59:17; Rev 6:10, 19:2). The persecuted church really exists. Brothers and sisters around the world are being kidnapped and martyred. Some burned alive. Others tortured for months. But though we do not know about them, God does.

In Revelation 6:9-10, those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne cry out, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Then they are told to rest and wait (11). In Revelation 19:2, we read, "His judgments are true and just; for he ... has avenged on her the blood of his servants." God knows his saints and those who kill them. Judgment is coming. A sure and severe judgment is coming.

Next, King Jehu goes after the descendants of Ahab in 2 Kings 10:1-17. Joram is dead but "seventy sons of the house of Ahab" remain, and are dwelling in Samaria (1). Part of the punishment of Ahab was the execution of his descendants. Jehu issues a challenge to the men of the city. He tells the rulers, the elders and the guardians to pick the best of the sons of Ahab and to sit him on the throne to fight for Ahab's house (2-3). Despite the offer and despite having access to military resources, Jehu intimidates them (4). So they decline the offer. They tell Jehu, "We are your servants, and we will do all that you tell us. We will not make anyone king. Do whatever is good in your eyes" (5). Next, Jehu says that "heads will roll" – literally. He tells the men of the city to bring the heads of Ahab's sons to Jezreel the next day (6a). They act swiftly and send the heads back to Jehu in Jezreel (7). Jehu puts them out by the entrance of the city and uses them as an object lesson from his morning speech (8-9).

When the people gather for his speech, he uses the heads as evidence of God's approval of his rise to power (House, 292). While he killed Joram, others killed Ahab's descendants, demonstrating that everything has come to pass because it was according to God's will. He is not totally honest in his statements. But his statements give him what he wants, namely, the support of the people. Again, we have an example of the flaws of Jehu. In verse 11, the writer points us that Jehu has nevertheless secured Jezreel. This leads us to the next point....

#5: Your Heart Matters (10:12-36)

Next, he will need to go to Samaria where the other stronghold remained. So we read that he sets out for Samaria (12), but on the way some important meetings happen that shed light on the heart problem of Jehu. After these meetings and the wiping out of the Baal worshipers, we read in the final analysis “But Jehu was not careful to walk in the law of the LORD, the God of Israel, *with all his heart*” (31, my emphasis). He was a man with obvious “zeal for the Lord” (16a) but that zeal seems to often be for himself and not always for the glory of God.

Jehu first meets Ahaziah’s relatives (12-13), who were apparently unaware of the current happenings. Jehu slaughters all forty-two of them mercilessly without any stated reason. Perhaps his reason was that Ahaziah’s house had intermarried with Ahab’s house and must be wiped out, or that they had some claim to the throne. But this would be a stretch it seems. House says that these murders “cause Hosea to condemn what occurs in Jezreel (Hos 1:4-5). The prophecies of Elijah and Elisha say nothing about the killing of *David’s* descendants” (House, 293). So this is at least questionable.

Jehu then meets a new character, Jehonadab. Jehu asks him, “Is your heart true to my heart as mine is to yours?” Jehonadab responds, “It is” (15). In response, Jehu brings him up into the chariot. His new new assistant will be with him as he cleanses the temple of Baal. Who is this Jehonadab? Drawing from Jeremiah 35:6-7, we find out about him from his descendants. We read that he promoted fanatical support for Yahweh that involved living an ascetic and a nomadic lifestyle. They would have rejected all that Ahab’s house would have valued. Jehu tells this man, “Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord” (9:16). Such an invitation would have been something attractive to such one like Jehonadab. We will ponder his zeal in a moment.

Having secured the conservative wing of Israel, the writer then tells us that Jehu proceeded to wipe out the remaining group of Ahab’s house in Samaria, “according to the word of the LORD that he spoke to Elijah” (17b). The writer confirms the eradication of the Ahab loyalists. So while the death of Ahaziah’s descendants is questionable, this act seems appropriate.

One may question the nature judgment of God in this story. Heads rolling, dogs eating Jezebel, Jehu, a flawed man exercising judgment. Does it have to be this way? Davis points out two good responses to this question. First, God has no sterilized instruments. He does all his work through imperfect people. Throughout the Bible, God has used not so good, and even wicked men (like Judas!) to carry out his sovereign plan. Secondly, it is very difficult to make judgment pleasant. I suppose Ahab’s descendants could have died in their sleep, but it was done this way. Either way, God’s word is fulfilled. Remember, that Jesus’ death on the cross was not sanitary. We read of blood and agony. At his second coming, we read of something more frightening than any story in the Old Testament. We should read of God’s judgment and stand in fear, and turn to Jesus for salvation. It is right to feel the gravity of these stories. It is an awful thing to fall into the hands of a holy God. Be hidden in Christ, who took the judgment that we deserve.

Jehu is not finished. He will finish what Elijah started in wiping out the worshipers of Baal in verses 18-27. Verse 18 does not look like zeal for Yahweh. Jehu says, “Ahab served Baal

a little, but Jehu will serve him much.” But we should know better by now. Jehu wants to eliminate anything associated with Ahab. So we should catch the play on words in the next verse, “No therefore call to me all the prophets of Baal, all his worshipers and priests. Let none be missing, for I have a great sacrifice to offer Baal. Whoever is missing shall not live” (19a). His idea of a sacrifice for Baal was a bit different from what the Baal worshipers called a sacrifice. For the writer tells later “But Jehu did this with cunning in order to destroy the worshipers of Baal” (19b). All of the Baalists arrive and fill the temple wearing their vestments, making them identifiable (20-22). Jehu threatened to kill them if they did not show up, but ironically he was going to kill them when they did show up. He then searches the place to make sure no Yahweh followers were present (23). With everyone in the temple, Jehu offers sacrifices. Meanwhile, he has eighty snipers stationed to execute them all at his command (24). After the sacrifices are made, Jehu gives the order and the Baal worshipers are eliminated (25b). They also destroyed the sacred stone of Baal, which symbolized the presence of Baal, and they destroy the temple itself (27). This was the temple built by Ahab in 1 Kings 16:32. To complete the demolition, he turns the temple into a toilet (10:27).

Should we commend Jehu for this purging? It was not part of the prophetic mandate, but if we consider Deuteronomy 13:1-11, we could make a biblical argument in defense of this action, as we did in 1 Kings 18. But is that *why* Jehu did it? I tend to agree with Davis who says, “wiping out the Baal cult had more to do with Jehu’s zeal for Jehu than his zeal for Yahweh” (165). If he had done this out of a pure zeal for Yahweh, then we would not find what we read in verses 28-29. Jehu basically traded apostasy for syncretism. He wipes out Baalism, but did not turn aside from the worship of Jeroboam (28-29). These “golden calves” would not have remained in Bethel and Dan if Jehu had desired a true, God-centered reformation. We seem to find mixed motives again.

In verses 28-36, we are left to evaluate the work of Jehu. As we have been pointing out, there is a qualified commendation of him. The writer says that he wiped out the Baal cult (28), but he did not turn away from the Jeroboam’s cult (29). He is given in limited reward with four generations of leadership for wiping out Ahab’s house (30), but the writer states again that he “did not turn from the sins of Jeroboam” (31). So, Israel has returned to where they were before Ahab, but they have not returned fully to the Lord.

What will be the result of Jehu’s failures over his twenty-eight year reign (36)? In verses 32 we read, “In those days the LORD began to cut off parts of Israel.” Hazael defeated them throughout the territory of Israel.” As a result of Israel’s ongoing decline, and Jehu’s failure to bring true reformation, “the LORD began to cut off Israel.” God was not pleased. Jehu is held accountable for his actions. Even though he was used by God to fulfill particular roles, his sins were not swept under the rug. One section of Israel after another is broken off. And who does it? It is Hazael, the Syrian king. This was another instrument of God’s judgment, and he was also deficient. One was used for “scourging” and the other for “purging” (Davis, 167).

God uses all kinds of people throughout history to fulfill his purposes, but they are responsible for his actions. Peter said this about the death of Jesus. It happened at the hands of

wicked men, who were accountable to God, but it was according to God's eternal plan (Acts 2:23). Just because you have been used by God to fulfill a role in his grand plan, does not mean that you are acceptable to him (cf., Matt 7:21-23). You must be found in Christ.

What should we make of Jehu's zeal? You might call it "twisted zeal" or in the words of James, he was "double-minded." Here is a guy who wipes out the prophets of Baal, and is used as an agent of judgment against Ahab's house, but then we see him bowing to the golden calves in Dan! We see him throughout this story going after personal gain, and securing political power. What a warning to examine our hearts.

What are some modern day examples of twisted zeal? You might be zealous for religion but never experienced regeneration. You may have a zeal to attend a worship gatherings, but be addicted to pornography. You might think you are zealous for ministry, but really have a zeal to be known and admired by others. You might claim to have a zeal to grow a church, but be doing it for all the wrong reasons and not for the glory of Christ. You may have a zeal for morality, but turn into a legalistic Pharisee and know nothing of the grace of God in Christ. You might claim to have a zeal for truth, but actually have a hatred toward those who disagree with you. You might have zeal to preach, but actually be driven to please people or be famous. You might be busy with churchy things, but have no devotion to Christ, doing everything in the energy of the flesh. You might be into social causes but have no desire for Jesus. Paul says there some have an "appearance of godliness but deny its power" (2 Tim 3:5). Jehu says, "Come see my zeal." Jesus says, "Let me examine your heart." That is what matters. Jehu purged Israel but he still needed purged on the inside. So do we.

How can we avoid the sin of Jehu? We must experience the transforming grace of Jesus. Like Paul who was formerly "zealous" for a form of religion that led him to persecute Christians (Phil 3:6), but then experienced conversion to Jesus Christ, leaving him to long for nothing but Christ. That is what we need. Zeal for Christ above all things. May all our sermons be aimed at pleasing him! May our ministry to kids be about pleasing Christ! May our parenting, our growth groups, and our finances be about him! May our church planting, orphan care, and care for the poor and oppressed be done out of the overflow of a heart for Jesus. Let your heart burn for Christ, not self.

#6: The Coming of Christ Matters

We do not have time to tease this out, but we must mention that Jesus is the better Jehu. He is the anointed one; the one who walked over a carpet of garments on his way to Jerusalem (Leithart, 223); the one who cleansed the temple; whose "zeal for God's house consumed him" (John 2:17). He was the faithful and just Israelite, who never sinned. Then he sinless life, died a substitutionary death, receiving the judgment of God on our behalf, making it possible for us to escape the just judgment of God. And he is the coming King, who will judge the earth.

At his first coming, he taught us and showed us to love our enemies, and showed us what that looks like. By following his teaching, emulating his example, relying upon his power, and entrusting to him the role of final judge and avenger, we do not have to live with constant anger

against those who wrong us or hurt us in this life. We can wait on Christ to judge. We can live as Paul says, "When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure." (1 Cor 4:12). The certainty that Christ is coming frees us to love the world, including our enemies (I am not implying however that the guilty should not receive just consequences). John Piper illustrates this fact beautifully in a sermon he preached on Romans 12:16-20 entitled "Do Not Avenge, But Give Place to Wrath"

In 1974, as many of you know, my mother was killed in Israel. The story, as I was able to piece it together from others who were with her, is that a VW Minivan full of drunken Israeli soldiers swerved out of their lane and hit the bus in which my mother and father were sitting near the front. The death certificate that I read ten days later, when her body arrived in Atlanta from Tel Aviv, said, "lacerated medulla oblongata." Unless you understand the circumstances of my growing up, you can't know what a loss that was to me at age 28.

But as a tribute to the mighty mercy of God I bear witness from my heart: I don't hate those soldiers. I do not wish them evil. In fact, it has occurred to me that they are probably today about my age or a little younger, and if any of them, were reached with the gospel and believed in Christ, I would count it a great joy to be with them in heaven for ever. "Vengeance is my, I will repay," says the Lord. I am happy to leave it with him. This, I commend to you, is a wonderful way to live. This is freedom. And in this freedom there are great open spaces for love.

Jehu was God's agent of judgment, but he was imperfect. The perfect conquering King is coming. Revelation 19 gives us this awe-inspiring picture that should motivate us to not waste our lives, and to love the world in view of his coming judgment:

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. (19:11-16)

This King, Jesus, is the "most interesting man in the world." Do you know him? Have you submitted to his kingship? Are you ready to see him? Let us tell the world about him.