



Execution of the House of Ahab, 2 Kings 10:1-11: Jehu Deceives the People, Misuses Doctrine, & Double-Crosses the Pedagogues

PRINCIPLE: Those who are in positions of authority often assume their power allows them to make unilateral decisions without reference to the rules of engagement. This assumption is usually permissive of the lust pater's craving for power which is prone to also incorporate other lust patterns. Crusader arrogance is a common result and it is often accompanied by self-righteous arrogance. Unrestrained these can lead a person to accommodate the lust to murder followed by the three arrogant skills. Jehu self-justified his actions with the rationale that he had to delegate the slaughter of the royal sons so order could be restored and he could govern without fear of a reckoning. He deceived himself into believing that the mandate to assassinate could be transferred to others. He also moved into self-absorption. He intended to remove any who might be a threat to his rulership of the Northern Kingdom and the royal sons of Ahab posed such a threat. We are reminded of Shakespeare's *Second Part of King Henry IV* where King Henry concludes his soliloquy with the famous line:

Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.

(3.1.31)

Heads of all sorts lay most uneasily in both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms during Jehu's rampage. Seventy were lopped off on this occasion. Now note his duplicity and his hypocrisy:

2 Kings 10:8 - When the messenger came and told him, saying, "They have brought the heads of the king's sons," Jehu said, "Put them in two heaps at the entrance of the gate until morning."

The phrase "entrance of the gate" is important in understanding why Jehu gave this order. The word "gate" is the Hebrew noun:

שַׁעַר *sha'ar* - "the main gate of the city"

Greater details are provided by:

Harris, H. Laird (ed.). *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 2:945-46:

Sha'ar: Gate. Refers to the whole gate complex and to the open area on either side of it. It was the means of controlled access to a walled city. Depending on its size a city had varying numbers of gates, but always one main gate which often consisted of an outer and an inner gate.

The city gate was extremely important in the life of the people, for social, administrative, and business intercourse took place there. Here kings as well as city elders sat to administer justice (Deuteronomy 21:19).

The square in front of the gate was the most natural congregating place, and it was here that the prophets frequently spoke to the people (2 Kings 7:1) and to kings (1 Kings 22:10). Legal transactions took place here (Genesis 23:10, 18), and it served as a marketplace as well (2 Kings 7:1).

The process of administration of justice was frequently referred to as "at the gate."



For the people of Jezreel, the elders of the city, the priests, and other officials to get the clear message that Jehu's ascendancy to the throne of Israel was secure and unchallenged then the obvious place to display the heads of the sons of Ahab was at the gate of the city's main entrance:

Walvoord, John F. and Roy B. Zuck (eds.). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*. (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1985), 557:

In the ancient Near East the practice of piling the heads of conquered subjects at the city gate was an effective way of demonstrating subjugation.

Most of the heads were easily recognizable to the people of Jezreel. These men and boys had grown up in the city and were well known as the children of King Ahab and subsequently, King Jehoram. The sight of the frozen death-stare on their ashen faces was both shocking and frightening. Who had done such a thing and why? Jehu provided the duplicitous answer which he calculated would defer blame from himself to the pedagogues of the now deceased royal line:

2 Kings 10:9 - Now it came about in the morning, that he went out and stood, and said to all the people, "You are innocent; behold, I conspired against my master and killed him, but who killed all these?"

Jehu's first statement is designed to give comfort to the people by assuring them they were not being considered as suspects for the murder of the royal line. He admits that he is indeed the one who took out King Jehoram. Having fessed up to this he implies the virtue of honesty which he then relies upon with his next statement. He claims not only to have had nothing to do with the slaughter of the princes but also has no idea who did.

The truth is that it was by his very order that the elders and guardians had carried out the bloody deed. But by pretending he was both innocent and ignorant he hoped to prevent anyone still loyal to the crown from leading an opposition against his coup. He then appeals to the divine decrees suggesting that the ghastly circumstance may be explained under the rationale, *che, serà, serà*: what will be, will be.

2 Kings 10:10 - "Know then that there shall fall to the earth nothing of the word of the Lord [idiom: nothing shall remain unfulfilled], which the Lord spoke concerning the house of Ahab, for the Lord has done what He spoke through His servant Elijah [1 Kings 21:17-29]."

It is true that the Lord did decree the end of the house of Ahab. However, He did not intend ruthlessness, brutality, and the macabre camouflaged by projection, duplicity, and deceit. Further, the Lord mentioned nothing about taking out the elders, guardians, priests, and officials, the very ones who had been manipulated by Jehu into carrying out the mass murder of the royal line. However, after having identified himself with the Lord and Elijah, Jehu was able to create for himself the authority to take out the only ones who knew the truth about his treacherous scheme.

2 Kings 10:11 - So Jehu killed all who remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, and all his great men and his acquaintances and his priests, until he left Ahab without a survivor.



There was nothing in the divine directive to kill anyone outside the house of Ahab. The elders, guardians, officials, and cabinet were not singled out and thus Jehu went beyond his authority by including these in his purge. Jehu only possessed borrowed power to be used for a specifically stated mission however he used it in an unnecessary effort to gain a political advantage. If the Lord ordered him to execute the house of Ahab he should have done so himself. Any adverse public reaction would have been handled by the Lord. Jehu thus proves the principle: Meet the new boss; same as the old boss.

Once Jehu had secured his holdings in Jezreel he and his men then rode off to Samaria to secure the capital. On the way he continued the massacre.