

Jehu

Jehu means “uncertain,” was the founder of the fourth and longest lived dynasty in Israel, [842-815BC].

1 Kings 19:15-17 [New King James] *“Then the LORD said to him: ‘Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria. Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place. It shall be that whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill; and whoever escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill.”*

Nimshi was actually Jehu’s grandfather, his father was Jehoshaphat.

Already during Ahab’s lifetime Jehu had been designated by God as the instrument of judgement upon the nation.

God’s command to Elijah was entrusted to his successor Elisha and was implemented during the reign of Ahab’s son Jehoram.

Jehu was the commanding officer of Jehoram’s army which had regained control of Ramoth-Gilead and continued to defend it against further Syrian assaults.

Jehoram had been forced to retire to Jezreel to recover from wounds received in the fighting and had left the army under Jehu’s control.

It was then that Elisha sent one of his sons of the prophets to anoint Jehu king over Israel with a mandate to exterminate the house of Ahab. Jehu’s fellow officers immediately acquiesced in acclaiming him king, [2 Kings 9:1-16].

Jehu wasted no time in carrying out his commission.

On his arrival in Jezreel, Jehoram and Ahaziah of Judah, who rode out to meet him, were put to death. Jezebel, at Jehu’s command, was thrown down into the courtyard of the palace, the circumstances of her death exactly corresponding to Elijah’s prophecy, [2 Kings 9:36-37].

The massacre of all seventy of Ahab’s male descendants living in Samaria was actually carried out by the leading citizens of the kingdom as evidence of their loyalty to Jehu and in an endeavour to escape a similar fate, [2 Kings 10:1-10].

The slaughter of the forty-two relatives of Ahaziah whom Jehu met on their visit to Samaria and his wholesale destruction of the worshippers in the temple of Baal went beyond the terms of his commission and are difficult to justify, [2 Kings 10:12-28; Hosea 1:4].

When the “bloodbath” was over and the pagan cult of Baal had been extirpated, Jehu’s true character showed itself in his toleration of the corrupt worship of Yahweh linked with the bull images of Dan and Bethel, [2 Kings 10:29-31].

It is scarcely surprising that Israel failed to prosper under Jehu.

The renewed threat from Syria found Israel incapable of effective resistance and Hazael overran all her territory east of Jordan, [2 Kings 10:32-33].

From a human perspective Jehu was a successful king, his family ruled the northern kingdom of Israel longer than any other.

Jehu came close to being God's king of kings, but he recklessly went beyond God's commands and failed to continue with the obedient actions that began his reign.

Jehu eliminated one form of idolatry, Baal worship, only to uphold another by continuing to worship the golden calves that Jeroboam had set up.

Jehu's style showed he was not fully aware of Who was directing him.

As God did with Jehu, he gives each person strength and abilities that will find their greatest usefulness only under His control, outside that control they can become tools for evil.

Only with God's presence in our lives, through the active indwelling of the Holy Spirit, will our natural strengths and abilities be used to their greatest potential for good in the serving of other human beings.

Obedience involves both action and controlled direction from the Creator God.