

## 2nd Kings Chapters 9-10 – John Karmelich

1. My lesson title for this week is "How God's judgment works". When we think of God's judgment we tend to picture standing in a long line in front of God. Then when it is our turn, He will say to us, "Here is what I think of your (our) life" and then we get eternally judged. I hold the belief that no one will be sent to hell who does not realize why they are sent there, so there will be some sort of eternal judgment. I don't visualize a line because I view heaven as timeless. I believe when we die, we will be either separated from God or drawn close to Him and somehow we'll just know why we are in the state we are in. With that said, we'll just have to wait and see what happens.
  - a) With that statement out of my system, there is far more to God's judgment than how we are eternally judged. If we live long enough, we can observe people lose their power or prestige and sometimes we even see execution for those that turn from God. This is not about the execution of criminals as much as it is about the fall of people from power based on their failure to trust God or simply do the right thing in life.
  - b) I state all of that because these two chapters are just that: God's judgment being executed in the Nation of Israel, for its leaders failing to trust in Him and worse: Leading others away from God. It's kind of like God saying in effect, "I've had enough of you. I've given you lots of time and chances to repent. I can see that you're never going to change and the most merciful thing I can do at this point is execute my judgment." Then we'll see how He works through people in order for His judgment to occur.
2. OK John, I believe in God's judgment, both eternally and occurring in our world. I go to church and I try to live a God fearing life. It's hard enough as it is to live the Christian life. Why should I be frightened by seeing all of this execution in these chapters? First, because it is so easy to stare at our issues in front of us and forget that there is a God who is in charge of all things. Reading these types of stories remind us not only that God exists, but that He wants to have dominance over our lives and guide our lives for His glory.
  - a) To say this another way, I don't want you to read these chapters and think, "Too bad for these people who lived thousands of years ago." I also don't want us to study this text and think, "I can think of this or that person who really needs to understand this text." I'm more concerned that when we go through our own struggles over our own issues, we realize that God is there, He knows all that we are dealing with at this moment and He wants to guide our lives for His glory if we are willing to trust Him with our lives.
3. With that tough introduction completed, let me try to summarize these two chapters quickly:
  - a) Both chapters come down to the fact that God's using an army general of the Northern Kingdom of Israel to pronounce God's judgment on a wicked family of ruling people that have led the Israelites away from worshipping Him.
  - b) This is a tough two chapters, because we will read of this king to be, killing lots of people including all the descendants of this former king as well as the priests who lead Israelites to worship a false god. Bottom line, this is judgment time.
  - c) As I love to state, this is not about eternal judgment, although one can figure the eternal fate of many of these people based on how they lived their lives. The main issue is that these people failed to be a good witness for God with their lives despite the power and influence that God has given them. To state this another way, they didn't use the most valuable asset that God has given them, their time, in order to make a difference for Him in this world. Now all of these people are going to get judged in a very public way that all of Israel and all of us bible readers can study to learn how God judges people.
  - d) Now if that doesn't scare you away from reading this whole lesson nothing will. I want you to read the rest not to learn about ancient history or read of this violence. I'd like all of us to understand that God does judge how we use the time that He gives us. With that tough comment stated, it's time to start the verse by verse commentary on this judgment.

4. Chapter 9, Verse 1: The prophet Elisha summoned a man from the company of the prophets and said to him, "Tuck your cloak into your belt, take this flask of oil with you and go to Ramoth Gilead. <sup>2</sup> When you get there, look for Jehu son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi. Go to him, get him away from his companions and take him into an inner room. <sup>3</sup> Then take the flask and pour the oil on his head and declare, 'This is what the LORD says: I anoint you king over Israel.' Then open the door and run; don't delay!"
- a) The chapter opens with the hero of most of 2nd Kings to date, a prophet of God named Elisha telling another prophet to go anoint a man named Jehu as the next king of Israel.
  - b) For my new readers, this is during a time when Israel split in two countries. The northern kingdom was called "Israel" and the Southern one was called "Judah". Now that you know that, when I refer to a country called Israel, know I mean the northern one unless I say otherwise.
  - c) Before I go any further, let me backtrack a little in order to set the scene. We read in the last few chapters about new kings in power in both countries. What is interesting is that both kingdoms had intermarried in that both had descendants of a former king of Israel in their kingdom. That former king was named Ahab. I'm not big on memorizing names of the kings of these countries. I just want you to realize that Ahab was a "bad egg". Even though he's no longer alive in this chapter, we're reading about judgment upon his family line. This is God saying to the Israelites, "I've had enough of this family and how they've turned My people away from Me. It's time to pronounce judgment upon this family."
  - d) That leads us back to the main character of 2nd Kings so far in this book. A prophet of God named Elisha. If you've been studying these lessons with me, one thing one notices is that he has a hand's off style. What I mean by that is we constantly read of him using other prophets to deliver his messages from God. It's a way of saying, "God is willing to use anyone willing to trust in Him, so I'm helping others be God's instrument of prophesy by having others deliver messages from God. A previous example was a foreign general who had leprosy asked Elisha to help him and this man traveled to Elisha's home. Elisha then had a servant come out to meet him as opposed to Elisha himself. That man did as Elisha told him to do and his leprosy was cured. (That's all from 2nd Kings, Chapter 5.)
    - i) I remind us of that as here in this chapter God wants to Elisha to go anoint the next king of Israel and use that man to be the king to execute God's judgment over the family of the current king. As an important a duty as this is, Elisha's the kind of man more interested in training up others to do God's work than just to get credit himself for that action. So we read in Verse 1 of Elisha telling an unnamed person to go do as God told Elisha to do.
  - e) The next bit of information we get is for this unnamed prophet to tuck up his robe. One has to understand that men in that culture wore full length robes as clothing. Recently I ran into a young man from the Middle East in a laundry mat who was wearing that type of garment. The point is, in order to run wearing such an outfit, one has to tuck up their robe in order to get any type of speed. That's the simple point here.
  - f) Then we read that this unnamed prophet took oil with him. This is another cultural idea. When people were anointed to be a king or even some other office, oil was poured on the heads to signify their jobs. Notice this is not a coronation ceremony, but more of a way of saying, "This will happen in your future, and I'm now anointing you as the king. God has ordained this to occur in your future, so accept it." That's what happened to King David as a boy centuries earlier as an example of a future anointing.
  - g) Finally, let me say a few words about this man named Jehu, who was the one anointed to be the next king: He is an army general. I don't know if he is head of the army, but one gets the impression he's already lived long enough to see lots of things happen in Israel. The text will imply he's lived through the reign of the current king and through the times of his father. Anyway, Elisha's order to his assistant is to anoint this man to be the king.

- h) In these verses, Elisha says to the prophet, "Do your job, get out of there and don't delay." Keep in mind that even though what is about to happen is God ordained, it is still treason against the current king. Elisha does not know how any of the other officers around Jehu are going to react to this treason. That's why Elisha is emphasizing for the prophet to do by himself, isolate himself with Jehu and when done get out of there as fast as possible.
5. Verse 4: So the young man, the prophet, went to Ramoth Gilead. <sup>5</sup> When he arrived, he found the army officers sitting together. "I have a message for you, commander," he said. "For which of us?" asked Jehu. "For you, commander," he replied.
- a) That scene I just describe starts to play out in these verses. When the prophet arrived at the army headquarters, there was Jehu sitting with his men. The prophet announces that he has a message for Jehu.
- b) I picture the rest of the army officers curious at this point about what is happening. I've also wondered through most of Kings how people recognized prophets. Do they look or dress different from other Israelites? Somehow prophets always seem to get access to the king or in this case an army general. It's my opinion that somehow prophets of God back then were recognized so that they could deliver their message.
- c) With that said, let me add the next group of verses and then I'll talk about application.
6. Verse 6: Jehu got up and went into the house. Then the prophet poured the oil on Jehu's head and declared, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I anoint you king over the LORD's people Israel. <sup>7</sup> You are to destroy the house of Ahab your master, and I will avenge the blood of my servants the prophets and the blood of all the LORD's servants shed by Jezebel. <sup>8</sup> The whole house of Ahab will perish. I will cut off from Ahab every last male in Israel--slave or free. <sup>9</sup> I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam son of Nebat and like the house of Baasha son of Ahijah. <sup>10</sup> As for Jezebel, dogs will devour her on the plot of ground at Jezreel, and no one will bury her.' " Then he opened the door and ran.
- a) First of all, the prophet did what he was told. He isolated the army general Jehu. He told him that he would be king of Israel one day. Know that the current king of Israel was the son of a man named Ahab. If you've been with me for a while now, you may recall Ahab: He and his wife Jezebel didn't believe in God and required Israelites to not worship God. Now Ahab has children and grandchildren that are prominent in both the Northern and the Southern kingdoms of Israel. With that bit of background stated, the prophets orders to Jehu is to literally wipe out that entire family as judgment against them for turning the Israelites against God.
- b) Let me give a little more background here, and then we'll talk about how this applies to our lives. The prophet's orders are also to wipe out Ahab's wife Jezebel, who is still alive at this point in the story. She was a foreigner who required Israelites to worship a false deity called Baal. Bottom line is she's a very bad influence. Verse 9 brings up previous Israelite kings who had their own reign come to a sudden end as they too turned from what God desired of them. The prophet predicted that Jezebel will die on the plot of land that her and her husband stole by killing the owner of that land. (From 1st Kings 21:23.)
- c) All of this leads me back to the issue of God's judgment. What is being planned here is quite literally God's judgment on this one family. This is not about eternal judgment, but about one's witness for God coming to a literal end. To put all of this in our vocabulary, God wants us to use our lives to make a difference for Him. It can be as simple as helping out in one's church or even helping those around us. The point is who God raises up for a particular purpose, He holds accountable. In this case, God raised up Ahab to be the king over His people and God is holding that king and his family responsible for how they act in their position of power.
- d) So if God knew Ahab and his family were "bad eggs" (to use my running joke to describe all of these bad kings) why did God allow him to rule in the first place? Part of it is free will, the other is to show us what is the price for being a bad witness for God.

- e) Before I jump back to the text, let me discuss our own lives for a moment. Does all of this mean that if I mess up in the opportunities that God gives me to do something good for someone else, I'll be killed there on the spot? Probably not. At the same time God does hold us accountable for what we do for Him. After all, it is His reputation at stake and He cares about what others think about Him. My point is confess sin when we become aware of it, trust that God has forgiven us no matter how often we do it and then keep moving forward, both in fear of His judgment and the realization that living to make a difference for God is the greatest way to use the valuable time He has given us.
- f) OK, with that bit of guilt laid out there for all of us, time to get back to the story.
7. Verse 11: When Jehu went out to his fellow officers, one of them asked him, "Is everything all right? Why did this madman come to you?" "You know the man and the sort of things he says," Jehu replied. <sup>12</sup> "That's not true!" they said. "Tell us." Jehu said, "Here is what he told me: `This is what the LORD says: I anoint you king over Israel.' " <sup>13</sup> They hurried and took their cloaks and spread them under him on the bare steps. Then they blew the trumpet and shouted, "Jehu is king!"
- a) As I read this, I kept thinking about the old Monty Python movie, "Life of Brian". There are scenes I don't recommend for kids to see, but as a Christian with a strange sense of humor, there are many parts that made me laugh out loud. If you are not familiar with the movie, it is the story of a man who lived at the time of Jesus who Israelites mistook for their Messiah. I bring this up here as prophets in that movie are shown as mad men who stand among crowds all day making predictions about the future.
- i) I bring it up here, as when Jehu returns from hearing the prophet's message, his first thought was, "I've just been told I'm going to commit treason and kill all the members of the king's family." He was too scared to state that to the army officials in the room as they might kill him for treason. Therefore, Jehu announced, "He's a madman, and you know how those madmen act with their strange predictions."
- ii) Bottom line is the army officials didn't buy the madman bit and were curious what the prophet had to say. Jehu then told them the truth. All the army officers then immediately agreed to the treasonous plot. They spread their jackets on the floor for Jehu to walk over them and blew a trumpet to proclaim Jehu as the new king.
- b) One has to admit, these verses show us what the army thought of their old king and what they thought of Jehu as their leader. As soon as a prophet said that Jehu was going to be the next king of Israel, they were all willing to commit treason and join Jehu here. If Jehu had any fear of committing this act of treason, my guess is Jehu was strengthened by the fact that his army buddies (who let's face it have all the weapons) now support him.
- c) With the plot to kill the king now in place, Jehu now takes actions in his own hands to carry out the plot immediately as we'll read in the next set of verses.
8. Verse 14: So Jehu son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi, conspired against Joram. (Now Joram and all Israel had been defending Ramoth Gilead against Hazael king of Aram, <sup>15</sup> but King Joram had returned to Jezreel to recover from the wounds the Arameans had inflicted on him in the battle with Hazael king of Aram.) Jehu said, "If this is the way you feel, don't let anyone slip out of the city to go and tell the news in Jezreel." <sup>16</sup> Then he got into his chariot and rode to Jezreel, because Joram was resting there and Ahaziah king of Judah had gone down to see him.
- a) These verses tell us of what was happening to the king while the conspiracy was taking place. The current king of the Northern Kingdom (son of Ahab) was named Joram. He had been fighting a war against Aram (think Syria today). To state the obvious, Jehu was an army leader so he was at the same battle ground. Apparently the king was wounded at some battle and had returned home to recover. Back at the palace, the Southern king of Judah was also there to see him as he recovered. It may help to know that this king of the Southern kingdom also married a daughter of Ahab. My point is the two kings were now related and the healthy king was visiting his sick relative the northern king.

- b) Anyway Jehu, the man appointed to be king, knew where the king was as an army leader. Jehu give the order for no one to leave the army camp as Jehu feared for his life as he was about to commit treason. Therefore Jehu rode off to find the king and didn't allow anyone else to leave the military site until he was long gone.
- c) With that said, the scene know switches back to the perspective of the king of Israel:
9. Verse 17: When the lookout standing on the tower in Jezreel saw Jehu's troops approaching, he called out, "I see some troops coming." Get a horseman," Joram ordered. "Send him to meet them and ask, `Do you come in peace?' "
- a) It might help to picture a city from medieval times. Visualize a bunch of high walls and from the top of a high tower, a lookout guard spots a bunch of troops approaching. It is the job of that watchman to protect the city. He orders a horseman to go intercept this group and make sure all is well. With that picture in mind, let's read of the encounter:
10. Verse 18: The horseman rode off to meet Jehu and said, "This is what the king says: `Do you come in peace?' " "What do you have to do with peace?" Jehu replied. "Fall in behind me." The lookout reported, "The messenger has reached them, but he isn't coming back." <sup>19</sup> So the king sent out a second horseman. When he came to them he said, "This is what the king says: `Do you come in peace?' " Jehu replied, "What do you have to do with peace? Fall in behind me."
- a) When the king's messenger reaches Jehu, all he says in effect is, "Get behind me as I have urgent business with the king." Remember that Jehu is a top army official. That's why the guard sent to see Jehu didn't get suspicious. When that guard failed to return, the man at the lookout tower sent another rider who was told the same thing. All this means is that Jehu is now approaching the city with a full head of steam and the king's messengers are now riding behind Jehu.
11. Verse 20: The lookout reported, "He has reached them, but he isn't coming back either. The driving is like that of Jehu son of Nimshi--he drives like a madman."
- a) As I read this, I recall something a friend of mine said about me in high school. My friend lived near a main road and from their house they could hear tire screeching if a car was driving too fast along that main road. My friend said about the noise, "It's probably just John driving home and that's why we hear the screeching of tires." It's amazing how we can remember stories like that from long ago and hopefully my driving has improved over that long past time period.
- b) Anyway, Jehu had a similar reputation for "driving like a madman" and the guard at the tower correctly guessed that it was Jehu approaching the city based on the way he drove.
12. Verse 21: "Hitch up my chariot," Joram ordered. And when it was hitched up, Joram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah rode out, each in his own chariot, to meet Jehu. They met him at the plot of ground that had belonged to Naboth the Jezreelite. <sup>22</sup> When Joram saw Jehu he asked, "Have you come in peace, Jehu?"
- a) All of this is important background because the city will be likely to keep the gate open to let Jehu in the city because he is a top official in the king's army. The king ordered for his chariot to get ready. The king must have figured, if the army general is riding here with a full head of steam, it must be important so let me ride out to go meet him. The other bit of background we get here, is the king happened to meet Jehu in a piece of farmland that the king's father stole from the rightful owner. (See 1st Kings Chapter 21 for that story.)
- b) When they first encountered each other, the king's greeting was "do you come in peace?" In other words, why are you driving here to the capital with a full head of steam going!
13. Verse 23: "How can there be peace," Jehu replied, "as long as all the idolatry and witchcraft of your mother Jezebel abound?"
- a) Here is the place where Jehu announces his plan to commit treason against the king. The first thing Jehu says is in effect, "Your mother has turned this country against serving God and did things that God does not permit us Israelites to do. If nothing else, give Jehu the credit for knowing right from wrong and that what the queen mother did was wrong.

- b) Let me pause from this story to bring it back to us. If we sin in some form, are we going to have a messenger approach us with a full head of steam saying God is about to judge us for turning from Him? Not that I've ever seen. It is usually in hindsight where we do realize that God was working in the background to bring about His judgment. I've now lived long enough to watch many people fall from political and religious power because they have turned from what God has desired that they accomplish. I'm not saying that we have to around being the "sin police". I'm saying that God works out His judgment on His timing His way. Personally, I'm more concerned about keeping my own life on the right path than to worry about others and hopefully you'll have the same attitude.
- c) Meanwhile, the story is just now getting good, and it's time to get back to it.
14. Verse 23: Joram turned about and fled, calling out to Ahaziah, "Treachery, Ahaziah!" <sup>24</sup> Then Jehu drew his bow and shot Joram between the shoulders. The arrow pierced his heart and he slumped down in his chariot. <sup>25</sup> Jehu said to Bidkar, his chariot officer, "Pick him up and throw him on the field that belonged to Naboth the Jezreelite. Remember how you and I were riding together in chariots behind Ahab his father when the LORD made this prophecy about him: <sup>26</sup>Yesterday I saw the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons, declares the LORD, and I will surely make you pay for it on this plot of ground, declares the LORD.' Now then, pick him up and throw him on that plot, in accordance with the word of the LORD."
- a) At this point, the king realized that Jehu was plotting treason. The king wanted to run away in fear of a powerful army officer. As he was fleeing, Jehu fired an arrow and to put it bluntly, it pierced his heart. I stated earlier that I'm convinced that Jehu's been around for awhile. That's because he was there when the king's father ruled and also when Ahab (Joram's father) had the family murdered who owned that farmland so that the king and queen could have that farmland for themselves. (Again this is from 1st Kings Chapter 21.)
- b) The last few verses mentioned that God predicted this would happen. To recall the facts from that chapter, the prophet Elijah (Elisha's predecessor) predicted that Ahab's blood would spill on the very piece of land that he stole. In an indirect way, Elijah's prophecy became literally true. That is because we associate the word "blood" with our descendants and the king's son's blood was literally spilled on the same plot of ground. Apparently Jehu witnessed the history of this prediction and declared "God's word" to come true here.
- c) The short version is we see God's word being fulfilled here and His judgment played out in this story. It's the scary fact that we can't get away with anything as believers in God that we need to take home from this story.
- d) Meanwhile, Jehu is just getting warmed up on executing God's judgment.
15. Verse 27: When Ahaziah king of Judah saw what had happened, he fled up the road to Beth Haggan. Jehu chased him, shouting, "Kill him too!" They wounded him in his chariot on the way up to Gur near Ibleam, but he escaped to Megiddo and died there. <sup>28</sup> His servants took him by chariot to Jerusalem and buried him with his fathers in his tomb in the City of David. <sup>29</sup> (In the eleventh year of Joram son of Ahab, Ahaziah had become king of Judah.)
- a) My very loose translation: While Jehu was in the mood to kill kings, he also killed the king of Judah because that king also married into this same family. The king of Judah escaped to a place called Megiddo but at that point, the wounds caught up with him. The king of Judah had at least one son at that point in his life, and his son was now the king of Judah.
- b) All in effect one has to know here is that the sins of this wicked family had caught up with them and now God's judgment is taking place. I'm convinced the scariest aspects of living out the Christian life is the realization that we can't get away with anything. That is why the book of Proverbs effectively starts with the importance of learning how to fear God as we serve Him. (See Proverbs 1:7 as an example.)
- c) At this point we get a time marker and a historical fact. Because the king of Judah was a king, he was buried in Jerusalem. He died in the 11th year of the reign of King Joram of the Northern Kingdom. Then his son Ahaziah started to reign in Judah.

16. Verse 30: Then Jehu went to Jezreel. When Jezebel heard about it, she painted her eyes, arranged her hair and looked out of a window. <sup>31</sup> As Jehu entered the gate, she asked, "Have you come in peace, Zimri, you murderer of your master?" <sup>32</sup> He looked up at the window and called out, "Who is on my side? Who?" Two or three eunuchs looked down at him. <sup>33</sup> "Throw her down!" Jehu said. So they threw her down, and some of her blood splattered the wall and the horses as they trampled her underfoot.
- a) Meanwhile Jehu still wanted to finish out the mission that the prophet told him to do: Wipe out the entire family of Ahab, including his wife Jezebel who was still alive at this point in history. The queen "fixes herself up" I assume to look like an aging queen and she starts the conversation by insulting Jehu. She compares him to a man named Zimri, who back in 1st Kings 16 murdered another king of Israel. My guess is that she wanted to use guilt to stop Jehu from killing her. However Jehu was more interested in carrying out God's judgment than to listen to a woman named in both the Old and New Testament as being associated with idolatry and leading the Israelites into idolatry. It's as if Jehu was thinking, "You've had a lifetime to change and now it's judgment time, your highness!"
  - b) At this point a couple of servants of the queen, apparently didn't think much of her either. They agreed to throw the queen down off the tower where they were. She died from the fall from the tower. If the fall didn't kill her, horses trampled on her as she landed. All in all, it's not a pretty picture. Speaking of scenes from movies, this would make a violent scene which of course has been popular in Hollywood for many years now.
17. Verse 34: Jehu went in and ate and drank. "Take care of that cursed woman," he said, "and bury her, for she was a king's daughter." <sup>35</sup> But when they went out to bury her, they found nothing except her skull, her feet and her hands. <sup>36</sup> They went back and told Jehu, who said, "This is the word of the LORD that he spoke through his servant Elijah the Tishbite: On the plot of ground at Jezreel dogs will devour Jezebel's flesh. <sup>37</sup> Jezebel's body will be like refuse on the ground in the plot at Jezreel, so that no one will be able to say, 'This is Jezebel.' "
- a) I have to admit, I'm fascinated by the fact that the text says Jehu stopped for a meal after he had just had the queen killed. Does killing make one hungry? Since movie scenes are on my mind today, I remember when Warren Beatty played gangster Bugsy Siegel in the 1991 movie "Bugsy". After he came close to violently killing someone, he stopped to eat a meal. I know it's not a Christian movie but thinking of this king to be stopping to eat after he had just killed someone reminded me of that scene. Coming back to the text, whatever the reason Jehu paused for a meal, he now took charge as the new king and said, "You go deal with burying the former queen mother, I'm hungry."
  - b) I also admit, the text in these two chapters spends a lot of time on "flashbacks". That is, it discusses predictions and stories from previous chapters and then discusses the situation of the moment as if to say, "this scene is like that scene" or "this act is the literal fulfillment of prophesy". With that said, here we have a literal fulfillment of a prophesy made back in 1st Kings 21:23 when Elijah (who is no longer alive) predicted the exact way that the queen mother would die: By dogs devouring her flesh on the plot of ground that she stole from the rightful owner, the point is Elijah predicted that she would be eaten to the point where no one would even be able to recognize her and she died that way.
    - i) Ok, it's time for one of your "why should we care about this" speeches: Remember the issue of the moment is understanding God's judgment. Yes God's literal when we read predictions about the future, but that doesn't affect us. What we do need to remember is that God holds us accountable for however He has called us to be a witness for Him. That could be some simple as a small project we are taking on to help our church, or being involved in some major ministry project. This does not mean God will strike us dead if we fail. However, failure to do what we believe God is calling us to do has consequences and that's the main lesson here.
    - ii) Meanwhile it's time to get back to the judgment on Jezebel's whole family.

18. Chapter 10, Verse 1: 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, <sup>2</sup> "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, <sup>3</sup> 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."
- a) To understand these verses, all we have to do is consider what it that the main character of the last chapter has done. The main character, Jehu has just killed the kings of both the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. However, there are seventy sons and grandsons of Ahab, the former king of Israel. Those descendants can try to kill Jehu out of revenge. Keep in mind that Jehu is a soldier. He is saying to all of those descendants, choose your best man to fight for you're families right to rule and I'll fight them. It's kind of like saying, "Bring me your best man and I'll fight him one on one for the title."
    - i) With that said, Jehu warned all of Ahab's descendants who lived in the capital city of Samaria, which again is the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel.
  - b) So why did Ahab have so many children? Most likely he had multiple wives like a lot of kings did in those days. That produced lots of children and grandchildren. Ahab himself was the father of the king that Jehu killed a few chapters back. The good news is I don't want you to memorize all of these names. Just know that the current king of Israel had to now deal with the family of the former dynasty in order to survive.
  - c) Coming back to God's judgment, remember that it was His desire to wipe out the family of Ahab because that family was appointed to rule and that family turned God's people away from worshipping Him. In effect, this whole chapter is about to preach to us, "You want to turn your back on God? Great, it's judgment time, deal with it!" That's why we are going to read of God using an army officer to eliminate this entire family.
19. Verse 4: But they were terrified and said, "If two kings could not resist him, how can we?" <sup>5</sup> 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."
- a) The point here is that all the descendants of the former king were scared. They thought if Jehu could successfully kill our relative the king, how can we stand a chance? In effect we are reading a surrender letter. They are collectively saying to the new king, "We give up, do what you think is best and we the staff who works around here will help."
  - b) In judgment terms, this is saying, "Dear God, we still don't want to serve You, but we don't want to die either. Can't you not judge how we live and let us live out our lives in peace?" The answer is obviously no, as we'll see Jehu respond here as well as how God is responding to people's request to be left alone. Whether we like it or not, God is in charge and we either serve Him or pay the consequences for refusing to do so. With that said I'm ready to move on.
20. Verse 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. <sup>7</sup>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. <sup>8</sup> 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."
- a) Short version: There is no getting around God's judgment.
  - b) Longer version: Jehu wanted to establish as king that he is not to be messed with. That's why he ordered that all the descendants of the former king be killed. It was a practice in the Middle East to publicly display the heads of one's enemies to make the public point that no rebellion against the king will be tolerated and all of the former family was killed.

- c) One has to admit, that this appears to be cruel. After all, these 70 descendants were not kings. Grant it, they may have positions of authority based on their family relationship. Still why did God have to judge all of them just for being related to the king? The answer comes back to accountability. All of these descendants chose to live like the king in that they made the decision to turn from God to worship Baal. To put this in our terms, there is no getting around God's judgment. We can't be saved because say, our mother is saved or we can't go to hell because say our father was a wicked person. Judgment is individual as well as corporate. It is individual in that eternity is God's domain and therefore it's His decision who gets to be with Him forever. Corporate judgment is God saying, "I've given you the privilege of making a difference for Me. If you choose to turn from that privilege judgment will come upon you corporately as well as individually."
- i) To say this another way, our church, our community or our country can and will be judged by God if we collectively decide to turn from Him. The family of the former king made that decision to turn from God and now they all suffered for it.
- ii) Bottom line is all the family of the former king is now dead. God's judgment has occurred in the text. However, Jehu is still being used for God's judgment in the rest of this chapter. In other words, time to read on:
21. Verse 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?"<sup>10</sup> 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."<sup>11</sup> 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.
- a) John's loose translation: Don't mess with Jehu. Not only did he kill all of the relatives of the former king, but anyone who was even associated with him. The question is, did Jehu do more than what was required of him? Probably. However, the ancient history doesn't interest me as much as the message it gives us: Don't mess with God. I admit, that would have been a great alternative title for this message! As I said earlier, there's a good reason why the book of Proverbs starts with the concept of "Fearing God". It is the idea that He does judge people individually and corporately and just being associated with those who choose to turn from Him has deadly consequences as these verses show as an example.
- b) Is this tough stuff to deal with? Definitely. Is that reality? Definitely. So if this is all true why isn't God striking more people dead? The answer is we're all guilty of sin and none of us would live very long if we got struck down for every sin. The issue is not so much eternal judgment here, but corporate. It's about our public witness for Jesus and the fact that God the Father takes that seriously. I'm not saying we can't have fun in life and never enjoy things. I'm just saying that fearing His judgment should be a basis for how we live out our lives and how we be a witness for Him is a topic to be taken seriously. OK, this lesson is hard enough as it is, so I'll hold off on additional guilt here.
22. Verse 12: Jehu then set out and went toward Samaria. At Beth Eked of the Shepherds,<sup>13</sup> 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."<sup>14</sup> "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.
- a) Unfortunately, Jehu is not done wiping people out. You may recall that I mentioned that some of the descendants of the former king of Israel also intermarried with the family of the king of Judah. Here we have 42 people from the Southern Kingdom who traveled up to Samaria to visit their relatives in the Northern Kingdom. The sad news is that Jehu had all of them killed as they were part of the same family line.
- b) To put it simply, Jehu didn't want anyone alive associated with the former king. Did he go to far in carrying out God's judgment? Most likely, but the facts are the facts.

23. Verse 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. <sup>16</sup> Jehu said, "Come with me and see my zeal for the LORD." Then he had him ride along in his chariot.
- The good news is we get a break from the killing spree. The king runs into one of God's prophets and invites him up into the king's chariot.
  - OK, and why are these verses here? One reason is to show that the king did spare those who were associated with serving God and it was not just a random killing spree.
  - I also see these verses another way. I'm convinced that Jehu went overboard in his killing spree. God never said to kill everyone even associated with the former king, but he did. Think about someone who wants to give the appearance of legitimacy. That person may take a picture with a famous religious leader for acceptance. That's sort of what I see Jehu doing here. He rode next to one of God's prophets as if to say, "Look how much zeal that I have for God based on who I'm killing." As to whether or not Jehu went to far, I'll trust God to sort that out. Meanwhile back to the killing spree.
24. Verse 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.
- The positive new of all this killing is that God got done what He said would get done by the words of Elijah back in 1st Kings 21:21. Short version is Elijah predicted many years earlier that Ahab's family would come to an end. After Ahab had died and he now had many descendants, God's word is coming true. Grant it, God used a less than perfect man to carry out that judgment, but in effect how different is that versus how God uses us to carry out His will in the world? The good news is we're done with Jehu's wiping out this family. The bad news is the killing spree and God's judgment is not over.
25. Verse 18: Then Jehu brought all the people together and said to them, "Ahab served Baal a little; Jehu will serve him much. <sup>19</sup> 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.
- The point here is Jehu has now wiped out everyone in Ahab's family and a lot of people who were even associated with that former king and his family. Jehu's adrenaline is still flowing hard from all of this killing and now he's thinking, "I need to kill all of the false prophets that were associated with that former king. Therefore, Jehu wants to organize a big gathering of the priests of the false god Baal with the idea of wiping them out.
  - Another fact recall may be in order here. Ahab's wife Jezebel would eat her meals with hundreds of false prophets and required the Northern Kingdom Israelites to worship this deity. (See 1st Kings 18:19). Therefore even though the king's family was not around, the priests that caused much of Israel to turn from God were still around and Jehu thought he can't be done killing until he got rid of all of them as well.
  - With all that said, Jehu got them all together in one place with the lie that he as the new king wanted to make a sacrifice to this deity.
26. Verse 20: Jehu said, "Call an assembly in honor of Baal." So they proclaimed it. <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> And Jehu said to the keeper of the wardrobe, "Bring robes for all the ministers of Baal." So he brought out robes for them.
- I want everyone to get the idea that this was no private little ceremony. Jehu appeared to have sent messengers all through Israel to gather all the prophets of Baal. Jehu even went as far as to get all the official robes out of the king's wardrobe. I suspect these robes came from the now dead queen's collection. The judgment here is Jehu is getting them together in one room in order to kill them all.

- b) You would think all of these priests they'd be suspicious, given how it was know public knowledge that Jehu killed all the family and friends of the former king. I suspect that all the priests went along with this as if to think, "OK, the old king is dead, and the new king is now establishing his rule by wiping out the family of the old king. However, even the new king is going to need priests to work the land, so let's all get together to do what it is that the king desires." Bottom line is the king is setting up these guys for judgment and in fear of their own lives, agree to this meeting.
27. Verse 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."<sup>24</sup> 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."
- a) The short version here is that guards were posted outside of this meeting. Inside they made sure that only Baal priests were there and no spies for God. To state the obvious by now, Jehu is setting them all up for judgment. Give the king a little credit here for pulling this off without any of the priests being suspicious of their upcoming death.
28. Verse 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.<sup>26</sup> They brought the sacred stone out of the temple of Baal and burned it.<sup>27</sup> 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.
- a) Short version #2: King Jehu ordered the guards now to go inside and kill everyone of the priests inside of this temple. The guards even destroyed some sort of sacred statue that was used in their ritual. Just to make God's judgment complete, the temple all of the men were in were destroyed. Here's the kicker: The location where that temple stood was then used as a "human waste dumping ground" to put it in mild terms.
- b) All of this horror and killing leads me back to God's judgment. To state the obvious, God does not call us to go around killing anyone and everyone who leads people astray from God in our lives. God does call on us to be a living witness for Him and to be willing to share our belief in Him when asked. The big question of course is how does God want to use us when it comes to judgment? This is why most countries set up courts and laws in order for society to judge people of crimes. I figure that that when God wants justice in hindsight it becomes clear how He is working in the background in order to draw people back to Him who were called to serve Him in the first place.
- c) To keep it simple, when it comes to God's judgment, that is His problem, not mine. Our job as Christians is hard enough as it is, trying to make a difference in this world for Him. We can study passages about His judgment like this section, realize that it does come at times, but then we should focus on making a difference for Him and let God worry about carrying out judgment His way. To state the obvious, if we were called to be policemen or law officials, there is a different application. For the rest of us, let's just focus on being a good witness for Him and live in a healthy fear of His judgment. Speaking of that let's get back to the judgment here.
29. Verse 28: So Jehu destroyed Baal worship in Israel.<sup>29</sup> 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.
- a) Through this king, God had now officially carried out judgment against the former king and how that former king caused Israel to turn away from God. However, the new king still feared people traveling to Jerusalem to visit the true God for worship. Therefore, the two statues of "golden calves" that were set up in this kingdom were not torn down. The quick story is they falsely represented God leading the Israelites there.

- b) So if Jehu killed all of Ahab's family and the priests associated with worshiping Baal, why did he leave these statues there? The problem was that he started thinking like a king and not a man that truly feared God's judgment himself. It's like thinking "I've done all that I am supposed to do for God, now I can ignore Him and go run the kingdom." Because the king did fear people leaving that kingdom, he left those two statues standing.
- c) OK, enough of me giving a report card on Jehu, God Himself will do that next:
30. Verse 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."
- a) Somehow at this point God spoke to this king and made it clear to him that because he's carried out God's judgment as He desired, his descendants would rule over the Northern Kingdom of Israel for four generations. It's not like the promise made to David that there would be records of his descendants until the Messiah comes. However a promise to rule for four generations is still God saying in effect, "Good job, now go enjoy being king!"
- b) This is one of those "fine print" type of comments. This does not mean that Jehu will have great rewards in heaven. It just means that Jehu was zealous for God during that killing spree and God is rewarding his life here. However because Jehu wasn't fully committed to serving God, we'll read of some punishment in the last few verses of this chapter.
31. Verse 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.
- a) In effect, Verse 31 is the "fine print" of God's decision. The point for us to learn is that this king still turned from God in ways similar to the last king and He judged his rule because of how he turned away. What all of this means is that God desires that we trust Him to guide our lives for His glory. This is another story of someone given a chance by God in order to lead others closer to Him and Jehu turned from that zeal in his life. Yes, it's more of God's judgment, but one is getting the idea by now.
32. Verse 32: In those days the LORD began to reduce the size of Israel. Hazael overpowered the Israelites throughout their territory<sup>33</sup> 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.
- a) So how did God judge this king? By reducing the size of this kingdom. If you remember the name Hazel from the last lesson, he was the king of the Syrians and God used Hazael to get God's point across that He is not to be messed with. Therefore, the parts of Israel that were east of the Jordan River were cut off and were now part of "Syria". I could give some more historical details here, but the main point is God's judgment continues.
33. Verse 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?<sup>35</sup> Jehu rested with his fathers and was buried in Samaria. And Jehoahaz his son succeeded him as king.<sup>36</sup> The time that Jehu reigned over Israel in Samaria was twenty-eight years.
- a) We end this section on judgment by giving the epilogue of the king's life. The text says in effect, "If one wants to read what this king did do, there were records kept when "Kings" was written and one could study those records to find out more of this king's reign. It may help to remember that this king was alive when Ahab was alive, so he lived through the reigns of two kings and then was king himself for another 28 years. The point is Jehu had a long life even after all of this killing spree was completed.
34. I admit, these were two tough chapters. Let's face it, they were full of killings and examples of God's judgment on those who turn from Him. I also covered 73 verses in 12 pages, so I tried to get through all of this judgment as painlessly as possible. The important thing for us to get out of this lesson is about what it means to "Fear God". It is to realize He can and does judge people not only for our eternal salvation, but also keeps a close eye on how we are a witness for Him. The world is full of many examples of God's judgment coming crystal clear on those who have been called to be a witness for Him and turned from that witness and suffered for it.

35. With that tough comment made, let me end this lesson with my closing prayer about what it is we should be aware of when it comes to God's judgment: Father, we realize that judgment is not just about eternal judgment but also about how we use our time that You give us. Help us not to waste that asset and use it for Your glory. Guide our lives to make that difference. May we have a healthy fear of Your judgment as we live to make that difference. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.