

King Jehu Purges Baal Worship in the Northern Kingdom

2 Kings 10:18-36

2 Kings 10:18-36 - *"Then Jehu gathered all the people together, and said to them, "Ahab served Baal a little, Jehu will serve him much. Now therefore, call to me all the prophets of Baal, all his servants, and all his priests. Let no one be missing, for I have a great sacrifice for Baal. Whoever is missing shall not live." But Jehu acted deceptively, with the intent of destroying the worshipers of Baal. And Jehu said, "Proclaim a solemn assembly for Baal." So they proclaimed it. Then Jehu sent throughout all Israel; and all the worshipers of Baal came, so that there was not a man left who did not come. So they came into the temple of Baal, and the temple of Baal was full from one end to the other. And he said to the one in charge of the wardrobe, "Bring out vestments for all the worshipers of Baal." So he brought out vestments for them. Then Jehu and Jehonadab the son of Rechab went into the temple of Baal, and said to the worshipers of Baal, "Search and see that no servants of the LORD are here with you, but only the worshipers of Baal." So they went in to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings. Now Jehu had appointed for himself eighty men on the outside, and had said, "If any of the men whom I have brought into your hands escapes, whoever lets him escape, it shall be his life for the life of the other." Now it happened, as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, that Jehu said to the guard and to the captains, "Go in and kill them; let no one come out!" And they killed them with the edge of the sword; then the guards and the officers threw them out, and went into the inner room of the temple of Baal. And they brought the sacred pillars out of the temple of Baal and burned them. Then they broke down the sacred pillar of Baal, and tore down the temple of Baal and made it a refuse dump to this day. Thus Jehu destroyed Baal from Israel.*

However Jehu did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin, that is, from the golden calves that were at Bethel and Dan. And the Lord said to Jehu, "Because you have done well in doing what is right in My sight, and have done to the house of Ahab all that was in My heart, your sons shall sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation."

But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart; for he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam, who had made Israel sin.

In those days the LORD began to cut off parts of Israel; and Hazael conquered them in all the territory of Israel from the Jordan eastward: all the land of Gilead—Gad, Reuben, and Manasseh—from Aroer, which is by the River Arnon, including Gilead and Bashan. Now the rest of the acts of Jehu, all that he did, and all his might, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? So Jehu rested with his fathers, and they buried him in Samaria. Then Jehoahaz his son reigned in his place. And the period that Jehu reigned over Israel in Samaria was twenty-eight years."

Background Notes

King Jehu was not a godly king, but God used him as an instrument to end the wicked dynasty of Ahab, fulfilling Elijah's prophecy in 1 Kings 21. Furthermore, God used King Jehu to help remove the worship of the pagan god Baal that was pervasive in the northern kingdom of Israel.

So Jehu came up with a crafty plan - very typical of Jehu! He proposed a national convention of Baal worshippers. In fact, Jehu even pretended that he was on their side, and that he was a Baal worshipper himself. So all the prophets of Baal and worshipers of Baal were gathered together inside the temple of Baal in Samaria. The building was full.

Jehu made sure that no prophets or followers of the Lord were involved. Then everyone was given a special garment to wear. How nice! Not just a nametag, like most conventions, but a whole distinctive set of clothes! Jehu did this for an obvious reason. The special clothing made for easy identification of Baal worshippers!

After some offerings were made to Baal, Jehu ordered his military men to go into the temple of Baal and execute everyone with the sword. Not one worshiper of Baal escaped! Then Jehu ordered that all the images of Baal and the temple of Baal be destroyed. *“Then they broke down the sacred pillar of Baal, and tore down the temple of Baal and made it a refuse dump to this day. Thus Jehu destroyed Baal from Israel” (v27-28).*

Doctrinal Points

1. Partial obedience has its rewards.

There's no doubt that Jehu did the right thing in ending the wicked dynasty of Ahab, as well as removing Baal worship from Israel. In fact, Jehu was rewarded for his partial obedience. Verse 30: *“Because you have done well in doing what is right in My sight, and have done to the house of Ahab all that was in My heart, your sons shall sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation.”*

But there's also no doubt that Jehu obeyed the Lord only partially. Verse 29: *“However Jehu did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin, that is, from the golden calves that were at Bethel and Dan.”* Also verse 31, *“But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart; for he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam, who had made Israel sin.”*

Jehu abolished Baal worship in Israel, but he did not establish true worship of the Lord in Israel. Jehu obeyed as long as it suited his political agenda. He didn't mind killing off Ahab's descendants. After all, that secured his own throne. And he didn't mind getting rid of the prophets of Baal. Ahab and Jezebel had imported them, and they supported the Ahab dynasty. So Jehu was willing to go along with all this. It fit right into his political agenda!

It's interesting that God rewarded Jehu for his partial obedience, even though his motives were wrong. God said that Jehu's dynasty would go on to the fourth generation. Jehu's dynasty went on for another hundred years, with four more kings. So even partial obedience has its rewards.

Even non-Christians, if they follow the laws of God and practice biblical principles for whatever motive, they reap certain benefits. Non-believers, for example, who are faithful in their marriages are delivered from many problems, both physical problems and psychological problems. That's a benefit, or a reward, for living by God's principles. Of course it would be so much better if they were to become Christians - but partial obedience does have its rewards.

This certainly applies to Christians as well. Sometimes we obey the Lord for the wrong motives - but God still rewards us! For example, if you were to counsel at a Christian camp this summer, but your hidden motive was to get a free vacation out of it – we'd probably all agree that is partial obedience! And yet God will still reward you for the service that you give to Him. Partial obedience has its rewards.

2. Partial obedience has its losses.

Verses 32-33: *"In those days the Lord began to cut off parts of Israel; and Hazael conquered them in all the territory of Israel from the Jordan eastward: all the land of Gilead—Gad, Reuben, and Manasseh."* What's going on here?

Loss of some of Israel's territory was God's discipline upon Jehu and upon the northern kingdom of Israel, because *"Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart"* (v31). Because of this partial obedience, he began to lose territory. All of Israel's lands on the east side of the Jordan were taken by the Syrians. Partial obedience has its losses.

The New Testament teaches that we as Christians will appear before the judgment seat of Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:10, *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ."* This is not a judgment to determine if we're saved or not. Praise God, that's all been settled! The judgment seat of Christ has to do with reward - or loss of reward - for how we live our lives as believers. Partial obedience has its losses. Let's expect to lose out on rewards, not only in this life, but also in the life to come if we're willing to only partially obey the Lord. Partial obedience has its losses.

Practical Application

Let's destroy the golden calves as well as the images of Baal!

Verses 28-29: *"Thus Jehu destroyed Baal from Israel. However Jehu did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin, that is, from the golden calves that were at Bethel and Dan."*

King Jeroboam I is known in Scripture as "the king who made Israel to sin." He had two golden calf idols made, and he set them up in shrines in the towns of Dan and Bethel. Jehu did not tear down these shrines. He tore down the temple of Baal and destroyed the images of Baal. That was good. But Jehu allowed the golden calves to remain. They should have been destroyed as well.

Baal was destroyed but the golden calves were tolerated. Why? Maybe because they had been there for so long, so everyone just accepted them as part of the landscape? Maybe because golden calves are a lot more pleasing to the sight than the pagan images of Baal? Well, for whatever reason, Jehu did not remove the golden calves and their shrines.

In 1 John 5:21, we as Christians are told to “keep ourselves from idols.” It’s possible that we’ve destroyed the “images of Baal” - the big, obvious “idols” in our lives - like addiction to alcohol, or drugs, or gambling. But maybe we’re tolerating some “golden calves” - the idols in our lives that have been around so long that everyone accepts them - such as the idols of materialism, or gluttony, or careless speech, or thoughts that are not pleasing to God. Let’s be careful to destroy the golden calves as well as the images of Baal!

In 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 we read, *“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”*

Can we say that we’ve taken **every thought captive, to make it obedient to Christ?** Can we say that about every TV program we watch, every video we watch, every book we read, and everything that’s available on the internet? If not, the Bible says these thoughts can set themselves up against the knowledge of God – and that’s idolatry. That’s as bad as tolerating golden calves!

Let’s destroy the golden calves as well as the images of Baal!