

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

by Dr. Richard L. Pratt, Jr.

The Reign of Joash, part 1: Joash's Rise over Athaliah (2 Chronicles 22:10–23:21)

The Reign of Joash (22:10-24:27)

The Chronicler's record of Joash's reign (835-796 B.C.) is unusual in that it devotes a whole chapter to Joash's rise to power. The judgment of God against Ahaziah (22:7) left the royal line of David near extinction. For a period of six years Judah had no king. Ahaziah's mother, Athaliah, reigned as queen. For this reason, the Chronicler first dealt with the transition of power from Athaliah to Joash instead of turning directly to the king's reign. Whereas other transfers of power usually take place in the space of a verse or two, the Chronicler spent an entire chapter explaining what happened when a wicked northern Israelite queen ruled Judah.

| 2 Chr | | 2 Kgs |
|--------------|--|--------------|
| 22:10-23:21 | Joash's Rise to Power (parallel) | 11:1-20 |
| 24:1-14 | Joash's Fidelity (loosely parallel) | 11:21-12:16 |
| 24:15-16 | Jehoiada's Death (added) | ----- |
| 24:17-22 | Joash's Infidelity (added) | ----- |
| 24:23-27 | Joash's Defeat and Death (loosely parallel) | 12:17-21 |

Comparison of 2 Chr 22:10-24:27 and 2 Kgs 10:15-12:21 (figure 41)

Comparison of 22:10-24:27 with 2 Kgs 11:1-12:21

In light of the complexity of this portion of the divided monarchy, it is helpful to compare Kings and Chronicles on a large scale. More detailed analyses will be given under each section (see figure 41).

As this comparison indicates, the Chronicler depended on the record of Kings for the account of Athaliah's overthrow (22:10-23:21 // 2 Kgs 11:1-20) and Joash's early years of fidelity (24:1-14 // 2 Kgs 11:21-12:16). He then added materials on the death of Jehoiada (24:15-16) and Joash's years of infidelity (24:17-22). After this additional material, he returned to the text of Kings for Joash's defeat and death (24:23-27 // 2 Kgs 12:17-21).

- Joash's Rise over Athaliah (22:10-23:21)
 - ◆ Athaliah's Evil Reign Over Judah (22:10-12)
 - Covenant with the King (23:1-3a)
 - Jehoiada's Plan and Its Implementation (23:3b-10)
 - Joash's Coronation (23:11)
 - Athaliah's Reaction to Coronation (23:12-13)
 - Jehoiada's Plan and Its Implementation (23:14-15)
 - Covenant with God (23:16-19)
 - ◆ Joash's Peaceful Reign Over Judah (23:20-21)
- Joash's Kingship (24:1-27)
 - ◆ Opening of Joash's Reign (24:1-3)
 - ◆ Joash's Early Years of Fidelity (24:4-14)
 - Joash Begins Temple Restoration (24:4)
 - Joash's Failed Collection (24:5)
 - Joash and Jehoiada Compromise (24:6-7)
 - Joash's Successful Collection (24:8-11)
 - Joash Completes Temple Restoration (24:12-14)
 - ◆ Jehoiada's Death (24:15-16)
 - ◆ Joash's Later Years of Infidelity (24:17-26)
 - Joash and Leaders Provoke God (24:17-18)
 - Zechariah Prophesies against Joash (24:19-20)
 - Joash Orders Zechariah's Death (24:21-22)
 - Zechariah's Prophecy Fulfilled (24:23-24)
 - Joash Assassinated by Leaders (24:25-26)
- ◆ Closure of Joash's Reign (24:27)

Outline of 2 Chr 22:10-24:27 (figure 42)

Structure of 22:10-24:27

The Chronicler's version of Joash's reign divides into two main sections followed by normal closing remarks. Each of the main portions consist of complex inner structures (see figure 42).

Joash's Rise over Athaliah (22:10-23:21)

The Chronicler's first concern was to establish how the influence of Northern Israel was broken. Athaliah, daughter of Ahab (22:2) had taken the throne of Judah. Joash could become king only when she had been removed.

Comparison of 22:10-23:21 with 2 Kgs 11:1-20

The Chronicler depended heavily on 2 Kgs 11:1-20 for his record of the coup leading to Joash's enthronement. At some points, he varied from the book of Kings simply for stylistic reasons. For example, the Chronicler consistently shortened the King's name from Jehoash to Joash. The name Jehosheba in Kings is lengthened to Jehoshabeath in the Hebrew of Chronicles (NIV simply renders Jehosheba both in Kings and Chronicles). These changes are insignificant, but on several occasions the Chronicler added and omitted significant materials that revealed his outlook on these events.

First, in many places the Chronicler highlighted the role of the priests and Levites in the overthrow of Athaliah. 1) In 22:11 (// 2 Kgs 11:2) he added the information that Jehosheba was not only the daughter of king Jehoram and sister of Ahaziah (see 1 Kgs 11:2), but was also wife of the priest Jehoiada. Thus the Chronicler explicitly attributed the rescue of Joash to the priestly families. 2) In addition to a list of commanders, the Chronicler added that the Levites were among those gathered for the coup (22:11 // 2 Kgs 11:4). 3) In 2 Kgs 11:5 the text reads "You who ... are going on duty ..." The Chronicler, however, specified **you priests and Levites who are going on duty** ... (23:4) to draw attention to their central role. 4) The Levites are explicitly mentioned again in 23:7 (// 2 Kgs 11:8). 5) 2 Kgs 11:8 leaves unspecified the people who were to surround the king. The Chronicler added that this special group of bodyguards was to be the **Levites** (23:7). 6) Kings reads that "the commanders" did as they were told (2 Kgs 11:9); the Chronicler substituted the **Levites** for "the commanders" (23:8). 7) The Chronicler also specified that **Jehoiada and his sons** anointed Joash, whereas Kings merely attributes the action to the whole assembly (23:11 // 2 Kgs 11:12). 8) The Chronicler added that **singers with musical instruments were leading the praises** (23:13 // 2 Kgs 11:14). 9) The Chronicler also added 23:18b-19 to describe the function of the priests and Levites in the new temple order established by Jehoiada. All of these changes illustrate the Chronicler's special interest in the temple and its functionaries.

Second, the Chronicler also emphasized the breadth of those involved in the coup. This emphasis fell in line with his concern for the unity of God's people in support of the

Davidic line (see *Introduction: 1) All Israel*). His concern with popular support of the coup resembles other times when the Chronicler emphasized unanimity between the people and their leaders. (For a summary of the Chronicler's view of popular consent see comments on 1 Chr 13:2,4.) This outlook becomes evident in a number of ways. 1) He added that Jehoiada gathered **the heads of Israelite families from all the towns** (23:2 // 2 Kgs 11:4). 2) Kings reads that Jehoiada made a covenant with the king (2 Kgs 11:4); the Chronicler specified that the **whole assembly made the covenant** (23:3). 3) In Kings, instructions are given only to the leaders; the Chronicler included that **all the other men are to be in the courtyards** (23:5 // 2 Kgs 11:7). 4) While Kings reads that "the commanders" did as they were instructed, Chronicles reads that **all the men of Judah did just as Jehoiada the priest ordered** (23:8 // 2 Kgs 11:9). 5) Kings mentions only that "the guards" stood ready (2 Kgs 11:11); Chronicles says he set **all the men, each with his weapon in his hand, around the king** (23:10). 6) Finally, the Chronicler added that **Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and cheering the king** (23:12 // 2 Kgs 11:13).

Third, the Chronicler demonstrated a concern for the sanctity of the temple not found in Kings. He noted specific instructions on entry to the temple for different groups (23:6 // 2 Kgs 11:7). This coup was set forth as an ideal event; the temple was not violated in the least (see *Introduction: 4-9) King and Temple*).

Fourth, the Chronicler added a direct quotation which reminded his readers that Joash's claim to the throne rested on the covenant God made with David (23:3 // 2 Kgs 11:4). This addition fit well with his emphasis on the Davidic covenant (see *Introduction: 13) Covenant*).

Structure of 22:10-23:21

This passage displays a rather complex structural symmetry. It divides into eight main parts that balance each other (see figure 42). The story of Joash's rise to power begins with the years of Athaliah's dreadful reign (22:10-12), but it ends with the peaceful reign of Joash (23:20-21). Jehoiada led the people of Judah to make a covenant with Joash as their king (23:1-3a); this event is balanced by Jehoiada leading the people to make covenant with their divine King (23:16-19). Twice Jehoiada gave instructions which were carried out (23:3b-10; 23:14-15). The center of the story balances between the coronation of Joash (23:11) and Athaliah's reaction to his coronation (23:12-13).

Athaliah's Evil Reign Over Judah (22:10-12)

The Chronicler began this section with a brief look at the trouble caused by Athaliah. He followed the basic plot as it appears in the book of Kings (// 2 Kgs 11:1-3). Athaliah saw that her son Ahaziah was dead and began to murder **the whole royal family** (22:10). She wished to rid the kingdom of all male heirs of the throne.

Jehosheba spoiled Athaliah's plans. In a dramatic act of courage, she rescued Joash and hid him with a wet nurse just as the **royal princes ... were about to be murdered** (22:11). As indicated above, the Chronicler added to the information on Jehosheba found in Kings. He noted that she was the wife of the priest Jehoiada (22:11). This identification heightened the role of the priesthood in the coup. Not only did Jehoiada lead the coup itself; his wife was responsible for Joash's initial rescue. Beyond this, the identity of Jehosheba also explains how Jehosheba hid Joash at the temple of God (22:12). As a member of a priestly family she had access to the inner circles of the temple personnel. Perhaps Joash hid among other priests' children or among young temple servants who were dedicated to temple work.

Joash remained safely hidden for six years (22:12). It was in his seventh year of age that the coup occurred (see 23:1; 24:1). Until that time Athaliah ruled the land (22:12).

Covenant with the King (23:1-3a)

Jehoiada determined to make his move in Joash's seventh year (23:1). He first made a covenant with the commanders (23:1). The Chronicler added a list of the names of these commanders (23:2a).

Beyond this, the Chronicler stressed the exemplary unity of the nation in these events. He noted that these commanders went throughout Judah for the purpose of gathering **Levites and the heads of Israelite families from all the towns** (23:2). This action involved representatives of the entire kingdom of Judah. In much the same way, this segment of the story ends with a similar variation between Kings and Chronicles. 2 Kgs 11:4 simply states that Jehoiada made a covenant with Joash. 2 Chr 23:3, however, states that **the whole assembly made a covenant**. This information fit well with the Chronicler's interest in the times when Israel gathered in religious assemblies in the past. Here the whole nation assembled to support the son of David in covenant renewal (see *Introduction: 5) Religious Assemblies*). From the Chronicler's perspective, covenant renewal with a son of David also needed to take place among the post-exilic readers to whom he wrote.

The **covenant** with Joash probably involved the terms under which his rule would be accepted by the nation (23:3a). Joash was only seven years of age; special provisions had to be made for his kingship. Similar covenant arrangements between the people and the king occurred in David's day (see 1 Chr 11:3). Apparently, one condition of this covenant was that Jehoiada was to act as regent for the young king. A written copy of this covenant was probably given later to the king (see 23:11). These arrangements may have provided a background for the subsequent conflict between Jehoiada and Joash (see 24:4-12).

The Chronicler's record pointed to several aspects of these events that were relevant to the post-exilic Israelites. Jehoiada's actions modeled the proper way the priesthood was to relate to the monarchy. Jehoiada served the throne of David. A similar relationship existed between Zerubbabel and Joshua in the post-exilic community (see Zech 3-4). Beyond this, the Chronicler stressed the broad national support for Joash. This event modeled the unity of

purpose the Chronicler encouraged among his readers (see *Introduction: 1) All Israel*). Finally, by pointing to the covenant made between Judah and Joash, the Chronicler made it clear that Judah's monarchs were not to rule without restraint. Their right to rule had to be balanced with the rights of the nation.

Jehoiada's Plan and Its Implementation (23:3b-10)

After their initial agreement with the young king, the gathering planned and enacted the coup. The Chronicler's record of these events divides into two parts: Jehoiada's instructions (23:4-7), and the implementation of the instructions (23:8-10). This sequence balances with Jehoiada's later instructions and their implementation (23:14-15; see figure 42).

Jehoiada's instructions divided into four points. First, the Chronicler added a theological justification for the coup that was about to take place (23:3a // 2 Kgs 11:4). In the Chronicler's account, Jehoiada insisted that the dynastic promise to David (see 1 Chr 17:7-14) required that **the king's son shall reign, as the Lord promised concerning the descendants of David** (23:3b). The fact that the Chronicler added these words to his record indicates how important this issue was for him (see *Introduction: 13) Covenant*). When a Davidide did not sit on the throne of Judah, it was the responsibility of the priest and the nation to rectify the situation. The dynastic promise to David was valid for all times, even during the post-exilic period.

Second, the Chronicler varied from the 2 Kgs 11:5 and specified that Jehoiada addressed the **priests and Levites ... going on duty on the Sabbath** (23:4). As we have seen above, the Chronicler gave the priests and Levites a more central role in this event. The element of surprise in Jehoiada's strategy is evident. The day of his coup was the Sabbath, a time when few would have expected trouble. Moreover, the coup was to occur as a new shift of priests and Levites entered the temple. As one division replaced another, there was much movement in the temple precinct and fewer suspicions would be raised by the actions of large groups. Jehoiada divided the priests and Levites into thirds. They were to station themselves **at the doors** (23:4), the **royal palace** (23:5), and the **Foundation Gate** (23:5).

Third, because the Chronicler applied the first portion of these instructions to the priests and Levites, he added instructions for the other participants. **All the other men**, military personnel and civilians, were to go to the **courtyards of the temple** (23:5 // 2 Kgs 11:7). The Chronicler also noted that only **the priests and Levites on duty ... may enter the temple itself** (23:6). This policy was based on the fact that the priests and Levites were **consecrated** for service in the temple (23:6). Rituals of consecration appear frequently in Chronicles as examples of proper worship which the post-exilic readers were to imitate in their day (see *Introduction: 6) Royal Observance of Worship*). The Chronicler made it clear that Jehoiada's coup did not defile the temple.

Fourth, the Chronicler once again specified a special role for the **Levites** in 23:7. The account of Kings makes it plain that military personnel supported Jehoiada's coup, but the

Chronicler focused on the Levites as the central figures of the action. From the days of Moses the Levites served to enforce God's ways in times of special need (e.g. Ex 32:26-29; see 36:17). 2 Kgs 11:8 simply orders some people to "station [themselves] around the king." The Chronicler, however, informed his readers that these men were a select group of **Levites** (23:7). Each Levite was to have **weapons in his hand** and anyone else who came into the temple **must be put to death** (23:7).

Having presented Jehoiada's instructions, the text moves to the implementation of his plan (23:8-10). The participants did **just as Jehoiada the priest ordered** (23:8). In his characteristic fashion the Chronicler shifted the designation of the participants from "the commanders of units of a hundred" (2 Kgs 11:9) to **the Levites and all the men of Judah** (23:8). Not only did this variation highlight the role of the Levites once again, it also indicated the breadth of participation. The people involved represented the entire tribe of Judah. As such, this event reinforced the Chronicler's concern for unanimous support for the Davidic throne (see *Introduction: 1) All Israel*).

From 23:4 it would appear that only those priests and Levites going on duty participated in the coup. 23:8, however, clarifies that all the priests and Levites participated. The Chronicler made this fact plain by adding that **Jehoiada the priest had not released any of the divisions** (23:8). Weapons that had **belonged to King David** which were stored **in the temple** were distributed (23:9). Special bodyguards also took their places **around the king** (23:10).

Joash's Coronation (23:11)

With the temple and its courts secured, the revolutionaries crowned Joash. Once again, the Chronicler emphasized the role of the priests by adding that **Jehoiada and his sons** performed the ceremony (23:11 // 2 Kgs 11:12). They put the **crown on him** and **anointed him**. Moreover, they presented him **a copy of the covenant**. In all likelihood this covenant was a copy of the arrangements established in 23:3. It is possible, however, that it was a copy of the Mosaic Law (see Deut 17:18; see also *Introduction: 13) Covenant*). In all events, the scene ends with a shout from the priests, "**Long live the king!**" This shout contrasts with Athaliah's screams of treason in the next step of the story (23:13).

This scene represented a high ideal for the Chronicler in many ways. The priesthood anointed and crowned the Davidic king. The bonds of covenant were established and the temple was filled with shouts of joy (see *Introduction: 27) Disappointment and Celebration*). In Jehoiada's day the throne of David had been empty for years, but in this scene all was set aright. The Chronicler and his readers had seen the throne of David deserted for an even longer period of time. Their hope for blessings could be realized only as the temple and King were in proper order (see *Introduction: 4-9) King and Temple*).

Athaliah's Reaction to Coronation (23:12-13)

This portion of the Chronicler's account compares with the preceding scene in at least three ways (see figure 42). Both segments occur in the temple. Both scenes involve shouting, first by the crowd (23:11) and then by Athaliah (23:12). The action of this segment is in reaction to the preceding verse. In these ways, this portion of the story balances with the scene of coronation (23:11).

Although this scene appears in 2 Kgs 11:13-14, the Chronicler intensified the action with two additions. First, he added that the people were **running and cheering the king** (23:12) to convey the excitement of the event. Second, the Chronicler followed 2 Kgs 11:14 (// 2 Chr 23:13) and mentioned that **the people of the land were rejoicing and blowing trumpets**. In other words, the common people were involved in the ceremonies. (For the Chronicler's use of "people of the land" see 1 Chr 5:25; 2 Chr 23:20,21; 26:21; 33:25; 36:1.) Even so, he also added that **singers with musical instruments were leading the praises** (2 Chr 23:13). Thus he highlighted the role of the Levite singers as he did in other portions of this narrative. The music and excitement of the situation was greatly enhanced in the Chronicler's version (see *Introduction: 8) Music*).

When Athaliah heard the noise (23:12), she came to the temple and saw the rejoicing. Realizing what had happened, she tore her robes and shouted, "**Treason! Treason!**" (23:13). One cannot help but notice the irony of one who had taken the throne violently now protesting indignantly the violence taken against her.

Jehoiada's Plan and Its Implementation (23:14-15)

The story focuses a second time on Jehoiada's instructions (23:14) and the implementation of his orders (23:15). As such, it balances with the earlier section devoted to the similar material (see 23:3b-10; see figure 42). In this portion of the narrative, the Chronicler followed the account of Kings (// 2 Kgs 11:15-16) without significant additions or omissions.

Jehoiada ordered Athaliah's execution, but he revealed his concern for the sanctity of the temple. He insisted, "**Do not put her to death at the temple of the Lord**" (23:14). Once again, the priest showed his concern for the sacred house of God even during the emergency of the coup (see 23:6).

Just as the priest ordered, **the commanders** took Athaliah away from the temple (23:14). They brought her to the palace grounds and there **they put her to death** (23:15). The Chronicler did not include a typical summary and burial notice for Athaliah. In his perspective Athaliah was not a legitimate monarch. She deserved no formal regnal summary.

Covenant with God (23:16-19)

This portion of the narrative records the second time Jehoiada established a covenant (see figure 42). Earlier Jehoiada supervised a covenant between **the assembly and the king** (23:3). Now the priest established a covenant that **he and the people and the king would be the Lord's people** (23:16). In this way, Jehoiada acknowledged the ideal authority structure for Judah. The priest mediated a covenant between himself, the people, the Davidic king and the Divine King. The nation repented of sins during the seven years of Athaliah's reign and committed their loyalties exclusively to the Lord. The Chronicler presented these events in part to inspire his readers to do the same (see *Introduction: 13) Covenant*).

The covenant renewal under Jehoiada's leadership had a negative and positive side. Negatively, **all the people went to the temple of Baal and tore it down** (23:17). The widespread support of Jehoiada's reforms fits well with the Chronicler's desire to see all Israel participate in the renewal of the post-exilic community (see *Introduction: 1) All Israel*). Beyond this, the people turned against the worship of Baal. Athaliah had introduced the worship of Baal in Jerusalem following the syncretistic practices of her father Ahab. The first act of reform according to Jehoiada's covenant renewal was to rid the city of its Baal temple. The Chronicler took this opportunity to stress another reform of worship in Judah. Syncretism was unacceptable (see *Introduction: 6) Royal Observance of Worship*).

Positively, Jehoiada reorganized the worship of the Lord (23:18-19). The Chronicler's account of Jehoiada's restoration of temple service is greatly expanded over Kings. He added that Jehoiada arranged the Levites just as David had made assignments and just as it was written in the Law of Moses (23:18; see *Introduction: 14) Standards*). They also were **rejoicing and singing as David had ordered** (23:18). The restoration of worship brought great joy to God's people (see *Introduction: 8) Music*; see also *Introduction: 27) Disappointment and Celebration*).

The Chronicler added this information to make it clear that Jehoiada's reforms were enacted just as they should have been. He approved of Jehoiada and exalted him as ideal. Jehoiada had done just as David and Moses ordered. In much the same way, the Chronicler also added the note that Jehoiada once again protected the temple from defilement (see 23:14). He **stationed doorkeepers at the gates so that no one who was in any way unclean might enter** (23:19).

In these verses the Chronicler established Jehoiada's actions as exemplary of the kind of devotion to the temple expected of post-exilic Judah. They were in need of renewing their commitments to the temple. Jehoiada's reforms demonstrated many important aspects of this renewal.

Joash's Peaceful Reign Over Judah (23:20-21)

The Chronicler returned to the record of Kings to finish his account of Joash's rise to power (23:10-11 // 2 Kgs 23:20-21). The text briefly describes Jehoiada bringing the leaders and **the people of the land** (i.e. the common people; see 1 Chr 5:25; 2 Chr 23:13,21; 26:21; 33:25; 36:1) to the temple along with King Joash (23:20). In this public ceremony seven year old Joash sat on the royal throne at the **Upper Gate** (23:20).

As a result of the events of this narrative, **the people of the land rejoiced** (23:21). Celebration came to all the people (see *Introduction: 27) Disappointment and Celebration*). Moreover, **the city was quiet** (23:21). The Chronicler associated the term "quiet" with the blessing of peace and security for the faithful (see *Introduction: 23) Victory and Defeat*). This blessing for the nation came **because Athaliah had been slain** (23:21). With these words the text balances the end of this story with the beginning (22:10-12; see figure 42). Athaliah's six year reign of terror was over. With Joash on the throne and Jehoiada at his side a period of quiet had come.

The Chronicler's message to post-exilic Judah was plain. The readers of Chronicles could expect the blessing of God only as they avoided involvement with the wicked and turned to the ways of renewed loyalty to God. The priests were to lead the way and all the people were to serve the Davidic king faithfully. If they did, the land of Judah would experience quiet once again.