

Aim of lesson

To show that God judges wickedness, and that he is in control of the events that bring retribution.

Bible background

1 Kings 19:16; 2 Kings 9; 10.

Outline of lesson

Unfinished business

Remind the class of the life of Elijah. When Elijah had been on Mount Horeb, after the earthquake, wind, fire and 'still small voice', God had given him some instructions. God told him to anoint three people for three different jobs. You may like to ask the class to look up 1 Kings 19:15-18 to find who the three people were. They were Hazael, who was to be king over Syria (Aram), Jehu, who was to be king over Israel, and Elisha who was to succeed Elijah himself as prophet. Elijah immediately called Elisha, but the other two had not yet been anointed when Elijah was taken away by God in a whirlwind. When Elisha took over from Elijah, he also took on his unfinished business. In 2 Kings 8:7-15, Elisha tells Hazael that the Lord has said he will be king over Syria (see v13) and in 2 Kings 9:3-10 Elisha sends one of his disciples, a young trainee prophet, to anoint the third, Jehu. This is a lovely example of the companionship and working together of three generations of men of God.

Jehu's task

You may like to read with the class 2 Kings 9:1 -13 in the form of a play, Different members of the class could read the parts of Elisha, the young prophet, Jehu, the other army officers and the narrator. When Jehu is anointed he is given the task of destroying the house of Ahab, 2 Kings 9:7. To appreciate what is meant by 'the house of Ahab' you may like to look with the class at the time chart of the kings of Israel and Judah. The twenty kings of the kingdom of Judah are all (with one exception which will be seen in next week's lesson) direct descendants of king David. They all belong to one royal family, one dynasty. The twenty kings in the kingdom of Israel are from ten different families. Ten of the kings inherited the crown from their fathers. The other ten became king in a more violent way, usually by killing the previous king. The class may like to use different colours to mark the five short dynasties in the list. They are as follows:

Jeroboam	Baasha	Omri	Jehu	Menahem
Nadab	Elah	Ahab	Jehoahaz	Pekahiah
		Ahaziah	Jehoash	
		Joram	Jeroboam	
			Zechariah	

The other kings in the list were the only members of their family to be king, and generally began and ended their reign with bloodshed.

Joram

When Jehu is anointed, Joram, the fourth king of the house of Ahab, is on the throne. All four kings have been wicked, and God had told Elijah that they would be destroyed. Jehu is a commander in the army of the king he has been told to kill.

Read with the class 2 Kings 9:14-19. Get them to note where the body of Joram (or Jehoram) is thrown.

Ahaziah

Jehu kills more than king Joram of Israel. He also kills the king of Judah, Ahaziah. It is no coincidence that Ahaziah is with Joram when Jehu goes to find him. Ahaziah, too, was related to Ahab; his mother was Ahab's daughter. King Joram of Israel was his uncle. 2 Kings 8:25-29 shows how close this descendant of David had come to being taken over by the wicked influence of the family of Ahab. See also 2 Chronicles 22:2-4.

Jezebel

Jehu then goes to find Jezebel. She was perhaps one of the worst of the influences in the family of Ahab. Elijah had prophesied her end in 1 Kings 21:23. Until Jehu arrived, Jezebel had had a son on the throne of Israel, and a grandson on the throne of Judah. Her influence was still great, and still bad for both kingdoms. Note Jehu's words in 2 Kings 9:22 that the whoredom or idolatry and witchcraft of Jezebel still filled the country. Read with the class the account of the death of Jezebel in 2 Kings 9:30-37. You may need to explain to the class that Zimri was a previous captain who had himself murdered a king in order to take the throne, and then lost it himself after seven days, 1 Kings 16:8-20.

Jehu's next actions

Some classes may wish to look at 2 Kings 10 to see how Jehu killed the rest of Ahab's heirs and the worshippers of Baal. However, if the class is hearing about Jehu for the first time, it will probably be best to finish after the death of Jezebel and use the pictures in the workbook to go through the events again. The class should look up the references, and put in each picture some of the words being spoken.

The dynasty of Jehu

Although Jehu began by doing God's will in removing very evil influences in the kingdom of Israel, once he was king he was more interested in his own position in the kingdom than the position of God. Like Jeroboam, he preferred to encourage the worship of idols in Israel rather than encourage the worship the Lord in Jerusalem. His four descendants who succeeded him to the throne were similarly not interested in God's values. In Hosea 1:4 there is condemnation of the slaughter that Jehu made in Jezreel. Perhaps Jehu killed more than God had told him to; he does include all the influential men of the court who could later oppose him. Perhaps he is condemned because, having brought God's judgment on a wicked dynasty, he then becomes a godless king himself, and is the beginning of another wicked dynasty. The condemnation in Hosea comes during the reign of Jehu's great-grandson and would remind that king that as God had destroyed one evil dynasty so he could destroy another.

Digging deeper

Some minor prophets

This section gives the background to the first five minor prophets, who were prophesying at about this time. It suggests learning the names of these books in order.

Relevance to our lives

God's judgment on wickedness may have seemed slow in coming to the people who saw Jezebel's cruel influence for so long, but what God had promised he does perform. Wickedness and cruelty today may seem to go unchecked, but that does not mean it will continue. When wickedness seems to go unpunished, it can easily seem attractive, even to those who are trying to serve God.

Ask the class what wickedness around them might be a temptation to their generation, and how they can best withstand it.

Prayer

'Lord, lead us not into temptation and deliver us from evil.'

Discuss with the class what they think they could pray in situations of evil or wickedness.

Other suggestions for activities

- The anointing of Jehu would make a good play.
- An older class may like to follow up references to Jonadab, the son of Rechab, who helps Jehu in 2 Kings 10:15-27. They could look at what his descendants say years later in Jeremiah 35.