

**The Reunited Kingdom, part 12  
(2 Chronicles 29:1–36:23)**

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**The Reign of Josiah, part 1: Overview; Opening of Josiah's  
Reign; Josiah's Fidelity in Worship Reforms, part 1:  
Josiah's Earlier Reforms (2 Chronicles 34:1-7)**

*The Reign of Josiah (34:1-35:27)*

The largely positive reign of Josiah (641-609 B.C.) follows the terrible downfall in Amon's day. As such, Josiah served as another model of fidelity. Nevertheless, later in his life Josiah failed to be faithful to God's command and suffered the judgment of defeat and death. As a result, Josiah's reign also warned the Chronicler's post-exilic readers to continue in faithful service to God.

*Comparison of 34:1-35:27 with 2 Kgs 22:1-23:30*

At this point we will compare the record of Kings and Chronicles on a large scale. More detailed comparisons will appear in the comments on each section. The Chronicler's account of Josiah's reign follows Kings closely for the most part. Yet, his version includes several expansions, abbreviations, and rearrangements of the material in Kings (see figure 60). As this figure demonstrates, each major portion of Kings is reflected in the Chronicler's account. At this point, however, it is important to note that two sections have been rearranged.

First, the Chronicler moved the description of Josiah's general worship reforms (34:3b-7 // 2 Kgs 23:6-20) from after Josiah's discovery of the Book and subsequent covenant renewal (2 Kgs 22:2-23:5 // 2 Chr 34:8-33) to a position prior to the discovery and renewal. This rearrangement does not reflect an historical disagreement with Kings. The writer of Kings must have known that some worship reforms took place prior to the temple reparations that led to the discovery. Instead, Kings is arranged more topically. By contrast, Chronicles is arranged more chronologically. It first notes the worship reforms that **began** in Josiah's **twelfth year** (34:3b) and continued with specific aspects of those reforms. Chronicles focuses on the events of discovery, renewal and Passover that took place in Josiah's **eighteenth year** (34:8; 35:19). Consequently, the Chronicler's rearrangement provided a general context of worship reforms in which the momentous eighteenth year occurred.

Second, the book of Kings places Josiah's battle with Nero (2 Kgs 23:29-30) after the reference to other sources (2 Kgs 23:28). This unusual arrangement led the Chronicler to reverse the order by listing the battle first (35:20-25) and then other sources (35:26-27).

<b>2 Chr</b>		<b>2 Kgs</b>
34:1-3a	Josiah's Rise (slightly expanded)	22:1-2
34:3b-7	Widespread Worship Reforms (loosely parallel)	23:6-20
34:8-28	Discovery of the Book (slightly expanded)	22:3-20
34:29-33	Covenant Renewal (slightly expanded)	23:1-5
35:1-19	Passover (greatly expanded)	23:21-27
35:20-25	Death in Battle (expanded)	23:29-30a
35:26-27	Death, Burial, and Successor (slightly expanded)	23:28

*Comparison of 2 Chr 34:1-35:27 and 2 Kgs 22:1-23:30a (figure 60)*

Apart from these rearrangements, the Chronicler's text follows the basic patterns of the record of Kings. A number of smaller variations occur (mostly expansions) which we will describe below.

*Structure of 34:1-35:27*

The record of Josiah's reign divides into four main parts (see figure 61).

In his typical fashion the Chronicler began with the rise of the king to power (34:1-3a) and closed with a balancing closure of his reign (35:26-27). The middle portion of Josiah's reign divides into two parts. The first of these parts focuses on Josiah's years of faithful service to God, especially his worship reforms (34:3b-35:19). The second part of the main body consists of a brief account of his failure to remain loyal to the Lord in battle with Neco of Egypt (35:20-25). This division between times of fidelity and infidelity is typical of the Chronicler's approach to the kings of Judah (see *Introduction: 10-27) Divine Blessing and Judgment*).

## Opening of Josiah's Reign (34:1-3a)

- ◆ Josiah's Fidelity in Worship Reforms (34:3b-35:19)
  - Josiah's Earlier Reforms (34:3b-7)
    - Reforms in the South (34:3b-5)
    - Reforms in the North (34:6-7)
  - Josiah's Later Reforms (34:8-35:19)
    - Josiah Repairs the Temple (34:8-13)
      - Initiation of Temple Repairs (34:8)
        - Money Designated for Temple Repairs (34:9)
          - Money Given to Supervisors (34:10a)
            - Money Paid for Temple Repairs (34:10b-11)
              - Completion of Temple Repairs (34:12a)
                - [Afterward Concerning Levitical Supervisors (34:12b-13)]
      - Josiah Renews Covenant (34:14-33)
        - \* Josiah Recognizes Sin through the Book (34:14-21)
          - Josiah's Leaders Discover the Book (34:14-15)
            - Josiah Hears the Book (34:16-18)
              - Josiah Reacts to the Book (34:19-21)
                - \* Josiah Receives Prophecy about the Book (34:22-28)
                  - Josiah's Leaders Approach Huldah (34:22)
                    - Huldah Speaks to Leaders (34:23-28a)
                      - Josiah's Leaders Return from Huldah (34:28b)
                        - \* Josiah Renews Covenant According to the Book (34:29-33)
                          - Josiah Gathers Judah for Covenant Renewal (34:29-30a)
                            - Josiah Reads the Book (34:30b)
                              - Josiah and Judah Renew Covenant (34:31-33)
          - Josiah Observes Passover (35:1-19)
            - Josiah's Passover Introduced (35:1)
              - Josiah's Preparations for Celebration (35:2-9)
                - Josiah Readies Priests and Levites (35:2-6)
                  - Josiah Readies Sacrifices (35:7-9)
                    - Josiah's Performance of Celebration (35:10-15)
                      - Josiah's Passover Summarized (35:16-19)
      - ◆ Josiah's Infidelity in Deadly Battle (35:20-25)
        - Josiah Goes Out for Battle Against Neco (35:20)
          - Josiah Hears Warning from Neco (35:21)
            - Josiah Defiantly Enters Battle (35:22)
              - Josiah is Seriously Wounded (35:23)
                - Josiah Returns and Dies (35:24a)
                  - [Afterword Concerning Mourning (35:24b-25)]

## Closure of Josiah's Reign (35:26-27)

*Outline of 2 Chr 34:1-35:27 (figure 61)*

*Opening of Josiah's Reign (34:1-3a)*

The reign of Josiah begins with material derived from 2 Kgs 22:1-2. With the exception of the omission of Josiah's royal mother (2 Kgs 22:1b; see comments on 33:1), the Chronicler closely followed Kings for the first two verses. Josiah became king at the young age of **eight years old** (34:1); only Joash began at a younger age (see 24:1). Like Joash, Josiah probably was under adult tutelage in his early years.

The Chronicler conveyed a very positive evaluation of Josiah. First, he followed the judgment of Kings (34:2 // 2 Kgs 22:2). Many kings are said to have done **right in the eyes of the Lord**. (For the Chronicler's use of this evaluative terminology see comments on 24:2.) A number of kings are also compared with **David** (see 2 Chr 17:3; 28:1; 34:2; see also *Introduction: 14) Standards*). Nevertheless, Josiah is the only king about whom the Chronicler added that he did not turn **to the right or to the left** (34:1). This description is a traditional way of describing fidelity to the Law of God (see Dt 17:20; 28:14; Josh 1:7; 1 Sam 6:12). This general outlook, however, must be balanced by Josiah's failure in battle (35:20-24 // 2 Kgs 23:29-30).

To heighten the importance of Josiah, the Chronicler added to the record of Kings that Josiah's loyalty to God began at a very early age. Here we find the first of several chronological references in Josiah's reign. **In the eighth year** Josiah was already taking positive steps toward reform; **he began to seek the God of his father David** (34:3a). "Seeking" the Lord is one of the Chronicler's regular ways of describing an attitude of humility and devotion to God (see *Introduction: 19) Seeking*).

The Chronicler drew attention to the remarkable character of Josiah by noting that he put his faith into action **while he was still young** (34:3a). In this manner, the opening verses of this material raise high expectations from the Chronicler's readers. If Josiah was loyal to God from such a young age, what great things did he accomplish as an adult? The Chronicler's account turns directly to these great accomplishments.

*Josiah's Fidelity in Worship Reforms (34:3b-35:19)*

The Chronicler first reported the positive reforms that took place under Josiah's direction. Similar reforms took place at other points in Judah's history (see: *Introduction: 6) Royal Observance of Worship*). Here the text highlights the extensive and enduring quality of these changes.

*Comparison of 34:3b-35:19 with 2 Kgs 22:3-20; 23:1-27*

As noted above, the greatest difference between this portion of Chronicles and Kings is that the Chronicler rearranged the order of the presentation. Kings reports the events in this order: discovery of Book (2 Kgs 22:3-20), covenant renewal (2 Kgs 23:1-5), reforms (2 Kgs 23:6-20) and Passover (2 Kgs 23:21-27). Chronicles, however, presents these events in this manner: reforms (34:4-7), discovery of Book (34:8-28), covenant renewal (34:29-33), Passover (35:1-19). No historical conflict

exists between these accounts. The writer of Kings merely moved his account of the discovery of the Book forward to highlight it (perhaps the book of Deuteronomy) as the main event of Josiah's reforms.

To understand the Chronicler's outlook, we should also note at this point that his account is governed by a definite chronological framework. To begin with, the Chronicler added a notice in 34:3b that Josiah's reforms began **in his twelfth year**. This point in time is to be distinguished from the temporal note of 34:8 (// 2 Kgs 22:3) that the cleansing of the temple began **in the eighteenth year** which forms an inclusio with the remark that the Passover also occurred **in the eighteenth year** (35:19 // 2 Kgs 23:23).

These chronological notes combine with the Chronicler's rearrangement of material to shape Josiah's reforms into two stages: those changes that took place in year twelve and those that took place in year eighteen.

### *Structure 34:3b-35:19*

The Chronicler's variations from Kings result in the following outline (see figure 61). Josiah's reform efforts divide into his earlier (34:3b-7) and later (34:8-35:19) efforts. As we will see below, the king's early reforms cover his work in the South (34:3b-5) and the North (34:6-7). The king's later reforms are more complex. They divide into a large dramatic structure involving the repair of the temple (34:8-13), covenant renewal (34:14-33), and the celebration of Passover (35:1-19).

### *Josiah's Earlier Reforms (34:3b-7)*

The Chronicler first reported the reforms Josiah began to perform **in his twelfth year** (34:3b). This chronological notice separates this material from events in **his eighth year** (34:3a) and in **the eighteenth year** (34:8).

### *Comparison of 34:3b-7 with 2 Kgs 23:6-20*

A number of significant differences appear between Kings and Chronicles at this point. First, we have already noted that the Chronicler moved this material from after the discovery of the book and covenant renewal (2 Kgs 22:3-23:5) to a position before these events. He also added the notice that these events took place **in his twelfth year** (34:3b) to make his chronological framework clear.

Second, a number of smaller additions occur. 1) The Chronicler noted the destruction of **altars of the Baals** and their **incense altars** (34:4). 2) He clarified that the expression "graves of the common people" (2 Kgs 23:6) meant **the graves of those who had sacrificed to** [idols] (34:4). 3) To divide his record into events in the South and then in the North, the Chronicler added a description of events in the North (34:6-7).

Third, some details of Josiah's reforms (2 Kgs 23:7-16a, 17-18) are omitted. 1) In usual fashion, references to cult prostitutes operating in the temple do not appear (2 Kgs 23:7 see 1 Kgs 14:24; 15:12; 22:46; 23:7). 2) The list of specific foreign gods which Josiah destroyed is absent (2 Kgs 23:8-14). The reason for this omission is not evident. 3) In order to divide the record between events in the North and South, the Chronicler also omitted Josiah's destruction of the altar at Bethel (2 Kgs 23:15-16a, 17-18) and changed the focus of burning priests' bones in Bethel to his similar actions in Judah (34:5 // 2 Kgs 23:16b).

### *Structure 34:3b-7*

The result of these variations from Kings is that Chronicles presents a much simpler record (see figure 61). Josiah's reforms are described in reports concerning changes in the South (34:3b-5) and in the North (34:6-7).

### *Reforms in the South (34:3b-5)*

The focus of the first set of reports (34:3b-5) appears explicitly in the repetition of phrases in 34:3b and 5. In both verses the Chronicler mentioned that Josiah began to **purge Judah and Jerusalem**. Two vignettes describe the king's actions in the southern kingdom. These scenes overlap to some extent, but they have distinctive features.

First, Josiah got rid of **high places** in Judah with their various **Asherah poles ... idols ... images ... altars of the Baals ... and incense altars** (34:3b-4). Like several kings before him (see 11:15; 21:11; 28:4), Josiah destroyed the syncretistic worship sites in Judah (see *Introduction: 6) Royal Observance of Worship*).

Second, the king **burned the bones of the priests on their altars** (34:5). In this verse, the Chronicler paraphrased the notice of similar actions in the North (see 2 Kgs 23:15-18). The Chronicler, however, applied them to Josiah's actions in Judah. Josiah executed the false priests following the examples of Jehu (2 Kgs 10:11) and Jehoiada (23:17 // 2 Kgs 11:18). The apostate priests of Josiah's day were subject to severe punishment for leading the people of Judah astray (Dt 13:1-5).

### *Reforms in the North (34:6-7)*

The Chronicler turned briefly to Josiah's reforms in the northern kingdom. Like Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah (2 Chr 19:4; 31:1), Josiah sought to reform worship in the North as well as in the South (see *Introduction: 6) Royal Observance of Worship*). The Assyrian empire was weak during this time of Josiah's reign. As a result, Josiah had the freedom to extend his religious reforms into the North.

The record of Kings is expanded to identify specific tribes touched by Josiah's efforts (34:6-7). In language that alludes to Hezekiah sending couriers throughout the North (see 30:10), Josiah reached

**towns of Manasseh, Ephraim and Simeon, as far as Naphtali** (34:6). His efforts were felt **throughout Israel** (34:7) to the point that contributions from all of these tribes were brought to the temple (34:9).

The Chronicler's distinct emphasis on the extent of Josiah's reforms drew a firm connection between Josiah and Hezekiah. After the fall of the Northern kingdom to Assyria (722 B.C.), these two kings saw their religious responsibilities extending beyond the borders of Judah. From the Chronicler's point of view, the Passover celebration under Hezekiah had brought a symbolic unity to the nation. He had this unity in view as he reported Josiah's early reforms in the North.

Josiah's actions challenged the Chronicler's post-exilic readers in at least two ways. They could see their need to reform the religious practices of Jerusalem. Whatever syncretistic practices had crept into their community must be eradicated (see Ezra 9:1-15; Neh 13:23-30). Even so, Josiah's example showed that religious reform was not to be limited to the southern region alone. They must look northward in their day even as Josiah did in his reign.