

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

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### **The Reign of Joash, part 2: Joash's Kingship (2 Chronicles 24:1-27)**

#### *Joash's Kingship (24:1-27)*

The Chronicler's record of Joash's reign presents the king as faithful in his early years and unfaithful in his later years. As such Joash represented the two options facing the Chronicler's readers. They could either serve God and receive blessings, or they could rebel against God and receive his judgment (see *Introduction: 10-27*) *Divine Blessing and Judgment*). A central concern in this material continues to be the relationship of the king and priesthood. As the preceding episode has already demonstrated, Jehoiada strongly supported the Davidic line. By contrast, however, Joash's regard for the priesthood and the proper worship of God did not extend throughout his life.

#### *Comparison of 24:1-27 with 2 Kings 11:21-12:21*

At times, the Chronicler's version is so different from Kings that some interpreters have suggested he relied on a completely different version of Joash's reign. While this viewpoint is not impossible, sufficient similarities exist between Kings and Chronicles at this point to assume the Chronicler's dependence on Kings.

Many variations between these texts result from the Chronicler's normal practices and style. Even so, four variations reveal the Chronicler's unique outlook on these events.

First, the Chronicler shaped his account to divide Joash's reign into two distinct periods, early years of obedience and later years of disobedience. 1) 2 Kgs 12:3 reports that high places were not removed from Judah and that the people sacrificed there during Joash's early years. The Chronicler omitted this information so as not to tarnish his portrait of Joash's early obedience. 2) The Chronicler added 24:17-24 as an introduction to Joash's war with Syria (24:23-27 // 2 Kgs 12:17-21). These verses explain that the war resulted from divine retribution for Joash's infidelity in the second half of his reign. 3) The Chronicler replaced 2 Kgs 12:18 with 24:23b-24 to depict the severity of divine judgment against Joash. He pointed out that Judah lost her battle despite her superior numbers. In this manner he made it clear that the king was judged by God in the second half of his reign. 4) The Chronicler added that Joash was not buried in the tombs of the kings (24:25b). In so doing, the Chronicler indicated again

that Joash's latter years were under divine curse (see *Introduction: 28*) *Healing and Long Life/Sickness and Death*).

Second, the Chronicler's interest in the mutual support of priesthood and kingship during the post-exilic period led him to draw attention to Jehoiada in a number of ways. 1) In 24:3 he added that Jehoiada was blessed with wives and children. 2) 24:7 adds that Athaliah and her Baal priests had misused the instruments of the temple. In all likelihood, the Chronicler added this information to clarify that Jehoiada had not neglected the temple. 3) 1 Kgs 12:11 reads "they gave," but the Chronicler substituted **the king and Jehoiada gave** (24:12) to emphasize the priests' leadership role and his cooperation with King Joash. 4) The Chronicler substituted 24:15 for 2 Kgs 21:14. He noted Jehoiada's central role in the proper functioning of the temple in Joash's early years. 5) The addition in 24:17-22 focuses on the central role that Jehoiada and his son Zechariah played in Joash's reign. 6) The Chronicler added the account of Jehoiada's death in 24:15-16. This addition served as the turning point in his account of the king's reign which made it clear that once the priest died, Joash turned away from the Lord. 7) The Chronicler added an explanation of why Joash's servants killed him. They conspired against him **for murdering the son of Jehoiada the priest** (24:25 // 2 Kgs 21:20).

Third, on three occasions the Chronicler drew attention to the role which the Levites played in these events. 1) In 24:5 he added that Joash called together **the priests and Levites** whereas 2 Kgs 21:4 simply mentions "the priests." 2) 2 Kgs 21:6 says that for twenty-three years nothing was done to repair the temple. To avoid the negative light this long interval of time cast on the Levites, the Chronicler merely said that **the Levites did not act at once** (24:5b). 3) The Chronicler also added the important role of the Levites in gathering money for the temple in (24:6). 4) Similarly, 24:11 (// 2 Kgs 21:10) adds the detail that the Levites helped to carry the chest used to collect money for the temple.

Fourth, several verses demonstrate much more interest in the details of Judah's worship. 1) Joash's plan for supporting the temple is identified with the Mosaic tabernacle practices (24:6,9-10). 2) A notice of the musical instruments used in the temple is added (24:14 // 2 Kgs 12:13). The Chronicler's interest in these details is characteristic of the kinds of attention to music and worship that he often demonstrated.

### *Structure of 24:1-27*

The main body of Joash's reign divides into five main sections consisting of a number of reports and full narratives. The Chronicler arranged these sections so that they displayed a balanced account of the king's activities (see figure 41). The Chronicler divided the reign of Joash into two periods by adding a notice of Jehoiada's death in the center of his account (24:15-16). Balancing segments stand on either side of this central scene. The king's years of fidelity balance with his years of infidelity (24:4-14,17-26). The beginning of his reign corresponds to the notice of the end of his reign (24:1-3,27).

### *Opening of Joash's Reign (24:1-3)*

The Chronicler began his record by following the general description in 2 Kgs 11:21-12:3. He omitted the synchronization with northern Israel as he usually did (12:1a; see *Introduction: 2) Northern Israel*). He noted that the king was **seven years old when he became king** (24:1). Moreover, he **reigned in Jerusalem forty years** (24:1). After mentioning his mother **Zibiah** (For further discussion of royal mothers in Chronicles see comments on 13:2.), the Chronicler characterized the king as one who **did what was right in the eyes of the Lord** (24:2). The Chronicler described a number of kings as doing **right in the eyes of the Lord** (see 14:2; 20:32; 24:2; 25:2; 26:4; 27:2; 29:2; 34:2). He also characterized other kings as having done **evil in the eyes of the Lord** (21:6; 22:4; 28:1; 29:6; 33:2,6,22; 36:5; 36:9,12). These depictions must be taken as general, not categorical. This text explains that Joash was exemplary only during **the years of Jehoiada the priest** (24:2). This information from 2 Kgs 12:2 led the Chronicler to his sharp division of the king's reign into the earlier and latter years. The earlier years of obedience were due to Jehoiada's influence.

2 Kgs 12:3 mentions that the people continued to worship at "the high places" during the early years of Joash. The Chronicler, however, omitted this report to avoid tarnishing his presentation of Joash as a good king in these years. Instead, he substituted a report of Jehoiada's **two wives** and **sons and daughters** (24:3) to illustrate God's blessing on the king. The Chronicler frequently mentioned progeny as a demonstration of divine favor (see *Introduction: 25) Increase and Decline of Progeny*).

### *Joash's Early Years of Fidelity (24:4-14)*

Having hinted at his perspective on Joash's early years, the Chronicler continued to follow the general order of 2 Kgs 12:3-16. His version of these events, however, shows many of his special interests.

### *Structure of 24:4-14*

This material divides into five steps (see figure 42 ). The Chronicler focused his record of Joash's positive years on the king's restoration of the temple. Joash determined to restore the temple (24:4) and succeeded (24:12-14). In the process, however, the collection effort failed because of conflict with Jehoiada (24:5). The two leaders resolved their differences (24:6-7) and the collection of funds proceeded along lines acceptable both to the king and the high priest (24:8-11).

### *Joash Begins Temple Restoration (24:4)*

While the book of Kings records many of Joash's actions in restoring the temple, it does not contain a parallel to this verse. The Chronicler added that at an undetermined time, Joash decided it was time **to restore the temple of the Lord** (24:4). Similar efforts to reform the worship of Judah took place at other times as well (see *Introduction: 6) Royal Observance of Worship*). From the outset the Chronicler made clear the central focus of this episode. He was interested in conveying how Joash restored the temple to its rightful order. During the six years of Athaliah's reign the temple had been defiled and neglected (see 22:10-12). Joash was about to correct this situation.

The implications for the post-exilic situation are evident. One of the Chronicler's chief concerns for the post-exilic community was that they bring about the full restoration and operation of the temple.

### *Joash's Failed Collection (24:5)*

Joash's first attempt to raise money for temple restoration failed. At first glance, it seems odd that the Chronicler would record the king's failure in his period of fidelity and blessing. The details of this failure explain why he included this material in his record.

The Chronicler's account reveals a conflict between Joash and the Levites. Joash wanted to restore the temple, but he also wanted to pay for the repairs with money collected by the Levites. In 2 Kgs 12:4-5 Joash proposed three specific sources of revenue: a half a shekel tax on twenty year old males (see Ex 30:11-16; 38:25-26), money from individual vows (see Lev 27:1-25), and voluntary offerings (see Lev 22:18-23; Deut 16:10). The Chronicler focused only on the first of these proposed sources of revenue. In his record, Joash ordered **the Levites to go to the towns of Judah and collect the money** (24:5). Bearing the responsibility and expense of gathering this money was more than the Levites were willing to do. 2 Kgs 12:6 says the Levites delayed following Joash's order for twenty-three years. The Chronicler mollified the Levitical resistance and simply said that they **did not act at once** (24:5b). The restoration of the temple was delayed because of this conflict between the king and the temple personnel.

This portion of the Chronicler's record was particularly important to the post-exilic readers. It illustrated a conflict between the royal and temple personnel the funding of the temple. It is likely that similar conflicts occurred between the temple personnel and political leaders during the post-exilic period. We may be sure that the potential for disharmony over these matters always existed. The Chronicler presented this narrative to address these potential conflicts.

### *Joash and Jehoiada Compromise (24:6-7)*

In the turning point of this narrative Joash held Jehoiada responsible for the delay of the temple restoration. Very little is said in this scene. Joash asked Jehoiada why he had not **required the Levites to bring in ... the tax imposed by Moses** (24:6). The Chronicler's interest in the standard of Mosaic legislation is evident (see *Introduction: 14) Standards*; see also *Introduction: 9) Temple Contributions*). The Chronicler also mentioned that Jehoiada's duty was also confirmed by the will of **the assembly of Israel** (24:6). Apparently, the desire to see the temple put back in proper order also rose from the enthusiasm of the people in a solemn assembly (see 23:21; see also *Introduction: 5) Religious Assemblies*). The assembly of God's people demonstrated that the king's orders had popular support. For the Chronicler's outlook on popular consent see comments on 1 Chr 13:2.

The record of Kings also mentions that the Levites refused to cooperate with the king (see 2 Kgs 12:8). The Chronicler, however, substituted a parenthetical remark explaining that the temple was in need of repair entirely because **that wicked woman Athaliah had broken into the temple of God and used even its sacred objects for the Baals** (24:7). In other words, the Levites had not neglected the temple; its disrepair was due to the reign of Athaliah alone.

Both Kings and Chronicles abbreviated their records of the meeting between Joash and Jehoiada. Neither book tells us Jehoiada's reaction. We must infer what happened from the verses that follow.

### *Successful Collection (24:8-11)*

From all appearances Joash and Jehoiada reached a compromise. Instead of sending the Levites out to collect money (see 24:5), **a chest** was made and **placed outside at the gate of the temple** (24:8). The Chronicler shifted attention from Jehoiada setting up this chest (see 2 Kgs 12:9) to the fact that this occurred **at the king's command** (24:8). He mentioned this fact to highlight the renewed cooperation between the king and the priest.

2 Kgs 12:9 sets the chest beside the altar. The Chronicler, however, set it at the gate of the temple of the Lord (24:8). From this variation we must suppose that "the altar" of 2 Kgs 12:9 was not the bronze altar of the inner court, but a smaller altar somewhere near the gate of the temple complex (see *Introduction: Appendix B - The Structures, Furnishings and Decorations of Solomon's Temple*).

The Chronicler added 24:9-11a,11c to the account of Kings. In this material he emphasized several concepts that were important for his post-exilic readers. First, a proclamation was **issued in Judah and Jerusalem** reminding the people of their responsibility to fulfill the Mosaic tax (24:9). The breadth of this proclamation exemplified the Chronicler's concern for all the people of God to support the temple and its program in the post-exilic period (see *Introduction: 1) All Israel*). Second, the Chronicler noted the emotions with which

the contributors gave to temple renovation. They **brought their contributions gladly ... until** [the chest] **was full** (24:10). Rather than merely fulfilling a duty, the people were enthusiastic in their support for the temple. These comments provide another example of the Chronicler's concern that the post-exilic readers have zeal and joy in contributing to the temple in their day (see *Introduction: 16) Motivations*). Third, the offerings amounted to **a large amount of money** (24:11a); the officials regularly collected from the chest **a great amount of money** (24:11c). In this exemplary event, the contributions to the temple were plentiful (see *Introduction: 9) Temple Contributions*). These three additions spoke directly to the needs of the original readers of Chronicles. They should have evaluated their own involvement with the temple in the light of the enthusiastic support of Joash's day.

#### *Joash Completes Temple Restoration (24:12-14)*

This segment of Joash's early years of fidelity closes with a report of the various workers hired for temple renovation. The Chronicler's account depends loosely on 2 Kgs 12:11-16. He specified that **the king and Jehoiada** hired workers (24:12) to highlight once again the spirit of cooperation between the royal family and the priesthood. Following the record of Kings, the Chronicler noted that no aspect of temple repair was neglected. They employed **masons, carpenters, and workers in iron and bronze** (24:12). Moreover, the Chronicler added that the supervisors of the work were **diligent** (24:13). They succeeded in bringing the temple back **to its original design and reinforced it** (24:13). In contrast with 2 Kgs 12:13, the Chronicler added that **when they had finished** the main work, various worship accouterments were produced as well (24:14). Finally, the Chronicler mentioned that **as long as Jehoiada lived, burnt offerings were presented continually** (24:14). The Chronicler's variations from Kings demonstrate again that he described these events to direct his post-exilic readers regarding their own responsibilities toward the temple in their day. They should not have been satisfied with their efforts until they were as extensive as those of Joash and Jehoiada (see *Introduction: 6) Royal Observance of Worship*).

#### *Jehoiada's Death (24:15-16)*

The Chronicler added a report of Jehoiada's death to separate the two periods of Joash's reign (see figure 41). He honored the priest by noting that he was **old and full of years**, living to be **a hundred and thirty** years old (24:15). This notice of age falls in line with the longstanding biblical tradition that long life is the demonstration of divine favor (see *Introduction: 28) Healing and Long Life/Sickness and Death*). The Chronicler also honored Jehoiada by mentioning that he was **buried with the kings ... because of the good he had done in Israel for God and his temple** (24:16; see 1 Chr 23:1). The close association between the priest Jehoiada and the Davidic line is established even in his death and burial. Even so, with Jehoiada gone, it is not long before Joash turned from his early fidelity to disobedience.

### *Joash's Later Years of Infidelity (24:17-26)*

The text turns immediately to a series of events that depicted Joash as unfaithful to God in the later years of his reign. As we have seen in the comparison above, this material loosely parallels 2 Kgs 12:17-21. Even so, the Chronicler omitted and added information to stress his own perspectives.

### *Structure of 24:17-26*

This record divides into a five step narrative illustrating how Joash was unfaithful to God, ungrateful to Jehoiada, and unable to maintain control of his kingdom (see figure 42). The leaders of Judah affirm their allegiance to the king as they rebel against God (24:17-18). This beginning balances with the ironic scenes of Joash's death at the hands of these leaders (24:25-26). Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, declared that God had abandoned Joash (24:19-20). This prophecy was fulfilled in the corresponding section which describes the victory of Syria over Judah (24:23-24). The turning point in this narrative is the murder of Zechariah at Joash's command (24:21-22).

### *Joash and Leaders Provoke God (24:17-18)*

The Chronicler began this portion of his record with a three step scenario which he added to the account of Kings. First, after the death of Jehoiada leaders **paid homage** to Joash and the king **listened to them** (24:17). Apparently, Jehoiada's influential role in the royal court was now fulfilled by these officials. 24:25-26 suggests that some of these new advisors may have been foreigners. These new advisors turned Joash away from God. Like other kings, Joash proved to be unfaithful once his kingdom was secure. For the Chronicler's warning against permitting blessings to lead to infidelity see comments on 1 Chr 5:24.

Second, Joash and these officials **abandoned the temple ... and worshipped Asherah poles and idols** (24:18). The Chronicler described this infidelity with one of his important theological terms: **abandoned** (see *Introduction: 22) Abandoning/Forsaking*). He repeated this same word (**forsaken** [NIV]) later in this story (24:20,24) with the meaning that Joash and the officials had flagrantly violated their covenant loyalty to God. This violation was illustrated by the fact that Joash now did just the opposite of what he had done earlier in his life (see 24:4-14). The king who had restored the temple now abandoned it.

Third, as a result of their rebellion, **God's anger came upon Judah and Jerusalem** (24:18b). It is not altogether clear whether the Chronicler meant that God began to punish Joash with specific covenant curses, or if he merely meant that divine wrath was stirred against the king. In all events, Joash and his leaders had provoked God against them. The king's path was leading to judgment.

The Chronicler shifted abruptly in his depiction of Joash. A greater contrast could hardly be imagined. He followed this course to illustrate the striking difference between obedience leading to divine blessing and disobedience leading to divine judgment (see *Introduction: 10-27) Divine Blessing and Judgment*).

#### *Zechariah Prophesies against Joash (24:19-20)*

As it often happens in the Chronicler's history, God sent prophets to warn the rebellious nation of impending judgment (see *Introduction: 15) Prophets*). This portion of the Chronicler's addition to the life of Joash first notes that God sent a number of **prophets to the people to bring them** (i.e. cause them to turn) **back to him** (24:19). As in many cases, the purpose of the prophetic ministry was not to condemn, but to call for repentance leading to renewal of covenant ties with God (see *Introduction: 22) Repentance*). Even so, the people **would not listen** (24:19). Similar refusals to accept prophetic warnings take place elsewhere in the Chronicler's history (see 2 Chr 16:7-10; 25:14-16; 36:12; see also *Introduction: 15) Prophets*) and in many other portions of Scripture.

Having given this overview of rebellion against prophetic warnings, the Chronicler focused on the example of **Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada** (24:20). As in other portions of Chronicles, a temple functionary served in the role of a prophet (see *Introduction: 15) Prophets*). **The Spirit of God came upon Zechariah** much as he had on Azariah (24:20). (For a summary of the Chronicler's view of the Spirit see comments on 1 Chr 12:18.)

Zechariah's speech followed the pattern of oracles of judgment found frequently in the prophetic Scriptures. He first raised his accusation in the form of a rhetorical question. "**Why do you disobey the Lord's commands?**" (24:20a). This accusation was followed by two sentencings. First, he declared, "**you will not prosper**" (24:20a). The term "prosper" frequently appears in Chronicles as a notice of divine blessing. Zechariah stated an important principle in the Chronicler's theology. He warned that if Judah continued in the way of rebellion, covenant blessings would not come (see *Introduction: 26) Prosperity and Poverty*).

Second, the prophetic priest announced, "**Because you have forsaken the Lord, he has forsaken you**" (24:20). The Hebrew word translated **forsaken** in this verse is the same as that translated **abandoned** in 24:18 (see *Introduction: 22) Abandoning/Forsaking*). Zechariah declared that Judah had violated her covenant with God. As a result, divine abandonment followed.

This dramatic warning depicted how the Chronicler believed God reacted to the abandonment of his temple. He hoped that his post-exilic readers would see the dire consequences of neglecting the temple and give it their full support.



*Joash Orders Zechariah's Death (24:21-22)*

The Chronicler continued to add to the record of Kings by describing Joash's reaction to the oracle of judgment. Humility and repentance was the appropriate response to a prophet's warning. Nevertheless, Joash ordered the death of **Zechariah** (24:21). Jesus mentioned the death of Zechariah when he referred to the prophetic tradition in the Old Testament (see Matt 23:35). He spoke of "Abel" and "Zechariah" who appear in the first (Genesis) and last (Chronicles) books in the Hebrew Bible.

The Chronicler drew attention to the heinous character of Joash's crime by reminding his readers of the debt Joash owed to Jehoiada. He did not remember **the kindness Zechariah's father Jehoiada had shown him** (24:22). Joash owed his life and kingdom to Jehoiada (see 24:1-16), but he had lost all regard for his former mentor. In this dramatic scene, the Chronicler noted that as Zechariah died, his final words were, "**May the Lord see this and call you to account**" (24:22). The verses that follow demonstrate that God heard Zechariah's dying wish.

*Zechariah's Prophecy Fulfilled (24:23-24)*

The Chronicler returned to the account of Kings for a moment (compare 24:23 and 2 Kgs 12:17), but he quickly departed from Kings once again (compare 24:24 and 2 Kgs 12:18). Zechariah had prophesied that God would forsake Judah. This prophecy was fulfilled in Syria's victory over Joash. The Chronicler's account of this fulfillment divides into a three step scenario (24:23) with an additional authorial comment (24:24).

**The army of Aram (Syria) marched** against Judah (24:23a). This invasion resulted in the deaths of **all the leaders of the people** (24:23b), and the plunder of Judah was sent back **to their king in Damascus** (24:23). The rapidity with which the Chronicler recounted the defeat of Judah reflected the ease with which their victory was achieved. It was a swift victory for Syria.

Typically, the Chronicler's accounts of war involved Judah defeating armies much larger than their own (*see Introduction: 23) Victory and Defeat*). Here, however, he reversed the scenario. Judah had a much larger army than Syria; the Syrians had **only a few men** (24:24). Nevertheless, they were victorious over Judah because **the Lord delivered (Judah) into their hands** (24:24).

Once again, the Chronicler explained that God was behind an important event in Israel's history (*Introduction: 10) Divine Activity*). To insure that his readers understood the reason for Judah's defeat, the Chronicler added that it was **because Judah had forsaken the Lord, the God of their fathers**. The use of the term **forsaken** recalls the previous references to Judah's apostasy in this narrative (see 24:18,20,24-25; see also *Introduction: 22) Abandoning/Forsaking*). Judah's covenant infidelity resulted in a remarkable defeat before the Syrians. The Chronicler's analysis of the event demonstrated that their own military strength

could not secure them against an enemy. Military security was found only in the power of God (see *Introduction: 23) Victory and Defeat*).

#### *Joash Assassinated by Leaders (24:25-26)*

In contrast with the opening of this section (see figure 42), the leaders of Judah did not honor Joash. Instead, they conspired against him. This event is described in 2 Kgs 12:20, but the Chronicler added a few details that highlight Joash's dishonor. The officials **conspired against Joash for murdering the son of Jehoiada** (24:25). Ironically, these men probably were the ones who first convinced Joash to follow the path that led to Zechariah's death (see 24:21-22). Moreover, Joash's death occurred while he was lying helplessly **in his bed** suffering from wounds inflicted by the Syrians (24:25). Finally, while 2 Kgs 12:21 reports that "he was buried with his fathers in the City of David," the Chronicler added **but not in the tombs of the kings** (24:25). Joash's infidelity resulted in a disgraceful death and burial for the king (see *Introduction: 28) Healing and Long Life/Sickness and Death*).

Having established the disgrace of Joash's death and burial, the Chronicler added a note indicating who was responsible for the king's assassination (24:26). His list differs from that of 2 Kgs 12:21 in that it emphasizes the role of foreigners in the event. Perhaps the Chronicler added this aspect of the narrative to explain Joash's worship of foreign gods (see 24:18). In all events, the assassination of Judah's king by the hands of an Ammonite and a Moabite demonstrated the severity of God's judgment against Joash (see *Introduction: 3) International Relations*).

#### *Closure of Joash's Reign (24:27)*

The Chronicler added a brief notice of additional records for Joash's life. He then merely followed the text of 2 Kgs 12:21d and noted that **Amaziah his son succeeded him as king** (24:27). Joash's reign ends with no praise or positive evaluation. His latter years of disobedience brought him to his grave in disgrace.