

# Homiletics Analysis: 2 Kings 9

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## Content & Intent

### This Text — Content

Second Kings 9 opens with Elisha dispatching one of the sons of the prophets to anoint Jehu son of Jehoshaphat son of Nimshi as king over Israel, sealing the commission with an explicit divine mandate: Jehu is to strike down the house of Ahab, avenging the blood of the LORD's servants the prophets and all the servants of the LORD killed by Jezebel. The anointing is accompanied by a prophetic word — the dynasty of Ahab ends here, by divine decree. Jehu receives this word, is proclaimed king by his fellow commanders, and immediately rides for Jezreel where Joram (Jehoram son of Ahab, king of Israel) is recovering from wounds received in battle against Hazael of Aram. Ahaziah king of Judah happens to be visiting Joram.

The narrative moves with striking speed. Watchmen spot Jehu's approaching chariot. Joram sends two messengers in sequence; neither returns. Joram and Ahaziah ride out themselves to meet Jehu in the field of Naboth the Jezreelite — and the narrator ensures the reader does not miss this detail. When Joram asks "Is it peace, Jehu?", Jehu answers with a question of his own: "What peace can there be, so long as the whorings and the sorceries of your mother Jezebel are so many?" Joram turns to flee; Jehu draws his bow and kills him with an arrow through the heart. He commands that Joram's body be thrown into the field of Naboth — explicitly invoking the prophetic word of Elijah (1 Kings 21) — and the narrator confirms this is its fulfillment. Ahaziah flees but is wounded and dies at Megiddo. Jehu then enters Jezreel. Jezebel, hearing the news, paints her eyes and adorns herself and positions herself at a window — perhaps a defiant posture, perhaps a last assertion of royal dignity. Jehu asks who is on his side; two or three eunuchs look out. He commands them to throw her down. They do. She is trampled by horses and her blood is spattered on the wall. When Jehu goes in to eat, he commands that she be buried "for she is a king's daughter" — but when servants go to bury her, they find only skull, feet, and palms. The narrator closes: the word of Elijah the Tishbite is fulfilled.

### This Text — Intent

God intends through this chapter to demonstrate with unmistakable concreteness that He is sovereign over the thrones of nations, that His prophetic word always arrives at its destination, and that no dynasty, no queen, no accumulated power can survive when the LORD's judgment has been decreed. The reader is meant to leave this chapter with the settled conviction that the word of the LORD cannot be defied — not by royal bloodlines, not by political alliances, not by personal defiance (Jezebel at the window), not by the passage of time (Naboth's murder was years prior). The chapter is also calibrated to

produce reverent fear: judgment, when it comes, is comprehensive, sudden, and precise. The intent is not merely theological information about divine sovereignty — it is the provocation of fear, trust, and submission to the God whose word performs what it promises.

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**Subject Sentence:** The LORD’s word through Elijah arrives at the house of Ahab in full and on time.

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**Primary Claim:** God is demonstrating through the anointing of Jehu and the death of Joram, Ahaziah, and Jezebel that His prophetic word is indestructible — every syllable of it — and that no human power, however entrenched, can survive when God has decreed its end.

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## Interpretive Evaluation

### The Problem of Jehu’s Violence and Divine Authorization

The most significant interpretive issue in 2 Kings 9 is the relationship between Jehu’s divinely commissioned violence and the moral weight the narrative assigns to it. Some readers — particularly in traditions shaped by a sharp law/gospel discontinuity — are uncomfortable with narrating this level of political assassination and royal execution as acts of divine obedience. The question surfaces acutely at Hosea 1:4, where God says He will punish the house of Jehu *for the blood of Jezreel*. Does Hosea 1:4 condemn what 2 Kings 9 commends?

The Reformed reading holds that these texts are not in tension. Second Kings 9 commends Jehu for executing a divine commission faithfully with respect to the *targets* named by the prophetic word — Joram and Jezebel, both directly in the orbit of Ahab’s condemned house. Hosea 1:4 addresses a later judgment on the house of Jehu for *its own* covenant unfaithfulness, particularly the idolatry Jehu himself failed to remove (2 Kings 10:29-31). The “blood of Jezreel” in Hosea may refer not to Joram and Jezebel specifically but to the extension of Jehu’s violence beyond the prophetically authorized scope — including the killing of Ahaziah’s relatives (2 Kings 10:12-14) and the broader purge. In any case, the narrative of 2 Kings 9 is not presenting Jehu as a moral hero to be imitated but as an instrument of divine judgment whose commission was real and whose execution of it (in this chapter) was in direct fulfillment of Elijah’s word.

### The “Avenge the Blood” Framework

Some interpreters in the Wesleyan-Arminian tradition struggle with the chapter’s governing logic: that God commissions one sinful king to execute another sinful king. The concern is that this seems to use evil to accomplish good. The Reformed reading affirms without

embarrassment that God governs sinful human instruments to accomplish His purposes — this is the consistent scriptural pattern from Pharaoh (Romans 9:17) to Cyrus (Isaiah 45:1) to the crucifixion itself (Acts 2:23). The chapter does not require Jehu to be righteous; it requires him to be obedient to a specific commission. The moral complexity of Jehu's broader character (displayed in chapter 10) does not undermine the authenticity of the commission in chapter 9.

### **Jezebel at the Window — Defiance or Dignity?**

Some commentators read Jezebel's final act (painting her eyes, adorning her hair, sitting at the window) as a seductive attempt to win Jehu over. Others read it as a dignified royal gesture — dying as a queen, not as a fugitive. The text does not resolve this definitively, and both readings are plausible. The Reformed reading takes seriously the narrator's withholding of any interpretation — what is emphasized is not Jezebel's motive but the utter ineffectiveness of whatever she intended. The word had decreed dogs would eat her flesh (1 Kings 21:23), and nothing she could do — whether seduction or defiance or dignity — altered that outcome by a single syllable. Her end is both swift and gruesome precisely to underscore the sovereignty of the prophetic word, not to make a moral point about her specific final posture.

### **The Reformed Verdict**

The chapter functions as a canonical demonstration of prophetic reliability — God's word through Elijah, given years before, arrives exactly when, where, and how it was spoken. The theological pressure of the chapter falls entirely on the indestructibility of the divine word, not on the virtue of the human instrument. Applications, therefore, must be grounded here: in the reliability of the God who speaks, not in Jehu as a model for decisive action.

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## **Key Canonical Support**

- **1 Kings 21:17-24** — Elijah's prophetic oracle against Ahab, Jezebel, and the house of Ahab following the murder of Naboth; every element of 2 Kings 9 is the arrival of this word, making this the indispensable prior text.
- **Numbers 35:33** — "You shall not pollute the land in which you live, for blood pollutes the land, and no atonement can be made for the land for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of the one who shed it." The vengeance on Naboth's blood and the field of Naboth as the site of Joram's death is theologically grounded here — blood guilt requires blood justice; the land itself is at stake.
- **Isaiah 46:9-11** — "I am God, and there is no other... declaring the end from the beginning... I will accomplish all my purpose." The chapter is a narrative illustration of this claim — the purpose declared by Elijah is accomplished by Jehu without the possibility of interruption.

- **Romans 9:17-18** — Paul’s use of Pharaoh as the paradigm case of God raising up a ruler for His sovereign purposes; the same logic governs Jehu — a flawed, ambitious instrument through whom the LORD’s declared word is executed.
- **Revelation 2:20-23** — Christ’s word to Thyatira warns against “that woman Jezebel” who teaches sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols; the canonical Jezebel becomes a type of false teaching and corrupting spiritual influence, and Christ’s promise to “strike her children dead” echoes the pattern of 2 Kings 9 — the Lord’s word against spiritual corruption is not idle.

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**Aim:** To show from the precision and completeness of Jehu’s commission and its execution that God’s prophetic word is indestructible — and to drive the hearer to submit to and take refuge in a God whose word performs exactly what it promises.

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## Content Table

| Verse(s) | Content                                                                                                                                                                                             | Notes                                                                                                                                               |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1-3      | Elisha commissions one of the sons of the prophets to anoint Jehu secretly at Ramoth-gilead; the commission is specific and urgent — anoint, deliver the word, and flee immediately                 | Elisha’s own distance from the act is notable — he sends a messenger, not himself; the commission is personal and targeted                          |
| 4-6      | The young prophet travels to Ramoth-gilead; finds Jehu sitting with the commanders; draws him aside privately; anoints him with oil                                                                 | The privacy of the anointing is emphasized twice (vv. 2, 6) — this is not a public ceremony but a prophetic act requiring Jehu’s personal reception |
| 7-10a    | The prophetic word delivered: strike down the house of Ahab; avenge the blood of the prophets and servants of the LORD; Jezebel will be eaten by dogs in the field of Jezreel; no one will bury her | The word given to Jehu is almost verbatim from Elijah’s oracle in 1 Kings 21 — the chapter opens by anchoring itself to prior prophetic authority   |
| 10b      | The young prophet opens the door and flees                                                                                                                                                          | His swift departure underscores the urgency and the purely prophetic                                                                                |

| Verse(s) | Content                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Notes                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 11-13    | Jehu returns to the commanders; when questioned he reports what was said; the commanders immediately accept the anointing — they spread garments on the stairs and proclaim “Jehu is king”                                                  | character of the act — he is not a political agent<br>Remarkably rapid acceptance; the commanders’ response is not examined for motivation — they act, which is what the narrative requires       |
| 14-16    | Conspiracy against Joram begins; Jehu commands the city be sealed so no word reaches Jezreel before him; he rides for Jezreel                                                                                                               | Joram is recovering at Jezreel from Aramean wounds; Ahaziah of Judah is visiting — both kings will be in the same place                                                                           |
| 17-20    | Watchman reports a company approaching; Joram sends two horsemen to ask “Is it peace?”; neither returns; the watchman reports Jehu’s driving — “furiously”                                                                                  | The repeated messenger pattern builds tension; “the driving is like the driving of Jehu son of Nimshi, for he drives furiously” — already a recognized characteristic                             |
| 21-23    | Joram and Ahaziah ride out themselves; they meet Jehu in the field of Naboth the Jezreelite; Joram’s question “Is it peace, Jehu?”; Jehu’s answer — “What peace, so long as the whorings and sorceries of your mother Jezebel are so many?” | The narrator’s placement of the encounter in Naboth’s field is not incidental — it is the precise geography of prophetic fulfillment; Joram’s question echoes through the chapter as unanswerable |
| 24       | Jehu draws his bow; arrow through Joram’s heart; Joram sinks in his chariot                                                                                                                                                                 | The execution is clinical and precise — no struggle, no negotiation, immediate                                                                                                                    |
| 25-26    | Jehu commands Bidkar to throw Joram’s body in Naboth’s field; explicitly invokes the prophetic word Elijah spoke there regarding Ahab’s bloodline                                                                                           | The narrative pauses to make the fulfillment explicit — this is not incidental geography; it is the word returning to the exact plot of land that provoked it                                     |
| 27-29    | Ahaziah of Judah flees; is                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Ahaziah’s death is                                                                                                                                                                                |

| Verse(s) | Content                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Notes                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|          | wounded in his chariot;<br>reaches Megiddo and dies;<br>is buried in Jerusalem with<br>his fathers                                                                                                                                                                            | secondary in the narrative —<br>he is not named in the<br>original oracle but is caught<br>in the movement of divine<br>judgment as an ally of<br>Joram's house                                |
| 30-31    | Jehu enters Jezreel; Jezebel<br>hears; paints her eyes,<br>adorns her hair, sits at the<br>window; calls down to Jehu:<br>“Is it peace, you Zimri,<br>murderer of your master?”                                                                                               | Jezebel's final act is<br>described without authorial<br>comment on motive; the<br>“Zimri” reference — a king<br>who killed his master and<br>lasted seven days — may be<br>a taunt or a curse |
| 32-33    | Jehu looks up; asks “Who is<br>on my side?”; two or three<br>eunuchs look out; he<br>commands them to throw<br>her down; they do; her blood<br>spatters the wall; Jehu<br>tramples her with his horses                                                                        | The eunuchs — members of<br>Jezebel's own household —<br>comply without hesitation;<br>the queen has no defenders<br>in the moment of judgment                                                 |
| 34       | Jehu goes inside to eat; then<br>commands they bury her,<br>“for she is a king's daughter”                                                                                                                                                                                    | A moment of surprising<br>restraint — Jehu<br>acknowledges her royal<br>lineage even after ordering<br>her death                                                                               |
| 35-37    | Servants go to bury her; find<br>only skull, feet, and palms;<br>Jehu declares the word of<br>Elijah fulfilled; the LORD had<br>said through Elijah: “The<br>corpse of Jezebel shall be as<br>dung on the surface of the<br>field so that no one can say,<br>This is Jezebel” | The chapter closes not with<br>Jehu's triumph but with the<br>narrator's explicit<br>declaration: the word of the<br>LORD through Elijah has<br>been fulfilled — every word<br>of it           |

## Divisions Table

| Division | Verses | Label                                             |
|----------|--------|---------------------------------------------------|
| 1        | 1-10   | The Word Arrives — Jehu Anointed and Commissioned |
| 2        | 11-20  | The Commission in Motion — Jehu Rides for Jezreel |

| Division | Verses | Label                                                    |
|----------|--------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| 3        | 21-26  | The Word Lands on Joram — Fulfilled at Naboth's Field    |
| 4        | 27-29  | The Word Reaches Ahaziah — A Dynasty's Ally Falls        |
| 5        | 30-37  | The Word Completes Itself on Jezebel — Dogs in the Field |

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## Subject Sentence & Primary Claim (*restated*)

**Subject Sentence:** The LORD's word through Elijah arrives at the house of Ahab in full and on time.

**Primary Claim:** God is demonstrating through the anointing of Jehu and the death of Joram, Ahaziah, and Jezebel that His prophetic word is indestructible — every syllable of it — and that no human power, however entrenched, can survive when God has decreed its end.

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## Applications (Five)

### 1. [Mind/Belief] — Recalibrate your view of God's silence before His action.

The chapter's narrative logic runs this way: years passed between Elijah's oracle against Ahab (1 Kings 21) and its fulfillment in 2 Kings 9. Naboth's blood soaked into a field. Jezebel continued to reign. Ahab died and his son sat on the throne. A casual observer might have concluded that either the word had failed or the LORD had forgotten. Neither was true. The word was in transit. God's apparent silence before a judgment or a promise arrives is not evidence of failure — it is evidence of His patience and His sovereignty over timing. If you are living in the gap between a promise received and a promise fulfilled, or watching unrighteousness continue unrebuked, this chapter reframes that gap not as divine absence but as divine precision in motion.

### 2. [Mind/Belief] — Take the word of God more literally than you take your own situation.

Joram apparently expected a military confrontation or a political challenge. Jezebel apparently expected that royal bearing or personal charisma might alter her outcome. Both read the situation through the categories of power and personality. Neither read it through the lens of the word already spoken over them. The exposition calls the hearer to a disciplined inversion: the word of God about your situation, your future, your standing before Him, your ultimate end — this is more determinative than everything your circumstances, your enemies, or your own assessment of your prospects tell you. The word is not one input among many. It is the controlling reality.

### 3. [Affections/Worship] — Fear the God whose word does not return empty, and find that fear to be a refuge.

The chapter is designed to produce fear — not neurotic anxiety, but the settled conviction that this God cannot be trifled with, manipulated, survived, or outwaited. The response to such a God is not terror for those who are His, but profound, stabilizing reverence. Jezebel's end is described with relentless specificity — skull, feet, and palms — because the word said she would not be buried, and the word meant it. Let this specificity reorder what you fear and what you trust. The God who is this precise in judgment is equally precise in mercy. The same indestructibility of His word that makes His judgment terrible makes His promises for those in Christ absolutely secure.

#### **4. [Affections/Worship] — Grieve the corruption that makes divine judgment necessary.**

It is possible to read 2 Kings 9 with a kind of narrative relish for the violence without being struck by what made it necessary. Jezebel's influence had filled the land with blood — prophets murdered, Naboth framed and killed, idolatry institutionalized. The execution of judgment is not the story's villain; the corruption that necessitated it is. Let the chapter produce not satisfaction at violence but grief at what human rebellion against God produces in nations, in families, in communities. Ask what corruptions in your own life or community are accumulating consequences that patient divine judgment will one day address. This chapter is not just history — it is anatomy.

#### **5. [Will/Behavior] — Act with urgency when the word of God has made your commission clear.**

Jehu's most notable quality in this chapter is not his violence but his immediacy. Once the word arrived, he did not deliberate, did not test the wind, did not wait for a more favorable political moment. He sealed the city, rode hard, and executed the commission. The young prophet also acted with urgency — anointed, delivered, fled. The chapter presents this urgency as appropriate to the nature of a divine commission. There are things God has made clear to you from His word — about sin to be put away, about obedience owed, about a person to be reconciled with, about a community to be served. The Jehu question for the hearer is simply: what are you waiting for, and why?

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## Theological Importance

**Theological Importance:** Second Kings 9 is a canonical demonstration that God is not merely aware of history but governs it precisely toward the fulfillment of His declared word. The passage teaches that divine judgment is real, specific, and irreversible once decreed — it cannot be deflected by political maneuvering, personal dignity, or the passage of time. It also teaches the theological coherence of God's governance across time: the word given to Elijah years before creates an obligation in the future that the LORD fulfills through a human instrument who may or may not be morally exemplary in himself. God's faithfulness to His word is not contingent on the virtue of the instruments He uses — He governs sinful human actors to accomplish righteous purposes. Finally, the chapter

teaches that divine retributive justice is geographically and historically specific: Joram dies in Naboth's field, not merely as a literary device but as the LORD's insistence that accounts are not simply forgiven but settled.

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## Reformed Theological Significance

**Reformed Theological Significance:** The chapter is a powerful display of divine sovereignty operating through secondary causes — Jehu is a real human agent with real motivations, yet the narrator insists at every turn that what is happening is the fulfillment of the word of the LORD. Reformed theology's insistence that God governs history without compromising human agency or moral responsibility finds vivid illustration here. The passage also presses against any domesticated view of God's holiness: the LORD who forgives in covenant mercy is the same LORD who will not allow the blood of His servants to go unavenged. This is not a contradiction — it is the full biblical portrait of the God of the covenant, whose mercy and justice are both absolute and both operating simultaneously in history. For the preacher shaped by Reformed theology, the chapter also resists the reduction of the Bible to moral exemplars: Jehu is not here to be imitated, and the chapter is not primarily about decisive leadership. It is about the God who speaks and whose speech is reality.

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## Main Takeaway

The word of the LORD about the house of Ahab was spoken. Years passed. Dynasties continued. Then the word arrived — to the exact field, the exact people, the exact hour it named — and nothing was left standing that it had decreed would fall. This is your God. His word about your sin, your standing in Christ, your future, and your ultimate end is not provisional, not contingent on circumstances, and not subject to revision. The same God who sent the word through Elijah and delivered it through Jehu is the God who has spoken over you in the gospel — and every syllable of that word will perform what it promises.

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## Preaching/Teaching Pitfalls

- **Preaching Jehu as a leadership model.** The most common homiletical misuse of this chapter is extracting Jehu's decisive, urgent action as a model for bold Christian leadership or decisive faith. The chapter does not commend Jehu's character — it commends the word of the LORD that he happened to execute faithfully in this chapter while remaining deeply compromised in others (2 Kings 10:29-31). Preaching Jehu as a hero produces moralism and distorts the chapter's claim entirely. The main character of the chapter is the divine word in motion, not the man who carries it.

- **Skating past the Naboth's field detail as a literary flourish.** The repeated emphasis that Joram died in the field of Naboth the Jezreelite (vv. 21, 25-26) is not atmosphere — it is the theological spine of the chapter. The preacher who moves past it without dwelling on it loses the chapter's primary demonstration: the LORD's judgments are historically and geographically specific. This detail connects everything backward to 1 Kings 21 and must be developed carefully.
- **Treating the Hosea 1:4 tension as a contradiction to be avoided.** Some preachers, sensing the tension between 2 Kings 9's commendation of Jehu's actions and Hosea 1:4's later judgment on the house of Jehu, either ignore Hosea or use it to undermine the authority of Jehu's commission in 2 Kings 9. Neither move is honest to the text. The tension is canonical and instructive: God uses an instrument faithfully for a specific commission, and that same instrument remains accountable for everything outside that commission. Both things are true simultaneously.
- **Reducing Jezebel's end to a morality lesson about wicked women.** The chapter's description of Jezebel's death is vivid and specific — but the point is not moral instruction about feminine wickedness or political ambition. The point is that the word of Elijah named her end in advance and the LORD executed it precisely. Preaching this section in a way that produces judgment against Jezebel as a character type misses the theological force: *no one* survives when the word of the LORD has decreed their end, not because of who Jezebel was but because of who God is.
- **Leaving the congregation only with fear and no gospel tether.** This chapter will, if preached honestly, produce sobering fear. That fear is appropriate and intended. But the preacher who lands there without tethering the fear to the gospel leaves the congregation with dread but no shelter. The same indestructibility of God's word that makes His judgment terrifying makes His covenant promises in Christ absolutely secure. Romans 8:38-39 is the same God speaking — and that word is equally indestructible. The sermon should move through fear toward a refuge, not leave the congregation standing in the rubble of Jezebel's field with no address for their anxiety.
- **Treating the chapter as unpreachable because of its violence.** Some preachers skip 2 Kings 9 precisely because of the graphic nature of Jehu's commission and Jezebel's death, regarding it as unsuitable for contemporary congregations. This avoidance fails the congregation in two directions: it robs them of a canonical demonstration of God's sovereignty over nations and rulers, and it implicitly suggests that the Bible's harder passages are optional. The violence is not incidental to the chapter's claim — it is the claim's delivery mechanism. Preach it with care, with contextual grounding, and with the full canonical frame — but preach it.