

Lesson 10 Lecture
2 Kings 9:1-10:36 and 2 Chronicles 22:7-9

Well I hope after the wonderful piano music, the beautiful decorations, and the anticipation of a great meal, you are all getting a good taste of the Christmas season. I respect Carol when she lines up the lessons each year she doesn't try to force the themes of each lesson to line up with the events that come in the calendar year. For example, we may want to have reading that emphasizes gratitude and thankfulness around Thanksgiving. It would be nice to have Scripture covering the topic of love near Valentine's Day. Around Easter, the reading would focus on new life and victory. And for those Scriptures that deal with the denial of God's existence...well those would be on April Fool's Day! Now, here in the Christmas season, we would like to read about giving, new life, hope, and love – that's what Christmas means to me. But that is not what we got in today's reading, did we? Whenever I open the Bible, my prayer is that God will reveal more of Himself and His character so that I might know Him more, trust Him more, and fall more in love with Him than I already have. The primary themes of this reading are *God is a God of judgment, and He is a promise keeper*. Isaiah 30:18 tells us the Lord is a God of justice. If God is truly just, then to validate this truth, then God must judge sin. His judgment of sin is proof that He is just. This is a hard section of Scripture and is possibly among the most vivid examples of God's judgment on evil. Finally, before I get into the reading, I'm going to ask for your forgiveness in advance. For many of you who have been sentenced to listening to me over the years, you know I have a twisted sense of humor. It is very much like me to attempt to lighten the load of a heavy moment by attempting, and I want to emphasize the word "attempt", to filter in some humor. Unfortunately, some people may think I'm mocking or minimizing the heaviness of a situation, but I come from the place of we have enough heaviness in this sin-filled world. Why not try to inject a little

humor to ease the burden? Please don't take my attempts at humor in this lecture as my not taking very seriously the carnage of judgment in this portion of Scripture. This is tough reading, but I believe there is a valuable message that God has for us that I will provide in my conclusion.

There's no better place to start in a lecture on a section of Scripture than with Scripture. Proverbs 11:21a does a nice summary of what is going on in our reading, "*Assuredly, the evil man will not go unpunished.*" This week's reading is about a tough guy named Jehu. This is not the same Jehu who prophesied the judgment on Baasha from 1 Kings 16:3. We aren't given much information on him other than he was the son of Jehoshaphat who was the son of Nimshi. This is not the same Jehoshaphat the king of Judah – he was the son of Asa. From verse 5 of chapter 9 of 2 Kings, we learn that he is one of the officers in the army, and his title is "commander". I have no doubt that God chose Jehu because of his military training and leadership. Military leaders typically understand things like chain of command and the importance of following orders. Jehu was anointed to be one of the kings of Israel – the Northern Kingdom. Of all the kings of Israel, he is the only one that is recorded in Scripture as having done some good things. Per the title to our lesson, those good things he did was to be an obedient instrument of God's and carry out judgment on the house of Ahab.

As we are learning this year, keeping track of who is who and from what kingdom can get a little confusing at times. Our reading mentions several kings and their houses, or families, who fall under God's judgment, or punishment, for their evil ways. From 2 Kings 9:9, we see a comparison of what Jehu was to do to the house of Ahab as to be like the judgment against the houses of Jereboam and Baasha.

To refresh your memory, Jereboam was a servant of Solomon, but he rebelled against him in Solomon's final days. Per the prophet Ahijah, he was the

one who led the secession of the Northern Kingdom from the Southern Kingdom. His sin that would anger the Lord was the creation of idol worship through golden calves. It was bad enough that he did this on his own, but he encouraged the people to do the same in fear they would return to Judah to worship the true and living God. Per the prophecy of Ahijah, Baasha, the third king of Israel, would carry out the judgment on Jereboam and all of his house including Nadab, the second king of Israel who was Jereboam's son. Zimri, the fifth king of Israel would carry out the judgment on all of Baasha's house including his son, Elah – the 4th king of Israel.

For today's reading though, the judgment is focused primarily on Ahab's house. From 1 Kings 16:30, you'll recall that Ahab had done more evil in the sight of the Lord than all the kings before him. His "claim to hedonistic infamy" included setting up Baal worship, including constructing a temple for Baal, and marrying that evil woman, Jezebel. You may also recall Ahab had coveted Naboth's vineyard, and Jezebel carried out the murderous plan on Naboth to give the vineyard to Ahab.

That should be enough background to get us to our story. Elisha, probably advanced in years, instructed one of the younger sons of the prophets to get a flask of oil and to go anoint Jehu to be king of Israel. There is one small problem; there already *is* a king of Israel – Jehoram, or Joram. He is one of Ahab's sons. The prophet comes upon Jehu and the other army officers and asks that he see him alone. Jehu agrees, and the prophet pours oil upon him and anoints him. The prophet then gives Jehu his orders in verses 7-10, "*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. The whole house of Ahab will perish. I will cut off from Ahab every last male in Israel—slave or free. I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam son of Nebat and like the house of*

Baasha son of Ahijah. As for Jezebel, dogs will devour her on the plot of ground at Jezreel, and no one will bury her.”

From Deuteronomy 32:35, we get the promise that vengeance is the Lord’s job, and, as I said, that really is one of the themes of this section of Scripture. God is just – always. The only “problem” with God’s justice is it doesn’t always happen on our timing. Someone has hurt us in sin, and our flesh wants justice – it wants judgment, preferably immediately. God does everything in His own perfect timing and while God is a God of justice and judgment, Hosea 6:6 tells us He desires mercy. Since each of us is His creation, He has a different perspective than our flesh. He looks upon each of us with a Creator’s love and compassion with a heart for redemption. This is the paradox of living in the Spirit. Our flesh that is in pain shouts out “*Revenge*”! Yet, the Spirit-led heart shouts out “*Repent*”! How do we get to this point of such a shift in attitude?

- **Abide in the Word of God.** You’ve probably heard the saying, “You are what you eat.” Well, if you feed on God’s Word, your life will be transformed into one who lives by the Word of God. You *will become* what you eat.
- **Prayer.** Begin each day on your knees and ask the Holy Spirit Who is dwelling in you to overwhelm your flesh and give you His eyes and heart. Plead with Him to show the people in your life as He sees them.
- **Surrender your will to God’s.** Hopefully, you are hearing this phrase in many of the sermons and Bible studies you are listening to. But what does it mean to surrender your will to God’s? Simplistically, whatever your flesh tells you to do, do the opposite. If your flesh tells you to be angry with someone because they’ve offended you, then you should forgive them and show kindness and love towards them. If your flesh tells you that you should be depressed, then you should be joyful.

Read the Bible; Pray; and Surrender. What's the common theme of these steps to be living in the Spirit? Choice. Don't receive the lie of the enemy that says you "can't" do these things. "Can't" implies you don't have a choice. If you don't take these steps, it's not because you can't – it's because you *won't*. If you're feeling a twinge of regret with my saying this, then GOOD! That's just God telling you the truth that you *do* have a choice. HOWEVER, that voice should be a voice of encouragement – not of guilt. God does not want His children coming to Him in guilt, fear, or shame. Why? - Because Jesus took care of all of that at the cross. The child of God has been healed by the stripes of Christ. There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus! A wonderful place of victory for the child of God is when he/she chooses to live in the Spirit – to continuously feed on God's Word, to invite God through prayer to give you His perspective, and to surrender to His will. It's the better way to live. Would Jesus die on a cross to give you a life that is not better than the one you had before you believed? Of course not!

One final comment on our desire to see God's justice come quickly – our flesh in pain seeks retribution. Our sin causes God's Spirit pain – did you know that? Ephesians 4:30 tells us, "*And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*" The Greek word for "grieve" is "lupeo" (pronounced loo-peh-o). It means to have heaviness and sorrow. This is what our sin does to the Holy Spirit – it harms Him. Yet, what does He do? He points you to God's Word which teaches what? - Forgiveness, mercy, and love. Our flesh wants revenge for the sins committed against us. We should be forever thankful God does not seek the same in response to the sins we commit against Him. Adopting God's heart towards others is a choice to live in the same grace that we enjoy as saved sinners.

Getting back to the reading from verse 8, we read of the totality of the destruction of Ahab and his house. God always completes His tasks. Remember

what happened to King Saul when he spared the king of the Amalekites? An Amalekite would ultimately be the one that would kill him. This is an important point to remember for those who may struggle with these moments in Scripture where God will wipe out an entire nation or group of people. We wonder what about the innocent or children? On the surface, it doesn't seem right that people who don't appear to be guilty are getting killed merely because they are associated with one bad apple. We must remember that God is both omniscient – He knows all things, and He is omnipresent – He is eternally present. He sees the future, so He knows exactly what's coming. Therefore, when He decrees these kinds of “wipe them out – all of them” orders, He is actually being merciful to those who will one day be harmed by these people as well as to those members who are not yet accountable for their future sinful behavior.

So after the prophet anoints Jehu and runs off, one of his fellow officers asks him if everything is all right. They ask him why this maniac came to him. Jehu responds, *“You know the man and the sort of things he says.”* Picture the scene. Jehu is hanging around with his tough guy friends, and this scrawny prophet tells him he has a message for him. His friends watch him go into the house with the prophet, and the next thing they see the prophet running out of the house while Jehu emerges with an oily head. His tough guy friends ask him what that was all about. Jehu feels the peer pressure and succumbs to what I know I have done at times when I was challenged to openly confess an encounter with a messenger of God. Can you hear the snark when he says, *“You know the man and the sort of things he says”?* He's embarrassed to proclaim that God has anointed him king. Yet, what do his friends do when he finally confesses the message from the prophet? They acknowledge the truth and celebrated and honored him. *Yes, some people will mock our confessions of faith, but don't be so surprised when other people will respond in a positive manner to a proclamation of the truth of God.*

So Jehu gets to work on following through on his orders to carry out judgment on Ahab's house. He starts with Jehoram, or Joram, who is the son of Ahab and still thinks he is the king of **Israel**. Joram had been in battle defending Ramoth Gilead against the Arameans. He was wounded and had returned to Jezreel to recover. Interestingly, Ahaziah, the king of **Judah** who had foolishly developed a relationship with Joram was visiting him. Ahaziah was one of the evil kings of Judah, so it shouldn't be a surprise that He was keeping company with his evil counterpart. As we will shortly learn, whom we keep company with can have a serious impact on our lives. Jehu got wind of this, and he and his men head for Jezreel. Joram hears of the coming troops and sends a horseman out to find out if Jehu is coming in peace. The horseman does not return, so Joram sends out a second horseman with the same task. He doesn't return either.

So Joram and Ahaziah go out to meet Jehu and ask him if he comes in peace. Jehu responds, "*How can there be peace as long as all the idolatry and witchcraft of your mother Jezebel abound?*" This part of the story blows my mind. After sending out two horsemen to inquire if Jehu is coming in peace and neither return, what does Joram do? He tells his men to hitch up his chariot, brings Ahaziah with him, and what question do they ask Jehu???? "Have you come in peace?"!! Seriously?? These guys didn't deserve to be kings – they were too stupid! Joram shows his strong allegiance to his good buddy Ahaziah and does what? Leaves him in the dust and tries to run away. Jehu pulls out his bow and shoots Joram between the shoulders piercing his heart and killing him. Notably he instructs his chariot officer to pick him up and throw him on the field that belonged to Naboth the Jezreelite. Jehu had heard Elijah's prophecy that Ahab's blood would be licked on the same grounds of Naboth's property – the one that Jezebel had Naboth murdered so Ahab could have his coveted vineyard. Prophecy fulfilled.

Next up on Jehu's hit parade was Jezebel. She is in Jezreel, and she learns that Jehu is in town. What was her response? She put on eye makeup and arranged her hair. Now, I'm not a woman, so I won't pretend to understand how women think. Therefore, I'm going to ask you ladies if this makes any sense. If you hear about some dude whom you figure has a murderous grudge against you is coming, would you, in response to such terrifying news, give yourself a makeover???? Seriously – is this woman nuts or what? Oh, and it gets better, when she sees Jehu out the window, what does she ask? "*Have you come in peace, you Zimri, you murderer of your master?*" "*Have you come in peace?*" Really? Once again, evil does not always translate into intelligence. Jehu looks up and shouts, "*Who is on my side? Who?*" Two or three eunuchs looked down at him. Jehu shouts out again "*Throw her down!*" The eunuchs do this, and that would be the end of Jezebel. Jehu was cold blooded – what was his response to this horrible death? A visit to the Sizzler – I guess nothing sparks the appetite like seeing a person thrown out of a window to her death. By the time Jehu is finished with his meal, he tells them to bury Jezebel, but when they go to her, the dogs had already had their meal. This murderous dog of a woman got her comeuppance – she became dog food. His men remind Jehu "*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.*" (2 Kings 9:36)

Jehu isn't done yet. His naughty list includes the seventy sons of the house of Ahab in Samaria. 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 lays down the challenge to Ahab's sons – "*choose your best among yourselves and let's see if you can take me down*". They must have heard that Joram and Ahaziah were toast, because they said, "*If two kings could not resist him, how can we?*" The palace administrator, the city governor, the elders and the guardians show their strong

loyalty to these 70 sons and sent a reply 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.*” Jehu carries out the judgment he was given at his anointing and sends a letter telling these pitiful protectors to take the heads of the sons and come to him in Jezreel by this time tomorrow. 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. Nice allegiance of these guys who were rearing Ahab’s sons, huh? Two nasty letters is enough for these guys to behead the very people they were charged to care for! 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.*” Not exactly a chamber of commerce promo moment for Jezreel is it?

The next morning, Jehu announced the reason for this killing, “*Know, then, that not a word the Lord has spoken against the house of Ahab will fail. The Lord has done what he announced through his servant Elijah.*” (2 Kings 10:10) Jehu announced he was merely executing the judgment that Elijah prophesied. He then 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. The fact that all of this carnage is happening in Jezreel is noteworthy. The word Jezreel means “God will sow”. Jezreel was the scene of many biblical battles: Deborah's victory over Sisera from Judges 4; the Israelites' victory over the Midianites and the Amalekites from Judges 6-8; Saul and Jonathan's defeat at the hand of the Philistines from 1 Samuel 31; and, Egypt's victory over King Josiah from 2 Kings 23:29. Interestingly, the Jezreel Valley is now a beautiful farmland, where wheat, cotton, corn, and sunflowers are grown, and herds of sheep and cattle graze. However, its days of violence are not over. The Valley of

Jezebel is also called "The Valley of Megiddo", which is where the Battle of Armageddon in Revelation will take place.

Jehu still had work to do. He ran into 42 relatives of Ahaziah, the slain king of Judah on the way to Samaria. He took Ahaziah's allegiance to Joram as evidence that anyone related to Ahaziah should get the same judgment as Joram, so he killed all of them, too. He then finishes the judgment against Ahab in Samaria by wiping out anyone with an association to Ahab. This is really gruesome stuff, but Scripture is clear regarding what the wages of sin are – they are death. Sin does not go unpunished. This is difficult and horrific reading, but what we're not reading is the entirety of the pain and suffering that occurred as a result of the sins of Ahab and Jezebel. Yes, we heard about Naboth and his vineyard, but what we didn't read about was all the other people's suffering under their rule. God must judge sin. The physical suffering of the people upset the Lord, but the spiritual offenses – the diversion of worshipping something other than God – is what really riles God. That may sound a bit self-serving, but God knows what is best for us because He created us. We were designed to worship God, so anyone seeking to divert what is best for us angers our Creator.

Jehu seemed to understand the seriousness of not worshipping God as he carries out judgment against Baal worship. He tells the people, "*Ahab served Baal a little; Jehu will serve him much.*" He really is setting up the Baal worshippers by telling them he's going to prepare a great sacrifice for Baal in the temple of Baal. He invites all the Baal worshipers in Israel to join him. The temple is filled to capacity, and he makes one last check to make sure it is only Baal worshippers in there – he doesn't want anyone who worships the true and living God in there. While the sacrifices begin, he instructs 80 of his men to surround the temple and ultimately to wipe out all of the worshippers and destroy the temple. They did this, and all of what was left was a refuse dump. At this point, as horrible as this entire

killing is, it was out of judgment prophesied by the Lord's prophets. Up to this point, Jehu had been obedient in following the orders laid out before him. Jehu has been a good king because of his obedience – he had destroyed Baal worship in Israel. Unfortunately, chapter 10, verse 31, tells us he was not a fully committed servant of the Lord. *“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.”* Despite this sad truth, the Lord demonstrated his appreciation for Jehu's efforts and tells him his descendants will sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation – and that is exactly what happened – the next four kings of Israel would be Jehu's sons. Our reading concludes with Jehu's passing and the sad news that the Lord began to reduce the size of Israel.

Hazael overpowered the Israelites throughout their territory. At this point of the story, Israel is less than 100 years to their eventual Assyrian captivity.

If you're still awake, I offered Proverbs 11:21a as a good summary of our reading – to refresh your memory it said, *“Assuredly, the evil man will not go unpunished.”* I must confess that I used this verse not only because I thought it did a good job summarizing the themes in this section of Scripture, but also because of what Proverbs 11:21b promises, *“But the descendants of the righteous will be delivered.”* The themes of this lesson's reading were God is a God of judgment, and He is a promise keeper. God had sent prophets to warn against the evil people that they will be judged for their sin. Without fail, even though brutal as it was, God did exactly what He said He would do – He is a promise keeper. We cannot escape the truth that sin must be judged, and today's reading was about as vivid of an example of this truth you will find in Scripture short of the book of Revelation. Here's the thing, though – there is a distinct difference between Jehu and Jesus. Jehu exacted God's judgment on the sins of people. Jesus took God's judgment for my sin and your sin. God's only begotten son – a co-equal member of the triune

Godhead - that baby in the manger we were just singing about came with one primary mission. Jesus Himself tells us the purpose of His mission in John 3:17, *“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”* We saw in today’s reading God is a God of judgment, but we cannot wholly evaluate God’s character on just that one trait. This is a tragic development in our society today – someone says something or supports someone else, and his entire character is pigeonholed for that one thing. If I say something stupid, does that one statement mean I’m stupid? Don’t answer that please! We are complex beings with our own mix of character. Since God is infinite, He is the most complex being of all. The beauty of God’s Word is that it reveals the multi-faceted character of God. Yes, God is a God of judgment, but from what we just heard from Jesus in John 3:17, He is also a God of love, mercy, and salvation.

Getting back to Proverbs 11:21b - it tells us the descendants of the righteous will be delivered, let’s take a look at what that means to every person who confesses Jesus as Lord & Savior. Back to Scripture - Galatians 4:7, *“Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”*; and, 2 Corinthians 5:21, *“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”* Galatians 4:7 states that for those who call on the name of Jesus Christ are heirs, or descendants of God through Jesus. 2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us that we take on the righteousness of God through Jesus. Now lets look one more time at Proverbs 11:21b, *But the descendants of the righteous will be delivered.* Never forget God is a promise keeper – He will keep this promise. We learned today that God *must* and *will* judge sin – even mine and yours. We also read today that God’s judgment can be brutal. Yet, for me and for you, we were given the gift of Jesus Christ and Him crucified to deliver us from God’s judgment on our sin. My vision of what Christmas means

is that of giving, new life, and hope – all wrapped up in love. My prayer for each and everyone of you is you will more fully receive, believe, and rejoice that the newborn baby in the manger we celebrate this season is the One Who gave you the gift of salvation by taking God's judgment on your sin. By doing this, He gave you new life and hope because of one thing and one thing only – *God loves you*. Let's pray.