

The Reunited Kingdom, part 1 (2 Chronicles 29:1–36:23)

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Overview; The Reign of Hezekiah, part 1: Overview; Opening of Hezekiah's Reign (2 Chronicles 29:1-2)

With the reign of Hezekiah the Chronicler reached the beginning of the last major division of his history. We have designated this period "The Reunited Kingdom" because the Chronicler emphasized the symbolic rejoining of the faithful northern Israelites with Judah during this period. The northern kingdom had so violated her covenant responsibilities that it fell to the Assyrians (see 2 Kgs 17:1-23). At the same time, Judah had become as corrupt as northern Israel during the reign of Ahaz (see 2 Chr 28:1-4,22-25). On the heels of this leveling of North and South, Hezekiah reinstated a national Passover celebration which reunited the faithful in the North and South around the temple and the Davidic king (see 30:1-31:1).

From this point forward, the Chronicler's perspective was that events taking place in Judah involved the faithful from the North and South. Together they experienced times of revival and blessing as well as hardship and trouble. During this time, a series of minor exiles took place, but always with a positive end of returning to the land. Repeated apostasy, however, eventually led to the fall of Jerusalem, and **the remnant** was exiled to Babylon (36:20). Nevertheless, even this great exile was followed by the release of the remnant and the commission to rebuild the kingdom of Israel (see 36:23).

The Reunited Kingdom divides into five parts (see figure 51).

Hezekiah (29:1-32:33)
Manasseh (33:1-20)
Amon (33:21-25)
Josiah (34:1-35:27)
Final Events (36:2-23)

Outline of 29:1-36:23 (figure 51)

The Reign of Hezekiah (29:1-32:33)

The reign of Hezekiah (716/15 - 687/86 B.C.) marked an important turning point in the Chronicler's history. Following the demise of the North and the corruption of the South, Hezekiah brought the fires of revival to the tribes of Israel. A new phase of history began as Hezekiah re-established the temple and king at the center of a reunited nation. Hezekiah was not without serious shortcomings, but the Chronicler presented him as an embodiment of many ideals which he held before his post-exilic readers.

Comparison of 29:1-32:33 with 2 Kgs 17:1-20:21

The Chronicler's perspective on Hezekiah's reign becomes clear when his presentation is compared with the corresponding portions of Kings. The following large scale comparison provides a helpful orientation. More detailed analyses appear in smaller sections which follow (see figure 52). This overarching comparison of the reign of Hezekiah in Chronicles and Kings reveals the major contours of the Chronicler's distinctive presentation. He depended heavily on Kings only at the beginning and end of his record (compare 29:1-2 // 2 Kgs 18:1-3 and 32:32-33 // 2 Kgs 20:20-21). Elsewhere he either omitted, added, greatly expanded or abbreviated the record before him.

First, in his usual style the Chronicler omitted material dealing with the fall of the northern kingdom (2 Kgs 17:1-41). He also omitted the second account of northern Israel's defeat (2 Kgs 18:9-12). As in the rest of his history, the Chronicler was concerned with events in the North only as they touched on the southern kingdom (see *Introduction: 2) Northern Israel*).

Second, the Chronicler added 32:27-30. This section summarizes blessings of wealth which Hezekiah received from God because of his repentance (32:24-26). As such, it fit well with the Chronicler's theology of divine judgment and blessing.

Third, three sections represent significant abbreviations of the records in Kings. 1) The Sennacherib invasion is shortened (32:1-23 // 2 Kgs 18:13-19:37). As argued below, the Chronicler's version simplifies the event to illustrate divine judgment and blessing in Hezekiah's life. 2) The story of Hezekiah's illness is also much shorter (32:24-26 // 2 Kgs 20:1-11). The Chronicler barely reported the king's prayer and used it to show Hezekiah's reward for repenting of pride. 3) The story of Babylonian emissaries and strong condemnation from Isaiah the prophet (2 Kgs 20:12-19) is reduced to a mere notice (32:31). The Chronicler did not want this terrible event to mar his portrait of Hezekiah.

Fourth, the most impressive aspect of the Chronicler's presentation is his enormous expansion of Hezekiah's reforms. Kings merely reports Hezekiah's destruction of idolatry in a brief notice (2 Kgs 18:4) and his success due to compliance with the Law of Moses (2 Kgs 18:5-7). The Chronicler loosely adapted this material to his own purposes (31:1 // 2 Kgs 18:4 and 31:20-21 // 2 Kgs 18:5-8). Yet, he greatly expanded the theme of Hezekiah's worship reforms throughout all Judah and Israel (29:1-31:2). For the Chronicler, Hezekiah's re-establishment of the temple and its services was the most important aspect of the king's reign.

2 Chr		2 Kgs
-----	Fall of Israel I (omitted)	17:1-41
29:1-2	Hezekiah's Reign Begins (loosely parallel)	18:1-3
29:3-31:21	Hezekiah's Worship Reforms (expanded)	18:4-8
-----	Fall of Israel II (omitted)	18:9-12
32:1-23	Sennacherib Invasion (abbreviated)	18:13-19:37
32:24-26	Hezekiah's Illness (abbreviated)	20:1-11
32:27-30	Hezekiah's Wealth (added)	-----
32:31	Emissaries from Babylon (abbreviated)	20:12-19
32:32-33	Hezekiah's Reign Ends (loosely parallel)	20:20-21

Comparison of 2 Chr 29:1-32:33 and 2 Kgs 17:1-20:21 (figure 52)

Structure of 29:1-32:33

Hezekiah's reign divides into four main sections (see figure 53). A typical opening and a closure appear (29:1-2; 32:32-33). The middle portion separates into times of exemplary fidelity and times of inconsistency (29:3-31:21; 32:1-31).

Opening of Hezekiah's Reign (29:1-2)

Hezekiah Re-establishes Temple Worship (29:3-31:21)

Hezekiah Initiates Temple Service (29:3-36)

- Hezekiah Begins Temple Restoration (29:3)
 - Hezekiah's Preparations for Temple Service (29:4-19)
 - Hezekiah Commissions the Priests and Levites (29:4-11)
 - Hezekiah's Commission is Performed (29:12-17)
 - *Levite Participants (29:12-14)
 - *Levite Activities (29:15-17)
 - Hezekiah Receives Report from Priests and Levites (29:18-19)
- Hezekiah Offers Sacrifices in the Temple (29:20-30)
 - *Sacrifices Offered (29:20-24)
 - *Musical Accompaniment (29:25-30)
- Hezekiah's Results from Temple Service (29:31-35a)
 - *Hezekiah's Invitation (29:31a)
 - *Assembly's Response (29:31b)
 - *Quantity of Service (29:32-35a)
- Hezekiah Completes Temple Restoration (29:35b-36)

Hezekiah Unites Israel in Passover Celebration (30:1-31:1)

- Tribes Invited to Jerusalem (30:1)
 - [Regression: Attention to Northern Israelites (30:2-12)]
 - [Hezekiah Plans the Invitation (30:2-5)]
 - [Hezekiah Sends Invitation (30:6-9)]
 - [Hezekiah Receives Reactions to Invitation (30:10-12)]
- Gathering and Reforms before Passover (30:13-14)
 - Passover Observed (30:15a)
 - [Regression: Attention to Northern Israelites (30:15b-20)]
- Worship and Reforms after Passover (30:21-31:1a)
 - First Seven Days (30:21-22)
 - Seven Day Extension (30:23-31:1a).
- Tribes Return Home (31:1b)

Hezekiah Enduring Provisions for Temple Service (31:2-21)

- Hezekiah Permanently Establishes Temple Personnel (31:2-8)
 - Hezekiah Arranges for Priests and Levites (31:2-3)
 - Hezekiah Orders Contributions (31:4)
 - Hezekiah's Orders Enthusiastically Obeyed (31:5-7)
 - Hezekiah Rejoices in Provisions (31:8)

- Hezekiah Establishes Permanent Distribution (31:9-21)
 - Hezekiah Evaluates Provisions (31:9-10)
 - Hezekiah Orders Storehouse Preparations (31:11a)
 - Hezekiah's Orders Enthusiastically Obeyed (31:11b-19)
 - Hezekiah Blessed for His Provisions (31:20-21)

Hezekiah's Inconsistencies During the Assyrian Invasion (32:1-31)

- Hezekiah's Inconsistent Military Strategy (32:1-23)
 - Hezekiah is Threatened by a Foreign Nation (32:1)
 - Hezekiah Depends on Human Strength (32:2-8)
 - Hezekiah Depends on God (32:9-21)
 - Hezekiah is Highly Regarded by Foreign Nations (32:22-23)

- Hezekiah's Inconsistent Pride (32:24-26)
 - *Hezekiah's Blessing (32:24)
 - Hezekiah's Prayer (32:24a)
 - Divine Healing (32:24b)
 - *Hezekiah's Judgment (32:25)
 - Hezekiah's Pride (32:25a)
 - Divine Wrath (32:25b)
 - *Hezekiah's Blessing (32:26)
 - Hezekiah's Repentance (32:26a)
 - Divine Forbearance (32:26b)

- Hezekiah's Inconsistent Alliance (32:27-31)
 - Hezekiah's Successes (32:27-30)
 - Hezekiah's Failure (32:31)

Closure of Hezekiah's Reign (32:32-33)

Outline of 2 Chr 29:1-32:33 (figure 53)

Opening of Hezekiah's Reign (29:1-2)

The Chronicler began his record of Hezekiah's reign with a very positive orientation. On the whole, Hezekiah was a remarkably righteous king.

As noted above, the Chronicler omitted the lengthy material in Kings that describes and explains the fall of Samaria (2 Kgs 17:1-41). In addition, he also omitted the synchronization of Hezekiah's reign with the northern kingdom (18:1). This was always his practice with one exception (see 13:1).

From the Chronicler's perspective, the history of Judah was more important for his post-exilic readers (see also *Introduction: 2) Northern Israel*).

As with many reigns, the Chronicler began by depending on Kings for his basic information. Here he drew from 2 Kgs 18:2 and reported the name of the king's mother and provided a chronological framework. (For the Chronicler's treatment of royal mothers, see 13:2.)

This passage reports that he became king at **twenty-five** and that he reigned **twenty-nine years** (29:1). As noted earlier (see 28:1), if we take the information at face value, it would appear that Ahaz was extremely young when he fathered Hezekiah. The possibility of one or more textual corruptions during transmission cannot be ruled out (see *Introduction: Translation and Transmission*).

Like a number of other kings, Hezekiah **did what was right ... just as his father David** (29:2; see 17:3; 29:2; 34:2). This positive evaluation of Hezekiah's reign derives entirely from 2 Kgs 18:3. This statement was a generalization evaluating the king's reign as a whole; both Kings and Chronicles record some of Hezekiah's failures (see 32:25-26,31 // 2 Kgs 20:12-19). For the Chronicler's use of this evaluative terminology see comments on 24:2).