

Week 16: Jehu Becomes King; Jezebel Dies: 2 Kings 9–10

Hook



Main Point: God puts rulers in authority and removes them from power.

Start by asking the group a quick question game:

“How long would you wait for ...?”

Go around the room and ask:

- How long would you wait in line for your favorite concert tickets?
- How long would you wait for your food at a restaurant before getting frustrated?
- How long would you wait for someone who says, “I’m almost there”?
- How long would you wait for a package you ordered online before assuming it got lost?
- How long would you wait for justice if someone had seriously wronged you?

Most of us are terrible at waiting – especially when we feel like something should have happened already. We want answers now, justice now, change now.

But God’s timing is not our own. At times, there are years between promises given and when those promises fulfilled. During seasons of waiting—when God seems silent and evil appears to be winning—we can rest in the certainty that God is faithful and always keeps His promises. Today's story reminds us that even when we cannot see what God is doing, He is still at work, accomplishing His purposes in His perfect timing.

Ahab is gone, but his family is still on the throne. Jezebel is still influencing the nation. The idolatry hasn’t stopped. Years earlier, God had spoken through Elijah that judgment was coming – but nothing seemed to happen.

Until one day, a prophet showed up with a flask of oil and everything changed. Today we’ll see what happens when God’s perfect timing arrives.

RECAP: In the first lesson we talked about the role of the Old Testament prophets as God's messengers calling His people to repent and how they pointed ahead to Jesus. In week 2, we saw God's provision for both Elijah and the widow of Zarephath during the drought, which was a consequence of Israel's idolatry. In lesson 3, God raised the widow's son from the dead, which not only showed His sovereign power but also His care for the vulnerable and His heart for all the nations. In lesson 4, we saw God's superiority over other "gods" as Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. In lesson 5, Elijah ran for his life from the wrath of Jezebel and found refuge in the Lord. God spoke to him not in the thunder and lightning but in the still, small voice.

In lesson 6, Elijah called Elisha to succeed him, and Elisha left his old life behind. Then Elijah prophesied the deaths of Jezebel and Ahab but delayed the end of Ahab's dynasty because he repented. Ahab's first son died because he worshipped false gods, and his second son became king. In lesson 7, Elijah was taken up to heaven in the whirlwind, and Elisha took over his ministry with the same Holy Spirit upon him. In lesson 8, we explored exactly what it meant when Elisha asked Elijah for a "double portion" of his spirit. In lessons 9 and 10, God brought judgment on those who rejected His prophets and His message but brought life, healing and blessing to those who came to Him in faith. In lesson 11, God fed the hungry through two miracles, healing the poison in the stew and multiplying food. In lesson 12, Elisha healed a Gentile leper and refused to take his thank-you gift, but his servant took the money instead, and we saw how Elisha responded. In lessons 13 and 14, the Lord supernaturally fought the battles of Israel with Aram. In lesson 15, God restored the land of the Shunammite woman after the famine.

In this lesson, Jehu rises to power and destroys all of Ahab's sons, friends and priests, and Jezebel is killed and eaten by dogs as prophesied by Elijah. This reminds us again that God is sovereign over all things, and He executes justice in His timing.

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Book

Main Point: God puts rulers in authority and removes them from power.

2 Kings 9:1–16 and reread 1 Kings 19:15–18 [Read]

Talking Point 1: God is sovereign over all.

Q: How did the anointing of Jehu fulfill an old prophecy given to Elijah?

Q: Why might the commanders of Israel's army call the prophet a "mad fellow"?

After speaking to Elijah in the still, small whisper, God told him to anoint Hazael to be king over Syria and Jehu to be king over Israel, as well as Elisha to be prophet in his place (1 Kings 19:15–16). Immediately afterward, Elisha joined Elijah in his ministry, but these other two men didn't come to power until decades later, here in this section of 2 Kings. In the most recent lesson, we saw Hazael become king of Syria because he murdered his master, Ben-Hadad (8:7–15). In the next section, which we didn't read (8:16–29), Jehoram became king of Judah (S) and married a daughter of Ahab of Israel (N) and followed in Ahab and Jezebel's same sins of idolatry, even though he was a king of Judah (S). His son Ahaziah became the next king of Judah (S) and also followed in Ahab and Jezebel's sins. Both halves of the nation were turning away from God at this point in history.

Ahaziah of Judah (S) and Joram of Israel (N) went to war together against Hazael of Syria. Joram (N) was wounded and Ahaziah (S) went to see him. Elisha told one of the sons of the prophets to go anoint Jehu as king of Israel (N), which would have been more clandestine than if Elisha had gone himself. The command to tie up his garments meant he was to run there as quickly as possible. Jehu was the commander of Joram's army and was at the front lines of their battle with Syria at Ramoth-Gilead. Elisha told the prophet to pull him aside in private, anoint him king over Israel, and leave immediately. This was to be done in private so the prophet could get away quickly.

Elijah had anointed Jehu king decades before, as he had done with Hazael. Yet it was only now happening. The young man, one of the sons of the prophets who anointed Jehu at Elisha's instruction prophesied that Jehu would avenge the blood of the prophets of Yahweh whom Jezebel had murdered (2 Kings 9:1–10) by cutting off the line of Ahab from the earth and allowing Jezebel to be eaten by dogs in the street instead of buried. Elijah had prophesied this years before, but because Ahab had humbled himself before God, God had delayed it until the days of his son instead of in his own lifetime (1 Kings 21:20–29). That time had now arrived; Jehoram was Ahab's son (the second of his sons to reign in Israel after him), and he had been wounded in battle and was ill. God was fulfilling His promise to cut off Ahab's dynasty and carry out vengeance on Jezebel.

After the young prophet left, the other commanders asked why he had come, calling him a “madman.” This was a common term used by those who didn’t believe the prophets were really sent by God; they believed they were insane (Jeremiah 29:26; Hosea 9:7). This happened to Jesus, too; the religious leaders said He was either demon-possessed or insane (John 10:19–20). Even His own family thought He was out of his mind at the beginning of His ministry (Mark 3:20–21). This wasn’t because the prophets behaved as if they were mentally ill but because their message was so radical that it sounded like madness to those who didn’t understand what they heard. Paul wrote that the very Gospel itself sounds like foolishness to those who don’t believe (1 Corinthians 1:18–25). Even today, bold Christians are sometimes dismissed as “mad” by those who don’t want to believe their message. It’s easier to call someone crazy than to listen to the hard truths they are preaching and be convicted.

Yet in this story, even though they believed the prophet to be a madman, when they heard what he had said (that Jehu had been anointed king), they agreed and declared Jehu king, too. They didn’t suddenly believe the prophet’s words; Jehu called it their *decision*. They were making a political move to support Jehu over the king who had been wounded in battle. Jehu had been loyal to Joram for his whole reign and to his father, Ahab, before that, but Jehu was a powerful man. When he suggested he may become king, these other leaders supported him. The anointing shows us that Jehu was God’s sovereign choice, but the commanders’ support of it shows us how God can use human motives and schemes to accomplish His will. No matter who plans or schemes, God is ultimately in control.

Q: Describe a time when you heard people say the Word of God sounds a little crazy. How can we trust in God’s Word when it seems crazy to the world?

Q: How has God shown you He is in control of all things? Give an example.

2 Kings 9:17–10:17 and reread 1 Kings 21:17–24 [Read]

Talking Point 2: God executes justice in His timing; His timing is perfect.

Q: Why did Joram send horsemen to meet Jehu? What did they do?

Q: How did Jehu’s actions in this story fulfill Elijah’s earlier prophecies?

Jehu went to Jezreel, where Joram, king of Israel (N) was trying to recover from his injuries, and Ahaziah, king of Judah (S) was visiting him. When the watchman saw Jehu coming, Joram assumed he was coming from the battlefield to bring news to him; Jehu was a commander of Joram’s army. So Joram sent horsemen to meet Jehu, asking if there was peace. This could either mean they were asking if there was peace between Israel/Judah and Syria or asking if Jehu was coming in peace (this is how the NIV translates it).¹ The rapid approach of a chariot like this could only mean two things – either they were fleeing the enemy (Syria) or coming with evil intent to their own king.²

Jehu answered the horsemen kind of cryptically – “What do you have to do with peace? Turn around and ride behind me.”

This was an invitation to join his rebellion against Joram, though Joram himself didn't yet know what was happening. Jehu's statement about peace could also speak on a spiritual level: they would not find peace because the kings of Judah and Israel were worshipping other gods, not Yahweh alone. Jehu said this explicitly a few verses later when he asked the king how there could be peace when there is so much idolatry in Israel (2 Kings 9:22).³ This is consistent with the pattern established when they first entered the land in Judges: when Israel's leaders followed God, they had peace; when they committed idolatry, they experienced oppression from their enemies (Judges 2:16–23).

Jehu sent two messengers and neither returned. So Joram, king of Israel (N) and Ahaziah, king of Judah (S) went to meet Jehu, each in his own chariot. They met him at the property of Naboth, the vineyard owner Jezebel had killed so Ahab could take his vineyard. This had been the final straw for the Lord's judgment against Ahab, when Elijah pronounced the end of his dynasty (1 Kings 21). This wasn't necessarily the worst thing Ahab did, but it showed a sense of entitlement and a blatant disregard for God's laws about land ownership. Ahab behaved as if he could do and have whatever he wanted because he was king instead of seeing his role as a servant of God's people, ruling on His behalf, with God as the true King (Deuteronomy 17:14–20). Meeting at Naboth's property highlights the fact that Jehu would now carry out the judgment Elijah had prophesied.

Joram himself now asked Jehu if there was peace, meaning peace between Israel/Judah and Syria. Again, Jehu answered in a way that focused on the spiritual health of Israel, not its military health; there could be no peace in Israel because of Jezebel's atrocities against Yahweh. Though Ahab was dead and his sons had taken over his throne, Jezebel's influence was still strong. Joram immediately realized Jehu was revolting against his rule and fled to tell Ahaziah, king of Judah (S). But Jehu shot Joram and commanded his aide to throw his body on the vineyard of Naboth, to fulfill the prophecy Jehu had heard Elijah pronounce, that God would repay the blood of Naboth on this very plot of ground. Ahaziah tried to flee, but Jehu shot him, too, because of his alliance with Joram and his idolatry. But as a son of David, his body was carried to the tomb of his fathers and buried properly.

When Jehu went to execute justice against Jezebel, her servants joined his side as well (9:33). Jehu sent them to collect her body and bury her as royalty, but when they said her flesh had been eaten, he confirmed the fulfillment of Elijah's prophecy. Jehu also slaughtered all 70 sons of Ahab, all his noblemen, close friends and priests, fulfilling God's word that his whole house would be cut off. Jehu called this his “zeal for the Lord” because he was executing God's judgment on Ahab and Jezebel.

This story can be a hard one to read, but it shows us that God takes idolatry very seriously. Though Jehu's actions were violent, he was executing divine judgment against the pervasive idolatry and corruption that had plagued Israel (N) for generations and was also infecting Judah (S). God stopped the line of Ahab before they led the people even further into idolatry and away from Him. In Jehu's story, the prophecies of Elijah were fulfilled, though decades later. Though God's timing may not always be what we think it should be, we can trust Him to execute justice and make things right in His timing.

Q: What injustices do we see in our world today? How can we trust that God will take care of them in His timing?

Q: What are some ways people seek physical peace while missing spiritual issues or being misaligned with God? What would it look like to pursue spiritual peace instead?

2 Kings 10:18–33 [Read]

Talking Point 3: God wants a heart committed to Him alone, no other gods.

Q: What did Jehu do about idolatry in Israel? How did his actions fall short?

Q: What does this story say about Jehu's zeal for the Lord? His heart for the Lord?

Jehu did show great zeal for the Lord by ridding the land of all the prophets, worshippers, priests and pillars of Baal and the temple of Baal. He even made the house of Baal into a latrine, which desecrated it. Jehu completely wiped Baal worship out of Israel (N). When he destroyed the house of Baal, Jehu double-checked to make sure there were no servants of Yahweh there, only Baal worshippers. This made it clear his actions were about cleansing the land of idolatry.

Yet Jehu fell short in following the law of the Lord with his whole heart. God said he did well in carrying out what God commanded regarding the house of Ahab, but he did not turn from the sins of Jeroboam, the king who originally split Israel (N) off from Judah (S) and created false worship of the golden calves at Dan and Bethel. Jehu carried out the mission he was commanded to do, but he didn't completely turn Israel back to the worship of Yahweh alone. He did have zeal for the Lord, but he didn't follow God with his whole heart the way Caleb had in the first exodus generation (Numbers 14:24; Joshua 14:8). He didn't walk in the ways of David; his heart was not wholly committed to Yahweh as David's had been. This is the recurring phrase Kings uses to evaluate each king's faithfulness (1 Kings 3:14; 15:3; 2 Kings 22:2, et. al.). David was not perfect; he committed grave sins. But he worshipped Yahweh alone; this was the litmus test for all future kings of Israel or Judah.

God said He would allow Jehu's dynasty to continue for four generations, but not past that. God didn't take away the consequence He had promised; He just delayed it. Also,

during Jehu's reign, Hazael of Syria took over much of the territory of Israel (N). The Bible describes it as God "cutting off" parts of Israel. Before Israel was destroyed by Assyria (722 BC) and their people assimilated into other people groups, God took away more and more of their land over time. Jehu's dynasty was the longest of the dynasties of Israel (N), but they fell deeper into idolatry, and they experienced political instability as a result. They were the last real dynasty; after them, a series of kings from different families ruled for short periods of time. Israel (N) only lasted about 40 more years after the last king from Jehu's family before being destroyed by Assyria.

Jehu's obedience led to generational blessing, but his idolatry was also passed down to future generations, and the idolatry grew worse over time. His story, like so many others, shows us that our lives have an impact on future generations of our family and even others around us, for better or for worse. If we live in a way that honors God and sets a positive example for our children, it can impact their lives and the lives of their children and their children's children, for generations to come. When we sin, as David did, we need to confess and repent. It means living a life committed to worshipping God alone, doing our best to follow Jesus and love our neighbor as ourselves.

The call is to pursue wholehearted devotion. That means when we mess up, we return again and again to God. Jehu had zeal but not wholehearted devotion. His story shows us that doing God's work is not always the same as following Him with our whole heart. His passion for doing what God had called him to do was real, but his heart was divided. The legacy we leave behind for generations to come will be shaped not just by the things we do for Jesus, but whether we truly give Him our whole heart.

Q: Describe someone you know who follows God with his whole heart. What is his life like? How can you see his wholehearted devotion in the way he lives?

Q: How are you intentionally trying to make a positive impact on future generations?

Q: How might God be calling us to combat idolatry today?

Q: How can we be zealous for God while also extending grace, compassion, and forgiveness?

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Took

Main Point: God puts rulers in authority and removes them from power.

This week, take time to examine your heart before God. Ask yourself: *Am I am I truly walking with Jesus in wholehearted devotion?*

Identify one area where your heart may be divided – whether it is pride, comfort, control, success, relationships or something else competing for first place in your life. Bring that area before the Lord in prayer and confession, trusting His promise in 1 John 1:9.

Then, choose one practical step of surrender this week – something that demonstrates not just zeal, but wholehearted devotion. It could be forgiving someone, spending intentional time in prayer, letting go of a habit, reconciling a relationship, obeying God in an area you’ve been resisting, or even taking a break from an area of service that has become unhealthy.

Remember: The legacy you leave is not just built by what you do for God, but by how fully your heart belongs to Him.

CHALLENGES

THINK: Think about the difference between what it means to have zeal for the Lord and what it means to follow God with your whole heart. How might people in today’s world do what Jehu did, showing zeal for the Lord but missing wholehearted devotion? What would it look like to follow God with your whole heart? What things might be standing in the way of your wholehearted devotion to God? How might you need to repent and turn back to the Lord?

PRAY: Pray for all those who are waiting for God to execute justice on their behalf. Pray for them to trust the Lord’s timing and listen for His voice. Pray for those who are called to help execute justice for people, such as lawyers, social workers and ministries in our world today. Pray for them to be led by God, hear His wisdom, and be empowered by Him in their mission.

ACT: Confront idolatry. Reflect on the ways you see idolatry in the world around you. Ask God how you can speak prophetically into the world against that idolatry.

¹ The Hebrew only says, “The king says, ‘Peace?’” Both translations (“Is it peace?” and “Do you come in peace?”) add words that aren’t in the Hebrew.

² John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Intervarsity Press, 2000).

³ Iain W. Provan, *1 and 2 Kings, New International Biblical Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995)