

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

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### The Reign of Jotham (2 Chronicles 27:1-9)

#### *The Reign of Jotham (27:1-9)*

With the reign of Jotham the Chronicler broke the pattern he established over the last three reigns. Instead of dividing this king's years between times of fidelity and infidelity, he presented Jotham in an entirely positive light. As we will see, the Chronicler patterned his account of Jotham after the early years of Uzziah his father. Jotham accomplished much, but unlike Uzziah he did not lose his kingdom because of infidelity. After the tremendous dishonor that came upon his father Uzziah, Jotham's life offered a portrait of fidelity and blessing for the Chronicler's post-exilic readers.

#### *Comparison of 27:1-9 with 2 Kgs 15:8-38*

The Chronicler depended heavily on the record of 2 Kgs 15:32-38 for his account of Jotham's reign (see figure 47).

First, the Chronicler omitted 2 Kgs 15:8-32 which concerns the last kings of northern Israel and the synchronization of Jotham's reign with the northern kingdom. In his usual fashion, the Chronicler focused only on materials concerned with the kingdom of Judah (see *Introduction: 2) Northern Israel*).

Second, the Chronicler replaced the reference to high places in 2 Kgs 15:35a with his own statement of contrast between Jotham and Uzziah. He noted that Jotham did right like his father **but unlike him he did not enter the temple of the Lord** (27:2). This change fit with the Chronicler's desire to present Jotham as a righteous king.

Third, the Chronicler enlarged the accomplishments of Jotham. 2 Kgs 15:35b reports that he rebuilt the upper gate of the temple. The Chronicler kept this information, but added other construction efforts and accomplishments in battle (27:3-6).

<b>2 Chr</b>		<b>2 Kgs</b>
-----	Events in the North (omitted)	15:8-32
27:1-2	Opening of Jotham's Reign (parallel)	15:33-35a
27:3-6	Jotham's Accomplishments (greatly expanded)	15:35b
27:7-9	Closure of Jotham's Reign (loosely parallel)	15:36-38

*Comparison of 2 Chr 27:1-9 with 2 Kgs 15:8-38 (figure 47)*

Fourth, 2 Kgs 15:37 mentions the attacks of the northern Israelite-Syrian coalition against Jotham. The Chronicler omitted this reference to avoid detracting from the king's blessings and to associate the attacks of the coalition primarily with the infidelity of Ahaz.

Fifth, the Chronicler repeated information about Jotham's age and the length of his reign at the end of his account (compare 27:1 and 27:8). This repetition contributes to the overarching symmetry of the presentation by balancing the beginning and ending of the king's reign.

*Structure 27:1-9*

The Chronicler's omissions and additions form his record of Jotham's reign into a simple threefold structure (see figure 48).

Opening of Jotham's Reign (27:1-2)  
 Jotham's Positive Accomplishments (27:3-6)  
 Closure of Jotham's Reign (27:7-9)

*Outline of 2 Chr 27:1-9 (figure 48)*

The opening and closing sections of this material form an inclusio. Both sections mention his age and the length of his reign (27:1,8). This symmetry frames the central reports of Jotham's accomplishments (27:3-6).

### *Opening of Jotham's Reign (27:1-2)*

The Chronicler opened the reign of Jotham in his usual fashion with some general information. Following 2 Kgs 15:33, he mentioned that the young king was only **twenty-five years old** when he rose to be co-regent with his father Uzziah (27:1). As we have seen (see comments on 26:21) the evidence of various biblical passages suggests that Jotham shared royal power with his ill father for ten years. The Chronicler also mentioned the name of the king's mother (27:1) as he did with other kings (see comments on 13:2).

Following these historical facts, the text of Chronicles and Kings offers an evaluation of the king's reign. He **did what was right in the eyes of the Lord** (27:2). As with other kings who receive similar evaluations Jotham was not absolutely perfect. These words characterized the king in general terms. For the Chronicler's use of this evaluative terminology see comments on 24:2.

The unique element in this description of Jotham is that he is said to have done **just like his father Uzziah had done** (27:2). The appearance of these words in 2 Kgs 15:34 is not surprising. The writer of Kings did not mention Uzziah's failures. Yet, the Chronicler's account of Uzziah gave much attention to his infidelity (see 26:16-21). For this reason the Chronicler added a qualification to the comparison between Jotham and his father. Jotham was like Uzziah **but unlike him he did not enter the temple of the Lord** (27:2). In other words, Chronicles distances Jotham from Uzziah's great failure. Indeed, the whole account of Jotham's reign records none of his sins. The only slight shadow on this presentation is that **the people ... continued their corrupt practices** (27:2). The parallel passage in Kings (2 Kgs 15:35) mentions high places and the sacrifices made there. The Chronicler shortened the matter and merely acknowledged that Jotham's piety was not shared by all the people.

The similarity and contrast drawn between Jotham and Uzziah reveals one of the Chronicler's central interests in this material. Jotham's reign illustrated for the post-exilic readers the blessings available for those who avoided the failures of Uzziah and imitated the fidelity of his son.

### *Jotham's Positive Accomplishments (27:3-6)*

What were the blessings that came to Jotham's kingdom? The Chronicler focused in two directions as he had in Uzziah's reign: building projects (27:3-4) and military accomplishments (27:5). First, in material which he largely added (with the exception of 27:3 // 2 Kgs 15:35b), the Chronicler mentioned the king's building projects. Jotham **rebuilt the Upper Gate of the temple** (27:3), like Uzziah who rebuilt the Corner Gate and Valley Gate (see 26:9). The restoration of the temple and its worship was of chief importance to this exemplary king as with other idealized kings in Judah (see *Introduction: 4-9 King and Temple*).

Jotham also had more widespread building projects. He fortified **Ophel** (27:3), a cite mentioned elsewhere (see 33:14; Neh 3:27; 11:21), but whose precise location is not known. He also **built towns ... forts and towers** throughout Judah (27:4; see *Introduction: 24 Building and*

*Destruction*). These activities also paralleled Uzziah's building projects in various parts of Judah (see 26:10).

Second, Jotham also had success in military conflicts much like his father Uzziah. Jotham received tribute from the **Ammonites** (27:5), as Uzziah had done before him (see 26:8). Once again, the Chronicler drew a close parallel between Uzziah and his son in order to show what can be done by a king who imitates Uzziah's early years (27:2).

The addition of 27:6 draws attention to the results of Jotham's military strength. Jotham grew **powerful** like his father (see 25:8,13,15,16; see also comments on 1:1.). This parallel surely raised questions in the minds of the original readers. Power led to pride and infidelity in Uzziah's reign. Would the same happen to Jotham? The Chronicler quickly answered this question. Jotham continued with great power to the end of his days. The reason for this contrast is evident. Jotham **walked steadfastly before the Lord his God** (27:6). The disappointing end of Uzziah's kingdom would not be repeated in Jotham's day. His reign ended on a crescendo of blessing and power.

The Chronicler's message to his post-exilic readers is evident. Uzziah's accomplishments during his years of fidelity occurred again in the reign of Jotham. Yet, Jotham was able to keep his powerful position because he remained faithful to God. In a similar way, post-exilic Israel was not bound to the pattern of sin and judgment characterized by previous generations. They too could be faithful to God and hope to receive blessings.

#### *Closure of Jotham's Reign (27:7-9)*

The Chronicler closed his record of Jotham with information derived from 2 Kgs 15:36-38, but he replaced the report of the Israelite-Syrian coalition (2 Kgs 15:37) with a repetition of information from the beginning of Jotham's reign (27:8). This replacement maintained the positive outlook on Jotham and created an effect of balance with the beginning of his reign.

The remainder of the Chronicler's account includes several usual items. The text refers to sources of information (27:7). It balances with the opening of the reign by mentioning the age of the king and the length of his reign (27:8). It then closes with a notice of his death, burial, and successor (27:9). Like Uzziah before him, Jotham **rested with his fathers** (26:23; 27:9). The two kings are contrasted, however, in that Uzziah was only buried **near them** in a separate field (26:23). Jotham was buried as other honorable kings of Judah because he remained faithful (see *Introduction: 28) Healing and Long Life/Sickness and Death*).

The Chronicler's idealized portrait of Jotham offered hope to his post-exilic readers. Although Uzziah had lost all through infidelity, it was not necessary for the blessings of God to be temporary. Each generation had the opportunity to be faithful to the end and could pass their blessings to the next generation.