

Jehu, Jezebel

Notes for 25 Apr

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Read: [2 Kings 9](#)

2 Kings 9 takes up the story of Jehu, another king to be anointed by God (see Saul, David...) via an important prophet, in this case Elisha.

Confession time: all I knew of Jehu, prior to prepping this week's study, was that he famously drove very fast. To "drive like Jehu" was to be careless. And, as I've just discovered by DuckDuckGo-ing, "Drive Like Jehu" were also a 1990s post-hardcore band from San Diego, California.

Similarly, what I knew about Jezebel was pretty much that she was Proper Bad. A schemer. The brains behind Ahab's throne. And that she was eaten by dogs (thanks to my childhood Sabbath School classes for that un-fond memory).

I'm not sure what we can really make of this chapter, other than a reiteration of much of our previous discussion on the violence of Samuel and Kings.

So...

And now for something completely different...

Permit me to exercise the privilege of being this week's discussion leader and let me send us off down a rabbit hole....

I'd like us to contemplate two questions...

Q1: How should we live in the here-and-now?

As I type this I am sitting in the library of [New College](#) at the University of Edinburgh. The main library of Edinburgh Uni won't let me in as it is full of student frantically cramming for exams and writing all those essays that they've been avoiding all year. Non-students are banned for the month of mid-April to mid-May and the library is open 24 hours a day to accommodate all that hard-thinking. But the School of Divinity, which occupies New College, will let me in. So here I am.

New College is one of the largest and most renowned centres for studies in Theology and Religious Studies in the United Kingdom. It's appropriate, then, that I can sit here and think about what 2 Kings 9 can tell us about how to live in the here and now.

Some modern politicians, particularly in the USA, are fond of those parts of the Bible that deal harshly with enemies. I imagine that the current US Secretary of Defence War would quite like verses 6-10:

So Jehu left the others and went into the house. Then the young prophet poured the oil over Jehu's head and said, "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 family of Ahab, your master. In this way, I will avenge the murder of my prophets and all the Lord's servants who were killed by Jezebel. The entire family of Ahab must be wiped out. I will destroy every one of his male descendants, slave and free alike, anywhere in Israel. I will destroy the family of Ahab as I destroyed the families of Jeroboam son of Nebat and of Baasha son of Ahijah. Dogs will eat Ahab's wife Jezebel at the plot of land in Jezreel, and no one will bury her." Then the young prophet opened the door and ran.

- What do you think?

I asked ChatGPT for a deep theological study of 2 Kings 9 (and we can go there if we run out of things to say on this question... (Unlikely??)). Bear in mind that the AIs are essentially sophisticated text prediction systems trained on all-the-stuff-on-the-internet so, if you like, an AI answer on a topic like this is likely to be a decent distillation of Christian thought on the matter.

A one paragraph summation of the study was

2 Kings 9 recounts how God initiates judgment against the house of Ahab by having Jehu anointed as king of Israel through a prophetic messenger. Jehu then swiftly carries out this commission, killing King Joram, King Ahaziah of Judah, and finally Jezebel, fulfilling earlier prophecies about the consequences of their idolatry and injustice, particularly the murder of Naboth. The chapter highlights God's sovereignty over political events, the certainty of His judgment despite delay, and the unsettling reality that He may use flawed human agents to accomplish His purposes, while also exposing the false peace of a corrupt regime.

- Discuss!

Q2: How should we live?

Let's start with the obvious. I don't want to live in Old Testament times! It not only that they didn't have modern dentistry and proper plumbing. It's just that it seemed all so *bloody* and violent. Apparently I don't want to live in a God-led theocracy. Am I missing something?

I don't want to live in modern Israel either. And Iran, etc, are right out. On the whole I don't think there's ever been a theocracy that was appealing to me.

Which begs the question: what does a *good* place to live look like? How *should* we organise ourselves? What's needed for a *Good Society*?

In VV discussions over the years we've returned often to this discussion and ones like it. One recurring theme of our collective definition of a *Good Society* is that the inhabitants must be kind and have empathy. We often espouse the view that empathy comes about through bitter and unfortunate personal experiences.

I'm a fan of Nick Cave, the Australian singer/poet/author/thinker. I subscribe to his "[Red Hand Files](#)" newsletter in which he answers (or not, as the case may be) readers' questions. Cave has experienced too much of the bad stuff of life (the death of his son being a recurring theme) and has a lot to say on the balming effect of God in his life.

Someone called Reggie asked "[Do you think humans have to suffer before harnessing genuine human sympathy?](#)". Cave wrote

The good news, Reggie, is that we all suffer. It is our defining and universal trait. However, this does not exclude us from experiencing genuine happiness, joy, or hope. These feelings of elation are rooted in the soil of our discontent, or so I have observed. Suffering is not solely caused by some unfortunate event – something that happens to you – it is more fundamental than that. Suffering is the essential and nourishing ground from which all the delightful gifts of life emerge. We are all made of loss, longing, and struggle – each carrying our losses with us, the personal and everyday, and those that reverberate through our collective histories.

- Is suffering necessary?
- If so, how do we imagine heaven? Or a perfect God-perfect society? Will it also need suffering?
- If not, how would you argue against Nick Cave?
- Is the suffering of the here-and-now simply necessary prep work for a suffering-free heaven? We won't suffer in heaven, and we won't need to suffer because we've already had enough of that in the here-and-now and we won't forget?
- Do we only truly [find God through suffering](#)?

And if that's all a bit too miserable take a look at the responses Nick Cave received when he asked "[How do you find joy?](#)"...