

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

## Questionable Motives

### II Kings 10:1-36

**Intro:** History has shown us that a violent change of government often results in a lot of bloodshed. From an estimated 40K in the French Revolution to the 1.5 – 2 million lost to Pol Pot's murderous regime in Cambodia, revolutions can be messy. It doesn't even need to be a complete change in government. When Joseph Stalin took over the Soviet Union, not even loyal Communists were safe. Between 1936-38 over half the Communist party was arrested and over a million died, either executed or "working" in the Siberian gulags. 70% of the Central Committee died. It was almost as if Stalin had a contract to populate Sheol. Gaining and keeping power can be a bloody business. Take Jehu's revolt – blood drips throughout **ch10**, although Jehu is a rank amateur compared to butcher Joe Stalin. But at least in Jehu's case, Yahweh had said it would be like that.

**1-11** – The emphasis of this section is given in **v10**. This is a declaration of Jehu's theology that highlights the fulfillment of Yahweh's word. But what is going on in the text that makes this declaration so significant? After eliminating the king of Israel (Joram), the king of Judah (Ahaziah) and the Queen mother (Jezebel) he still had a bit of a problem as **v1** informs us. Ahab actually had 70 other sons living in Samaria – 70! These sons were still a significant danger to the newly anointed king Jehu. First, as direct descendents of Ahab, they would have a keen interest in fighting to retain the throne of Israel within the dynasty of Omri. Second, they were all in Samaria, the capitol city of Israel and Jehu was still in Jezreel. But, instead of mustering the troops for a major confrontation, Jehu initiates a letter writing campaign. He specifically targets the elders of Samaria responsible for raising Ahab's sons.

Jehu's letter pointed out that these elders had everything they needed to fight for their former master's regime. They could select any one of 70 candidates for king and put all their military resources to good use. But the elders had no stomach for battle and were totally intimidated. They fold like a cheap suit and send word to Jehu of their complete surrender to him. Of course, there was a price to pay for their capitulation, or at least a test. Jehu responds by saying "If you are for me, if you are as subservient as you

claim, see to it that the heads of your master's sons are delivered to Jezreel tomorrow morning. The Samarian elders are as docile as the elders of Naboth's town; they slaughter the 70 men and Fedex them to Jezreel. "When it absolutely, positively has to be there overnight..."

The author's matter-of-fact style in v8 is astounding. I imagine an Alfred type English butler announcing this in his unflappable way, "Sir, the heads you've ordered have arrived." Jehu has the heads stacked in 2 heaps by the gate of the city and they are to be there overnight. This way, everyone can get a good look at this spectacle. This may be quite shocking to us but it was a fairly common practice in ancient times. In fact, the Assyrians had a real knack for stacking severed heads. But Jehu didn't do this to intimidate the people of Jezreel; he used these heads as visual aids for his speech the next morning. In effect, Jehu says, "Sure, I killed Joram but this isn't my work – these heads arrived by parcel post. Someone else did this. Clearly there is widespread support for me. These are royal heads; this means I have the loyalty of people at the highest levels – further resistance would be pointless."

Jehu then declares that all of this that has transpired on the house of Ahab is just the fulfillment of Yahweh's word as it was spoken by Elijah the prophet. With that undeniable stamp of approval, Jehu set about purging all the Ahabian relatives, supporters, nobles, court favorites, religious functionaries...anyone in Jezreel who had been associated with Ahab in any way bit the dust. It was a bad day to be Ahab's barber! There were no survivors. It was like the title of a book on Custer's last stand – None Injured, None Missing – All Dead. Any support for Ahab in Jezreel was now gone, meaning all resistance to Jehu's regime was also gone. He knew how to win over the hearts and minds of the people! But this was just Jezreel, the vacation home of Ahab. The city of Samaria still had to be dealt with.

**12-17** – On the way to Samaria, Jehu crossed paths with a group of young royals who were ignorant of current events and quite free with all their personal information. There are a lot of missing details here but the long and the short of it is that they all met an untimely end at the hand of Jehu. Now, Jehu gets a lot of grief in the commentaries for wiping out such a large delegation of the king of Judah's relatives since they were clearly not part of Israel. But, if you will recall, the houses of Israel and Judah had intermarried so Jehu most likely assumed that, having been given this golden

opportunity, it would be negligent on his part not to decimate the pro-Ahab contingent in Judah as well.

After this, Jehu meets up with the mysterious Jehonadab son of Rechab on the way to Samaria. In fact, it seems that Jehonadab was on his way to meet up with Jehu where he expresses enthusiastic support for Jehu and his revolt. We don't know exactly what to make of this guy. He's the founder of the Rechabites, a reform movement in the region that protested and rejected the immoral and impure lifestyles of many in Israel and Judah. They never drank wine, built houses, sowed seed or planted vineyards and they always lived in tents. His descendents appear later in [Jeremiah 35](#). There, God uses the Rechabites and the memory of Jehonadab as an example of faithfulness and obedience to rebuke His unfaithful and disobedient people.

Jehonadab was apparently a Yahweh loyalist because Jehu made a point of declaring his own personal zeal for Yahweh. Jehu wanted to know if he was on his side because he was hungry for the approval of this popular religious leader and reformer. It's quite possible that Jehu wanted to use Jehonadab to add legitimacy to his reign. Jehonadab was considered an honorable man in Israel and by carrying him around in his chariot Jehu may be trying to enhance his own public esteem. But, Jehu's comment about his zeal for the Lord seems to emphasize his zeal more than the Lord's glory. This is the first inkling we have on the motivations of Jehu's actions.

This is what happened and the point of the text is that it is the fulfillment of Yahweh's word. Jehu says as much in his heady speech at the city gate ([10](#)). Now, maybe you're not sure Jehu is qualified to be our resident theologian or our interpreter of his contemporary history. After all, Yahweh's word against Ahab was all to convenient and beneficial for Jehu, right? Still, the author himself doesn't allow us to question Jehu's theology because he supports completely in [v17](#). He confirms: the eradication of the Ahab loyalists in Samaria was in line with Yahweh's word spoken to Elijah.

So, if we can discount Jehu then we may be tempted to question God. Why does He work like this? Why does He allow the gore of man to carry out His will? Couldn't He operate in a cleaner way? Maybe so, but we remember these 2 points: 1) the Bible shows that God often works indirectly through human instruments and unlike modern surgeons, God has no sterilized

instruments; all of them are flawed and many of them are opportunistic, self-serving Jehus. So, God uses wicked people to carry out His divine design (Assyrians). 2) This is a situation involving the judgment of God and it's very difficult to make divine judgment pleasant.

In our home, like most, the laundry is sorted into several different categories; the basics: whites, colors, jeans and towels and they are supposed to be washed accordingly. Now, I'm quite willing to abide by the modus operandi as delivered by the authority on high but at the same time, I also like to see the laundry completely finished. So, if I have a little bit of this and a little bit of that left over in each of the hampers, well guess what – its all going in together and everybody is happy. All I'm saying is that laundry can be done in a refined way or in a barbaric way. Either way, the laundry gets done. That's Kind of how God works. He can fulfill His word in a direct, un-polluted way if He chooses to but more often than not, He does it in an unrefined way with tainted instruments. Either way, the word gets fulfilled and the fulfillment of God's word is sometimes very messy.

**18-28** – Jehu promised zeal for Yahweh but it looks like the exact opposite of that in **v18**. But before we can even grab our torches and pitchfork, the author clues us in to Jehu's deception. It seems he has an ingenious plan for eliminating all the Baal worshippers. All Baalists are properly notified and they arrive to fill the temple of Baal from wall to wall. How can Baal fail with even greater government gusto behind him? Jehu makes sure all the Baalists put on "vestments." We're not exactly sure what these vestments were but we know what they are for – they will make the Baal worshippers easier for his death squad to identify.

This is no ecumenical service either – no Yahweh loyalists allowed. Jehu goes in for the sacrificial ceremony but has 80 commandos waiting outside for the kill order. He exits when he has completed his liturgical work and he sends in his men to "clean house." They are very efficient: they wipe out all Baal worshippers, destroy all pagan paraphernalia and totally level the temple of Baal making it all part of Jehu's temple-to-toilets program. That's what it means by refuse dump – it was now a public toilet. Then as almost an aside, **v28** heralds the good news: Baal is dead in Israel!

There was a time in Israel when nobody believed that was possible. Under Ahab and Jezebel it looked like Baal was in the cat-bird seat for the

duration. What unexpected good news! But it may make some a little nervous. After all, eliminating Baal's devotees was never part of the prophetic mandate laid down to Jehu by Elijah. That is true but we should probably peruse through **Deut 13** a little before we start to condemn Jehu. That being said, It's still possible that wiping out the Baal cult had more to do with Jehu's zeal for Jehu than his zeal for Yahweh. Since Ahab and Jezebel ardently supported the Baal cult, it's very likely there were many Ahab supporters in Baalists circles. Jehu likely purged the Baal worshippers not because he was so pro-Yahweh but because he was anti-Ahab. Eliminating Baal eliminated Ahab loyalists, dissolved support for Ahab's family and consolidated power for Jehu – all in 1 step!

But the good news of **v28** must be taken with a grain of salt and the following verses to properly see how it functions.

**28-31** – This passage follows a 2-beat pattern: there's a commendation **28** then a qualification **29**; then another commendation **30** followed by yet another qualification **31**. Jehu wipes out the Baal cult but he doesn't turn away from Jeroboam's bull cult. The Lord commends him for wiping out Ahab's house but the author repeats that he didn't turn away from Jeroboam's nonsense. Jeroboam is sort of the Pontus Pilate of the OT – his name lives in infamy over the history of the kingdom of Israel because he, in effect, sealed their doom with his idolatrous worship of Yahweh. The problem with Jehu's revolution is not that it went too far; it didn't go far enough. Or rather, it didn't go deep enough – into Jehu's own heart!

So Jehu carried out God's will but he did so out of pride and for personal glory. He carried out God's will but he only did it partially. He obeyed God up to a certain point. It was profitable for him to exterminate the royal house of Ahab because it put him on the throne but anything beyond that didn't pay so Jehu didn't touch it. You could say that Jehu was the best of a bad group of kings. He was a success in one regard but a successful failure because he failed to live a life of fellowship with God – which was the birthright of every Israelite! Jehu overthrows apostasy but retains perversion. Hating one sin, he loved another, proving that the fear of Yahweh didn't reign in his heart. He was merely a hired servant and received the throne as his wages but he never was a child of God.

**32-33** – What we see in this passage, what Jehu conveniently forgot, is that

the instruments in Yahweh's hands are always responsible. God promised Jehu a 4-generation dynasty because he had carried out God's will in eradicating Ahab's house. This is appropriate: limited blessing for half-hearted zeal since Jehu eliminated Ahab's Baal cult but retained Jeroboam's bull cult. The sequencing of the text suggests that the set backs in [v32-33](#) are just the beginning scourges of Yahweh's judgment against Jehu's lukewarmness. 1 chunk after another of Israel's long held real estate is being lost to her; actually all of Israel's territory east of the Jordan. Hazael the Syrian is responsible for this ([32b](#))!

There it is again: the Lord began to cut off...Hazael conquered them. Hazael is just as much Yahweh's instrument as Jehu was. And Yahweh's word had predicted Hazael's attacks just as it had predicted Jehu's revolt. It's a sobering summary because it informs us that 1 instrument of God's judgment (Hazael) is being raised up to bring judgment on a previous instrument of God's judgment (Jehu). This story will repeat itself. Though God will use Assyria as the rod of His anger against His own people, God will turn around and destroy Assyria for forgetting that they were simply a tool of judgment in His divine hands. God will eventually give Judah to His servant Nebuchadnezzar until the time of his land comes ([Jer 27:7](#)). God presses kings and other reprobates into His service but these servants rarely accept servanthood gracefully so God raises up another servant to consign His previous servant to the dumpster of history.

This isn't just sobering, it's also a bit scary because this doesn't just involve the movers and shakers and swelled egos of politics. Jehu's story testifies that one can be used by God and judged by God. You might say, "Well, this is OT theology." But you only need to go to [Matt 7:21-23](#) to find the Jehu paradox in the NT. There are questions and some confusion associated with this passage but the undeniable fact revealed here is that you can both be used by Christ and rejected by Christ. Just because you have at some time in some way been the Lord's servant doesn't mean you are currently viewed with the Lord's pleasure.

Jesus lists some amazing feats of faith in [v22](#) that most western Christians have rarely seen let alone performed. So, if the performance of these wonders is not a sure fire sign that you are accepted by Christ then why would we think that church membership makes us acceptable, or church attendance (as rare as that is in this day and age) or why would I think that

a half-hearted repetition of a prayer makes me acceptable to Christ? Don't get me wrong, all it takes to receive eternal salvation and forgiveness of sin is an honest prayer of repentance but if you think that mumbling a few scripted phrases somehow allows you to go off and live like the devil without fear of divine judgment then [Mt 7:21-23](#) says you're wrong – dead wrong.

A prayer of repentance is evidenced by a life of submission and obedience. In [Luke 6:46](#), Jesus asks a very simple question. It's a reasonable question concerning an unreasonable situation. How can you claim to carry the name of Jesus as the title of your life (Christian) and yet never allow His words (the Bible) to be the guiding force of your life? Jesus lays this truth out even more simply in [John 14:15](#), "If you love Me, keep My commandments." Obedience is the only true evidence of your faith. If you can live happily without regularly hearing God's Word taught, without regularly worshipping God corporately or without regularly fellowshiping with God's people then I have to wonder if you are truly part of God's family.

God doesn't have any grand-children or any black sheep in His family. He only has children and they are those who have repented of their sins and former lifestyles and have turned to Christ in faith, love and obedience, evidenced by a stubborn desire to follow in His footsteps. If this all sounds foreign to you, you may need to take stock of what you believe and where you stand with God according to His Word and not your assumptions. The most terrifying words anyone could ever hear are, "Depart from Me; I never knew you."

[34-36](#) – Another sad commentary of Jehu's reign. It was a long reign – 28 years – but was only notable at the very beginning. For 28 years Jehu had the energy, the influence and the time to turn the nation of Israel back to the true worship of her covenant God but his own half-hearted commitment to God left that potential tragically unfulfilled and it points to a lack of any real relationship with Yahweh. He was a man who heard the very Word of God straight from the prophet's mouth and yet, it never moved him to seek God's presence.

For all the good he accomplished, in the end, Jehu's life is a prime example of wasted potential. My prayer is that his example is not reflected in your life. But all I can do is pray about it. You're the only one who can do something about it, you must seek forgiveness and salvation from Jesus

Christ yourself. 😊