

173—JEHU’S SACRIFICE TO BAAL

(2 Kings 10; 2 Chronicles 22)

Jehoram, king of Israel, and his nephew, Ahaziah, king of Judah, were both dead, having been slain by Jehu and his men. Queen Jezebel was also dead, and her body had been eaten by dogs in the streets of Jezreel. Elijah’s prophecy concerning the destruction of King Ahab’s family was well on its way to being fulfilled.¹

Jehu was unrelenting in his pursuit of Ahab’s descendants. Those who were responsible for the care of Ahab’s seventy sons were afraid of Jehu and agreed to do whatever he asked of them. Thus, Jehu’s instructions to them were fulfilled when they delivered the heads of all seventy to him in baskets at Jezreel. Jehu had his servants stack the heads of Ahab’s sons overnight in two great heaps at the city gates. Then, in the morning, he went out and stood by them and said to the people, “You should observe that nothing Jehovah has spoken concerning the house of Ahab will be left unfulfilled. For all Jehovah promised by the mouth of his servant Elijah is now being fulfilled.”

Jehu then proceeded to slay all that remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel—not only Ahab’s family but also his chief servants and his priests. When he was finished in Jezreel, he returned to Samaria, meeting and slaying on his way forty-two of Ahaziah’s relatives who had not received word of Ahaziah’s death and were traveling to Jezreel to see him.

En route to Samaria, Jehu also encountered Jehonadab the Rechabite² who had come to meet

¹ The prophecy concerning the destruction of Ahab’s family (or house) is found in 1 Kings 21:17–24 and is recounted in story “157—Naboth’s Vineyard”). It is also reiterated in 2 Kings 9:7–10 (see story “172—The Beginning of the End for the House of Ahab). The account of the deaths of these two wicked kings, Jehoram and Ahaziah, is found in story “172—The Beginning of the End for the House of Ahab.”

² Jehonadab (or Jonadab, as the scriptures sometimes refer to him) was chief of the Rechabites, an Arab tribe that worshipped Jehovah. The house of Rechab identified with a section of the Kenites, a Midianite tribe who came into Canaan with the Israelites but retained their nomadic habits. They worshipped Jehovah and were circumcised, though they were not looked upon as belonging to Israel and probably did not consider

him. Jehonadab agreed to support Jehu in his campaign against the house of Ahab, and the two men rode to Samaria together in Jehu’s chariot. Once in Samaria, they united to slay all of Ahab’s family who remained there.

With this accomplished, Jehu gathered the people of Samaria for a speech—a speech filled with subtlety and aimed at destroying all those who worshipped Baal.³

“Ahab served Baal a little,” Jehu told the gathered throng, “but I, Jehu, will serve him much. I will show you how much if you will call to me all the prophets of Baal, all his servants, and all his priests. Let none of them be absent, for I have a great sacrifice to make to Baal; those who do not come shall be put to death.” Jehu sent throughout all Israel, inviting the prophets and priests of Baal and everyone who worshipped Baal to a holy gathering in Samaria. And there was not one person in Israel who worshipped Baal that did not come.

The house of Baal was filled to capacity, and Jehu had the man in charge of the vestry provide sacred clothing for every person who came to worship that day. When all were gathered and properly clothed, Jehu and Jehonadab came into the house, before the vast congregation, and tested them one more time. “Search and make sure,” they cried, “that none of the servants of Jehovah are here. This gathering is for only those who worship Baal.”

When Jehu and Jehonadab went in to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings, they appointed eighty men outside to make sure no one who was inside escaped. “If any of these men whom I have brought into your hands escapes,” Jehu warned, “the life of him who allows the escape shall be taken.”

When Jehu’s sacrifice and burnt offering were ended, his plan was put into full effect as he commanded the guards and the captains to enter the house and slay all who were there. And when all the

themselves bound by Mosaic law and ritual. The worship of Baal was offensive to them. They were not to drink wine, build houses, sow seeds, or have vineyards. They were to dwell all their days in tents (see Jeremiah 35:6, 7). All of these things they did in an effort to retain their distinct tribal identity (see William Smith, *Dictionary of the Bible, GospelsLink*, CD-ROM, s.v. “Re’chab”).

³ Baal (plural form Baalim), the storm and fertility god, was symbolic of the male generative principle in nature. Baal worship was most common among the Zidonians or Phoenicians, the people to whom Ahab’s wife Jezebel belonged.

Baal worshippers were dead, Jehu's men next proceeded to burn all the idols of Baal in the city. They broke down all the images of Baal as well as the house of Baal. All worship of Baal was destroyed and banished out of the kingdom of Israel that day.

When Jehu had completed the destruction of the house of Ahab and of all those who worshipped Baal, Jehovah spoke to him. "Because you have done that which is right in my eyes and have done unto the

house of Ahab according to all that was in my heart, your children shall sit on Israel's throne to the fourth generation."⁴

Jehu reigned over Israel for twenty-eight years. But, though he ended the worship of Baal in the kingdom, Jehu still clung to the sins of Jeroboam and failed to walk according to God's laws. The golden calves set up by Jeroboam in Dan and Beth-el still remained in their places.⁵

⁴ The fulfillment of this four-generation prophecy is noted in story "180—The End of Israel Is in Sight."

⁵ Story "143—Israel Divided" explains why King Jeroboam, the first king of divided Israel, set up the golden calves at Dan and Beth-el for the worship of his people.