

Dr. John Oswalt, Kings, Session 22, Part 3

2 Kings 9-10, Part 3

© 2024 John Oswalt and Ted Hildebrandt

We turn now to the final scene in this rather bloody episode, the destruction of the Baal Temple in Samaria. Once again, we see how shrewd and how decisive this man Jehu is. How are you going to get rid of all these Baal worshippers? They're scattered around the countryside.

They're all, of course, living in fear at this point. Who is this man, Jehu? What's he going to do? And so when they hear the word, oh, my goodness, he's not, he's killed. He's killed Joram, and he's killed Ahaziah.

He's killed the whole family of Ahab. But he's not going to turn against our God Baal. Oh, good.

Let's have a big, big celebration. Let all of us come together at the Baal Temple, Jezebel's Baal Temple in Samaria. Ahab served Baal a little.

Jehu will serve him much. That's a relief. That's a relief.

Let's go party. Summon all the prophets of Baal, all his servants, all his priests, and see that no one is missing because I'm going to hold a great sacrifice to Baal. Anyone who fails to come will no longer live.

Wow. Better be there. And so, as the story develops, what does this tell us about Jehu's commitments? If we have questions about Jehu, we ought not to miss the important points.

Who's he going to serve? Yahweh, Yahweh at all costs. What is this? What is this event about from the anointing of Jehu until this moment? It's about bringing Baal worship to an end. No ifs, no ands, no buts.

He's not playing games. Now, again, if this were merely a coup d'etat, it would not be very bright to get rid of the Baal worship, but he's going to get rid of Baal worship. As I said, his deception was precisely for the purpose of getting them all together in one place at one time.

And they were enthusiastic about joining the celebration because they were relieved. Oh, he wasn't going to destroy their religion. He was only destroying that dynasty.

This is verse 24. Now, Jehu had posted 80 men outside with this warning. If one of you lets any of the men I'm placing in your hands escape, it'll be your life for his.

Hmm, I wonder if the Lord says something opposite to us. Are there people that he has committed to us? And he's saying, don't let them escape me. Are there people that you need to be praying for? That you need to be talking to? That you need to be being kind to? He says I've committed these people to you for you to kill them.

I think Jesus may be saying, I've committed these people to you to bring them to life, and it's your life for their life. I'm not saying that I think we'll be condemned to death because of that, but I simply want to make the point. So, when the word came, go in and kill them. Let no one escape.

So, they cut them down with the sword. The guards and officers threw the bodies out and then entered the inner shrine of the temple of Baal where the idol would have been. They brought the sacred stone out of the temple of Baal and burned it.

You got to get a pretty hot fire to burn a stone. I think it's interesting that they don't. The writer doesn't even go so far as to call it an idol here.

It's just a sacred stone, but I think there's no question. It was the idol of Baal. They demolished the sacred stone of Baal and tore down the temple of Baal.

And people have used it as a latrine to this day. Oh, my, this is not going to be a holy place anymore. Now, why? Why that kind of totality? Demolished the stone, tore down the temple, and turned it into a latrine.

What's going on here? Total eradication. Total eradication. Leave a little bit, and you will go back to the same place.

Yes, yes, yes. God will not tolerate arrival. It relates to our lives.

The smallest thing that stands in the way of his lordship will cripple us. But we're drawn back to it again and again and again. Get rid of it.

Get rid of it. And it will be different things for different people. Different things have a hold on different people.

But it's got to be dealt with radically. Whatever you love in the place of the lord will kill you. I've thought of it this way.

I have in my hand several hundred pennies. All of them are contaminated with COVID. How many do I have to get rid of? Every last one of them.

Every last one. Well, I just want to keep one. That's all it takes.

That's all it takes. So again, if we ask questions about Jehu, and I certainly do, there's a lot about what he did that was exactly what was required at that moment. But I want you to look at verses 28 and 29.

So, Jehu destroyed Baal worship in Israel. However, oh Lord, he did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, the very first king of the northern kingdom, which he caused Israel to commit the worship of the golden calves at Bethel and Dan. Oh, this was the opportunity.

The best opportunity that anybody had to make the break and say, we're going to get rid of those Yahweh idols. But he didn't do it. Now, I've thought about this some.

I mean, what does that mean? If you were to get rid of those idols, would your people have to go back to Jerusalem to worship God? What might that mean? Might that mean the dissolution of your kingdom? That was what Jeroboam had been afraid of in the beginning when he made those idols, that people would be drawn back to that gorgeous temple. But could they have worshipped God at Bethel without an idol? I don't know. I don't know the answer here.

But very clearly, he didn't do all he should have done. He had the opportunity to go ahead and risk the consequences and take Israel back to where it was supposed to be anti-idolatrous. And he didn't do it.

Again, I think the question is for you and me. Are there places I need to go in my worship of the Lord that I'm not willing to go to yet? Are there opportunities that I have to serve him more clearly and purely? And I'm missing them. And so, the Lord said to Jehu, because you've done well in accomplishing what is right in my eyes and have done to the house of Ahab all I had in mind to do, your descendants will sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation.

This is the longest dynasty in the Northern Kingdom. The Jehu dynasty was on the throne for about 100 years through four generations. 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. Look back at Deuteronomy chapter 10, verses 12 and 13. People keep asking me what my favorite verses in the Bible are. And I say whichever ones I read most recently.

But these come close. Now, Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you? But to fear the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul. This is what Jehu did not do.

He served the Lord. He sure did. In some dynamic and powerful ways, but not with a whole heart.

What does it mean? What does it mean to live for the Lord with a whole heart? What are your thoughts? Nothing is more important. All right, what else? Give that woman a gold star. Total obedience, okay? The whole focus, his way, his way, his way.

What else? You see, I think that Jehu thought that obedience action was all that was required. I want to be careful how I say this, but I'm going to say it. God doesn't want your obedience.

He wants you, and if he gets you, then doing what your father wants is not a big deal. But it's when we, oh, I've got to do this for God. Well, okay, what's the minimum I have to do in order to achieve the point? But no, Father, I want you.

That's what you see with Jesus. My bread is to do my father's will, but it's very significant to do my father's will. Not my God's will, not my boss's will, not my supervisor's will, but my father's will.

So, you can do God's will in another way than God's way, and you can do God's will in a limited way that overlooks the whole aspect of the relationship. Arm me with jealous care as in thy sight to live, and oh thy servant, Lord, prepare a strict account to give. Yes.

So, in so many ways, the story of Jehu is a triumph and tragedy. He did God's will. He did deliver the northern kingdom from the threat of losing Yahweh, but he did it in his own way, a way that far exceeded what God had in mind, and he did it partially.

He fulfilled the obvious intention of his mandate: get rid of Baalism, but a loving relationship with God would have taken him to the next step and get rid of the idolatrous worship of Yahweh. I don't know whether that ever occurred to him, I don't know whether he considered the possibility, or whether it never occurred to him. I mean, we've been worshiping these gold idols now for nearly 100 years.

Get rid of them? Why would we do that? Well, read the Bible. Bible? What's that? So, that's our challenge. Oh, Lord, you can have all of me, every last bit, and whatever stands in the way, if you'll give me the knife, I'll cut it.

But Lord, I don't want to do just your will. I want to love you. I don't want to do what pleases you.

I want to do what gives you joy. I've thought again and again in this book of Kings, the judgment. He did what was evil in God's eyes.

Eyes tell us so much. Are you happy with what I'm doing? Oh, you're not. I want to live, and God help me. I want to live in the smile of God's eyes.

I want him to say, oh honey, you're doing just what I want. Those are dangerous words to say, but that's what Jehu missed. That's what Jehu missed.

He did God's will, but he did it in his own way and in a partial way.

And not in all that might have been. And again, I don't want to leave you there. I want to make that point again.

There's no place where Jehu was told, and you need to get rid of those idols. I suspect, I suspect, on his deathbed if somebody said that. Nobody ever told me I had to do that.

Right. Nobody told you you had to. But if you were in the father's heart, you wouldn't have had to be told. You would know.

Let's pray.

Help us, Lord. We thank you for Jehu. Thank you that he was faithful. That he was willing to carry out this dreadful task.

But I'm afraid he enjoyed it. Oh, Father, take us beyond Jehu. Take us into your heart.

Where doing what you want will be a pleasure to us, not a burden. Help us, Lord Jesus, to have your spirit within us where our bread is to do your will.

And not merely what's stated, but what's in your heart. Thank you. In your name. Amen.