

Zeal, Judgment, and the Cost of Partial Obedience

2 Kings 9 & 10

Key Bible Texts

2 Kings 9 & 10

Key Bible Verse(s)

“But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin.” (2 Kings 10:31)

Background to the Study

2 Kings 9–10 highlights two central biblical truths: **sin is ultimately judged**, and **God’s word always comes to pass**.

In 2 Kings 9:1–13, Elisha sends a young prophet to secretly anoint Jehu, who was then a military commander, as king of Israel. The prophetic message he delivers is less a command and more a declaration of what God already knew Jehu would do: bring judgment on Ahab’s corrupt dynasty.

Verses 14–37 describe Jehu’s swift overthrow of Joram, Ahaziah, and Jezebel. Israel was in the midst of war, and Joram was recovering in Jezreel when Jehu arrived. Their confrontation happened on Naboth’s former land, fulfilling Elijah’s earlier prophecy. Jezebel’s death also unfolded exactly as foretold decades before, showing that God’s justice may be delayed but is never denied. Her reference to Zimri (v.31) was a warning that Jehu’s violent rise to power might bring instability, although Zimri himself had once been an instrument of divine judgment.

Chapter 10 continues the theme of judgment but also exposes Jehu’s character. He eliminates Ahab’s seventy sons, kills forty-two travellers from Judah, and orchestrates the destruction of Baal’s priests. Although these actions aligned with God’s earlier warnings against Ahab’s house, Jehu’s brutality and political ambition are clear. Hosea later condemns the excesses of his violence.

Jehu claimed zeal for the Lord, yet his obedience was selective. He removed Baal worship but preserved the golden calves at Bethel and Dan, likely for political convenience, since destroying them would have required people to worship in Jerusalem. His 28-year reign had the potential to lead Israel back to wholehearted faithfulness, but his half-commitment revealed a heart that never fully turned to God.

TESTIMONIES FROM OUR DAY

David Livingstone often faced daunting challenges in his mission to share the Gospel in Africa. When he established a new mission station, the surrounding area was plagued by lions that terrorised the villagers. Knowing something had to be done, Livingstone led a group of men on a hunt. He managed to wound a large lion, but before he could reload, it attacked him, crushing his arm and leaving deep bite marks. The villagers rushed to help, and the lion eventually collapsed from its wounds. Though injured, Livingstone had achieved his goal and removed the danger that had gripped the community.

Our passage today introduces another man given a difficult assignment. Elisha instructed a young prophet to anoint Jehu as king of Israel, fully aware that this act would trigger violent upheaval. Elijah had already foretold the judgement that would follow Jehu's rise, so Elisha urged the young prophet to flee as soon as the task was done. It must have felt overwhelming, yet he obeyed.

Most of us will never face lions or anoint kings, but we will encounter moments when obedience feels risky: challenging a workplace expectation, standing firm in a classroom, or speaking up when it would be easier to stay silent. In those moments, we remember that God goes with us. As one of our long-serving ministers, George Hughes, often said, "Where God's finger points, His hand will make a way." It was true for Elisha's young prophet, it was true for Livingstone, and it remains true for us. God equips us with the courage and strength we need when we look to Him. He never fails.

A Closer Look

Question 1

What did Jehu do immediately after being anointed by the prophet? (II Kings 9:11-13, 14-16) What does the fulfillment of Elijah's prophecy teach us about God's patience and timing?

Question 2

In 2 Kings 9:30-37, we find the fulfillment of a prophecy that was given to Elijah twenty years earlier (1 Kings 21:17-24) when Jezebel had Naboth the Jezreelite murdered so that Ahab could acquire his vineyard for a garden. Name at least one spiritual truth that can be derived from this account. Jezebel remained defiant even as judgment approached. What might cause someone to harden their heart, even when the consequences are clear?

Question 3

When we face a difficult task in the Lord's work, what practical steps can help us respond with courage and obedience? (II Kings 9: 5, 7, 16, 17, 36)

Question 4

In chapter 10, Jehu was commended for his obedience to God in destroying the worship of Baal in Israel (see verses 28, 30). However, in spite of his apparent zeal to wipe out the worship of Baal, he allowed the Israelites to continue the worship of the golden calves in the cities of Bethel and Dan. How does verse 31 describe his spiritual condition? Do you think God was pleased with all of Jehu's actions? What reasons support your view?

Question 5

How do these chapters (II Kings 9 & 10) challenge our modern discomfort with divine judgment?

Question 6

What signs or qualities might we expect to see in someone who is fully committed to God and His service?

Take Home

As Christians, at some point we may be faced with a challenging assignment from God. When that happens, we must not hesitate to follow through with faith and obedience. God will be with us!

Because Jehu's heart was not perfect toward the Lord, much of the land of Israel was lost during his reign, and his dynasty only lasted for four generations. The spiritual choices we make today could have a lasting impact on future generations!