

## 2<sup>ND</sup> KINGS

### Week 13, Chapters 9 and 10

It's about 840 B.C. **Yehu** has just been anointed King of Israel by an anonymous guild prophet who was sent under the authority of Elisha to the Trans-Jordanian fortress city of Ramot-Gilead for just that purpose. This anointing of Jehu was essentially done by proxy. In other words, a few years earlier the Lord told Elijah that he was to anoint **Yehu** as king over Israel; but as the following days unfolded, circumstances were such that it never happened. After **Eliyahu** was miraculously lifted up into the heavens not to return, the man who witnessed it became the proxy to bring about those things that God had charged to Elijah but remained undone. When the time was ripe to finally anoint Jehu, the Prophet Elisha chose (for some unexplained reason) to issue yet another proxy and pass the task along to a member of the local prophet guild instead of doing it himself.

To briefly review the happenings of 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 9: we find that God's stated reason for making Jehu King of Israel was as a divine intervention for the dual purpose of ridding Israel of the Ba'al worship that had been instituted as a matter of national policy by Queen Jezebel, and to destroy the wicked dynasty of her husband King **Achav** (Ahab) that had begun with his father **Omri**. Jehu was a military man; a superb and ferocious commander of the army of the northern kingdom. He was respected and feared by his men, and when he was anointed his top lieutenants enthusiastically endorsed him. But what we also must understand about **Yehu** is that he was ambitious, ruthless and while he believed in Yehoveh it was a self-serving kind of belief whereby he felt it gave him the liberty to live and do whatever he thought best, and whatever made him prosperous and powerful.

Nonetheless, he carried out the twin assignments with zeal, and not the least reason being that it assured that he would attain the throne quickly, and that there would be no rivals left alive to challenge him. As for the Ba'al worship issue, there is no reason for us to think that he had any particular problem with Ba'al worship personally despite words to the contrary that came from his mouth, that were mostly for show. However the benefactor and energy behind the Ba'al cult in Israel was also the Queen of Israel, and so ridding Israel of this cult naturally meant killing Jezebel. Attaining the throne along with eliminating all rivals, and ending Ba'al worship worked hand in glove together for Jehu, and much to his advantage.

Whether God meant for Jehu to become King over ALL Israel or merely to replace the king of the northern kingdom, is debatable; but in **Yehu's** mind being king over all Israel was his goal.

And the truth is that although the **Achav** dynasty technically ruled only Ephraim-Israel (the northern kingdom), they had also become closely aligned and highly influential in the southern kingdom, Judah, through the marriage of Jezebel's daughter Athaliah to **Y'horam** King of Judah. Their son was **Achazyah**, who became King of Judah after his father's death and also created a strong alliance with his close relative King **Y'horam** of Israel (Remember we had two men, both named **Y'horam**, living and ruling at the same time. One ruling over the northern kingdom, the other ruling over the southern kingdom).

So when we left off in our last lesson, **Yehu** had taken a contingent of loyal soldiers and speedily traveled from Ramot-Gilead that was located east of the Jordan River, to Jezreel where the King of Israel, King **Y'horam**, was still recovering from battle wounds at his country palace. And, as luck would have it, the King of Judah, **Achazyah**, just happened to be there as well.

As Jehu was quick to point out to the King's messengers who were sent outside the palace walls to inquire why he had come, it was certainly not for peace! When King **Y'horam** came out to personally confront Jehu, it is clear that he knew nothing about Jehu's appointment by God as the new King of Israel, and therefore never suspected that Jehu came with assassination on his mind. But when Jehu hurled insults at the king, and made it known what his purpose was for coming, **Y'horam** yelled out a warning to **Achazyah** who had come out with him, and tried to flee. But he didn't go but a few yards before an arrow from **Yehu's** powerful and accurate bow found its mark and King **Y'horam** was killed atop his fleeing chariot. King **Achazyah** managed to escape, but not for long.

Let's re-read the last few verses of chapter 9.

### RE-READ 2<sup>ND</sup> KINGS 9:22 – end

Recall that some chapters back we learned that this palace at Jezreel bordered on land owned by a man named **Naboth**, who had planted a vineyard on it. The wicked and childish King **Achav** decided that he wanted that beautiful land for his own to plant a garden on it and so went to **Naboth** with a proposition. But **Naboth** explained that by Torah law it was impossible for him to sell, give, or trade the land for some other land. When King **Achav** went back to his bed chambers and pouted, His wife Jezebel responded by organizing some leading men of the Jezreel area to lie and say that **Naboth** had blasphemed God and the king and thus **Naboth** was executed and **Achav** confiscated the property. But God cursed **Achav** for this criminal action and told him that his own blood would someday saturate the soil of this stolen land.

Well, that prophetic curse was now coming about. In verse 25 Jehu orders his captain **Bidkar** to take **Achav's** corpse and to throw him into the field that used to belong to **Naboth**. We learn that on the day that **Achav** rode on his chariot to claim the deceased **Naboth's** field, Jehu and **Bidkar** had accompanied him (a king didn't go anywhere without bodyguards). And they had personally witnessed God's prophet pronounce the curse upon their king. Little could they ever have imagined at the time that they would become the ones to carry it out, and what a great vehicle this would be to propel their own careers.

Naturally, Jehu's real goal wasn't to piously be God's instrument in bringing about the curse. However from a political standpoint he needed to publically demonstrate that he didn't kill the sitting king just so that he could grab his throne; rather he wanted the perception to be that it was because **Achav** was such a wicked man, and was the leader of a wicked monarchy, that all Jehu had on his innocent mind was divine justice and the good of the Israeli people. And then the people would think that he wouldn't have done any of this unless he had been inspired by God's prophet.

We should notice that the fulfillment of divine prophecy doesn't always occur in the way we think it ought to. Sometimes it is entirely supernatural and men aren't involved at all. At other times, men unwittingly bring it about having no idea that this is what they are doing. And, like here, sometimes in the midst of some action or another a man recalls a prophecy and realizes that indeed he seems to be participating in its fulfillment. Thus in our own lives as we await many of God's end-times prophecies to come about, we need to be aware that they can occur under any number of circumstances and be brought about in any number of ways. However too often we, as Christ's church, seem to think that it MUST be either God's own hand that will reach down from heaven in some awe inspiring miracle to bring fulfillment to His prophecies, or that if men are involved these will be great men going about God's work, aware of their role in fulfilling prophecy, and it will be readily recognizable to the Church and to Judaism.

God's people throughout the ages have missed many of the prophetic fulfillments because of a predetermined mindset of what it must look like. Remember that when **Yeshua** came, the Hebrew people from the lowliest farmer to the Jewish religious leadership to the King of Judah were anxiously looking for the Jewish Messiah; so His advent was expected. It's just that He didn't come in the WAY or the form they had expected, and so He was rejected as that prophetic fulfillment to their shame and to their detriment.

Let us vow never to think that despite some teachers, pastors, self-styled prophets and writers who think they know exactly how many of the end times prophecies are going to look and happen, that we can be certain of how it will come about; more than likely it will be nothing like what they or we might envision. But if we are stubborn and only accept our own determination of how these prophecies will be manifested, then we will be counted among the majority who

will have deceived ourselves and we will probably deny the actualization of these long awaited events when they finally do happen.

After killing the King of Israel, Jehu set his sights on **Achazyah**, King of Judah. They had to chase after **Achazyah** as he fled to the south by way of the ascent of Gur that is by Ibleam. According to this account in 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings he was wounded, fled to Megiddo, and died there. However 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 22 gives us a bit different tradition about his death. There it says that **Achazyah** made it all the way to Samaria (the capital of the northern kingdom), but Jehu's men found him, brought him to Jehu, and he was executed. There have been many attempts to reconcile these two accounts but all are speculation so we won't go there. What matters is that King **Achazyah** of Judah was killed by Jehu a few days after King **Y'horam** of Israel was killed. And so although the listing of kings in the Bible doesn't say so, in practice Jehu was king over both Israel and Judah for a short time, although apparently the people of 12 tribes never quite saw it that way. For them, he was the legitimate King of the northern kingdom of the 10 tribes, but just an interim figurehead in 2-tribe southern kingdom of Judah until a new king was coronated.

Verse 29 says that **Achazyah's** reign in Judah occurred during the 11<sup>th</sup> year of King **Y'horam's** reign over Israel. In other words, **Achazyah** was so wicked that his reign lasted less than one year. In fact 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 22 explains that not all of Judah even accepted him as king. No doubt that's because he was of mixed blood (his mother was Athaliah and his grandmother Queen Jezebel, who wasn't even a Hebrew), and so his even being legitimately of the tribe of Judah was in question. It seems that it was only the people of Jerusalem (the capital of Judah) who accepted him, and the remainder of the kingdom was less open to his rule. It is not unusual in history, and in the present day, that the people living in the capital city of a nation have a different mindset concerning that nation's government and leaders than the remainder of the nation. Sometimes that attitude is more positive, other times more negative.

Here's a little tip for studying the New Testament based on that premise. In Yeshua's general era, for example, the common people and the religious leadership that were based in Jerusalem had a very different mindset about King Herod and then his successor than the rest of the Holy Land did. They also had a different mindset about how to practice the religion of the Jews, Judaism, than did the Jews of the other regions of the Holy Lands and of the Diaspora. Thus when in our New Testaments we read about the Judeans, it helps to understand that this is not a synonym for Jews in general. Rather it is specific to the Jews who occupied the Roman province of Judea (Judah), and even more usually to the Jews who lived in the capital city of Jerusalem, because they were more in tune with the civil and religious government that resided there. This is also why the New Testament takes great care to refer to Yeshua and His disciples as Galileans (and NOT Judeans), and a distinction is also made regarding the Jews living in the Diaspora, and in Samaria, Perea, and Idumea as they each also had different political and religious views and practices than the Jews living in Jerusalem who are known as the Judeans.

Verse 30 continues Jehu's blood rampage; keep in mind that thus far, this was entirely God authorized and Jehu was doing no wrong, other than his heart-motives for doing them were hardly pure. Jehu went into the city of Jezreel that was an outgrowth of the royal palace there, for the purpose of confronting Jezebel; she had been expecting him. So when **Yehu** arrived she adorned herself and prepared to meet him hoping to either seduce him or impress him with her aristocratic appearance, trying perhaps to save her life or to make her demise quick, dignified and honorable.

She was on the upper floor of her residence and looked out the window to taunt Jehu, probably hoping her regal bearing and tone might intimidate him. She calls to him and sarcastically asks after his well being, but then labels him as "a **Zimri**, murderer of his master". **Zimri** was also a military commander who notoriously assassinated King **Elah** of Israel and took his throne; but **Zimri's** reign lasted only 1 week before he was then assassinated. Her goal was to influence the thinking of Jehu's military officers who were looking on, such that they would remember what happened with **Zimri** and how siding with the usurper Jehu could mean the forfeit of their lives if **Yehu's** fortunes were anything like **Zimri's**. But Jehu's reputation was too much to overcome, and Jezebel too hated, and his soldiers stood with him in solidarity. So he challenged the bodyguards who were with Jezebel up in her private quarters to decide on the spot who they would support; and they didn't choose Jezebel. So they grabbed the Queen and unceremoniously threw her out the widow to the paved street below.

When her body hit, her blood splattered on the street, walls, and even onto the horses that were standing nearby. Jehu used his mount to trample on the Queen's corpse to the point of dismemberment. And just to demonstrate the utter disdain he had for her, he immediately went inside, up to her quarters, and dined at the royal table all the while the packs of wild dogs that usually roamed city streets ate her remains.

After thinking it over he decided he'd have her body removed and buried, but when his servants went to her there was nothing left but her bare skull, hands, and feet. When they told **Yehu** he remembered the prophet's curse concerning Jezebel that this is exactly what Yehoveh promised would happen to her.

<sup>CJB</sup> **1 Kings 21:23** *ADONAI also said this about Izevel: 'The dogs will eat Izevel by the wall around Yizre'el.*

There virtually was not enough left of her to bother to bury, and instead the queen's carcass wound up being spread around like fertilizer, partly as the dung that the dogs that had eaten her would soon deposit. She had received her just due, measure for measure, for her unbridled cruelty, blood lust and idolatry.

The palace grounds where the dogs would defecate and her few remains were thrown was the field of **Naboth**. Everything has come full circle. God has balanced the scales and it's not a very pretty picture, is it? Such is the measure of God's wrath against those who harm His people, turn them away from their God, and then themselves worship other gods. And God's vengeance will again show all its fierceness in this completely ruthless fashion not too far in the future. And again it will be mostly at the hands of horribly evil men, some (like Hitler) who on some level believe that they are doing the Lord's work for Him.

Let's move on to chapter 10.

### READ 2<sup>ND</sup> KINGS CHAPTER 10 all

So much royal blood had already flowed, but that was only the beginning. Jehu was an enigma who was zealous in carrying out his commission to destroy every last member of **Achav's** family and dynasty, and then to destroy Ba'al worship in Israel. But on the other hand **Yehu** did this in his own strength, without true fear or dedication to Yehoveh, God of Israel. He indeed was a chosen instrument of God's wrath; but on the other hand he was not a servant of God. Jehu was ruthless, Machiavellian, and would have set about murdering all possible rivals of **Achav's** and **Achazyah's** families regardless of God's command to do so since it served his political purposes and ambitions. So a God-principle is that even obedience to God's commands, done in the wrong spirit and with the wrong motives, is evil.

Verse 1 says that Ahab had 70 sons living in Samaria. Our CJB says 70 descendants, which is not literal (the Hebrew is **ben**, meaning sons or children) but descendants is really a better translation because these were certainly not all sons or grandsons, but also probably included nephews and grandnephews. Further the number 70 is a round number meant to be symbolic and not precise. The number 70 is the product of the number 7 and the number 10. The number 7 indicates perfect totality and is the divine ideal number. The number 10 indicates order and fullness. When multiplied together to equal 70, the number is representative of the whole. It is typological, and so 70 indicates all-inclusiveness. So the idea is that while there were around 70 (plus or minus) male descendants of **Achav**, each eligible in theory to become king, how ever many there actually were in existence were living there at the northern kingdom's capital, **Shomron**: all of them.

So we find that the bulk of **Achav's** family lived in Samaria, and so **Yehu** wouldn't be done with exterminating the **Achav** dynasty until those living there were dead. But since Samaria was a heavily defended walled city, and taking it could be costly and time consuming, he needed to come up with a plan to find out who of the old regime would renounce their former allegiances and side with him. Thus he wrote letters to each of the elders and officials who had

taken charge of one or more of the former king's male descendants. The Hebrew term for these officials is **sar**; it is a general term whose context can make it to mean anything from prince, to ruler, to chief; generally any kind of upper echelon leader. Thus these **sar** are men in various positions of leadership.

Jehu, being a warrior, challenges these men to a battle for the keys to the kingdom. The letters he sends to them say that they have at their disposal war chariots, horses, an arsenal of weapons, and a fortress. So, they should choose from among the 70 royal descendants in their charge, make one of them king, and then fight with Jehu to see who wins the day and the right to be King of Israel.

The **sar** held a meeting amongst themselves and asked rhetorically if two experienced kings (the kings of Israel and Judah) couldn't defeat Jehu, how would they fare with a youth on the throne? So with self preservation in mind, they responded to Jehu's letter with one of their own that effectively said, we surrender. We won't challenge you as king. Just tell us what you want done and we'll do it.

In verse 6 **Yehu** gave them his terms: each man who is in charge of one or more of the 70 princes is to behead them, and send their heads to Jehu by the next day. The city officials wasted no time and did their dirty work. They put the dismembered heads into kettles and sent them to Jehu, who was in Jezreel. Jehu was nothing if not clever. By having these leading men kill all of the king's descendants, they became co-conspirators in Jehu's consolidation of power. Now Jehu could rightfully claim that he didn't kill the king's descendants, and none of his own men did it either, and thus he wouldn't risk a bad public image.

Even so, Jehu wanted everyone to see that the house of **Achav** no longer existed, so he had the heads piled up into two mounds at the city gates of Jezreel. No doubt this also sent a gruesome warning to any who might consider hiding some stray descendant of **Achav's** that such a folly would prove fatal. In fact **Yehu** stood by the bloody piles and told the people that they were righteous, and implied that he was too even though he fully admitted to killing **Y'horam**. But, he asked rhetorically, who killed all the men represented by this pile of heads? In other words, you people didn't do this, and I, Jehu, didn't do this; it was actually **Achav's** own servants who had killed **Achav's** descendants in but a choice of loyalty. And so all that had been done was free of sin as far as the people were concerned and as far as **Yehu** was concerned. All of this had been decreed through God's prophet Elijah, and Jehu deserved merit and the people's loyalty, not curses and their resistance, for his actions.

This Jehu was a shrewd man. He had deflected blame upon himself, he had made the leading men of Samaria accomplices and thus allies (willing or not), he provided evidence that what he had done was in fulfillment of Elijah's prophecy, and he established himself as the only, and legitimate, new monarch over Israel who deserved to be respected and feared.

But verse 11 tells us something even more disquieting. In addition to **Achav's** dynastic family members, Jehu killed their friends, their priests, and anyone that could be associated at any level to the royal family. This went well beyond God's command to **Yehu** to destroy **Achav's** dynasty (meaning anyone who could inherit the throne), and that is a pattern that we have seen, and will continue to see, for all those wicked men who God uses from time to time to punish His chosen people for their rebellion. These men eventually succumb to their lusts for power and megalomania and venture far beyond God's instructions so that they now make themselves subject to the Lord punishing them at some point. Not long from this point in 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings we'll see the infamous Nebuchadnezzar as but another wicked man that God anoints to punish His people, but he goes too far, gets too severe, and eventually His Kingdom of Babylon is taken from him by Yehoveh and turned over to the Persians as a result.

It was time for Jehu to officially assume the throne, and the place to do that was in his kingdom's capital city. So in verse 12 he leaves Jezreel to venture to Samaria. But along the way, by chance, he happened upon some relatives of the deceased King of Judah, **Achazyah**. 42 of these men were on their way to Jezreel, obviously unaware of what had happened to their king or to the king of Israel. 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 22 makes it clear that these men were nephews of **Achazyah**, so they were indeed eligible to become King of Judah under the right circumstances.

We can get the false idea from the many English translations (including the CJB) that they were headed to Jezreel to mourn with their other family members over the death of **Achazyah** because many versions say that they were coming to pay their respects. Actually the word being translated is **shalom**; so all this means to convey is that these 42 nephews were coming to greet or to wish-well their various family members (remember, they were related to both the king of Israel and the king of Judah who were, as far most folks knew, still alive and well and staying at the Jezreel palace). This was a regular show of solidarity and family respect typical and expected in the Middle East.

Jehu couldn't believe his good fortune! He didn't have to venture south, to Judah, to try and round-up these men (who soon might have gone into hiding once they found out what had happened), but instead they've come to him like ignorant sheep to a slaughter. And it is ironic that the very place that he crossed paths with them was at a sheep shearing facility. **Yehu** ordered them to be captured and immediately executed. He left their lifeless bodies in the pit of the shearing shed so that passers by on this busy highway would find the royal corpses and the news would spread quickly that the King of Judah's family is well on its way to extinction.

From there, **Yehu** continued on his journey towards Samaria, when he encountered a fellow named **Y'honadav** son of **Rekhav**, and then proceeds to show him the greatest admiration and respect. Who is this **Y'honadav** and why all the cow-towing and flattery? This man's



identity is quite fascinating, and that's what we'll look into next time.