



Ahaziah, Jehoram, Jehu: The End of Ahab

Lesson 11

*He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck,
Shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.
Proverbs 29:1*

Teacher's Note: [Less time will be spent on the first two kings than on Jehu. Although we will touch briefly on the first two kings, the focus of this lesson will be the severe judgment God brings upon the wickedly idolatrous house (dynasty) of Ahab. This lesson contains several longer footnotes. As always, these are intended to supplement your study of the lesson and don't need to be included in your presentation.]

One of the most famous sermons in the American history is the sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" by Jonathan Edwards. The main passage for the sermon was Deuteronomy 32:35 "Their foot shall slide in due time." In that sermon, Edwards warns that God's judgment may be delayed for now, but God delays his judgment in order to give man one more chance to repent. One day, God's judgment will wait no longer and it will be too late. When God's judgment does come, it will be swift and severe.

We see this warning played out in living colors in the story of Ahab. For many years God's threatened judgment waited. Yet Ahab and his descendants refused to fully eradicate Baal worship and forsake the worship of Jeroboam's golden calves.

God's judgment waited and waited, but when it finally came down on Ahab's dynasty, it was swift and severe.

How might a message like this be needed in America today?

How might it be needed in our lives?

A popular saying today is "Only God can judge me?" What view of God does this reveal? How might this thinking be true of us?

Ahaziah¹ (2 Kings 1)

Ahaziah was the son of Ahab and followed in his father's evil deeds (1 Kings 22:51-53). He reigned for only two years. All we know about him from Scripture are his failed attempts to partner with Judah in trade (2 Chronicles 20:35-37) and the account of the prophecy of his death by Elijah (2 Kings 1:1-18).

I. Ahaziah's seeks the wrong help (1:1-4).

For whatever reason, Ahaziah decided that the Philistine god Baal-zebub was better able to diagnose and even help his condition than the Lord. He sends messengers to Baal-zebub to find out what will happen to him, but Elijah intercepts them and tells them to inform the king he will die.

Why do you think Ahaziah sent to find out his fate from the god of another country?

II. Ahaziah threatens God's prophet (1:5-15).

¹ The names Ahaziah and Jehoram (also spelled Joram) get confusing from 853-841 B.C. Israel in the north has a king named Ahaziah who ruled from 853-852, followed by a king named Jehoram from 852-841. These kings will be covered in this lesson. Judah has the opposite: a king named Jehoram reigns from 853-841, followed by a king named Ahaziah who reigns for one year in 841. These kings will be covered in next week's lesson.

Ahaziah doesn't like the message he receives. So he sends a troop of fifty to bring Elijah to him. They are destroyed by fire. He sends another fifty. They likewise are destroyed. Finally, a third group comes begging for their lives. Elijah shows mercy and doesn't kill them, but instead goes with them to visit the rebellious king.

III. Elisha repeats God's message (1:16-18).

Elijah is brought to the king, though on very different terms than the king was originally envisioning. Elijah confirms that Ahaziah will die as he prophesied that he would. Sure enough, Ahaziah fails to recover for his injury and his brother Joram takes the throne.

How might Ahaziah's end have had an impact on his younger brother, Joram?

Joram²

Joram didn't fare much better than his brother. Although he did make at least an attempt to return to the Lord (2 Kings 3:1-3), it was unfortunately too little too late for the house of Ahab. We read about Joram's battles with Moab, Syria, and ultimately his end at the hands of Jehu in 2 Kings 3-9.

² In 2 Kings 1:17 and 2 Kings 3 the king is called Jehoram, but in the remaining accounts of his life he is called Joram. His reign also overlaps with a king of Judah normally called Jehoram (2 Kings 8:16; all of 2 Chronicles) but sometimes called Joram (2 Kings 8:21-24). To distinguish the two, in our lesson notes Joram will be used for the northern king of Israel, since that name is used more, and Jehoram will refer to the southern king of Judah, since that is the name consistently used in 2 Chronicles.

I. Joram's failed military campaign (2 Kings 3).

Moab had begun rebelling at the death of Ahab (2 Kings 1:1).³ However, Ahaziah in his short reign was unable to address the problem. That would fall to his brother. Joram reached out to Israel's old friend, Jehoshaphat, and the two joined forces with Edomites to try and bring Moab back under the control of Israel.

During the campaign, the armies run out of water and the kings turn to Elisha for guidance. This is the first time that kings have recognized the importance of Elisha as a prophet. Elisha eventually prophecies that God will provide water, and he does. Although God preserved the life of the armies, and gives them a certain measure of success, ultimately the campaign was unsuccessful in its attempt to reassert dominance over Moab.⁴

³ Interestingly, strong archeological evidence supports this little detail of the Bible's chronology. A special archeological find known as the Moabite Stone was uncovered in the 1868 which read the following: "I (am) Mesha, son of Chemosh-[...], king of Moab, ... As for Omri, king of Israel, he humbled Moab many years (lit., days), for Chemosh was angry at his land. And his son followed him and he also said, 'I will humble Moab.' In my time he spoke (thus), but I have triumphed over him and over his house, while Israel hath perished for ever! (Now) Omri had occupied the land of Medeba, and (Israel) had dwelt there in his time and half the time of his son (Ahab), forty years; but Chemosh dwelt there in my time." Translation taken from *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (3rd edition with supplement) by James Pritchard, page 320. The time frame given, 40 years, would be the exact amount of time expected by the biblical chronology (up to 12 years of Omri + 22 years of Ahab + 2 years of Ahaziah + several years of Joram).

⁴ The final verse of this section is a difficult passage to interpret. Numerous solutions have been proposed, but it is likely that the indignation (wrath) that came upon Israel was not tied to the sacrifice to Chemosh, but rather was the wrath of the Lord against Israel for their overly destructive warfare (2

II. Joram's battles with Syria (2 Kings 6:8-7:20).

While Joram is likely the king for the two next two stories (2 Kings 6:8-23 and 6:24-7:20), he plays a minor role (in fact, he isn't even named in either story!). The focus of both of these stories is on the prophetic ministry of Elisha and not the king of Israel. It is important to note the severe threat that Syria has been and continues to be for the nation of Israel.

III. Joram's end (2 Kings 9:14-29).

Joram is assassinated by Jehu in Jehu's revolution. This story will be studied in greater detail in the section under Jehu.

Joram is the only king in Omri's dynasty that seeks on some level to remove Baal (2 Kings 3:2-3). Why is he the king who is punished?

Jehu

I. Jehu's anointing (2 Kings 9:1-13).

When Elijah had complained that God wasn't doing anything about the wicked rulers trying to kill him, God told Elijah that he had a 3 fold plan to address Ahab and his dynasty: Hazael [future king of Syria], Jehu [future King of Israel], Elisha [future prophet] (cf 1 Kings 19:14-17). These three men would collectively bring an end to Ahab and his wicked dynasty.

Kings 3:25-26) which violated in principle and likely in practice the commands for warfare set out in Deuteronomy 20:19-20. See "2 Kings 3:27: Yahweh's Wrath on Israel's Sin" by Daniel Wilson, available at https://www.academia.edu/36569797/2_Kings_3_27_Yahwehs_Wrath_on_Israels_Sin

In these verses, we read about the anointing and commissioning of Jehu do his part in this task. Possibly because his presence would be unnecessarily conspicuous, Elisha delegates this task to an unnamed prophet. This prophet tells Jehu that he will be king, then immediately flees. Jehu reluctantly relays the message to those with him, and they immediately declare him king of Israel.

What does this reaction tell us about the state of Israel and her army? Why do you think that might be the case?

II. Jehu's coup (2 Kings 9:14-10:17).

With the force of at some of if not the majority of the army, Jehu heads back to the capital to overthrow Joram.

A. The assassination of Joram (2 Kings 9:14-29).

Joram had apparently been injured in battle, and so had returned to Jezreel, the secondary capital.

What other significant event happened at Jezreel?

Jehu warns the soldiers that none are allowed to tell Joram what has happened, and none of them do. Jehu comes back riding fiercely, and two messengers are sent to find out if the returning band means peace or not. Jehu essentially says, "no," and both messengers join his rebellion. Joram is informed it looks like Jehu, and goes out to meet him. Jehu assassinates Joram, and then because the southern king Ahaziah is present, Jehu assassinates him as well.

How does this story represent the characters? What impression do we get of Jehu? Of Joram?

Why did Jehu kill Ahaziah? Was he right to do so?

B. The assassination of Jezebel (2 Kings 9:30-37).

Having killed both the southern and northern kings, Jehu now enters the city proper. There he confronts the wicked Jezebel.

Why do you think Jezebel paints her face?

Why does she reference Zimri?

God's chilling description of Jezebel's murder is fulfilled to the word. The most wicked woman in the Bible, who becomes the paradigm for the evil seductress who lures God's people away from God (cf Revelation 2:20), is finally defeated.

C. The assassination of Ahab's house (2 Kings 10:1-17).

The battle continued as Jehu goes on wiping out the descendants of Ahab. Jehu's ruthlessness and power remain unquestioned and unchallenged as he continues on his bloody rampage.

Jehu also wipes out several relatives of Ahaziah of Judah. Why do you think he did that? Should he have done that?

At one point, Jehu enlists the help of someone who apparently had a lot of influence, Jehonadab son of Rechab. The prophet Jeremiah informs us that Jehonadab had told his descendants not to drink wine or settle down (Jeremiah 35), likely meaning that Jehonadab led a conservative reaction to the Baalizing tendencies under Ahab. Jehu promises that his activity is zeal for the Lord and gained political advantage from it by gaining at least some measure of support and credence from Jehonadab. Whether or not everything he is doing is really for the Lord as he claims will be studied later.

III. Jehu's religious purge (2 Kings 10:18-27)

Jehu decides to eradicate Baal worship from Israel forever. He makes a public show of loyalty to Baal and demands that every loyal Baal worshipper show up. He then locks everyone in the room and sends guards in to kill all who are in there.

How should we feel about Jehu's method here? Why did he do what he did? What do you think God's perspective on this was?

IV. Jehu's end (2 Kings 10:28-36).

How would you define Jehu's character?

What do you think motivated him to carry out the massacre that he did?

What do you think God's view on this was? (Read the passage after asking this question and see what the answer was!)

Jehu's moral character is ambiguous (if you haven't noticed, many of the kings are). He fulfills the task God gives him with ruthless abandon and is commended for carrying out those assignments. But he does so in dishonest, extravagantly violent ways. It almost seems that Jehu's violence is not a tool to help him accomplish the Lord's will, but rather that the Lord is a tool that allows him to carry out his violent ways. In the end, he didn't have the courage to pull down the idols of the Lord that Jeroboam had set up years earlier. Baalism might have been removed from Israel, but idolatry wasn't.

Jehu was a ruthless leader that God used at a critical time in Israel's history. As with other kings, we see things that bother us about him, and yet we see at least a partial approval of him by the Lord. Once again we are reminded that the line between hero and villain is thinner than we might like.

Sitting in a cave in Mount Horeb Elijah asked God what took him so long. Romans 2:4 tells us why God delays his judgment: to give another chance to repent. But Romans 2:5 goes on to give a warning: those who ignore God's opportunities for repentance will receive even greater wrath. God gave Ahab and his family a long time to repent. But eventually enough was enough, and the consequences of their wickedness came and were devastating. As Paul put it in Galatians 6, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."