

Part Three —The Kings: Jehu

Jehu was not a righteous man in the sense that he was dedicated to God's Way of Life. But he should be considered great because of his zeal in obeying God's instruction to avenge the house of Ahab. He was given a commission through the prophet Elijah—a commission that played a major role in the history of the northern kingdom.

The wicked king Ahab had been instrumental in leading the northern tribes into utter ruin. He also influenced the affairs of the southern kingdom—Judah. He persuaded Jehoshaphat to join in an alliance against the Syrians, and even had his daughter Athaliah marry into the royal house of Judah. Athaliah's entry into the high society of Judah introduced pagan abominations into the southern kingdom. God raised up Jehu, who was the commander in chief of the Israelite army at Ramoth Gilead, to execute His wrath upon the house of Ahab.

We first encounter Jehu in 1 Kings 19:16. God instructed Elijah to anoint Jehu to be king of Israel. He was chosen to replace Ahab's ruling house. There is little personal information about Jehu except that he was a long-standing veteran and an effective soldier. God had determined to get rid of Ahab, and to extirpate his wicked house. ". . . There was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up" (1 Kings 21:25).

Ahab coveted a piece of property next to his. When he tried to purchase the land, the owner—Naboth—refused to sell, as he regarded it as family inheritance. Ahab returned to his house and pouted. Jezebel saw this and offered to get the land for him. She trumped up phony charges and had Naboth and his sons executed. Ahab did not hesitate to take the property.

And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, which is in Samaria: behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it. And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine . . . Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity . . . And will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked me to anger, and made Israel to sin. And of Jezebel also spake the LORD, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat. (1 Kings 21:17-19, 21-24)

God pronounced a death sentence upon the house of Ahab, but who should execute it? Some years passed. Ahab was slain in battle against the Syrians, and his son Jehoram now ruled. Elisha, whose work was a continuation of Elijah's, had replaced Elijah. Elisha now directed that the punishment upon the house of Ahab be carried out.

And Elisha the prophet called one of the children of the prophets, and said unto him, Gird up thy loins, and take this box of oil in thine hand, and go to Ramothgilead: And when thou comest thither, look out there Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi, and go in, and make him arise up from among his brethren, and carry him to an inner chamber; Then take the box of oil, and pour it on his head, and say, Thus saith the LORD, I have anointed thee king over Israel. Then open the door, and flee, and tarry not. (2 Kings 9:1-3)

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Notice the commission given to Jehu.

And he arose, and went into the house; and he poured the oil on his head, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I have anointed thee king over the people of the LORD, even over Israel. And thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master, that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD, at the hand of Jezebel. For the whole house of Ahab shall perish . . . 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: And the dogs shall eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel, and there shall be none to bury her (2 Kings 9:6-10)

Jehu was well aware of the sins of the house of Ahab. He knew what he had to do. His soldiers immediately pronounced him king. Vengeance against the house of Ahab was now set in motion. "So Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi conspired against Joram. (Now Joram had kept Ramothgilead, he and all Israel, because of Hazael king of Syria" (2 Kings 9:14). Earlier, the king of Israel had been at Ramothgilead where a siege was underway, and had been wounded there. He had returned to Jezreel to recuperate. Ahaziah, the wicked king of Judah, and grandson of Jehoshaphat, had gone to Jezreel to visit Joram.

So Jehu rode in a chariot, and went to Jezreel; for Joram lay there. And Ahaziah king of Judah was come down to see Joram And Joram said, Make ready. And his chariot was made ready. And Joram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah went out, each in his chariot, and they went out against Jehu, and met him in the portion of Naboth the Jezreelite. And it came to pass, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, Is it peace, Jehu? And he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many? And Joram turned his hands, and fled, and said to Ahaziah, There is treachery, O Ahaziah. And Jehu drew a bow with his full strength, and smote Jehoram between his arms, and the arrow went out at his heart, and he sunk down in his chariot But when Ahaziah the king of Judah saw this, he fled by the way of the garden house. And Jehu followed after him, and said, Smite him also in the chariot. And they did so at the going up to Gur, which is by Ibleam. And he fled to Megiddo, and died there. (2 Kings 9:16, 21-24, 27)

What then happened to Jezebel?

And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window. And as Jehu entered in at the gate, she said, Had Zimri peace, who slew his master? And he lifted up his face to the window, and said, Who is on my side? who? And there looked out to him two or three eunuchs. And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down: and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and he trode her under foot. And when he was come in, he did eat and drink, and said, Go, see now this cursed woman, and bury her: for she is a king's daughter. And they went to bury her: but they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands. Wherefore they came again, and told him. And he said, This is the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel: And the carcase of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field in the portion of Jezreel; so that they shall not say, This is Jezebel. (2 Kings 9:30-37)

Ahab had 70 sons who resided in Samaria, so Jehu's work had just begun.

And Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria. And Jehu wrote letters, and sent to Samaria, unto the rulers of Jezreel, to the elders, and to them that brought up Ahab's children, saying, Now as soon as this letter cometh to you, seeing your master's sons are with you, and there are with you chariots and horses, a fenced city also, and armour; Look even out the best and meetest of your master's sons, and set him on his father's throne, and fight for your master's house. But they were exceedingly afraid, and said, Behold,

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two kings stood not before him: how then shall we stand? And he that was over the house, and he that was over the city, the elders also, and the bringers up of the children, sent to Jehu, saying, We are thy servants, and will do all that thou shalt bid us; we will not make any king: do thou that which is good in thine eyes. 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. (2 Kings 10:1-7)

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

On his way to Samaria, the capital city of the northern kingdom, Jehu met a number of relatives of Ahaziah, king of Judah. They were on their way to visit the children of Ahab. They had no idea what had taken place. "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" (2 Kings 10:14). Because the house of Ahab had intermarried with the royalty of Judah, this execution was a continuation of the vengeance upon the house of Ahab. "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" (2 Kings 10:17).

Next, Jehu began a campaign against Baal worship, which had been greatly promoted by Jezebel.

And Jehu gathered all the people together, and said unto them, Ahab served Baal a little; but Jehu shall serve him much. 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. 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 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. 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. Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel. (2 Kings 10: 18-21, 25-28)

Even though Jehu carried out this vengeance upon the house of Ahab, which included the extirpation of Baal worship, he was really not a zealous and loyal servant for God's Truth.

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. 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. 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. (2 Kings 10:29-31)

Jehu was not chosen for this task because he was righteous. He was chosen because he was a man of war, a man who was used to bloodshed. He accomplished God's purpose well. Because of Jehu's actions

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the national punishment, which had been prophesied upon the northern kingdom, was delayed for some time. “In those days the LORD began to cut Israel short: and Hazael smote them in all the coasts of Israel” (2 Kings 10:32). “And the time that Jehu reigned over Israel in Samaria was twenty and eight years” (2 Kings 10:36).

In the sense that Jehu carried out this commission against the house of Ahab, he can certainly be considered a man who served God in a great manner.