

SECOND KINGS

Chapter 10

Ahab's Family Killed

Now there were in Samaria seventy sons of the house of Ahab. So Jehu wrote letters and sent them to Samaria: to the officials of Jezreel, to the elders and to the guardians of Ahab's children. He said, ² "As soon as this letter reaches you, since your master's sons are with you and you have chariots and horses, a fortified city and weapons, ³ choose the best and most worthy of your master's sons and set him on his father's throne. Then fight for your master's house." ⁴ But they were terrified and said, "If two kings could not resist him, how can we?" ⁵ So the palace administrator, the city governor, the elders and the guardians sent this message to Jehu: "We are your servants and we will do anything you say. We will not appoint anyone as king; you do whatever you think best." ⁶ Then Jehu wrote them a second letter, saying, "If you are on my side and will obey me, take the heads of your master's sons and come to me in Jezreel by this time tomorrow." Now the royal princes, seventy of them, were with the leading men of the city, who were rearing them. ⁷ When the letter arrived, these men took the princes and slaughtered all seventy of them. They put their heads in baskets and sent them to Jehu in Jezreel. ⁸ When the messenger arrived, he told Jehu, "They have brought the heads of the princes." Then Jehu ordered, "Put them in two piles at the entrance of the city gate until morning." ⁹ The next morning Jehu went out. He stood before all the people and said, "You are innocent. It was I who conspired against my master and killed him, but who killed all these? ¹⁰ Know then, that not a word the LORD has spoken against the house of Ahab will fail. The LORD has done what he promised through his servant Elijah." ¹¹ So Jehu killed everyone in Jezreel who remained of the house of Ahab, as well as all his chief men, his close friends and his priests, leaving him no survivor. ¹² Jehu then set out and went toward Samaria. At Beth Eked of the Shepherds, ¹³ he met some relatives of Ahaziah king of Judah and asked, "Who are you?" They said, "We are relatives of Ahaziah, and we have come down to greet the families of the king and of the queen mother." ¹⁴ "Take them alive!" he ordered. So they took them alive and slaughtered them by the well of Beth Eked—forty-two men. He left no survivor. ¹⁵ After he left there, he came upon Jehonadab son of Recab, who was on his way to meet him. Jehu greeted him and said, "Are you in accord with me, as I am with you?" "I am," Jehonadab answered. "If so," said Jehu, "give me your hand." So he did, and Jehu helped him up into the chariot. ¹⁶ Jehu said, "Come with me and see my zeal for the LORD." Then he had him ride along in his chariot. ¹⁷ When Jehu came to Samaria, he killed all who were left there of Ahab's family; he destroyed them, according to the word of the LORD spoken to Elijah.

10:1 *Samaria.* In order to consolidate his coup and establish control of the northern kingdom, Jehu still faced the formidable problems of taking the nearly impregnable

fortress of Samaria (see note on 1Ki 16:24) and then of completing the destruction of Ahab's house. (CSB)

Capital of Israel. (TLSB)

seventy sons of the house of Ahab. The number of Ahab's wives is unknown (see 1Ki 20:5). The 70 presumably included both sons and grandsons. (CSB)

Clearly, Jezebel was not Ahab's only wife. (TLSB)

officials. Officers appointed by the king (see 1Ki 4:1–6). (CSB)

elders. Local leaders by virtue of their position in the tribal and family structure (see notes on Ex 3:16; 2Sa 3:17). (CSB)

guardians of Ahab's children. Those entrusted with the care and upbringing of the princes in the royal family. (CSB)

10:3 *fight for your master's house.* Jehu's strategy was to induce the leaders of Samaria into submission to his rule by bluffing a military confrontation. (CSB)

Jehu issued a challenge, forcing the guardians to come to arms or conspire against the young men in their care. The guardians of Ahab's 70 sons or grandsons realized that resistance to the conspiracy was useless. (TLSB)

10:4 *terrified.* The leaders of Samaria were completely intimidated by Jehu's challenge. (CSB)

two kings. Jehoram, Ahab's son and king of Israel, and Ahaziah, king of Judah (9:24, 27). (TLSB)

10:5 *palace administrator.* See note on 1Ki 4:6. (CSB)

city governor. Probably an official appointed by the king who served as commander of the militia of the capital city. (CSB)

the elders and the guardians. See note on v. 1. (CSB)

We are your servants. They transferred their loyalty to the new dynasty and proved their loyalty by sending the severed heads of the former king's offspring to Jehu (v 7). (TLSB)

10:6 *take the heads of your master's sons and come to me.* The wording of Jehu's command contains what appears to be a deliberate ambiguity. The "heads of your master's sons" could be understood as a reference to the leading figures among the 70 descendants of Ahab, such as the crown prince and several other sons of special ability

and standing. On the other hand, the expression could be taken as a reference to the literal heads of all 70 princes. (CSB)

great men. The leaders. (TLSB)

10:7 *slaughtered all seventy.* The leaders of the city understood the communique in the literal sense, as Jehu most certainly had hoped they would. (CSB)

put their heads in baskets and sent them to Jehu. The leaders of Samaria did not carry the heads of the princes to Jezreel themselves as they had been ordered to do by Jehu (see v. 6). It is likely that they feared for their lives. (CSB)

10:8 *Put them in two piles at the entrance of the city gate.* This gruesome procedure imitated the barbaric practice of the Assyrian rulers Ashurnasirpal and Shalmaneser III, whose reigns were characterized by acts of terror. (CSB)

So everyone could see that the coup had wiped them out. (TLSB)

10:9 *It was I who ... killed him.* Jehu openly confessed his own part in the overthrow of the government of Joram. (CSB)

who killed all these? Because of the ambiguous communique Jehu sent to the leaders of Samaria (see note on v. 6), he can now deny any personal responsibility for the slaughter of the 70 sons of Ahab and can lay the blame for it on the leaders of Samaria. (CSB)

Pretending to be surprised by the grisly heap of heads, Jehu pointed out to the turncoats that by their execution of “the house of Ahab” they now were irrevocably committed to his cause. (TLSB)

10:10 *what he promised through his servant Elijah.* See 1Ki 21:20–24, 29. Jehu implies a divine sanction not only for what had already been done but also for his intent to continue the purge of Ahab’s house and associates. (CSB)

10:11 *all his chief men, his close friends and his priests.* Jehu went beyond the responsibility given to him (see 9:7; Hos 1:4) and acted solely on grounds of political self-interest. Jehu himself had been in the service of Ahab (see 9:25). (CSB)

He killed all potential traitors. (TLSB)

10:12 *set out.* Traveling from Jezreel. *Beth-eked.* Lit, “the house of binding,” so named because shepherds bound their sheep there at shearing time. (TLSB)

10:13 *relatives of Ahaziah.* See 2Ch 21:17. (CSB)

Next victims of the purge were 42 Judean relatives of King Ahaziah, whose father had married Athaliah, sister of the slain Israelite king Jehoram (8:18, 26). (TLSB)

families of the king and of the queen mother. Members of the royal family from Judah who had not yet heard of the deaths of Joram and Jezebel. (CSB)

10:14 *alive.* Perhaps to question them. (TLSB)

slaughtered them. As Jehu proceeded to establish himself on the throne, his wholesale executions went beyond the directive of “the word of the LORD” (see note, v 17). Carried away by personal ambition rather than motivated by “zeal for the LORD” (v 16), God’s appointed avenger of the house of Ahab (9:8) went so far as to provoke the Lord to say: “I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel” (Hos 1:4). Cf Is 10:5–19 for God’s judgment of Assyria. (TLSB)

10:15 *Jehonadab son of Rechab.* Jehonadab was the leader of a conservative movement among the Israelites that was characterized by strong opposition to Baalism as well as to various practices of a settled agricultural society, including the building of houses, the sowing of crops and the use of wine. His followers still adhered to these principles over 200 years later and were known as Rechabites (see Jer 35:6–10). (CSB)

Descendants of Rechab (a Kenite like Moses’ father-in-law, Jethro [cf Jgs 1:16]) were extreme in their opposition to the fertility cult of baalism. They opposed agricultural pursuits, particularly the growing of vineyards (Jer 35:6–10), believing that a return to a Bedouin way of life was Israel’s salvation. Jehonadab believed Jehu’s revolt was a step in the right direction. (TLSB)

give me your hand. Welcoming him and drawing him into the chariot. (TLSB)

10:16 *had him ride along.* Public association with Jehonadab gave Jehu added credentials among the rural populace as a follower of the Lord. (CSB)

10:17 Overall, Jehu fulfilled the prophecy as God had intended. However, in some matters he went beyond what God had said. (TLSB)

10:1–17 Jehu pretends to be zealous for the Lord’s way, while disobeying the Lord’s Word. Today, the Lord calls you to follow His Word deliberately, yet not as an excuse for cruel judgment against others. Even the condemnation of God’s Law ultimately serves the peaceful, life-giving purposes of His Gospel, by which He forgives our sins and restores us. • Grant me a faithful heart, O Lord, to follow Your Word and see in it Your compassionate purposes. Amen. (TLSB)

Ministers of Baal Killed

18 Then Jehu brought all the people together and said to them, “Ahab served Baal a little; Jehu will serve him much. **19** Now summon all the prophets of Baal, all his ministers and all his priests. See that no one is missing, because I am going to hold a great sacrifice for Baal. Anyone who fails to come will no longer live.” But

Jehu was acting deceptively in order to destroy the ministers of Baal. ²⁰ Jehu said, “Call an assembly in honor of Baal.” So they proclaimed it. ²¹ Then he sent word throughout Israel, and all the ministers of Baal came; not one stayed away. They crowded into the temple of Baal until it was full from one end to the other. ²² And Jehu said to the keeper of the wardrobe, “Bring robes for all the ministers of Baal.” So he brought out robes for them. ²³ Then Jehu and Jehonadab son of Recab went into the temple of Baal. Jehu said to the ministers of Baal, “Look around and see that no servants of the LORD are here with you—only ministers of Baal.” ²⁴ So they went in to make sacrifices and burnt offerings. Now Jehu had posted eighty men outside with this warning: “If one of you lets any of the men I am placing in your hands escape, it will be your life for his life.” ²⁵ As soon as Jehu had finished making the burnt offering, he ordered the guards and officers: “Go in and kill them; let no one escape.” So they cut them down with the sword. The guards and officers threw the bodies out and then entered the inner shrine of the temple of Baal. ²⁶ They brought the sacred stone out of the temple of Baal and burned it. ²⁷ They demolished the sacred stone of Baal and tore down the temple of Baal, and people have used it for a latrine to this day. ²⁸ So Jehu destroyed Baal worship in Israel. ²⁹ However, he did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit—the worship of the golden calves at Bethel and Dan. ³⁰ The LORD said to Jehu, “Because you have done well in accomplishing what is right in my eyes and have done to the house of Ahab all I had in mind to do, your descendants will sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation.” ³¹ Yet Jehu was not careful to keep the law of the LORD, the God of Israel, with all his heart. He did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam, which he had caused Israel to commit. ³² In those days the LORD began to reduce the size of Israel. Hazael overpowered the Israelites throughout their territory ³³ east of the Jordan in all the land of Gilead (the region of Gad, Reuben and Manasseh), from Aroer by the Arnon Gorge through Gilead to Bashan. ³⁴ As for the other events of Jehu’s reign, all he did, and all his achievements, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel? ³⁵ Jehu rested with his fathers and was buried in Samaria. And Jehoahaz his son succeeded him as king. ³⁶ The time that Jehu reigned over Israel in Samaria was twenty-eight years.

10:18–27 Jehu’s treacherous cunning in luring the Baal worshipers to their death richly deserved the Lord’s rebuke (Hos 1:4). (TLSB)

10:18 *Ahab served Baal a little; Jehu will serve him much.* After settling in Samaria, Jehu gave the appearance of having previously appealed to the word of the Lord as a mere political maneuver. (CSB)

Ironic statements declare, yet hide, Jehu’s deadly intent against the Baal worshipers, who had been close supporters of Ahab’s dynasty. Cf 1Ki 16:31. (TLSB)

10:19 *prophets ... worshipers ... priests.* Different orders of the religion. (TLSB)

will no longer live. Jehu’s reputation made this no idle threat. (CSB)

10:21 *all the worshipers*. Leaders, not simply every person who sacrificed to Baal. *worshipers*. Lit, “servants.” (TLSB)

house of Baal. A temple. (TLSB)

10:22 *vestments*. Jehu used clothing to identify his victims. (TLSB)

10:23 *no servant of the LORD*. Jehu likely hoped to make an alliance with those who followed the Lord. The Baal worshipers, as supporters of Ahab, had to be eliminated. (TLSB)

10:24–25 *offer sacrifices*. In order to allay all suspicion, Jehu pretended to join in the worship of Baal. (TLSB)

inner room. Similar to the Most Holy Place in the Jerusalem temple. (TLSB)

10:26 *pillar*. Lit, “pillars. (TLSB)

burned it. May refer to the Asherah pole (see note on 1Ki 14:15) that usually accompanied a sacred stone (see 1Ki 16:32–33). (CSB)

May have been made of wood. However, stone was a common medium for these pillar (*massebah*) stones, which could be cracked and destroyed by heating and cooling. (TLSB)

10:27 *sacred stone of Baal*. See note on 1Ki 14:23. (CSB)

latrine. Hbr introduces a more polite term (“sinks”) for the public reading of the text. (TLSB)

to this day. See note on 8:22. (CSB)

10:18–27 Through deception, Jehu wipes out more potential rivals, the servants of Baal, who were closely allied with Ahab’s dynasty. Again, Jehu demonstrates his wit and taste for irony (cf 9:11, 34; 10:9, 19). How regrettable that this clever man did not put his talents to work for the sake of proclaiming God’s Word. Rather than using your talents for personal gain, turn your God-given talents over to the Lord’s service and the service of others. Christ, whose wit confounded His detractors, also spoke plainly the life-changing message of God’s grace. • Dearest Jesus, teach me to love my enemies and declare to them Your promises rather than attack them with lies and weapons. Amen. (TLSB)

10:28–29 Three main religions competed for the hearts of the Israelites: Baal worship, the worship associated with the golden calves (see note, 1Ki 12:28), and the worship of Yahweh. (TLSB)

did not turn aside. Jehu did not receive a wholehearted endorsement (vv 28–31). He retained the golden calves and was excessive in overcoming opposition to his regime.

10:29 *sins of Jeroboam ... he had caused Israel to commit.* See 1Ki 12:26–32; 13:33–34; 14:16. (CSB)

10:30 *Because you have done ... to the house of Ahab all I had in mind.* Jehu was the Lord's instrument to bring judgment on the house of Ahab, for which he was commended. But he was later condemned by the prophet Hosea for the killing of all Ahab's associates, as well as Ahaziah of Judah and the 42 Judahite princes—the "massacre at Jezreel" (Hos 1:4). (CSB)

The Lord commended Jehu only specifically for overthrowing Ahab's idolatrous house. (TLSB)

fourth generation. The restriction of this blessing to four generations is reflective of the qualified approval given to Jehu's reign. Nevertheless, his dynasty survived longer than any other dynasty of the northern kingdom, lasting nearly 100 years. It included the reigns of Jehoahaz, Jehoash, Jeroboam II and Zechariah (see note on 15:12). (CSB)

Israel's next four kings were Jehu's descendants: Jehoahaz, J[eh]oash, Jeroboam II, Zechariah. (TLSB)

10:31 *was not careful to keep the law of the LORD... with all his heart.* Jehu seems to have been driven more by a political desire to secure his own position on the throne of the northern kingdom than by a desire to serve the Lord. In this he was guilty of using God's judgment on the house of Ahab to satisfy his self-interest. (CSB)

10:32 *the LORD began to reduce the size of Israel.* The climax of the covenant curses enumerated in Lev 26 and Dt 28 was Israel's expulsion from Canaan. During the rule of Jehu the northern kingdom experienced the beginnings of this curse (see 17:7–18 for its full realization). (CSB)

Zeal for the Lord did not automatically guarantee outward success. During Jehu's reign, the Syrians overran Israelite territory "from the Jordan eastward" (v 33). (TLSB)

10:33 All of Transjordan was lost to Hazael and the Arameans of Damascus. (CSB)

Arnon. River that empties into the Salt Sea almost midway between its northern tip and its southern extremity. (TLSB)

10:34 *other events of Jehu's reign.* The "Black Obelisk" of the Assyrian ruler Shalmaneser III informs us that Jehu paid tribute to the Assyrians shortly after coming to the throne of the northern kingdom in 841 B.C. In the Assyrian inscription Jehu is incorrectly called the "son of Omri," but this may simply be Shalmaneser's way of identifying Jehu with Samaria (or Israel). There is no reference to this payment of tribute in the Biblical narratives of Jehu's reign. (CSB)

annals of the kings of Israel. See note on 1Ki 14:19. (CSB)

10:35 *rested with his fathers.* See note on 1Ki 1:21. (CSB)

Jehoahaz his son succeeded him. For the reign of Jehoahaz see 13:1–9. (CSB)

10:36 *twenty-eight years.* 841–814 B.C. (CSB)

10:28–36 Despite Jehu's excesses, the Lord grants him a long reign and a four-generation dynasty. The Lord tolerates unjust rulers when it serves His purposes of judgment and it is for the good of His people. Pray for your leaders, that they may be not only successful but also just and righteous. Your just and righteous leader, the King of heaven, will hear your pleas and answer according to His good purposes and according to the mercies of Jesus. • Preserve Your Church, O Lord. Deliver and grant all nations faithful, peaceful leaders. Amen. (TLSB)