

June 11

2 Kings 8-10

OK, so today's reading would have made for a great series of scenes in an R-rated war movie - Can you see it: Scar wars; The REVENGE of the JEHU. The scenes would include the tragic death of Ahaziah, the revenge on Joram and all Ahab's family, Jezebel going splat and a basket full of 70 heads. Gross!

Follow today's reading closely, though, because it is one of the few times that Israel and Judah's history converge. So today, I am mostly going to review the storyline to be sure you are following at a confusing moment.

Ahaziah is king in the south. He became a young king at the tender age of 22 when his Dad, Jehoram and all his brothers got killed. Nobody cared that papa Jehoram got the axe and MOMMY Dearest - AKA Athaliah, encouraged him to do wrong.

Perhaps this is why Ahaziah was in cahoots with the always wicked Northern Kingdom. His Grandpa, Jeshoshephat, would have never stood for that. But by Ahaziah's day, they were willing to dance with the deadly and deceiving King Joram, son of Ahab and Jezebel.

MAP - visiting from Jerusalem in Jezreel, buddy King Joram is injured.

OK, so follow me back up to the Northern Kingdom of wickedness. Joram is on the throne, when the prophet Elisha sent word to a general named Jehu, and had his servant anoint Jehu as the next king of Israel, and gave that commander some instruction with regard to what he must, as God's representative do, to secure his throne. God used Jehu, of course, to bring final judgment upon the household of Omri, and in particular upon the household of Ahab for all the wickedness that had been perpetrated during their reigns, just as was predicted.

Elisha the Prophet is still alive, but he fades into obscurity following the anointing of Jehu as Israel's new monarch.

MAP

Ramoth Gilead, where Jehu was when the messenger of Elisha reached him, was in the northeastern border area of Gad's territory, near the Jordan River. Elisha not only had the king anointed, but delivered a stern commission to him. Following the celebration of Jehu's rise, the new ruler turned his thoughts to that charge that had been given him. King Joram had been in the same location as his captain, but he had returned across the Jordan River to Jezreel. Jehu, knowing how rapidly news of the coup could be disseminated, gave orders that no one was to leave Ramoth Gilead, and then he departed with a force of his supporters, and because of his great haste to precede any news of his rise to power drove, (in the words of the King James Bible,) 'furiously' in the desert. That has made Jehu the kind of patron saint of taxicab drivers -- because he drove like a madman.

So Joram, and King Ahaziah - who happened to be visiting from the south, buzzed out to meet him themselves. They met Jehu at the vineyard of Naboth, the property that had been gained by Ahab's family through the cunning of Jezebel, and for which the prophet Elijah had pronounced a curse upon them. Jehu minced no words about his purpose. He announced that his journey was not one of peace. His reply to Joram's inquiry - "What peace, so long as the harlotries of your mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many," gripped the king with fear. He shouted a warning to Ahaziah and began to flee. But before he had time even to bound into his own chariot, Jehu shot him with an arrow. Before he began the chase of Ahaziah, he gave commands concerning the disposition of Joram's body. The Lord had commanded that the body be thrown on that ill-gotten property that had been Naboth's, and the blood of Naboth was finally avenged.

MAP

Ahaziah, the king of Judah, tried to get away by reaching the chariot city of Megiddo, but meets his death instead-ultimately in Samaria..

MAP -back to Jezreel

The second part of Jehu's commission was the charge to put Jezebel to death. When Jezebel heard that Jehu was coming, she painted her face. It might seem strange that she would worry about cosmetics when her life was in danger, but Jezebel was going to die like she had lived, cutting a memorable figure. She didn't beg for mercy. Like a Hollywood vamp, she dressed up for the showdown and waited at the window to talk to the man who had come to deal with her. She called him Zimri, recalling the fate of the one who had overthrown a previous dynasty. "Is it well, Zimri, your master's murderer?" She was about to die, but she was going to get her jabs in first. This woman, however, had inspired no loyalty, and she was tossed out of the window by her own servants. Aaahhh... splat. Just as Elijah had prophesied, the dogs licked up her blood where it laid.

MAP - to Samria

Faced with a need to secure his kingdom, Jehu prepared to eradicate all heirs to the throne. The new king went about his extermination with creativity. He challenged the guardians of the 70 sons of Ahab to set up one son as heir apparent and fight for the throne. But they refused, knowing how Jehu had already done away with Joram and Ahaziah. Instead they proposed subservience to the new king, and an embassy from Ahab's house pledged loyalty to Jehu and promised to carry out his orders. Those orders called for the beheading of the family members. The heads were then piled up before the gate and that pile of heads bore somber evidence of the fulfillment of the prophecy of God.

I just want to leave you with one crazy thought today. You know, all this stuff was a part of God's plan. He even put Jehu up to it! So when crazy things happen in the government, in your family, or in your business - know that God is still in charge, as chaotic as things look now...

Mark Ashton, resting in God's sovereignty.