

SECOND CHRONICLES

Chapter 21

Jehoram Reigns in Judah

Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David, and Jehoram his son reigned in his place. 2 He had brothers, the sons of Jehoshaphat: Azariah, Jehiel, Zechariah, Azariah, Michael, and Shephatiah; all these were the sons of Jehoshaphat king of Israel. 3 Their father gave them great gifts of silver, gold, and valuable possessions, together with fortified cities in Judah, but he gave the kingdom to Jehoram, because he was the firstborn. 4 When Jehoram had ascended the throne of his father and was established, he killed all his brothers with the sword, and also some of the princes of Israel. 5 Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. 6 And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as the house of Ahab had done, for the daughter of Ahab was his wife. And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. 7 Yet the LORD was not willing to destroy the house of David, because of the covenant that he had made with David, and since he had promised to give a lamp to him and to his sons forever. 8 In his days Edom revolted from the rule of Judah and set up a king of their own. 9 Then Jehoram passed over with his commanders and all his chariots, and he rose by night and struck the Edomites who had surrounded him and his chariot commanders. 10 So Edom revolted from the rule of Judah to this day. At that time Libnah also revolted from his rule, because he had forsaken the LORD, the God of his fathers. 11 Moreover, he made high places in the hill country of Judah and led the inhabitants of Jerusalem into whoredom and made Judah go astray. 12 And a letter came to him from Elijah the prophet, saying, "Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father, 'Because you have not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat your father, or in the ways of Asa king of Judah, 13 but have walked in the way of the kings of Israel and have enticed Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem into whoredom, as the house of Ahab led Israel into whoredom, and also you have killed your brothers, of your father's house, who were better than you, 14 behold, the LORD will bring a great plague on your people, your children, your wives, and all your possessions, 15 and you yourself will have a severe sickness with a disease of your bowels, until your bowels come out because of the disease, day by day.'" 16 And the LORD stirred up against Jehoram the anger of the Philistines and of the Arabians who are near the Ethiopians. 17 And they came up against Judah and invaded it and carried away all the possessions they found that belonged to the king's house, and also his sons and his wives, so that no son was left to him except Jehoahaz, his youngest son. 18 And after all this the LORD struck him in his bowels with an incurable disease. 19 In the course of time, at the end of two years, his bowels came out because of the disease, and he died in great agony. His people made no fire in his honor, like the fires made for his fathers. 20 He was thirty-two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. And he departed with no one's regret. They buried him in the city of David, but not in the tombs of the kings.

Ch 21 Reign of Jehoram. By comparison, the parallel account in 2Ki 8:16–24 is exceedingly brief. Jehoram is the first king of Judah whose reign can be characterized from beginning to end as evil. This account of his reign serves as a sermon for the Chronicler's contemporaries. The Jerusalem temple was to be the sole sanctuary of the Lord, the God of Abraham. Any infidelity to that temple would result in the wrath of the Lord, with disastrous warfare following. The result is

the polar opposite of the military and political blessings bestowed on the kingdom during times of fidelity in temple worship, illustrated by the reigns of Abijah, Asa, and Jehoshaphat. (TLSB)

21:2–4 Unique to 2Ch. Jehoram, the eldest brother, is given the kingdom, but Jehoshaphat follows the pattern established by Rehoboam in dispersing sons throughout the fortified cities (11:23). Immediately after the accession of Jehoram, the theme of danger to David's house is brought forward, a theme that recurs in 21:17; 22:8–11. Ironically, by these murders Jehoram sets in motion events that culminate in the near obliteration of his own line (21:17). (TLSB)

1:2 sons of Jehoshaphat. The Chronicler shows the blessing of God on Jehoshaphat by mentioning his large family, particularly his seven sons (see 11:18–22; 1Ch 25:5 and notes). Jehoshaphat's large number of sons is in striking contrast to the wicked Jehoram who, after murdering his brothers (v. 4), is left with but one son (v. 17). Jehoram's wife Athaliah would later perform a similar slaughter (22:10). (CSB)

Azariah. Unclear why the first and fourth sons have the same name. (TLSB)

21:4 This bloody assassination of all potential rivals is not reported in Kings, but it fits the pattern of the northern kings (see v. 6). The princes of Israel were probably leading men in the southern kingdom who opposed having a king married to a daughter of Ahab. For this use of "Israel." (CSB)

21:5 *eight years.* 848–841 B.C. The period 853–848 was probably a co-regency of Jehoram with his father Jehoshaphat—Jehoshaphat's 18th year was also Jehoram's second year (cf. 2Ki 1:17; 3:1). (CSB)

21:6 *daughter of Ahab was his wife.* Probably the marriage referred to in 18:1, used to cement the alliance between Jehoshaphat and Ahab. Such political marriages were common. Many of Solomon's marriages sealed international relationships, as did Ahab's marriage to Jezebel. (CSB)

The marriage alliance Jehoshaphat made with Ahab (18:1) had more serious consequences than unsuccessful military and maritime ventures undertaken jointly by the two kingdoms (18:2–34; 20:35–37). For some time, Judah came directly under the evil influence of the house of Ahab. See the parallel account in 2Ki 8:16–19. (TLSB)

21:7 *not willing to destroy.* The Lord withholds destruction of the house of David for the sake of David. Jehoram was the only "lamp" left to the Davidic dynasty; his life would be preserved. Hope must be directed to future generations, both at the time of Jehoram and at the time of the Chronicler. (TLSB)

21:8–10 The pious Jehoshaphat had enjoyed victory over Edom (20:1–30), while the wicked Jehoram is defeated in his attempt to keep Edom in subjection to Judah (see note on 20:30). (CSB)

Jehoram's initial battle is a victory of sorts but sets the stage for later defeat by the Philistines and Arabians (vv 16–17) following Jehoram's apostasy (v 11), a war not reported in 2Ki 8:16–24. (TLSB)

21:9 *by night ... struck.* Uncommon tactic. (TLSB)

21:10 *Libnah.* Located between Judah and Philistia. (CSB)

because he had forsaken the LORD. Not found in 2Ki 8:22. The Chronicler introduces this judgment as an indication of immediate retribution. (CSB)

21:11–19 Unique to Chronicles. (TLSB)

21:11 *whoredom.* Jehoram's sin differs from that of his predecessors. They failed to remove the high places; he built the high places. Jehoram's wickedness will be punished (vv 12–15). Judah was invaded (vv 16–17), and the king died of a horrible disease (vv 18–19). (TLSB)

21:12–15 This reference to a letter from Elijah is the only mention in Chronicles of that prophet, to whom the books of Kings give so much attention (1Ki 17–2Ki 2). Elijah's letter specifically announces the immediate consequences of Jehoram's disobedience—further defeat in war, which will cost Jehoram his wives and sons; and disease, which will lead to his death. Cf. also the foot disease of Asa (16:12–14) and the leprosy of Uzziah (26:16–23). Kings does not mention the nature of Jehoram's death. Some have argued that this letter could not be authentic because, they claim, Elijah was taken to heaven before Jehoram became king. But this is not a necessary conclusion (see 2Ki 1:17; see also note on 2Ki 3:11). Elijah's translation may well have taken place as late as 848 B.C. (CSB)

Letter of rebuke from Elijah, announcing two punishments. Vv 16–19 describe their fulfillment. (TLSB)

21:12 *Elijah.* He had little contact with the kings of Judah, but sudden, unannounced appearances were characteristic of his ministry. The arrival of a letter from him seems unusual; he likely wrote it before he was taken to heaven (2Ki 2:1). (TLSB)

21:14 *plague.* Hbr means a severe “blow,” which may take the form of a disease or epidemic. In 1Sm 4:17, it is translated “slaughter.” (TLSB)

21:16–19 First of the prophesied punishments is fulfilled by the invasion of the Philistines and the Arabians. The Lord intervenes against Judah, and the endangerment of the Davidic line is clear. Second, like his grandfather Asa, Jehoram suffers before his death. Whatever his illness, it exceeded the grotesqueness of Asa's disease (16:12). Jehoram's bowels prolapsed before his death. Cf 16:11–14; 26:19–21. (TLSB)

21:16 *Cushites.* Similar group of raiders was repulsed by Jehoram's grandfather Asa (14:9–13). (TLSB)

21:17 *Jehoahaz.* Commonly called Ahaziah (22:1). Both names mean “the LORD took” (Hbr verb *'achaz* may appear at the beginning or end of the name). Jehoahaz becomes the lamp of the house of David (v 7; 2Ki 8:19), the sole bearer of the Davidic line and promise. (TLSB)

21:19 *no fire.* People did not burn spices in his honor as they had at his grandfather's funeral (16:14). (TLSB)

21:20 *eight years.* This is the first time that the Chronicler does not refer his readers to other sources for additional details on the reign of a king. (CSB)

not in the tombs of the kings. Only the Chronicler mentions the refusal of the people to accord Jehoram the customary burial honors of a tomb with the other kings of Judah (cf. 24:25). (CSB)

Ch 21 Through a letter from Elijah the prophet, the Lord warns Jehoram that he must face God's punishment. A harsh letter is difficult to write and harder still to receive. Yet as sinners, we all need the rebuke of God's Law against our sins. Above all, we need the call to repentance, forgiveness, and new life that the Lord is always ready to offer. • Lord, lead me to receive Your Word as a letter for my instruction and restoration. Amen. (TLSB)