

Judah During the Divided Kingdom (2 Chronicles 10:1 – 28:7)

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The Reign of Jehoram (2 Chronicles 21:4–22:1)

Corruption through Northern Influence (21:4-24:27)

The second portion of the Divided Kingdom covers the reigns of Jehoram (21:4-21:20), Ahaziah (22:1-9), Athaliah (22:10-23:21), and Joash (24:1-27). Each of these records displays a variety of motifs which the Chronicler designed to direct his readers toward the restoration of the kingdom in the post-exilic period. Yet, this material primarily holds together around the central theme of the northern Israelite corruption of Judah. Jehoshaphat's reign has already anticipated the problem of close association with wicked Northerners (see 19:1-3; 20:35-37). At this point, however, this motif dominates the history. Jehoram **walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, as the house of Ahab had done, for he married a daughter of Ahab** (21:6). This **daughter of Ahab** was none other than Athaliah whose presence is felt throughout this section. Ahaziah **too walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother encouraged him in doing wrong** (22:3). The record then moves to Athaliah herself and the trouble she caused the house of David, including her opposition to king Joash whose reign ends in corruption (22:10-24:27). Put simply, the Chronicler focused in this material on the corruption that came to Judah because of alliance with wicked persons from northern Israel. By doing so, he warned his post-exilic readers against the dangers of compromising fidelity to the Lord for relationship with those among the northern tribes who rebelled against God even in his own day (see *Introduction: 2) Northern Israel*).

The Reign of Jehoram (21:4-22:1)

The Chronicler continued his account of the kings of Judah with an expanded record of Jehoram's reign (853-841 B.C.) The Chronicler presented a one-sided outlook on the king. Without exception, Jehoram behaved in ways that brought the judgment of God against him. As such, he illustrated what outcome lies ahead for those who relentlessly turned away from God.

Comparison of 21:4-22:1 with 2 Kgs 8:17-25

The Chronicler's account of Jehoram's life loosely parallels the record of Kings (see figure 37)

2 Chr		1-2 Kgs
-----	Events in Northern Israel (omitted)	1 Kgs 22:51-2 Kgs 8:16
21:4-11	Jehoram's Sins (slightly expanded)	2 Kgs 8:17-22
21:12-17	Jehoram's Condemnation (added)	-----
21:18-22:1	Jehoram's Sickness and Death (greatly expanded)	2 Kgs 8:23-25

Comparison of 2 Chr 21:4-22:1 and 1 Kgs 22:51-2 Kgs 8:25 (figure 37)

A number of other changes appear, but are of little significance. For instance, Kings consistently uses the name "Joram." An alternative form of "Jehoram" appears in Chronicles. In addition to this, a number of more specific variations deserve comment.

First, the most obvious contrast between Kings and Chronicles is the large omissions of 1 Kgs 22:51 - 2 Kgs 8:16. For the most part, this material was not important to the Chronicler because it focuses on events in the northern kingdom. The Chronicler typically focused on the southern kingdom of Judah and touched on the North only when events there were closely tied to events in the South (see *Introduction: 2) Northern Israel*).

Second, at the end of Jehoshaphat's reign the Chronicler added a list of Jehoshaphat's many children to exalt him as one blessed by God (see 21:2-3). At the beginning of Jehoram's reign, the Chronicler reported that Jehoram murdered his brothers to secure his power over the kingdom of Judah (21:4). This beginning for the king's reign replaces the innocuous report in 2 Kgs 8:16 and immediately cast the king's entire reign in a negative light.

Third, the Chronicler slightly shifted the language of 2 Kgs 8:19 (// 21:7). 2 Kgs 8:19 reads that God "was not willing to destroy Judah." The Chronicler, however, wrote that God **was not willing to destroy the house of David** (21:7). This variation focuses on God's commitment to the continuation of the Davidic line, one of the Chronicler's central themes.

Fourth, 21:10 (// 2 Kgs 8:22) adds an explanatory clause that Libnah rebelled **because Jehoram had forsaken the Lord, the God of his fathers**. By this means the Chronicler pointed to one manner in which Jehoram's reign illustrated his views on divine judgment and blessing.

Fifth, the Chronicler inserted 21:11-20 into the reign of Jehoram. This material mentions a number of the king's serious sins, Elijah's letter to him, further rebellion, and the king's severe suffering and death. This addition contributed significantly to the negative assessment of Jehoram.

Sixth, Chronicles omits the reference in Kings to literary sources for the king's activities (2 Kgs 8:23). This omission was probably designed to disparage the king by ignoring his official records (see *Introduction: Historical and Theological Purposes*).

Seventh, the book of Kings refers to the fact that Jehoram "slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers" (2 Kgs 8:24). The Chronicler simply noted that **they buried him** (21:20). Moreover, he commented that Jehoram's burial was **not in the tombs of the kings** (21:20). Once again, the Chronicler's negative outlook is evident.

Eighth, 2 Kgs 8:24b-25 notes the succession of Ahaziah in very simple terms. The Chronicler, however, explained a number of details related to his succession. 1) **The people of Jerusalem**, not Jehoram, appointed Ahaziah as king (22:1). Jehoram's kingdom was in such disarray that the people had to resolve the matter. 2) The Chronicler reminded his readers why Ahaziah succeeded Jehoram. It was because **the raiders, who came with the Arabs had killed all the older sons** (22:1b). The allusion to 22:17 is evident. In a word, Judah made Ahaziah king because there was no other choice. These additions continue the focus on divine judgment against Jehoram.

- Opening of Jehoram's Reign (21:4-7)
 - ◆ Rebellion against Jehoram (21:8-11)
 - Rebellion of Edom (21:8-10a)
 - Edom Begins Rebellion (21:8)
 - Jehoram Attacks (21:9a)
 - Edom Surrounds Jehoram (21:9b)
 - Jehoram Escapes (21:9:c)
 - Edom Remains in Rebellion (21:10a)
 - Rebellion of Libnah (21:10b-11)
 - Libnah Begins Rebellion (21:10b)
 - Explanation of Rebellion (21:11)
 - ◆ Elijah's Condemnation of Jehoram (21:12-15)
 - ◆ More Rebellions against Jehoram (21:16-17)
 - Rebellions Stir (21:16)
 - Rebels Attack Judah (21:17a)
 - Rebellions End (21:17b)
- Closure of Jehoram's Reign (21:18-21:1)

Outline of 2 Chr 21:4-22:1 (figure 38)

Structure of 21:4-22:1

The Chronicler's version of Jehoram's reign forms a symmetrical pattern of five sections (see figure 38). The symmetry of this passage is apparent. First, the opening (21:4-7) and closing (21:18-22:1) sections are drawn together by the repetition of a chronological note. Both 21:5 and 21:20 mention the age of the king when he began to reign and the length of his enthronement. Second, the rebellions of Edom and Libnah (21:8-11) are balanced by the rebellions of Philistines and Arabs (21:16-17). Third, Elijah's letter to Jehoram (21:12-15) forms a turning point in the reign because it looks back to the king's preceding sins (21:12-13) and anticipates the punishment that will come against the king (21:14-15).

Opening of Jehoram's Reign (21:4-7)

The Chronicler began his record of Jehoram's reign with his own addition to Kings. He focused on the time when Jehoram **established himself** (21:4). Consolidating strength was an important goal for every king. It marked control and power over opponents. The Chronicler used similar terminology a number of times. For the significance of this terminology see 1:1.

When Jehoram **established himself** it was not during a period of fidelity. Jehoram rose to power by putting **all his brothers to the sword along with some of the princes of Israel** (21:4). According to 21:2, Jehoram was the firstborn of six brothers. The Chronicler did not explain why Jehoram killed his brothers. In light of the divine condemnation that follows, it is unlikely that his actions were justifiable. It seems much more likely that he ruthlessly murdered his brothers to eliminate any competition for the throne (see Judg 9:56; 2 Kgs 10:11). In many respects, this report of Jehoram's fratricide seems to be out of place. It would appear much more in line with the Chronicler's usual approach first to provide a chronological framework (21:5-7) and then move to Jehoram's crimes (21:4). Nevertheless, with this unusually abrupt opening, he immediately led his readers to conclude that Jehoram was a terribly wicked king.

The Chronicler turned to the record of Kings to give a more general description of Jehoram's reign (21:5-7 // 2 Kgs 8:17-19). He first noted the king's age and the length of his time on the throne (21:5). These facts appear again at the end of the Chronicler's account (see 21:20). From other chronological notices related to Jehoram (see 2 Kgs 1:17; 3:1; 8:16), it seems best to conclude that Jehoram was co-regent with Jehoshaphat for at least four years.

This chronological framework leads to an evaluation of the king's reign which is also largely taken from Kings (21:6-7 // 2 Kgs 8:18-19). The text compares Jehoram with **the kings of Israel** and specifically with **the house of Ahab** (21:6). The books of Kings and Chronicles compare other kings of Judah with northern Israelite kings (see 2 Kgs 16:3) and with Ahab specifically (see 2 Kgs 8:27; 21:3) to indicate how evil some Judahite kings had become (see 2 Chr 21:6,13; 22:4; 28:2-4; see also *Introduction: 2) Northern Israel*). The point of comparison here and elsewhere is primarily religious syncretism. The connection with Ahab is made even more direct because Jehoram **married a daughter of Ahab** (21:6). Jehoram sought a marriage alliance with the North like his father

Jehoshaphat (see 18:1). We learn later that the name of Ahab's daughter was Athaliah. She influenced Jehoram toward evil as she did her son (see 22:3).

The Chronicler summarized Jehoram's activities as **evil in the eyes of the Lord** (21:6b). Nevertheless, God did not destroy Judah as would be expected from the Chronicler's doctrine of blessing and judgment (see *Introduction: 10-28 Divine Blessing and Judgment*). As noted above, 2 Kgs 8:19 reads that God "was not willing to destroy Judah." The Chronicler, however, explained that God **was not willing to destroy the house of David** (21:7). This shift drew attention to the Chronicler's insistence that the dynasty of David was an essential part of the kingdom of Israel, even in the post-exilic period (see *Introduction: 4-9 King and Temple*). The reason for God's actions is plainly stated. God refused to destroy the Davidic line **because of the covenant the Lord had made with David** (21:7). The Davidic covenant established David's family as the permanent dynasty over Israel (see 2 Sam 7; Ps 89; 132).

The promise to David is described as God's determination **to maintain a lamp for him and his descendants forever** (21:7). These words recall God's word to David in 1 Chr 17:4-14 (// 2 Sam 7:5-16). There David received assurances from the prophet Nathan that no matter how sinful his descendants became, God would not utterly destroy his royal line. Instead, God promised to keep a **lamp** for David (21:7). The translation of the word **lamp** is problematic. The Hebrew term is normally translated in this manner, but it is possible in this case to render it as "fief" or "dominion." 1 Kgs 11:36 supports this interpretation. Moreover, the immediately following context also supports this translation as it focuses on territorial losses for the house of David (see 21:8-11, 16-17). In the least, **lamp** is a metaphor for the continuing hope that the house of David would not lose all of its land.

From the Chronicler's perspective the only reason the throne of Judah was not utterly destroyed during Jehoram's reign was divine favor toward David. In other words, Jehoram did nothing to forestall the anger of God. He deserved severe punishment, but God's love for David mollified the divine response to his sins.

Rebellions against Jehoram (21:8-11)

Having established Jehoram as unfaithful and disobedient, the Chronicler reported two rebellions that took place during the reign of Jehoram. For the most part, this material comes from 2 Kgs 8:20-22.

Structure of 21:8-11

This portion of Jehoram's reign divides into two episodes which describe rebellions against Jehoram (see figure 38). The rebellion of Edom falls into a five step symmetrical narrative (21:8-10a). The rebellion of Libnah amounts to a simple report (21:10b) followed by a brief explanation (21:11).

Rebellion of Edom (21:8-10a)

The rebellion of Edom began when Edom **set up its own king** (21:8). For a summary of Judah's involvement with Edom see comments on 25:5a.

The middle portion of this story moves quickly. Jehoram sent **all his chariots** (21:9a). In response, the Edomites **surrounded him and his chariot commanders** (21:9b). Jehoram barely escaped with his life **by night** (21:9c). As a result, Jehoram was unable to overcome the rebellion of Edom (21:10a).

The Chronicler closed with the observation that the Edomites remained separated from Judah **to this day** (21:10a). The meaning of the expression "to this day" varies from passage to passage in Chronicles. (For the Chronicler's use of this terminology, see 1 Chr 4:41.) In this passage, the Chronicler adopted the language of Kings (// 2 Kgs 8:22) and extended the significance of **this day** to reach to the post-exilic period. This passage explained why Judah continued to be weak in relation to her neighboring Edomites. Jehoram's infidelity led to enduring results.

Rebellion of Libnah (21:10b-11)

The Chronicler followed 2 Kgs 8:22b and reported that **Libnah revolted at the same time** (21:10b). Libnah was probably located westward in the Philistine plain. If this geographical identification is correct, then Jehoram faced enemies on the east (Edom) and west (Libnah). Conflicts on both fronts demonstrated how severely God judged Jehoram.

As noted above, the Chronicler explained the reason for this punishment (21:10b-11). It was **because Jehoram had forsaken the Lord** (21:10b). These words do not appear in 2 Kgs 8:22 and express the Chronicler's repeated concept of "forsaking" covenant fidelity. Jehoram had seriously violated the Law of God and deserved God's judgment (see *Introduction: 22 Abandoning/Forsaking*).

The Chronicler continued his addition by specifying Jehoram's sins. He **built high places** (21:11). Contrary to his fathers who tore down high places (see 14:3,5; 17:6; but see 15:17; 20:33), Jehoram erected these syncretistic worship sites (see 28:25; 33:3). Moreover, Jehoram also **caused the people of Jerusalem to prostitute themselves ... and led Judah astray** (21:11). The terminology of prostitution refers to the practice of idolatry (see 1 Chr 5:25; also 2 Chr 21:13). The metaphor stemmed from the practice of fertility prostitution in Canaanite worship (see Jer 3:1; Ezk 16:35f) and the belief that Israel was the bride of God (see Hos 1:2-7).

Elijah's Condemnation of Jehoram (21:12-15)

The turning point of the Chronicler's account consists of a prophetic warning of judgment. This warning is unique in the Chronicler's history because it consists of a letter from the prophet Elijah. This letter recollected events already mentioned (21:12-13) and anticipated events to follow (21:14-15).

The letter itself follows an introduction (21:12a) and takes the form of a typical prophetic oracle of judgment: messenger formula (21:12b), accusation (21:13), and sentencing (21:14-15).

The Chronicler explicitly identified the author of this letter as **Elijah the prophet** (21:12a). This well-known prophet appears in 1 Kgs 17-19 but nowhere else in Chronicles. 2 Kgs 2-3 suggests that Elijah went to heaven during the reign of Jehoshaphat. So, it is likely that Elijah lived only during the years when Jehoram was co-regent with Jehoshaphat. Elijah's letter indicates that he knew of Jehoram's fratricide which took place very early in his reign (21:13).

The prophet's accusation against Jehoram was threefold. First, the king did not **walk in the ways of ... Jehoshaphat or of Asa** (21:12b). As we have seen, the Chronicler did not hide the faults of these kings. Yet, Jehoram's reign did not even measure up to these reigns.

Second, instead of following the examples of his father and grandfather, Jehoram was like **the kings of Israel** (21:13). The Chronicler made the same accusation earlier (see 21:6). Jehoram followed the example of the northern kings by leading his people **to prostitute themselves** (21:13a; see also 21:11).

Third, Elijah accused Jehoram of fratricide (21:13b). As the Chronicler himself just reported (see 21:4), Jehoram killed his brothers to take Judah's throne. Elijah heightened this accusation by saying that those whom Jehoram killed **were better than** Jehoram (21:13b).

As a result of Jehoram's guilt, Elijah proclaimed divine judgment against the king (21:14-15). The king's punishment would be twofold. First, Elijah wrote that God will "**strike your people, your sons, your wives and everything that is yours**" (21:14). In contrast with the blessing of increased progeny, the Chronicler indicates that Jehoram's progeny will be harmed (see *Introduction: 25 Increase and Decline of Progeny*). The fulfillment of this threat appears in 21:16-17.

Second, God will make Jehoram himself **very ill** (21:15). This illness will be a **lingering disease** that will cause his **bowels to come out** (21:15). The precise identity of this disease is uncertain; interpreters have suggested colitis, chronic diarrhea, or dysentery. Whatever the case, it is apparent that Elijah predicted a terrible manner of death for the king. This judgment was fulfilled in 21:18-19.

The Chronicler's record gives no indication that Jehoram responded to the prophet's words with humility. Unlike Rehoboam (see 11:4; 12:6), Asa (see 15:8), and Jehoshaphat (see 18:6ff), Jehoram did not submit to the prophetic word. Instead, he continued in his disobedience. His contumacy led directly to the realization of divine judgment (see *Introduction: 15 Prophets*).

By reporting Elijah's harsh letter to Jehoram, the Chronicler pointed out once again that judgment comes against those who turn away from God (see *Introduction: 10-27 Divine Blessing and Judgment*). The Chronicler's readers must resist all temptations to fall into Jehoram's infidelities and remain strongly committed to the ways of Judah's honorable kings.

More Rebellions against Jehoram (21:16-17)

The Chronicler continued his addition to Jehoram's reign by illustrating how Elijah's prediction was fulfilled.

Structure of 21:16-17

This material amounts to a simple three step episode (see figure 38). It begins with the stirrings of rebellion (21:16) and ends with the aftermath (21:17b). The actual attacks form the turning point (21:17a).

Rebellions Stir (21:16)

In the previous section dealing with rebellion, Edom and Libnah are the active agents (21:8,10; see figure 38). Here the active agent is God: **the Lord aroused ... the Philistines and the Arabs** (21:16). On a number of occasions, the Chronicler pointed to God as the power behind important events (see *Introduction: 10) Divine Activity*). In fulfillment of Elijah's prophecy, God caused these subjugated kingdoms to rebel against the king of Judah.

Rebels Attack Judah (21:17a)

The rebellion stirred by God brought great trouble to Jehoram. The Philistines and Arabs **attacked and invaded** (21:17a). It is likely that these attacks came from the west (Philistines) and the south or southeast (Arabs). Once again, troubles came to Jehoram from many directions.

Rebellions End (21:17b)

These rebellions proved to be devastating to Jehoram's kingdom. The enemies took **all the goods** of the palace as well as Jehoram's **sons and wives** (21:17). In contrast with the blessing of increased progeny (see 25) *Increase and Decline of Progeny*), only one son, **Ahaziah**, was left to Jehoram (21:17).

Elijah's prediction proved to be true in great detail because Jehoram did not heed his warning. The Chronicler's outlook is evident. Continuing in sin and resisting prophet warnings insure divine judgment (see *Introduction: 15) Prophets*).

Closure of Jehoram's Reign (21:18-22:1)

The Chronicler closed Jehoram's reign with another allusion to Elijah's prophecy. Elijah had predicted that Jehoram would suffer a terminal illness (see 21:15). The Chronicler's addition to Jehoram's reign ends with the fulfillment of this prophecy. The Chronicler described Jehoram's disease in several ways to depict its severity. It was **an incurable disease** (21:18); it lasted to the **end of the second year** (21:19). Jehoram's **bowels came out** (21:19) and the king **died in great pain** (21:19).

The Chronicler also focused on the shame of Jehoram's death. **His people made no fire in his honor** (21:19). Honorific fires occurred at Asa's death (16:14), but Jehoram received no such honor. Besides this, when Jehoram died it was **to no one's regret** (21:19). The disintegration of Judah's kingdom had become so severe that the people did not care that the king died. Finally, the Chronicler added the observation that Jehoram was **not buried in the tombs of the kings**, a special site in Jerusalem set aside for the royal family (21:20b). Jehoram was excluded from the site; similar fates awaited Joash (see 24:25) and Uzziah (see 26:23; see also *Introduction: 28) Healing and Long Life/Sickness and Death*).

Following 2 Kgs 8:24-25, the Chronicler closed the reign of Jehoram with a notice of succession (22:1). As noted above, the Chronicler added much to this material. He reported that **the people of Jerusalem** made Ahaziah king (22:1). In other words, Jehoram's kingdom was in such disarray that he was unable to appoint a successor. For similar situations see 23:20-21; 26:1; 33:25; 36:1. The Chronicler's addition makes it plain why these events took place. It was because **the Arabs had killed all the older sons** (21:1; see 21:16). In effect, Ahaziah was the only option left for Judah. The significance of this turn of events will become evident as the character of Ahaziah is exposed in the chapter that follows (22:1-2). Simply put, Ahaziah was no better a king than his father Jehoram. He too turned from God and brought trouble to Judah.

These descriptions make it clear that the Chronicler wanted to impress his post-exilic readers with the severity and shame of Jehoram's punishment. In contrast with the preceding kings of the divided period, this son of David was so corrupted by the wicked of northern Israel that he suffered terribly for his violations. The message for post-exilic Judah is evident. They should do all they can to avoid the severe punishment that comes against those who flagrantly violate their covenant with God in this manner.