

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

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The Reign of Ahaziah (2 Chronicles 22:2-9)

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The Chronicler summarized the reign of Ahaziah (841 B.C.) in only eight verses. The brevity of his account may be due in part to the fact that Ahaziah reigned less than one year. It may also result from the lack of sources of information. Whatever the case, Ahaziah's reign represents another poignant example of divine judgment against a king who was unduly influenced by the wicked of northern Israel.

Comparison of 22:2-9 with 2 Kgs 8:25-9:29

The Chronicler's account followed the basic pattern of Kings, but reduced Ahaziah's reign to a much shorter record (see figure 39).

2 Chr		2 Kgs
-----	Synchronization with the North (omitted)	8:25
22:2	Ahaziah's Reign Begins (parallel)	8:26
22:3-6	Ahaziah's Wickedness (slightly expanded)	8:27-29
22:7-9	Ahaziah and Jehu (greatly abbreviated)	9:1-10:36

Comparison of 2 Chr 22:2-9 and 2 Kgs 8:25-10:36 (figure 39)

At first glance, it becomes apparent that the Chronicler's material on Ahaziah is much shorter than the account in Kings. By and large this variance is due to the fact that the writer of Kings set Ahaziah's reign within the context of events in the North. The Chronicler omitted the synchronization with the northern kingdom (22:1 // 2 Kgs 8:25) as he did in every case except 13:1 (see *Introduction: 2) Northern Israel*). Moreover, the material dealing with Jehu's actions (2 Kgs 9:1-10:36) is severely abbreviated in 22:7-9.

Beyond this, however, the Chronicler made several small additions that reveal his central concerns. First, the Chronicler identified those persons responsible for Ahaziah's evil actions. 1) The king walked in the ways of the North **for his mother encouraged him in doing wrong** (22:3). Athaliah influenced Ahaziah toward evil. 2) In much the same way, the Chronicler added that the house of Ahab influenced him. He followed their ways **for after his father's death they became his advisers, to his undoing** (22:4b). These additions confirm the Chronicler's focus on corruption from the North.

Second, the Chronicler's account emphasized the role of God in these events. 1) He noted that **through Ahaziah's visit to Joram, God brought about Ahaziah's downfall** (22:7a). 2) Similarly, 22:7b adds that Jehu was the **son of Nimshi, whom the Lord had anointed to destroy the house of Ahab**.

Third, the Chronicler's account of Ahaziah's death (22:9) includes information not found in Kings that displays his evaluation of Ahaziah. 1) He mentioned that Ahaziah was captured **while he was hiding in Samaria** (22:9). The portrait of Judah's king hiding in Samaria indicates his affinities for the North and displays the great shame of the king. 2) The Chronicler explained that the only reason Ahaziah was buried with some measure of honor was because he was **a son of Jehoshaphat, who sought the Lord with all his heart** (22:9). By this addition, the Chronicler made it evident that Ahaziah himself did not have enough positive qualities to warrant an honorable burial. 3) Instead of the normal notice of a successor, the Chronicler added that **there was no one in the house of Ahaziah powerful enough to retain the kingdom** (22:9). Like Jehoram before him (see 22:1), Ahaziah had not successfully appointed a son to rule after him. His house was under the curse of God.

Fourth, a small variation occurs in 22:2 (// 2 Kgs 8:26). Kings reads that Ahaziah was "twenty-two" when he took the throne. The traditional Hebrew text of 2 Chr 22:2 reads "forty-two." NIV correctly adjusts the number to match the reading of Kings, but note NKJ and NRS. It is very likely that the text of Chronicles was corrupted at some stage in transmission (see *Introduction: Translation and Transmission*).

Structure of 22:2-9

The reign of Ahaziah follows a simple outline of three main steps (see figure 40).

- Opening of Ahaziah's Reign (22:2)
 - ◆ Ahaziah's Wicked Actions (22:3-6a)
 - Reports of Wickedness (22:3-4)
 - Narrative of Wickedness (22:5-6a)
- Closure of Ahaziah's Reign (22:6b-9)
 - ◆ Ahaziah Meets Jehu with Joram (22:6b-7)
 - Ahaziah's Family Killed by Jehu (22:8)
 - Ahaziah is Sought and Captured (22:9a)
 - Ahaziah Killed by Jehu (22:9b)
 - ◆ Ahaziah Buried without Successor (22:9c)

Outline of 2 Chr 22:2-9 (figure 40)

The King's reign begins and ends as expected (22:2,6b-9). The middle portion of the account depicts Ahaziah's wickedness (22:3-6a).

Opening of Ahaziah's Reign (22:2)

Chronicles closely follows 2 Kgs 8:26 at this point. **Ahaziah's mother Athaliah** is of northern royal descent, a **granddaughter of Omri** who married Jehoram (21:6). She influenced her son's actions for the worse (see 22:3), just as she had misled her husband (see 21:6). Athaliah will play an even more central role with the next generation (see 22:10ff). For further discussion of the royal mother motif see comments on 13:2.

Ahaziah's Wicked Actions (22:3-6a)

The center of Ahaziah's record contains nothing positive. He is portrayed as corrupt from beginning to end.

Structure of 22:3-6a

The Chronicler summarized the actions of Ahaziah in two reports (22:3,4) and a brief narrative (22:5-6a).

Reports of Wickedness (22:3-4)

The initial words of each portion repeat similar motifs. Ahaziah **walked in the ways of the house of Ahab** (22:3); **he did evil in the eyes of the Lord, as the house of Ahab had done** (22:4); **he went with Joram son of Ahab ... to war against Hazael** (22:5). These facts are all contained in the record of 2 Kgs 8:27-28. The Chronicler followed the outlook of Kings and noted how Ahaziah's close relation with the North resulted in the corruption of Judah. This motif appears a number of times in Chronicles and contributed significantly to his outlooks on the relationship between the northern tribes and the post-exilic community (see *Introduction: 2) Northern Israel*).

The Chronicler's additions tie these events together. Ahaziah sinned **for his mother encouraged him in doing wrong** (22:3); he did evil because members of Ahab's house **became his advisers, to his undoing** (22:4). He even went to war as an ally of the North because he **followed their counsel** (22:5). In each verse the Chronicler explained that Ahaziah's trouble came because he was influenced by wicked northern Israelites.

The Chronicler followed 2 Kgs 8:27 when he noted that Ahaziah **too** (i.e. like Jehoram) lived **in the ways of the house of Ahab** (22:3). He repeated the same Hebrew word when he added to the account of Kings that Ahaziah **also** listened to the counsel of the northerners (22:5). This repetition emphasized the connection between Ahaziah and Jehoram. Both of the kings followed the ways of Ahab's house and violated their loyalty to God (see 21:6,13).

Although the Chronicler hoped for the eventual expansion of the post-exilic community to include all the tribes and their original territories, the Chronicler insisted that his readers not compromise righteousness under the influence of wickedness from the North. Jehoram (21:12-15), and Ahaziah (22:4) were soundly condemned for their involvement with the wicked of the North (compare also Jehoshaphat 19:1-2; 20:35). Athaliah corrupted Judah and such corruption was to be avoided in post-exilic times (see also 2 Kgs 8:26; 11:1-3,13-14,20; 1 Chr 8:26; 2 Chr 21:6; 22:2,10-12; 23:12-13,21; 24:7; see also *Introduction: 2) Northern Israel*).

Narrative of Wickedness (22:5-6a)

The extent of Ahaziah's involvement with the northern kingdom becomes particularly clear in the brief narrative of 22:5-6a. This brief four step episode comes from the book of Kings (// 2 Kgs 8:28-29). It tells how Ahaziah joined the Northern king **Joram son of Ahab** in battle against Syria (22:5a). In the battle, the Syrians **wounded Joram** (22:5b) and Joram **returned to Jezreel to recover** (22:6a). The Chronicler consistently condemned military alliances with the North (see *Introduction: 2) Northern Israel*). From his perspective, these events illustrated the fact that Ahaziah was too involved with the wicked family of Ahab.

Closure of Ahaziah's Reign (22:6b-9)

The Chronicler closed his account of Ahaziah's reign with a narrative of his death. This material was added to finalize his perspective on the king. The narrative of 22:6b-9 sets forth how God brought about Ahaziah's downfall.

Structure of 22:6b-9

This part of the Chronicler's addition divides into five steps (see figure 40). This passage reports the movement from Ahaziah meeting with Jehu and Joram (22:6b-7) to his death (22:9c). In the middle portion, Jehu kills Ahaziah's family (22:8); pursues Ahaziah (22:9a), and kills Ahaziah (22:9b).

Ahaziah Meets Jehu with Joram (22:6b-9)

The first step of this story (22:6b-7) describes Ahaziah visiting the wounded northern king Joram. As the story begins, Ahaziah was apparently unaware of any danger. He visited Joram at Jezreel, a summer palace of the kings of Israel (22:6b; see 1 Kgs 18:45-46; 21:1; 2 Kgs 9:30). (22:7b) and joined Joram to meet Jehu.

The Hebrew grammar of 22:7a suggests that this sentence was intended as a parenthetical note. The Chronicler explained that God had a secret purpose for Ahaziah's visit to Joram. It was the means by which **God brought about Ahaziah's downfall** (22:7a). In fact, the Chronicler also noted that Jehu **had been anointed to destroy the house of Ahab** (22:7b). As he did on many occasions, the Chronicler pointed to the hidden ways of God behind otherwise ordinary events (see *Introduction: 10) Divine Activity*).

The book of Kings provides the historical background for the story of Ahaziah's death (2 Kgs 10:18-36). Elijah had appointed Jehu to destroy the house of Ahab because its wickedness was so great. Even so, Jehu's coup also involved an attack on Ahaziah and his house as they visited Joram at Jezreel.

Ahaziah's Family Killed by Jehu (22:8)

As the tension of this story rises, Jehu also came upon **the princes of Judah and the sons of Ahaziah's relatives** who were in the North and **killed them** (22:8).

Ahaziah is Sought and Captured (22:9a)

The turning point of the story portrays a terrified Ahaziah **hiding in Samaria** (22:9a). Not only does this scene reveal the king's shameful state; it also reveals his loyalties as he opted to hide in Samaria rather than Jerusalem.

Ahaziah Killed by Jehu (22:9b)

After a search, Jehu's men find Ahaziah. In balance with the execution of Ahaziah's sons and relatives (see 22:8), Jehu also had Ahaziah **put to death** (22:9b).

Ahaziah Buried without Successor (22:9c)

This event leads to the closing of this episode. Jehu and his men were strongly committed to the ways of God. Ahaziah was so disgraced that he was buried with some measure of honor for one reason alone: **he was a son of Jehoshaphat, who sought the Lord with all his heart** (22:9b; see also *Introduction: 28) Healing and Long Life/Sickness and Death*). In his characteristic manner, the Chronicler praised Jehoshaphat as one who sought God (see *Introduction: 19) Seeking*). Ahaziah sought his strength in alliance with the northern kingdom and he received divine judgment because he never turned from this disloyalty to God. The severity of God's judgment against Ahaziah is evident in the last sentence of this episode. Ahaziah had no clearly appointed successor. No one was **powerful enough to retain the kingdom** (22:9c).

The Chronicler's message to his post-exilic readers was straightforward. Compromise with the wickedness of the northern kingdom would lead to serious consequences. God's judgment against a wayward Judah may come in the most unusual and unexpected ways, but it will come. Although Ahaziah prospered for a while, his compromise with the wicked ways of the house of Ahab eventually led to his destruction. The post-exilic readers of Chronicles were to learn from these events that the judgment which Ahaziah experienced could be theirs as well.