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**Jehu:
But Not With
All His Heart**

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Series: Little Known Legends



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Jehu: But Not With All His Heart

You've probably never heard of him. Perhaps you've spent years in Sunday school, but never studied who he was, what he did, and what he might have done. You're not alone. He is a little-known legend in Scripture. And yet he came into a world desperately lacking in faithful leadership, following dynasty after dynasty led by men who had willfully set aside the commandments of God and purposefully given their hearts to the works of Satan.

Generation after generation had gone one after the other in the ways of their fathers, until doing things God's way did not even seem appropriate. *And then along came a man named Jehu.* No, he did not live a blameless life. In fact, the title of this lesson and the deeper truths of this lesson actually spring from his failures. But God honored him in Scripture simply because, in an era when obedience was a little-known word, this man said "Yes, Sir" to God, and did what he was told to do. And what he had been told to do, as we shall see, was not an easy task.

THE BACKGROUND

To see the kind of world into which our legend came, we have to but scan the pages of Kings and Chronicles and see how many times the words "*and he did evil in the sight of the Lord*" appear. The kings of Israel alone had developed such a pattern of disobedience and idolatry that the nation literally lived in the shadow of rebellion for generations. Just look at the legacy that preceded Jehu's reign as king:

Omri did evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all who were before him. (I Kings 16:25 NKJV)

Now Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord, more than all who were before him. (I Kings 16:30 NKJV)

He [Ahaziah] did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father and in the way of his mother and

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in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin; (I Kings 22:52 NKJV)

And he [Jehoram] did evil in the sight of the Lord (II Kings 3:2 NKJV)

What a sad commentary on the condition of the spiritual leadership, or lack of same, that was indicative of Israel. And it is there that our story begins. It is found in II Kings 9 and 10.

The prophet Elisha summoned a man from the company of the prophets and said to him, “Tuck your cloak into your belt, take this flask of oil with you and go to Ramoth Gilead.

When you get there, look for Jehu son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi. Go to him, get him away from his companions and take him into an inner room.

Then take the flask and pour the oil on his head and declare, ‘This is what the Lord says: I anoint you king over Israel.’ Then open the door and run; don’t delay!

(II Kings 9:1-3 NIV)

THE CALLING

I trust you get a visual image in your mind of what was happening. The prophet Elisha was about to anoint a new king over Israel. He calls in one of his most trusted aides, tells him to tuck a flask of oil in his belt, run to where Jehu is staying in Ramoth Gilead, draw him away from his buddies, and tell him, “By the way, Jay, you’re going to be the new king. Bye.” Then he was to hop in his Honda and head back home. No festivities, no ceremonies, no robes, no crowns, no nothing. Just get the guy alone, tell him he’s king, and run.

Now just suppose you were Jehu. Here you were, having a friendly discussion with some of your friends over who would win the Super Bowl between the Israeli Eagles and the Judean Giants, when this strangely-clad guy, out of breath, runs into the room, asks to talk to you privately, then tells you, “Guess what, you’re our new king. See you around.” How would you respond? What would you tell your buddies when you went back to the den where they were gathered around their pre-historic television set waiting for the kickoff? I’m not sure but that I would have rushed our prophetic visitor off to the funny farm and gone back to the potato chips and root beer in the

den. Here's what happened:

When he arrived, he found the army officers sitting together. "I have a message for you, commander," he said. "For which of us?" asked Jehu. "For you, commander," he replied.

Jehu got up and went into the house. Then the prophet poured the oil on Jehu's head and declared, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'I anoint you king over the Lord's people Israel.

You are to destroy the house of Ahab your master, and I will avenge the blood of my servants the prophets and the blood of all the Lord's servants shed by Jezebel.

The whole house of Ahab will perish. I will cut off from Ahab every last male in Israel—slave or free.

I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam son of Nebat and like the house of Baasha son of Ahijah.

As for Jezebel, dogs will devour her on the plot of ground at Jezreel, and no one will bury her.'" Then he opened the door and ran.

When Jehu went out to his fellow officers, one of them asked him, "Is everything all right? Why did this madman come to you?" "You know the man and the sort of things he says," Jehu replied.

"That's not true!" they said. "Tell us." Jehu said, "Here is what he told me: 'This is what the Lord says: I anoint you king over Israel.'"

They hurried and took their cloaks and spread them under him on the bare steps. Then they blew the trumpet and shouted, "Jehu is king!"
(II Kings 9:5-13 NIV)

So Jehu has informed his army friends of the prophet's announcement, and probably much to his surprise, they *believed it*. Instead of passing it off as a childish joke, they took off their cloaks, spread them out on the steps, and began blowing a trumpet, shouting, "Jehu is king! Jehu is king."

They were not mocking him, either. Somehow God had gone before the prophet's proclamation and prepared the hearts of those under his command. Instantly, he was revered as king, even though another king still sat on the throne of Israel. God had called him. Jehu had answered.

THE CHALLENGE

But the calling was only the beginning. God had laid out for this seemingly unlikely candidate for kingship an apparently impossible task. He was to assume the throne by marching into the palace, assassinating King Joram and his heirs, and brutally murdering Jezebel, the high priestess of witchcraft, leaving her body to be eaten by the dogs. Not a pretty picture, and not a tidy first assignment for this monarch-to-be.

It's one thing to accept the honor of the calling; it's quite another to realize the horror of the challenge that goes with the calling. Somehow, Jehu caught a glimpse of the awesomeness of it all and still said to God: "Yes, Sir, Lord; I'm available." There is somehow lacking in the Christian world today, that kind of obedience to seemingly impossible tasks. One more thing: Jehu understood *why God was so incensed with the present administration*. Read what happened when he arrived at the palace:

Then he got into his chariot and rode to Jezreel, because Joram was resting there and Ahaziah king of Judah had gone down to see him.

When the lookout standing on the tower in Jezreel saw Jehu's troops approaching, he called out, "I see some troops coming." "Get a horseman," Joram ordered. "Send him to meet them and ask, 'Do you come in peace?'"

The horseman rode off to meet Jehu and said, "This is what the king says: 'Do you come in peace?'" "What do you have to do with peace?" Jehu replied. "Fall in behind me." The lookout reported, "The messenger has reached them, but he isn't coming back."

So the king sent out a second horseman. When he came to them he said, "This is what the king says: 'Do you come in peace?'" Jehu replied, "What do you have to do with peace? Fall in behind me."

The lookout reported, "He has reached them, but he isn't coming back either. The driving is like that of Jehu son of Nimshi—he drives like a madman."

"Hitch up my chariot," Joram ordered. And when it was hitched up, Joram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah rode out, each in his own chariot, to meet Jehu. They met him at the plot of ground that had belonged to

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Naboth the Jezreelite.

When Joram saw Jehu he asked, “Have you come in peace, Jehu?” “How can there be peace,” Jehu replied, “as long as all the idolatry and witchcraft of your mother Jezebel abound?”
(II Kings 9:16-22 NIV)

THE OBEDIENCE

If this isn't “High Noon”, I've never seen it. Our man heads for the royal residence with a clear set of objectives and thus knows how to handle the temptation to compromise that will come along the way. Joram isn't alone. Isn't God's timing perfect? Ahaziah, king of Judah just happened to be on hand for a summit conference the same day Jehu approached. The man in the lookout tower sends a “fax” to Joram. “I see an army coming our way, what do I do?” Answer: “Send a messenger to greet them and ask, do you come in peace?” Good question. Problem is, the messenger never returned. So the nervous king sends his second-string messenger service with the same assignment. He doesn't return, either. Joram calls the watchman on his cellular phone, and in a panic asks, “Now what?” The watchman answers, “They're still coming, and they're driving like there is no speed limit. Must be Jehu!”

Nowhere Jehu got his reputation for speeding, we don't know. But that report was enough to get *both kings* in their chariots, and with their racing steeds in overdrive, they rush out to try to assess the magnitude of the problem before them. Joram repeats his question, this time in person, “Have you come in peace, Jehu?” Jehu's answer was a classic, “How can there be peace when the idolatry and witchcraft of Jezebel, your mother, abound?”

Joram turned to run for his life, screaming to Ahaziah as he fled. Jehu simply drew his bow and shot the fleeing monarch between the shoulders, the arrow piercing his heart. Joram was dead. Assignment number one is complete. Ahaziah, king of Judah was the next to try to escape. He was wounded by Jehu, got away, but died at Megiddo. One bonus point for Jehu. Next he goes to Jezreel where Jezebel lived. The story is told in verses 30-37:

Then Jehu went to Jezreel. When Jezebel heard about it, she painted her eyes, arranged her hair and looked out of a window.

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As Jehu entered the gate, she asked, "Have you come in peace, Zimri, you murderer of your master?"

He looked up at the window and called out, "Who is on my side? Who?" Two or three eunuchs looked down at him.

"Throw her down!" Jehu said. So they threw her down, and some of her blood splattered the wall and the horses as they trampled her underfoot.

Jehu went in and ate and drank. "Take care of that cursed woman," he said, "and bury her, for she was a king's daughter."

But when they went out to bury her, they found nothing except her skull, her feet and her hands.

They went back and told Jehu, who said, "This is the word of the Lord that he spoke through his servant Elijah the Tishbite: On the plot of ground at Jezreel dogs will devour Jezebel's flesh.

Jezebel's body will be like refuse on the ground in the plot at Jezreel, so that no one will be able to say, 'This is Jezebel.'"
(II Kings 9:30-37 NIV)

Now I realize this story is "R" rated because of violence. But we must tell it like it is. Jehu arrives in Jezreel. Jezebel paints her face and fixes her hair, leans out the window and cries, "Have you come in peace, you murderer?" No doubt the 10 o'clock news had already broadcast the tapes of the two dead kings. Silly question, "Have you come in peace?" That would be like asking Saddam Hussein if he was coming to draw up a disarmament treaty when he invaded Kuwait.

Jehu's response, "Do I have any friends up there? If so, throw her down." The next sound you hear is Jezebel hitting the pavement. Jehu's horses race across the driveway, trampling her body underfoot. But when he goes back to arrange for a burial (since she had been a king's daughter), all they can find is her skull, her feet and her hands. Jehu's men return and report what happened by quoting Elijah, who had prophesied just such an ending for the wicked witch.

So Jehu's first assignments were finished as planned. Two nations were without their kings, the meanest woman in the world was dead, and God was preparing to rule His people once again. An auspicious beginning, to be sure. But more was to

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follow, and quickly. If you were to judge Jehu for his record to date, would you not rate him a legend? There's more, and it gets even more gruesome. Jehu had been told to leave none of Ahab's sons alive. Here's how he handled it:

Now there were in Samaria seventy sons of the house of Ahab. So Jehu wrote letters and sent them to Samaria: to the officials of Jezreel, to the elders and to the guardians of Ahab's children. He said,

“As soon as this letter reaches you, since your master's sons are with you and you have chariots and horses, a fortified city and weapons,

choose the best and most worthy of your master's sons and set him on his father's throne. Then fight for your master's house.”

But they were terrified and said, “If two kings could not resist him, how can we?”

So the palace administrator, the city governor, the elders and the guardians sent this message to Jehu: “We are your servants and we will do anything you say. We will not appoint anyone as king; you do whatever you think best.”

Then Jehu wrote them a second letter, saying, “If you are on my side and will obey me, take the heads of your master's sons and come to me in Jezreel by this time tomorrow.” Now the royal princes, seventy of them, were with the leading men of the city, who were rearing them.

When the letter arrived, these men took the princes and slaughtered all seventy of them. They put their heads in baskets and sent them to Jehu in Jezreel.

When the messenger arrived, he told Jehu, “They have brought the heads of the princes.” Then Jehu ordered, “Put them in two piles at the entrance of the city gate until morning.”

The next morning Jehu went out. He stood before all the people and said, “You are innocent. It was I who conspired against my master and killed him, but who killed all these?”

Know then, that not a word the Lord has spoken against the house of Ahab will fail. The Lord has done what he promised through his servant Elijah.”

(II Kings 10:1-10 NIV)

Isn't amazing how God ultimately does what He says He

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will do? His timing is often slower than ours. That's because His ways are so much higher than ours. But in due time, God vindicates His reputation and glorifies His Name. And if you think Satan, through the Jezebels and Jorams of this world, has gained the upper hand, Beloved, take heart. Now, as then, His Word is sure.

...What He had promised, He was able also to perform.

(Romans 4:21 KJV)

There has not failed one word of all His good promise...

(I Kings 8:56 NKJV)

Not one. And the darker this old world looks, the nearer we are to that day when the light of His Presence will fill the Eastern skies and *He will once again vindicate His Name*. His arm is not shortened, nor His ear heavy. He will come again!

The enemies of God who had so polluted His worship and misled His people fell in utter defeat *the very moment God's clock said High Noon*. Not one minute before. But be reminded, not one moment late, either.

Jehu's job was not quite finished. He still had the prophets of Baal to contend with. So he pretended to want to worship their satanic idols, called all their priests together for a meeting, and posted guards outside the temple. The story ends like this:

So they went in to make sacrifices and burnt offerings. Now Jehu had posted eighty men outside with this warning: "If one of you lets any of the men I am placing in your hands escape, it will be your life for his life."

As soon as Jehu had finished making the burnt offering, he ordered the guards and officers: "Go in and kill them; let no one escape." So they cut them down with the sword. The guards and officers threw the bodies out and then entered the inner shrine of the temple of Baal.

They brought the sacred stone out of the temple of Baal and burned it.

They demolished the sacred stone of Baal and tore down the temple of Baal, and people have used it for a latrine to this day.

So Jehu destroyed Baal worship in Israel.

(II Kings 10:24-28 NIV)

American presidents tend to revel in how high their

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“acceptance” ratings are in the polls a few months into their term of office. Had Jehu been president, he would have “galloped” into the “Gallup” poll with a 95% approval rating. What no man had been able to do for five or six generations, this man did in days. And God approved, as well. In fact, verse 30 of chapter 10 says this:

The Lord said to Jehu, “Because you have done well in accomplishing what is right in my eyes and have done to the house of Ahab all I had in mind to do, your descendants will sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation.”

(II Kings 10:30 NIV)

What a commendation from God. This unknown was guaranteed four generations of royalty just for having done what God asked him to do. And God has done even better for you. The rewards for your obedience are eternal. They will be yours forever.

There are reasonably good odds that before today you’d never even heard of Jehu. Chances are, this whole story is new to you. Tucked away in the midst of a legacy of wicked kings “who did evil in the sight of the Lord”, it seems almost buried beneath the sins of the nation. But to God, his life was not incidental. Through this one unheralded hero, Jehovah overturned generations of vile witchcraft, immorality and flagrant disobedience to His laws. In a few short months, Jehu rose from total obscurity to spiritual greatness. And the interesting thing about it is that he didn’t have to possess a thread of creativity or organizational skills or even great leadership ability. In fact, there’s no real record that any of those things were found in him. All he possessed was a record of obedience. God called him. God commissioned him. God sent him. He listened. He went. He did. He did exactly what God told him to do. The rewards God bestowed upon him were far beyond what he must have expected simply for doing what he was told.

Somehow we often long for greatness, and believe that if we only had the skills of Moses or the faith of Abraham or the boldness of Peter or the tenderness of John, we could change our worlds. Jehu, in all likelihood, had none of the above. He was just an average guy, a soldier, who clearly understood what God wanted of him, raised his arm in salute, and said, “Yes, Sir.”

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The rest is history. And the man became a living legend. Not because of his ability, but because of his availability. And that's a skill everyone has in equal proportions.

THE EXCEPTION

But the story does not have a happy ending. Though God called him from nothing and commended him for his faithfulness, tucked away in the final dialogue about his life is a sad note. And it is this note that we must focus on in closing, for each one of us has the potential of having the same words etched upon the gravestones of our lives. Verses 29 and 31 of chapter 10 leave the stain of tears upon the pages of an otherwise unblemished life.

However, he did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit—the worship of the golden calves at Bethel and Dan.

Yet Jehu was not careful to keep the law of the Lord, the God of Israel, with all his heart. He did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam, which he had caused Israel to commit. (II Kings 10:29,31 NIV)

What a sad ending to an otherwise glorious story. Jehu did the will of God, but not with all his heart. He was a faithful man in the trenches. He fought God's battles with fervor. He did God's will with abandon. In our day, he would have been elected chairman of the church board and been awarded "layman of the year" honors by the local Christian Men's Group. Compared to his predecessors, he was "Mr. Obedient". Compared to his peers, he was "Mr. Spiritual". So he allowed the worship of the golden calves at Bethel and Dan to continue. No one is perfect, right? Right. No one is perfect. But it isn't the fact that he caved in to one moment of idolatry that did him in. It was his heart. He was doing all the right things, and receiving the praises of men, but in his heart of hearts there was territory marked "Do not touch—reserved for Jehu alone." God will have none of that.

It didn't make his acts of valor less sensational. It didn't make his religious zeal less impressive. But oh, how it broke the heart of God. For the one thing God wants most of each of us is that "we love the Lord our God with all our hearts." That means no compartment left unopened. That means no hidden closets with secret sins. That means no "almost" committed lives who

will go wherever God leads unless...

THE APPLICATION

The entire calling of the Christian life is to be willing to forsake all that we have (or we cannot even lay claim to becoming His disciple). And so often we become so spiritual compared to our friends, and so seemingly indispensable to our church or our organization, that we think God is looking at us with the same measure of pride as our peers. The trouble is “God looks on the heart.” And if we are not what *we claim to be*, God is not impressed at all. Jehu’s final footnote reads like this:

In those days the Lord began to reduce the size of Israel.
Hazael overpowered the Israelites... (II Kings 10:32)

Jehu began to lose battles. Israel began to become a second-rate power again. The nation began to shrink beneath the weight of compromise, even though compared to their fathers they were walking in the ways of God. Jehu became a living legend. But he was just a millimeter away from real greatness. All he lacked was one thing. But that was *everything*. He did not seek the Lord with *all His heart*.

How about you? Are your family and friends impressed with your spirituality, or is your church impressed with your leadership? And yet, when you get alone with your God, and the accolades have vanished, does a picture of that one area of your life *nobody else knows about* surface? And does the guilt of it or the shame of it or the stench of it tell you how it makes God feel? Are you almost a living legend except for that one habit, or those secret thoughts, or that lust-filled desire that is never under control, or that greed for things that you just can’t quite turn loose? It’s not too late to give that hidden sin to God so He can set you free.

God is looking for faithful disciples. But He wants more than a Jehu. He wants men and women who love Him *with no strings attached, no stones unturned, no sins unconfessed*. Jehu just missed real greatness. By God’s grace we don’t need to.

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JEHU: BUT NOT WITH ALL HIS HEART

Jehu loved the Lord we read,
And crowned he was as king indeed.
As king this man did so much more
Than all the men who had gone before.

Jehovah promised to him alone
Four generations on Israel's throne.
And all of his greatness was attributed to
The fact that he did what God told him to do.

But we read with sadness the final part:
He served, but not with all his heart.
In one tiny part of his life he fell,
Thinking God would overlook it as well.

But God could not do that, not then, and not now.
A heart that's not right the Lord can't allow.
Sooner or later the price must be paid;
Only so long will Gods hand be stayed.

God's not just thinking of how much we do,
For when our stay on earth is through,
He will ask the better part:
"Child, did you love me with all your heart?"

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Let us pray.

Our Father and our God,

Thank You for the illustrations in Scripture of obedience that help us to see how it thrills Your heart when men and women simply do what You have asked them to do. Thank You Father, for the deeper truths as well—the one thing that You want of all of us is hearts that have been literally poured out before You with nothing held back.

Some of us, Father, are clutching at things that long since should have gone and are wondering why the joy is not there, and the peace is not there, and the continuity is not there, and the power is not there, and the ministry is not there. We look around us and see others that seem to have the power, and we think that we've got this talent, or we've got this skill, or we've got this experience. We forget the only thing we've really got is Jesus. His is the power.

Some of us this morning, Father, need to bow before You and quietly say one more time, "Father, that area of my life that so stands in my way, that so keeps me from allowing Your power to flow as it should, I'm simply not going to clutch at it any more." Father, I don't want to be a Jehu. I don't want to achieve almost greatness, but miss it because of some golden calves. Take them away this morning, Father. Remove the desire and give me the desire, give each one of us the desire to say "no" and allow the Spirit to give us the strength, to give it all to Jesus. And may we become, by Your grace alone, Living Legends.

In Jesus' sweet name we pray,

Amen.

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A Challenge to Further Study

1- Have your family write an essay, describing a modern-day parable of Jehu's life. What would you have him stand for in our generation? What enemies would you have him slay? How would you define the compromise that tarnished an otherwise glorious life?

2- Get alone to the secret place where just you and God have fellowship. Be quiet long enough for God's Spirit to direct your heart to those areas of your life where you do not seek Him with all your heart. Fall on your face before God and repent. Remind yourself He is not impressed with your religious performance, He is too busy looking at your heart.

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