

Who was King Jehu in the Bible?

Before his reign as king, Jehu functioned as a commander in the army of Ahab (2 Kings 9:5, 25) in the northern kingdom of Israel. Jehu was the son of Jehoshaphat, although he is more commonly mentioned as son of Nimshi, his grandfather, perhaps because Nimshi was more well-known. Jehu's name, meaning "Yahweh is he," portrays well his future, God-given task: to obliterate the house of Ahab along with the worship of Baal that pervaded Israel at the time.

Jehu was a reformer of sorts who was used by God to clean up the mess that Ahab had made. Of King Ahab it is recorded that he "did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any of those before him" (1 Kings 16:30). Marrying Jezebel, daughter of the king of the Sidonians, Ahab was seduced into her idolatrous worship of Baal and Ashtoreth. Although God was patient for a time with Ahab, his many sins eventually brought God's judgment upon his family line (1 Kings 21:20-22). This judgment first lands upon Ahab's own head, as he is shot and killed in a battle against the Arameans (1 Kings 22:34-38).

God chose Jehu as one of three men who would enact His judgment upon Ahab's family. God told the prophet Elijah, "Anoint Hazael king over Aram. Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu" (1 Kings 19:15-17). One way or another, Ahab's dynasty would be destroyed.

God also chose Jehu to be the king of Israel. After he was anointed king, Jehu immediately took steps to secure the throne. Knowing that Joram, son of Ahab, had recently gone to Jezreel to recover from wounds in a battle against the Arameans, Jehu

ordered his men to seal the city so that no one could alert Joram of Jehu's anointing (2 Kings 9:1-16). Jehu made haste to Jezreel and killed two of Ahab's progeny—Joram, king of northern Israel; and Ahaziah, king of Judah (2 Kings 9:14-29). Jehu then proceeded to Jezebel's palace in Jezreel, where the queen stood watching for him at her window. At Jehu's command, eunuchs surrounding Jezebel threw her down from the window. Jezebel's blood splattered over the pavement, and her body was eaten by dogs (2 Kings 9:30-37).

Jehu left no man standing who was in alliance with King Ahab, as God had commanded long before through Elijah. Entering the temple of Baal, Jehu slaughtered all the priests of Baal and destroyed the temple and its sacred stone, thus eradicating Baal worship in Israel (2 Kings 10:23-28).

The Lord blessed Jehu for his obedience, granting him a dynasty that would last to the fourth generation (2 Kings 10:30). However, because Jehu continued to hold on to the idolatrous worship of King Jeroboam (2 Kings 10:29, 31; 12:26-30), God began to reduce the size of Israel, gradually giving them over to the power of even Hazael of Syria (2 Kings 10:32-33). Jehu reigned over Israel a total of twenty-eight years and was succeeded by his son Jehoahaz (2 Kings 10:35-36).

Through Jehu we can learn that, although it is true that God blesses and grants success to those who seek to obey Him, God also can and will pull away His blessing from one who willfully chooses to live in sin. As Jesus says in Matthew 6:24, "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other." We cannot serve God while continuing to hold on to false gods. As Joshua said, we must "choose for [ourselves] this day whom [we] will serve" (Joshua 24:15). Where does your allegiance lie?