

### 2<sup>nd</sup> KINGS

#### Week 12, chapter 9

As a boulder gathers speed as it rolls down a steep hillside, so we see Israel and Judah tumbling out of control down their own slippery slope towards God's wrath by means of their idolatry and apostasy. And just as the physics of inertia dictate that momentum is gained as an object speeds ahead unimpeded, so it was that the northern and southern kingdoms had gained so much momentum that they were now headed towards an unstoppable collision with destruction and exile.

The Book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings has been charting Israel and Judah's self-inflicted apostasy and how it happened. And how it happened was essentially because of bad leadership. It's not that a faithful people somehow were taken over by unfaithful kings; rather it was a symbiotic relationship. As the people displayed less and less obedience to their Heavenly King, and to His Ideal Word, the Torah, God gave to them the kind of leaders that their confused minds wanted and their hardened hearts deserved. Then these leaders added more evil energy to Israel and Judah's fall away from Yehoveh, and most of the Hebrew citizens merely followed along like blind sheep. Thus even more momentum was added to the Israelites' determination to define for themselves truth, justice, morality and just how much of following God was even needed.

So YHWH intervened as the only force large enough to redirect this speeding boulder of apostasy; and as He always does, He used a few good men to bring His Word of Truth to His people for those who would have the ears to listen. These few good men were His prophets, led in the era we have reading about by Elijah and Elisha. But as He also always does, the Lord forces no one to obey Him. He speaks His commandments and oracles to His people (in the era of the Kings He spoke through His prophets) and tells them of the blessings and benefits associated with obedience and the curses and catastrophes associated with disobedience. Then it is left up to the people and to the nation's leaders to choose. The Book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings makes it sadly clear what the choice was.

By the time we come to the final pages of this book, the Kingdom of Israel will have been exiled, the 10 northern tribes scattered and dispersed all over the Asian Continent; and the Kingdom of Judah will have been marched off to Babylon as a community of captives, left to suffer their well earned humiliation on foreign soil for 70 years.

Since it was way back in the Book of Genesis that we discussed the issue of choices, I want to

review it. First of all, there are two basic kinds of choices put before all humans: moral choices and preferences. Moral choices are the product of our will. Preferences are the product of our intellect. God gave us wills NOT to make preferences but to make moral choices. Therefore moral choices involve right and wrong, evil and good. Preferences are those things that God has given for us to choose from that have no element of right or wrong to them per se. Moral choice, however, is completely wrapped up in our obedience to God's commandments. To obey is moral, to disobey is immoral. To choose to cheat, steal, lie, murder, or be sexually deviant are moral choices and thus well defined by God's commandments. But to choose chocolate over vanilla, to drive a Toyota instead of a Buick, to become an engineer instead of truck driver, to wear blue instead of yellow are all preferences and so are not defined or regulated by God's commandments.

Inevitably, a sign of unfaithfulness and falling away from God is when a person or society chooses to transform moral choices into preferences. That is, something that at one time was understood as a moral issue of right or wrong is now seen as a matter of enlightened personal liberty that carries no stigma and no divine consequences. Another sign of unfaithfulness and falling away from God is when a person or a society chooses to redefine His commandments (the definition of morality). That is, certain things don't become preferences but rather we have reversed the moral status of a behavior; what God calls good we now call evil, and what He calls evil we now call good. Thus, in such a circumstance, to follow God faithfully often means to be in conflict with your peers or your society; or even with your government. And yet another sign of unfaithfulness and falling away from God is when we choose to be willfully ignorant of God's Word and/or prefer to rely on the glib words, philosophical, political and religious doctrines of our leaders, and the comfortable and familiar traditions of men that tend to change and conform with the times and culture.

We see all these signs of unfaithfulness and falling away from Yehoveh occurring in 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings. And unless one is either a non-Believer or spiritually blind, we see these signs all around us today. God's pattern of how He deals with people and nations in this regard began early in the Torah and continues on through Revelation. Which means that how He dealt with His people in the Biblical days is how He is going to deal with His people of the present and future days.

Open your bibles to 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings Chapter 9.

### **READ 2<sup>ND</sup> KINGS 9 all**

This chapter is set up by the previous one. In chapter 8 we learned that the kings of Judah and Israel had not only adopted similar unwholesome characteristics, they were closely blood related. And in the last couple of verses of chapter 8 we were given an account of how **Y'horam** King of Israel joined with **Achazyah** King of Judah, to go and fight the forces of Aram

led by their new king, Haza'el (the fellow Elisha had anointed as King of Aram at God's order). The place of battle was Ramot-Gilead, a fortress city that was at one time an Israelite possession that lay in the territory of Gad.

Let me take just a moment to explain something that happens more frequently in the Bible than some might realize, and not knowing this can cause Bible readers to either think that they have discovered an error, or they miss the intent altogether. It is common to have more than one name assigned to the same city or person. As applies especially to a person, there's a number of reasons for it. Sometimes it is simply a matter of two different translators transliterating a Hebrew name into English but each applying different methods to do their transliteration. Sometimes it was due to dialect changes over the hundreds of years that the Bible was written and added on to, and that older names changed to new names. Sometimes it's a matter of our not understanding the nuances of the Hebrew language and culture.

Notice the case of the name of the King of Judah, **Achazyah** here in 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings. If we turn to 2Chronicles 21, we find this same person mentioned, but by what seems to be an entirely different name. An error?

### **CJB 2Chronicles 21:16-18**

***<sup>16</sup> Then ADONAI aroused against Y'horam the spirit of the P'lishtim and of the Arabs near the Ethiopians;***

***<sup>17</sup> and they came up to attack Y'hudah. They broke in and carried off all the personal property they could find in the royal palace, as well as his children and his wives; so that no son was left to him except Y'ho'achaz his youngest son.***

***<sup>18</sup> After all this, ADONAI struck him in his intestines with an incurable disease.***

The **Y'ho'achaz** of 2Chronicles is the same person as our **Achazyah** of 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings. And in fact, they are actually exactly the same name. Notice that **Y'ho'achaz** consists of two Hebrew words, **Yeho** and **Achaz**. **Yeho** is a word for God, and **Achaz** means to seize or to take possession.

Now look at the name **Achazyah**; it also consists of two Hebrew words, **Achaz** and **Yah**. **Yah** is another word that means God, and **Achaz** we just discussed. So with **Y'ho'achaz** and **Achazyah** we simply have the identical name with the two terms or attributes of that name (God, and seized) given in reverse order. It's a bit easier to see when it's in Hebrew, but

nearly impossible to notice when it is in English. And this is more typical than one might expect in the Bible and so can cause all sorts of confusion and suspicions of typos and copyist errors when it is not.

During the battle for Ramot-Gilead **Y'horam** was wounded seriously enough that he was taken to his palace in Jezreel so that he could be cared for and recover. **Achazyah** at some point joined him there as a show of support and mutual loyalty. Verse 1 of chapter 9 explains that Elisha had received another oracle from God, and so at the same time that **Y'horam** and **Achazyah** were in Jezreel he instructed one of his guild prophets to grab up a flask of anointing oil and to travel across the Jordan River to Ramot-Gilead. When he got there he was to look up **Yehu**, the commander of Judah's and Israel's joint expeditionary military forces who had set up their headquarters inside the city. This means, of course, that Israel had defeated Aram in the battle for Ramot-Gilead (at least for now).

Some years earlier the Lord had given **Eliyahu** (Elijah) the dual missions of anointing **Haza'el** as King of Syria (Aram), and of anointing **Yehu** (Jehu) as King of Israel. Both **Haza'el** and **Yehu** were anointed for the same purpose: to be God's instruments to bring an end to the wicked dynasty of **Achav**, which had begun with his father **Omri**. But since the Lord deemed that there seemed to be some element of repentance shown by King **Achav**, He postponed his divine judgment for a generation. Since during that time of delay **Eliyahu** would be spirited off this earth by the Lord, the mission fell to Elisha to anoint these 2 men (Haza'el and Jehu) to become kings (1 of them a gentile, 1 a Hebrew).

Elisha personally travelled to Damascus and anointed the gentile Syrian army commander **Haza'el**, but now Elisha would delegate the duty to anoint the Israelite army commander **Yehu** to one of the guild prophets that he oversaw. We aren't given a reason as to why Elisha didn't go himself. **Yehu** was the son of Jehoshaphat, who was the son of **Nimshi**. It is unusual to include both the father and grandfather's name when identifying a person, and so both Hebrew and English scholars believe that the purpose is to highlight the name of **Nimshi**, which is probably the name of a clan and not so much a person. In other words, **Nimshi** was likely not Jehu's grandfather. Thus this particular Jehoshaphat is not thought to be King Jehoshaphat of Judah, but rather another Jehoshaphat who belonged to the clan called **Nimshi**. In fact, some Rabbis claim that **Yehu** isn't even of the tribe of Judah but rather that **Nimshi** was a clan that belonged to the tribe of Manessah. This is tradition and there is no evidence to collaborate it so we'll just have to move on with **Yehu's** ancestry as somewhat of a mystery. However, there is nothing in the story that would automatically disprove the theory of **Yehu** being of the tribe of Manessah.

So in verse 3 the guild prophet is told to go and find **Yehu** and pour the oil over his head and pronounce him as king over Israel. Now, here is one of those instances where the meaning of the word Israel is a bit hazy. Whether it was meant to communicate that Jehu would become king over the northern kingdom of Ephraim/Israel, or king over all Israel (the combined Judah

and Israel) is not entirely clear. I think that it probably indeed meant all Israel and in fact as the story goes along we'll see **Yehu** dispose of BOTH the King of Judah and the King of Israel no more than a few days apart, so I suspect that in his mind he was to be king over both kingdoms (and we don't see anything to say he was mistaken). And he probably was considered by much of the Hebrew population as king over both kingdoms for at least a short time (since the other 2 kings were now dead at his hand) while this new reality got sorted out.

Notice that Elisha no doubt figured out on his own that the timing was finally right to anoint **Yehu**. Prophets were often allowed to use their own common sense, especially when it seemed that circumstances had at last aligned to allow God's instructions to be carried out. **Yehu** was currently located far away from the royal palace, **Y'horam** King of Israel was wounded and in Jezreel, and **Achazyah** King of Judah was at his side. So the guild prophet could go to **Yehu** without fear of the kings finding out what he was up to. Nonetheless this was a dangerous mission with lots of ways for it to go wrong; and once the message was delivered to **Yehu**, and he was anointed as king, the guild prophet was told by Elisha to high-tail it out of the city immediately.

Notice that after anointing him, the prophet also informed **Yehu** WHY the Lord made him king: it was so that he could completely destroy the dynasty of **Achav** in fulfillment of God's promise to do so. Even more: this was so that the blood of the many prophets of Yehoveh that **Achav's** government had killed on account of Queen Jezebel could be avenged. In fact the Hebrew Talmud scholar Abarbanel points out that the wiping out of Ahab's descendants was meant as a condition put upon **Yehu** by the Lord God of Israel for receiving and keeping the throne. And there is no doubt that **Yehu** took the terms of his promotion quite seriously, as a very real proposition given to him by Yehoveh, even though it of course also benefited him greatly to be given carte blanche by God Himself to wipe out the families of both the kings of Judah and the kings of Israel. And notice that it was because of the intermarriage between the families of the kings of Judah and Israel that this execution order to bring about God's vengeance could be extended not only to the monarchy of the northern kingdom that had been directly ruled by **Achav's** dynasty, but also to the southern kingdom that had been influenced, but not directly ruled, by **Achav's** dynasty. And thus **Yehu** could realistically become king over all Israel and not just of the northern 10 tribes.

The idea of God's vengeance is very uncomfortable to Christians. Does it bother you, personally? In fact, it is often flatly rejected as something that does not extend beyond the Old Testament God. Dispensationalists especially say that starting in the New Testament vengeance as a mode of divine justice ends. The Hebrew word for avenge is **naqam** and there is no question that punishment in retribution for something is its clear intent. But let me assure you that divine vengeance is alive and well and will be part of Christ's mission when He returns.

***<sup>9</sup> When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been put to death for proclaiming the Word of God, that is, for bearing witness.***

***<sup>10</sup> They cried out in a loud voice, "Sovereign Ruler, HaKadosh, the True One, how long will it be before you judge the people living on earth and avenge our blood?"***

CJB Revelation 19:1

***After these things, I heard what sounded like the roar of a huge crowd in heaven, shouting, "Halleluyah! The victory, the glory, the power of our God!***

***<sup>2</sup> For his judgments are true and just. He has judged the great whore who corrupted the earth with her whoring. He has taken vengeance on her who has the blood of his servants on her hands."***

The notion that the New Testament God and His Messiah are pacifists and that divine blood vengeance is a thing of the past is pure fantasy. It seems as though some denominations have created their own non-biblical theology that divine vengeance is bad. But nothing could be more appropriate than God taking the lives of His foes as divine justice; it has been so since Genesis and will remain so until the new heavens and earth appears at the end of the Millennial Kingdom period. What we think about, or whether it makes us a bit uncomfortable doesn't matter.

It is also a God-pattern that He will use a wicked man to bring about earthly punishments of His own chosen people. Only rarely do we see in Holy Scripture a supernatural punishment upon God's people; most of the time it is in the form of a gentile enemy being given heavenly permission to effect some kind of oppression upon the rebellious Israelites. We need to recall that the many decades of the Lord's intervention to try to wake up the Israelites to their precarious position before Him had failed. Using Elijah and Elisha He had brought famines, sieges upon key Israelite cities, droughts, wars, and even a foreign queen (Jezebel) had been allowed to rule over Israel as an Israelite monarch to bring internal oppression upon the Hebrews; all to no avail. Each successive Israelite king was worse than the one he replaced; and the people themselves became numb and immune to the reasons for all of these catastrophes and simply increased their idolatry and immoral behavior.

Even in the End Times we'll see the ultimate evil man, the Anti-Christ, used to punish Yehoveh's Jewish people who still, for the most part, will not accept Yeshua as their Messiah.

Therefore instead of prophets a very different kind of ambassador of God's heavenly justice will now be employed: a cold blooded killer. Two killers in fact. Time for judgment; **Haza'el** of Syria and **Yehu** of Israel will go on blood rampages, and much of it is authorized by God.

The Lord is still warning mankind to this day through His teacher/prophets. The pagan world is of course mostly deaf to it; but amazingly much of the Church is also. And soon the merciful warnings and the survivable catastrophes that the world has been enduring over these last several decades will turn to something else; severe judgment. The opportunity to turn away from apostasy and wickedness will end and the great reaper will be turned loose.

CJB Rev 14:14-20

***14 Then I looked, and there before me was a white cloud. Sitting on the cloud was someone like a Son of Man with a gold crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand.***

***15 Another angel came out of the Temple and shouted to the one sitting on the cloud, "Start using your sickle to reap, because the time to reap has come- the earth's harvest is ripe!"***

***16 The one sitting on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.***

***17 Another angel came out of the Temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle.***

***18 Then out from the altar went yet another angel, who was in charge of the fire; and he called in a loud voice to the one with the sharp sickle, "Use your sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth's vine, because they are ripe!"***

***19 The angel swung his sickle down onto the earth, gathered the earth's grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God's fury.***

***20 The winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress as high as the horses' bridles for two hundred miles!***

So what is about to happen in 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings is but a shadow and illustration of what will happen in the modern era a few years from now. It is inevitable. And the anointed Jehu would indeed slay the idolatrous Ba'al worshippers of Israel, led by descendants of **Achav** and Jezebel, who had perverted the worship of Yehoveh; but it is NOT in righteous anger that he would do it. Rather it was for personal gain and power.

Verse 9 continues God's Word to **Yehu** as to why he is being given the mission to wipe out the royal family of **Achav** by saying that the House of **Achav** will be like the House of Jeroboam and the House of **Ba'sha**. And the idea is that these two former Israelite dynasties were also ended because of their rebellion against Yehoveh. Further Queen Jezebel will die and be eaten by wild dogs and not be properly buried.

One can imagine the scene as the other two military officers at Ramot-Gilead that had been sitting there when the guild prophet showed up and then took Jehu into another room to talk with him, were wondering what was going on. So when the guild prophet leaves and **Yehu** comes back out, they start pestering him to tell them what was said. We get an interesting insight into these men's attitude about God's prophets when they ask what this **meshugga** had to say. **Meshugga** is Hebrew for crazy or idiot. At first **Yehu** says it makes no difference because these prophet-guys simply babble stuff and it doesn't mean anything; it's all just religious nonsense. But they press him and he tells them that this prophet has anointed him king. Suddenly this prophet isn't such an idiot after all! They are ecstatic! So instantly they acknowledged **Yehu** as king and blew the shofar as a traditional announcement that a new king has been coronated.

Did they necessarily believe that this rather common prophet (1 of the thousands of rival prophets running around throughout the land) had an actual legitimate message from Yehoveh that they ought to believe and act upon? Maybe marginally. The content of the message was pleasing enough and certainly something that they **wanted** to believe, because it served them well. As a result of this good news Jehu's two closest officers would soon become the king's right hand men and great wealth and power would come with it. Further, whether they put any stock into this **meshugga** prophet was irrelevant; what was more important was that the people of Israel sure did.

Elisha was so popular and respected that when he anointed someone for anything, or announced a Word from the Lord, the people accepted it without hesitation. So when **Yehu** assumed the throne, Elisha would vouch that he was God's choice and thus fully legitimate. And when **Yehu** started killing off the current monarchy and all their families, Elisha would vouch that this indeed was per God's instructions. From **Yehu's** perspective he was given an opportunity that he could have never dreamed of. Not only is he king, but he has been given full authority by God to kill off all rivals to the throne and the people won't see him in a bad light because of it. In fact, they'll see him as obedient and righteous. Even more, to whatever extent Jehu and his two sidekicks believed in Yehoveh, they wouldn't have to worry in the back of their minds about facing God's curses for murdering scores or perhaps hundreds of Hebrew people.

You know, as we read the book of Kings it is hard to not see such a direct parallel to our day. Many of our politicians and government officials speak into cameras in respectful tones about

Christianity and the Church, even of their own faith. But on the other hand, to other audiences, they'll also admit that they consider people who take God, the Bible, and their faith too seriously as a little bit off; as **meshugga**, crazy people. People who ignorantly cling too closely to their bibles and their guns. But do they still want our help and our votes? Of course, and they're willing to play the game and say what we want to hear and believe to get it. Perhaps we are a little **meshugga** since we keep giving them our support.

In verse 14 we're told that Jehu wasted no time; his first order of business was for his men guarding the city to make sure that no one left Ramot-Gilead. That way he could reasonably assure that King **Y'horam** remained unaware of this God-ordained coup. So Jehu hopped onto his war chariot and taking a contingent of the most loyal troops with him went off in haste towards the King of Israel's palace in Jezreel. Secrets of this magnitude are just too hard to keep quiet for very long so immediate action was necessary. The tower watchman at Jezreel saw a chariot and a company of troops approaching and reported it to his superior. When the properly cautious **Y'horam** got word he ordered that a soldier be sent out with the message to whoever it was, "do you come in peace?" When the 1<sup>st</sup> rider approached **Yehu** he made the inquiry in the name of the king and Jehu responded arrogantly that his business was not the rider's concern and ordered the king's messenger to fall in line with **Yehu's** soldiers.

When **Y'horam** heard what happened, he sent out a second messenger but with the same results. The watchman then told the king that the frenetic style of driving the chariot reminded him of the way that Jehu drove his; so the king decides it must be Jehu and decides to go meet him personally. Big mistake. When the king confronts **Yehu** and asks if he comes in peace, **Yehu** proceeds to make insulting comments about the Queen Mother Jezebel and makes it clear that peace was not his aim. Uh-oh. King **Y'horam** instantly bolts knowing that he is in trouble, and yells out a warning to King **Achazyah** who had gone out with him, that **Yehu's** coming was treachery not peace.

The warrior Jehu drew back his powerful bow and before **Y'horam** could get very far shot him with an arrow between his shoulder blades that pierced his heart, killing him. But that was only the beginning of Jehu's rampage.

We'll continue this story next time.