

2 Kings 9:1-14a God's Vengeance

Last summer, when I preached through the life of Elijah, I mentioned the famous sermon *Payday Someday* by RG Lee. That sermon deals with how Ahab and Jezebel acquired Naboth's vineyard through a murderous conspiracy, and what happened as a result of that sinful behavior. Here's a quote from that sermon:

...from this [passage] we learn the power and certainty of God in carrying out His own retributive providence, that men might know that His justice slumbereth not. Even though the mill of God grinds slowly, it grinds to powder. Yes, the judgments of God often ... travel slowly. But they always have iron hands and crush completely.

Elijah had warned Ahab that he and his descendants would pay for their idolatry, their murder of God's prophets, and their wicked influence (I Kings 21:17-29). Ahab had repented at that time, and God had postponed the judgment until after Ahab's death. But now the bill had come due; God's judgment was about to fall on Ahab's house through both Hazael the king of Syria and Jehu the king of Israel.

Note vs. 7: *2Ki 9:7 And thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master, that I may **avenge** the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD, at the hand of Jezebel.*

Notice the word "avenge." The Bible often refers to God's vengeance.

Cf. Deuteronomy 32:35 ***Vengeance** is Mine, and recompense;*

Deuteronomy 32:43 *...[God] will **avenge** the blood of His servants, And render **vengeance** to His adversaries...*

Luke 18:7 *And shall God not **avenge** His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?*

Romans 12:19 *... it is written, "**Vengeance** is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. (quoting Deut 32:35)*

1 Thessalonians 4:6 *... the Lord is the **avenger** ...*

Revelation 6:10 *And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and **avenge** our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"*

What is vengeance? It is retaliation for an evil deed; punishment given for one's sinful behavior. God promises to repay people for the evil that they've done. *We* are not to take vengeance or seek revenge. We are to leave that to God; that's his business. He's the righteous judge, and he will make sure that the guilty will reap what they've sown. People will get what they deserve.

Isa 3:11 *Woe to the wicked! It shall be ill with him, For the reward of his hands shall be given him.*

Quote: When men and women violate God's laws, when they ignore his calls to repent and when they abuse his servants, God is committed to avenge such activity with his own judgements.¹

Many people today dismiss the idea of God's vengeance. They like to think about God as loving, kind, tolerant, and benevolent, not judgmental. God to them is like a heavenly grandfather who ignores the bad behavior of his grandkids. But because God is holy, he must also judge righteously. The judge of all the earth will do right, and that requires him to mete out righteous judgment.

We certainly don't deny that God is loving, kind, and compassionate. God provides a way of escaping retribution for our sins—he provided a sacrifice who took that judgment for us—Jesus. If we repent of sin and believe the Gospel, we avoid experiencing God's vengeance. But if you don't, you won't.

In our passage today, we see several ways that God causes vengeance to fall on unrepentant sinners. If you fail to repent and believe the Gospel, you could experience these same kinds of expressions of God's vengeance.

¹ John Cheeseman, *Elisha: Man of Mission, Man of Miracles*, People in the Bible (Leominster: Day One, 2015), 87.

- I. Vengeance may cause you to lose your position.
- A. Joram was the king of Israel. Ahab was his father, and Jezebel was his mother.
 - B. Joram had been fighting in a battle against the Syrians and had been wounded. He was recovering from his wounds in Jezreel.
 - C. .1 Meanwhile, Elisha decides to send a message to Jehu, telling him that he's going to be the next king.
 - 1. The text doesn't tell us why Elisha sends the message at this point in history. We know that God had commissioned Elijah to anoint Jehu as king (1 Kings 19), but Elijah apparently never got around to doing that. So God communicated to Elisha that the time had come for Jehu to do this job.
 - 2. Elisha sent "one of the sons of the prophets" with this message. Why didn't Elisha go with this message himself? The text does not say, but apparently, he had a good reason to send someone else.
 - 3. .5 Jehu is an officer in Joram's army—the messenger calls him "captain." He was fighting for and alongside Joram.
 - 4. .6 The messenger takes Jehu aside privately and anoints him as the king of Israel. After initially disregarding this prophecy (.11), Jehu agrees to be recognized as the king, and he begins the plot to kill Joram.
 - 5. .13 It's rather remarkable that the other military officials immediately recognize Jehu as the king because of this prophecy. They take the words of Elisha's messenger very seriously. This prophecy from Elisha overrides their loyalty to Joram as king.
 - 6. So this amounted to a coup, an insurrection against a sitting king.
 - D. Jehu begins his task of obliterating all the descendants of Ahab, including Joram, Ahab's son.

App: For Joram, the vengeance of God meant that he lost his position as the king. We know that not everyone who loses his job does so because of God's

vengeance. There may be many reasons that one might lose his position.

But it could be that one expression of God's vengeance is the loss of your position or privilege. If you are living in unrepentant sin, and if God takes away a job or position, it could be as a result of God's vengeance.

Perhaps God will raise someone else up to take your place. Maybe your job will be terminated or your company closes down. God could use any number of factors to take away your position. That sometimes happens to those experiencing God's vengeance.

II. Vengeance may result in violent death.

A. A violent death for Ahab

1. Ahab died long before this account. We read about Ahab's death back in 1 Kings 22. A Syrian soldier shot him with an arrow, and that led to his death.
2. But we read about the *cause* of Ahab's death in 9:25-26 (read). Ahab coveted Naboth's vineyard, and his wife, Jezebel, arranged for Naboth's murder so that he could acquire that property.
3. Naboth is an example of the shedding of innocent blood. God's vengeance seems to be particularly stirred up when wicked people shed innocent blood.
 - a) In Genesis 4:10, God says that Abel's *blood cries out to Me from the ground*.
 - b) In Rev 6:10, the martyrs who were killed for their faith cry out for God to bring down vengeance on those who shed their innocent blood.

App: The blood of the innocents still cries out for vengeance today. No doubt the most common and barbaric way that innocent blood is shed is through abortion. Every nation that tolerates this bloody, barbaric practice subjects itself to the judgment of God. Anyone who defends abortion is complicit in the shedding of innocent blood and deserves God's vengeance.

We ought to support and defend those who are trying to prevent

the shedding of innocent blood through abortion.

4. Ahab was guilty of murder, idolatry, and many other sins, all of which subjected him to the vengeance of God.

1 Kings 21:25 But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.

Vengeance for Ahab was his violent, painful death, followed by the obliteration of his entire dynasty.

B. 9:21f A violent death for Joram

1. Jehu traveled to Jezreel where Joram was recovering from his wounds.
2. When Joram asked if Jehu had come in peace, Jehu said, “What peace, as long as the harlotries of your mother Jezebel and her witchcraft are so many?” (2 Kings 9:22)
3. As Joram was trying to escape in a chariot, Jehu shot him with an arrow and killed him. Fittingly, Joram died on Naboth’s vineyard and his corpse was thrown to the ground there (9:21, 26).

C. 9:27 A violent death for Ahaziah (king of Judah)

1. Ahaziah was another son of Ahab, which made him Joram’s brother. He had been visiting Joram in Jezreel. But he ran away when Jehu killed his brother.
2. Jehu pursued him and eventually caught up to him and shot him. He was seriously injured and died shortly thereafter.

D. 9:30f A violent death for Jezebel (Ahab’s wife; Joram’s and Ahaziah’s mother)

1. Jezebel had been responsible for the deaths of many of the prophets, and she was a great enemy of Elijah.
2. About 15 years had elapsed since Ahab’s death, but Jezebel was still alive. She was in Jezreel, probably to help care for her son,

Joram.

3. 9:33 When Jehu found her, he commanded that she be thrown out of an upper story window, and she died when she hit the ground. The horses also trampled her underfoot.
4. .35 Elijah had prophesied that the dogs would eat Jezebel, and that's exactly what happened. Jehu left Jezebel's body on the ground for several hours, and when he returned to collect the body, all that was left were her skull, feet, and hands. So this wicked woman came to a dishonorable and greatly-deserved death.

App: We know that God's judgment is not necessarily the direct cause of violent death in many cases. We can't assume that those who die that way were under the judgment of God. But if you are persisting in idolatry and immorality, if violent death strikes, it is very possible that it was the vengeance of God.

For some of these people, vengeance was unexpected and sudden. Joram, Ahaziah, and the sons and colleagues of Ahab were probably not expecting that God's vengeance would fall on them. But it did.

Likewise, those who experience God's judgment may not be expecting it. But it could fall unexpectedly and suddenly. But it will fall eventually.

Nu 32:23 ... *behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out.*

You reap what you sow. God is very merciful and patient; but in time, God's judgment will fall on those who refuse to repent. And in some cases, God's vengeance takes the form of violent, sudden death.

III. Vengeance may have wide-ranging consequences for many.

1 Kings 21:21–24 [Elijah told Ahab] *'Behold, I will bring calamity on you. I will take away your posterity, and will cut off from Ahab every male in Israel, both bond and free ... because of the provocation with which you have provoked Me to anger, and made Israel sin.'* And concerning Jezebel the LORD also spoke, saying, *'The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.'* The dogs shall eat whoever belongs to Ahab and dies in the city, and the birds

of the air shall eat whoever dies in the field.”

We find out later in the story that Jehu killed virtually everyone related to Ahab and his family. The prophecy stipulates that “every male in Israel, both bond and free” would be cut off. And that’s what happened.

2 Kings 10:17 And when [Jehu] came to Samaria, he [killed] all that remained unto Ahab in Samaria, till he had destroyed him, according to the saying of the LORD, which he spake to Elijah.

Jehu took his commission very seriously. By the time he was done,

- Joram, the son of Ahab was dead and his corpse was lying in Naboth’s vineyard (9:24-26);
- Ahaziah, the king of Judah, was dead (9:27);
- Jezebel, Ahab’s wicked, pagan wife, was dead and most of her body eaten by dogs (9:33);
- Ahab’s seventy other sons were dead (vss. 10:1-11);
- Various priests and supporters of Ahab were dead (10:11)
- Some of the princes of Judah associated with the family were dead (10:13-14);
- And many of the worshippers of Baal were dead (10:19-28).
- Ultimately, Jehu himself would come under the judgment of God for his idolatry and lack of repentance (2 Kings 10:31; Hosea 1:4). Jehu reigned in Israel for 28 years, and his dynasty lasted for 4 generations, but none of his descendants were good kings. Eventually, they were all wiped out. God’s vengeance even extended to Jehu because of his ungodliness and lack of repentance.

App: Sin affects more than just the one who committed the sin. The results of sin often have widespread repercussions. The decisions you make now may have consequences for many people far into the future. Your entire family and generations of your family may be negatively affected by your sin.

We know that children often suffer because of the sinful decisions of the parents. The innocent suffer because of the guilty. The results of sin extend

far and wide. In this case, many people were caught up in the destruction of the house of Ahab.

And it could be that many people will be caught up in God's vengeance if it falls on you. If you care at all about your family, if you want to avoid causing God's judgment to fall on you, you must repent of your sin and turn to God in faith.

God's vengeance might fall on an individual or on a whole group of people.

American Minute with Bill Federer: "On Jamaica's sandy southeast coast, the city of Port Royal grew to surpass Boston as England's most prosperous New World settlement. Many of the Caribbean's thousands of pirates and smugglers operated from there, with half of the 200 ships a year passing through the harbor transporting slaves, liquor, and other contraband trade to Spanish America. Drinking, [gambling] houses, slave trading, brothels, taverns and grog shops attracted 'pirates, cutthroats, whores and some of the vilest persons in the whole of the world.' Port Royal was called 'the richest and wickedest city in the world' or 'the Sodom of the New World.' Suddenly, June 7, 1692, an earthquake and tsunami sank Port Royal under the sea. . . . Enormous waves tossed ships from the harbor into buildings, and in many places the ground opened up and 'swallow'd up multitudes of people together.' Over 2,000 [residents] drowned. Graves were opened and bodies washed about. A Quaker resident, John Pike, wrote June 19, 1692: '... If thou didst see those great persons that are now dead upon the water thou couldst never forget it. Great men who were so swallowed up with pride, that a man could not be admitted to speak with them, and women whose top-knots seemed to reach the clouds, now lie stinking upon the water, and are made meat for fish and fowls of the air.'" Members of the Jamaica Council [later] declared, 'We are become ... an instance of God Almighty's severe judgment, therefore every future seventh of June ... be kept and observed by all the inhabitants of this Island, as an anniversary day of fasting and humiliation,' in hopes that acknowledging 'manifold sins and wickednesses committed against his Divine Majesty,' may 'appease God's imminent wrath and prevent heavier judgements.'

Those Jamaicans took this earthquake and tsunami to be the outpouring of God's vengeance against them, and with good reason. Perhaps it was. And the people took steps to avoid experiencing God's judgment again—they admitted their sin and pled for God's mercy. That's the only way to avoid God's judgment—repent and plead for mercy.

Reading about all this bloody mayhem in our text today is not a pleasant experience. And we may be quite shocked about all the violence that was part of God's vengeance against the house of Ahab. But what we see here is a very clear demonstration that God takes vengeance on his enemies. He threatened to extinguish the house of Ahab, and that's exactly what he did.

As the AH tells us, *[It is] a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* (Heb 10:31).

One of the great things about being a Christian is that you need not fear the vengeance of God. Rom 8:1. Jesus took God's vengeance against us when he died on the cross. When we trust in Jesus to save us, God's wrath is turned aside.

But if you are not saved, the vengeance of God is not an idle threat. Judgment will fall on the unrepentant sinner either here during this life or in eternity. Payday will arrive someday; God's vengeance will fall. The only way to avoid the vengeance of God is to repent of your sins and to trust in Jesus, who took the punishment of God's judgment for you.