

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 6

THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS

CHAPTER 10

INTRODUCTION

In chapter 9, Jehu was anointed king of Israel by a prophet chosen by Elisha. He was specifically instructed to “smite the house of Ahab” that the LORD might avenge the murder of His prophets under the hand of Ahab (9:6,7). This anointing of Jehu was delayed because Elijah for reasons not given did not carry out God’s commission to him. Delay did not mean God had forgotten or changed His mind. It was probably an issue of the timing. Jehu carried out his mission immediately and he killed Jehoram, the King of Israel, and wounded Ahaziah, the King of Judah, who was Jehoram’s nephew. Ahaziah fled to Megiddo where he died and then was taken to Jerusalem to be buried. Jehu then proceeded to Jezreel where Jezebel was. At the instigation of Jehu, Jezebel’s chamberlains (eunuchs) threw her off the palace and killed her (9:32, 33). God had demonstrated that He was true to His Word. Jehu was the instrument used by God to fulfil His judgement upon the house of Ahab. The present study shows how zealous Jehu was in completing the destruction

of the house of Ahab and purging Israel of the worship of Baal. He was commended for all these works but he was also condemned. Close examination of the account of Jehu’s works shows why he was commended and yet condemned. This could lead to the understanding that while one could be commended for doing God’s work and yet could still be censured for doing it in the wrong way.

Some students of the Word might think that the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament are different. The God of the Old Testament seems to be a merciless God whereas the God of the New Testament is loving and merciful. It is recommended that they read the book of Revelation. The Bible clearly teaches that there is only one God. So there must be a reconciliation of these two impressions.

At least four separate massacres are recorded here. There is much that can be learned about God and about human nature.

OUTLINE

1. Massacre #1 of Ahab’s Seventy Sons (vv.1-7);
2. Massacre #2 of the Rest of the House of Ahab (vv.8-11);
3. Massacre #3 of Ahaziah’s Brothers (v.v.12-17);
4. Massacre #4 of The Prophets of Baal (vv.18-28);
5. Jehu’s failed to return to God when he became king (vv.29-36).

COMMENTARY

Massacre #1 of Ahab's Seventy Sons – 10:1-7

Jehu continued to carry out his mission with great fervour. What happened in Jezreel had caused the rulers of the city to flee and seek refuge and protection in Samaria. And from Jezreel, Jehu wrote a letter to them and to the elders and the officers who brought up Ahab's children. In his letter, Jehu intimidated the rulers of Jezreel, the elders of Samaria, to choose the best son of Ahab's children and to make him King over Israel. Since they had chariots and horses, and a fortified city, their chosen king could fight and defend the royal families. The recipients of the letter fearfully declined Jehu's proposal. They were in a dilemma. They reasoned that they stood no chance at all against Jehu's army since the "two kings", Jehoram the King of Israel and Ahaziah, the King of Judah, could not stand up to them (v.4). So they sent word to Jehu that they were prepared to surrender and to submit to him absolutely.

Jehu sent another letter. He demanded that the rulers of Jezreel and the elders behead "your master's (i.e. Ahab's) sons." Then they had to deliver the seventy heads to him in Jezreel by the next day. Jehu did not give them time to think over. So the rulers of Jezreel and the elders of Samaria had no choice but to do the gruesome task in order to show their loyalty to Jehu. They beheaded the seventy sons of Ahab. They put them

in baskets and sent them to Jehu in Jezreel.

Jehu was informed that the seventy heads of Ahab's sons have been delivered. Jehu ordered his men to pile the heads and lay them into two heaps at the gate of Jezreel until the morning. The display of the heads of Ahab's sons in public was designed to intimidate the people into complete submission. "Ye are righteous," said Jehu (v.9b). This was to pacify the hearts of the people that those who executed Ahab's sons were not the murderers. Jehu declared that he was the one who conspired against Ahab. But for the slaying of Ahab's sons, he attributed it to God's directive to him. He did it in obedience to God's Word. Jehu therefore exonerated himself of any guilt in the whole affair.

Massacre #2 of the Rest of the House of Ahab – 10:8-11

Jehu was thorough in liquidating every rival and opposition to the throne. He slew those who were related to Ahab in one way or another, even governing officials and the priests who served Ahab. He left none who were in any way related or linked to Ahab alive in Jezreel.

And when he left Jezreel and went to Samaria, he did the same (v.17).

Massacre #3 of Ahaziah's Brothers – 10:12-14

Jehu left Jezreel for the capital city Samaria. On the southward journey to Samaria, he was at a house of shearing sheep. Jehu met forty-two "brethren" of Ahaziah (vv.13, 14). The

word “brethren” does not mean that all the forty-two of them were the brothers of Ahaziah. The word is also used to refer to near kinsmen or relatives of Ahaziah. They had come from Judah to visit their relatives, the children of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. When Jehu heard that they were blood relatives of Ahab and Jezebel, he ordered his men to kill all of them at the shearing house. All forty-two of them were massacred. Not one was left alive.

Jehonadab the Rechabite – 10:15-17

Not long after he left the shearing house, Jehu met (“lighted” or found) a Rechabite chieftain named Jehonadab. The Rechabites were an ascetic community who led a simple nomadic life, living in tents. They believed that this was the true way of the LORD. They refused to settle down and raise crops. They also abstained from drinking wine. The prophet Jeremiah regarded them as an example of a people who had refused to bow their knees to Baal, and who were obedient to YAHWEH.

Jehonadab was a distinguished man who was highly respected.¹ He was coming to meet Jehu. His purpose was probably to congratulate Jehu for a thorough job of destroying the wicked families of Ahab. He would therefore make a strong and valuable

¹ **Jeremiah 35:6-7**, “But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever: Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers.”

ally. Jehu saluted Jehonadab. Jehu asked him, “Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?”(v.15). Jehu was saying in effect whether Jehonadab approved of what he had done and was one with him in affection. Jehonadab answered in the affirmative. The offering of the hand and inviting of Jehonadab to ride with him in his own chariot was more than a chariot ride. It was a sign of sealing their friendship and alliance. Jehu then invited Jehonadab to go with him to witness his zeal for YAHWEH. When Jehu and Jehonadab entered into the capital city of Samaria, Jehu wasted no time in killing all the relatives of Ahab who had remained in Samaria.

Massacre #4 of The Prophets of Baal – 10:18-28

Jehu turned his attention to the false prophets of Baal. He conceived a plan to kill all the prophets of Baal in one sweep. He assembled all the Samaritans together. He told them that Ahab served Baal “a little” but Jehu would serve Baal more (v.18). The statement that “Ahab served Baal a little” intimates that although Ahab allowed his wife Jezebel to promote the worship of Baal in Samaria, he himself only paid lip service. He adhered to the worship of the LORD (YAHWEH) but via a graven image that violated the Second Commandment—“*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth*” (Exodus 20:4). YAHWEH was made in the image of a calf. The fact that Ahab

worshipped Baal “a little” was further evidenced by the naming of his two sons in honour of the LORD—“Ahaziah” which means “the possession of the LORD” and “Jehoram” which means “the LORD is exalted.”

Jehu invited all the prophets, servants and priests of Baal to a great sacrifice to Baal. It was compulsory for every one of them to attend. Any one who refused to attend the religious ceremony would be killed. Jehu’s secret intention was to destroy all the worshippers of Baal. So the worshippers of Baal must be very thrilled to see that Jehu would lead them in offering Baal a great sacrifice. They came and filled the temple of Baal. Jehu led Jehonadab into the temple. He told his men to make sure that everyone in the temple was a Baal worshipper and not a servant of the LORD.

Before Jehu offered the great sacrifice to Baal, he appointed eighty men to guard against any of the worshippers of Baal from escaping. Should any one of them escape, that guard would have to pay with his life (v.24). When Jehu had finished with the offering to Baal, he gave the order to his guards and captains to kill all the worshippers of Baal. After that they removed and smashed the Baal idols. He also destroyed the temple of Baal and turned it into “a draught house”—a latrine. This was the greatest insult to the worshippers of Baal. Thus, Jehu destroyed Baal in Israel. He was commended for putting an end to Baal worship in Israel.

Jehu’s Failure – 10:29-31

Apparently, Jehu had done commendably well. He fulfilled the LORD’S commission that was given to him in destroying the house of Ahab (v.30). He was also commended for destroying Baalism in Israel and killing all its worshippers (v.28). For this, God promised him that his dynasty would last for four generations.

Now verse 29 begins with a conjunction of adversity, “howbeit” or “but” (v.31). Jehu did not depart from the sin of Jeroboam who made two calves to represent the LORD and caused the people to worship them. In other words, Jehu’s religious cleansing of Israel was not as thorough as his zealous destruction of the house of Ahab. He took no heed to walk in the ways of the LORD God of Israel with all his heart. In this regard, he was not sincere. For this, Jehu was condemned.

Jehu Reigned in Israel – 10:32-36

The remaining verses of the chapter summarise the reign of King Jehu over Israel. Following the words that Jehu “took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD”; the LORD “began to cut Israel short”. God raised Hazael King of Syria to dominate and reduce the territories of Israel east of Jordan. God did not cut off parts of Israel in a moment. Hazael’s actions of taking parts of Israel each time served as a warning to Israel and an opportunity for Israel to turn from her evil ways to the LORD. Jehu reigned for twenty-eight years (841-814 B.C.). He died a natural death. He was buried in

Samaria. His son Jehoahaz became the King of Israel in the year 814 B.C.

PRACTICAL VALUE

Some Christians who understand that God is loving and merciful find it disconcerting that God is also an avenging God who shows no mercy to unrepentant and recalcitrant sinners. God's Word to Jehu to smite the house of Ahab is an undeniable example. Jehu was commended for ruthlessly killing all those who were related to Ahab. How can we reconcile these two seemingly opposing natures?

We have to lay out the facts. First, God is holy and righteous (Psalm 145:17). He also hates sin, and the penalty of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Second, Ahab and Jezebel were responsible for the murder of Naboth (1 Kings 21). They were also responsible for the killing of many of God's prophets and other righteous people (1 Kings 19:10). And who would know that many more could have died if Ahab's sons were not put to death. Third, God had given Ahab and his sons, opportunities to repent of their sins and to turn to Him. Let us assume that if God is not an avenging God, then He would be sitting unconcerned to the public stoning of Naboth to death and the unjust seizure of his land and property.

So God's "love" for Ahab and the wicked Jezebel is such that He could not bring Himself to punish them. That would be unthinkable. God clearly reveals to us in His Word, both

in the Old Testament and in the New Testament that He is both Holy and Righteous, as well as Loving and Merciful.

Jehu was commended for destroying the house of Ahab and for killing the worshippers of Baal. But one wonders whether Jehu had carried out the command of God with the right attitude. Could he have done in a more proper way in destroying the house of Ahab? Did he not show off his zeal for the LORD to Jehonadab? In other words, Jehu could be applauded for obeying God but he could be censured for the way he went about it. The end does not justify the means. God's work must be done in God's way. He was made the King of Israel so he had the power, the means and the authority to carry out the commandment of God in a better way that would correspond to his position. The public display of heads and absolving himself of the guilt was not necessary. He was ruthless and callous. His purging of the worshippers of Baal was right. But one wonders what his motive was. Was he getting rid of this evil in Israel, or was he politically trying to remove any dissenting voice from a strong religious section of the country? If he had gone all the way in smashing the two golden calves and tearing down all the pagan altars and high-places, all his other actions could have been deemed genuine.

God is very gracious and patient towards those who do not walk in His ways. He did not take away Jehu for following the sins of

Jeroboam. God told him of his sins. Jehu should have repented and turned to God. He was more concerned of his political future. God allowed his descendants to rule Israel till the fourth generation. He also trimmed off the boundaries of Israel gradually, intimating that the Israelites should realise their sin and repent. In the light of these, the LORD our God should be worshipped, loved and obeyed. AMEN

DAILY READING & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: 2 Kings 10:1-7; Deuteronomy 9:6-11.

TUESDAY: 2 Kings 10:8-11; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9; Hebrews 10:30-31.

WEDNESDAY: 2 Kings 10:12-17; Psalm 73:6-8; Jeremiah 35:1-19.

THURSDAY: 2 Kings 10:18-28; Psalm 115:1-18.

FRIDAY: 2 Kings 10:29-36; Hosea 5:3-7; 6:4-7.

- 2. Why did Jehu say that he was told by Elijah in verse 10 when in fact it was Elisha who commissioned and anointed him? In your opinion, did Jehu over kill i.e. killed more than those that the LORD had instructed him to?

Discussion Questions

- 1. Was Jehu utterly ruthless or was he being a good politician by removing all his potential rivals for the throne or was he obeying God?

- 3. How did Jehu exterminate the Baal worshippers in one blow? Was it right for him to do this? In what better way could he have done?

4. What did Jehu fail to do after exterminating the Baal worshippers? How did God evaluate his acts? What were the blessing and consequences of his actions? What should he have done to be blessed more abundantly?

5. How would you describe Jehu (i) in terms of his natural character and (ii) in terms of his religious attitude?

6. How can we tell, when we oppose evil forces and movements, whether we are moved by the Spirit of God or motivated by our own ambitions or desires?
