



C O M E S E E

My Zeal for the LORD!

by Mike Atnip

Had Jehu been a man of 21st-century America, he would drive a 4x4, with the biggest engine available under the hood. He needs power to get him going, and that right fast. Stop signs would be a frustration, and by habit he would squeal his tires upon departure from any given point.

It is not that Jehu was a show-off. He simply had things to do, places to go, and people to see. He had no time for piddling. After all, he was Jehu: zeal incarnated.

Jehus are exciting people to be around. Things happen around Jehus. Drowsiness and puttering are evil, and half-heartedness gets a disgusting scowl every time it

meets Jehu. There is a job to do, and it needs full attention until executed. So Jehu fires up the 4x4 and peels away. He'll return with a roar when the job is done—thoroughly done.

*“Be Ye Zealous”
is a Bible Command*

God is not a lazy being, and so He appreciated Jehu's zeal; so much so that He promised Jehu four generations

of kings for executing judgment against the wickedness of Ahab. In his typical fervent style, Jehu had done a full work of annihilating the descendancy of that wicked king. Both the king of Israel and the king of Judah had fallen before him, as well as the sensuous Jezebel. When it came time to deal with the followers of Baal, he slyly had them gather into the slaughterhouse and, with his exacting passion, made sure not a single one escaped. In his enthusiasm, he turned the house of Baal into a public sewer.

“Come see my zeal for the Lord,” he had told one of his friends. I do not get the picture that Jehu was bragging. He simply was excited to be doing what he understood was the will of God, and was eager to share his own zest. After all, enthusiasm is contagious. Those infected will not stand it to let others be mere bystanders.

The Little Red Light

In watching the life of Jehu, one word suddenly jolts us to the reality that zeal in and of itself is not totally satisfying to God. We find that word in 2 Kings 10:29: “Howbeit”.

Like the flashing of a red light in the dash of a vehicle, we are warned that not all is well “under the hood”. We may be cruising blissfully along at 70 mph on a beautiful sunny day, but that little light forewarns us that we best stop and check things out before proceeding any further.

Ahhh, but we have places to go, things to do, and people to see. We have no time to stop for a silly little light in the dash!

And so Jehus speed along...until in the end they realize that it is too late to add more oil to the engine. With a clunk and a bang, they suddenly come to the stark realization that all the ambition in the world cannot keep an oil-less engine running.

In Jehu’s case, it was two golden calves that “made his engine blow”. For all his accomplishments, his life record indicates that he failed to heed the “low oil pressure” light. And that fateful mistake is forever recorded for us to learn from.

What Can We Learn From This?

First, zeal is good, but zeal is not love. Had Jehu loved God as much as he was zealous for him, his reforms would have been broader. He would have, perhaps, spent more time in getting to know the full will of God. As it was, he did indeed carry out, and zealously carry out, a part of God’s will. But because he was zealous for God instead of longing to know God in a personal loving rela-

tionship, it is written that “Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel with all his heart.”

What? Zealous Jehu accused of not being wholehearted?

Yes!

You see, God appreciates zeal. But His desire is that our zeal springs from love, not ambition. Paul was “constrained by love”, not zeal.

Jehu - The Missionary

Many people are zealous for God, ready to depart unto the ends of the earth to preach to the heathen. They devour mission books and magazines. They practice self-denial to ready themselves for the arduous demands of frontier life. They study hard to learn the language of “their people”.

But there remain some golden calves in their lives. And this lack of breadth reveals itself.

I am reminded of an instance in a foreign land where a conversation was going concerning a group of unevangelized primitive people, about two ridges over from the home base. This little group of people supposedly had never heard the Gospel.

I can still hear the words of one young man: “Now that is what stirs my heart! The people who never heard before! I get excited about that!” He was ready to hoist a backpack and head out.

But this “Jehu” had some calves in his life. While he got excited about the group of ignorant souls two valleys to the east, his daily walk in the neighborhood he lived in did not manifest a passion for lost souls. Jehu! Zealous Jehu on the mission field!

Jehu - The Reformer

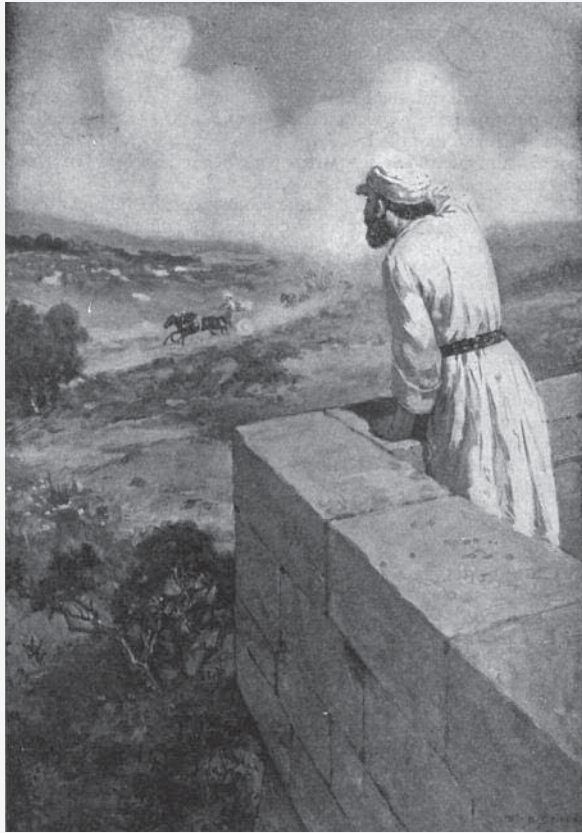
With a commendable zeal, these Jehus set themselves to destroy anything and everything associated with, say, Roman Catholicism. Fat books are written about Mariology and the falsehood of transubstantiation. Tracts are passed out at Catholic seminaries and at the front door of convents. Websites are published with links to any and all information available about the apostasy of the Roman church.

This is Jehu in the temple of Baal. Not a dash of Baal-worship survives his reform.

“Howbeit...”

Uh-oh...

Two golden calves... Maybe those calves represent, in the life of the church reformer mentioned above, the



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Zeal is not charity, neither is it holiness unto the Lord. As we go through this life, let us be sure that we take time to know God and His heart. May our reforms be thorough, based upon a love for God and truth.

negligence of practicing the principle of nonresistance, and being covetous. Maybe they represent some other aspects of God's heart, in other reformers.

Jehu - The Evangelist

Jehus are great people to have around in evangelistic efforts. They will boldly stand on the housetops wearing sandwich boards and preaching hellfire and damnation upon all who will not believe. With an ardor that ignites the interest of passing folk, they thunder out the message of righteousness and holiness and judgment to come. People stop to listen to Jehu's preaching; his very ferocity demands it. People also respond to his "altar calls" at tent meetings.

But Jehus rarely make good pastors. They cannot sit still enough to listen to a hurting heart for two hours. And so Jehu the evangelist is best backed up by a support team of men with the gift of shepherding. In his zest for truth, Jehu is prone to forget mercy.

Zeal is Good, But...

Zeal is not charity, neither is it holiness unto the Lord. As we go through this life, let us be sure that we take time to know God and His heart. May our reforms be thorough, based upon a love for God and truth. May love for souls be the fuel that thrusts us into foreign mission fields.

Zeal can get us a long way in many churches. It may put you behind the pulpit. It may put you on a mission field. It may get you a following. After all, it is a lot more exciting to ride "furiously" along in Jehu's chariot than to watch sheep nibble grass. At the end of the day, Jehu may well have to wash blood and guts off of his chariot. And they may well be the blood and guts, mind you, of a notoriously famous queen!

"Howbeit"

"Howbeit"—what does that word represent in your life? Zeal without knowledge? Unbridled ambition? Unbalanced reformations? Ministering truth without love? Love without truth?

Be zealous! This is a Bible command. Just make sure "howbeit" does not appear at the end of the biography that God writes about you! □

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