

# SECOND CHRONICLES

## Chapter 21

**Then Jehoshaphat rested with his fathers and was buried with them in the City of David. And Jehoram his son succeeded him as king. <sup>2</sup> Jehoram's brothers, the sons of Jehoshaphat, were Azariah, Jehiel, Zechariah, Azariahu, Michael and Shephatiah. All these were sons of Jehoshaphat king of Israel. <sup>c 3</sup> Their father had given them many gifts of silver and gold and articles of value, as well as fortified cities in Judah, but he had given the kingdom to Jehoram because he was his firstborn son.**

**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)

**21:3** Cf. the similar actions of Rehoboam (11:23). (CSB)

### *Jehoram King of Judah*

**<sup>4</sup> When Jehoram established himself firmly over his father's kingdom, he put all his brothers to the sword along with some of the princes of Israel. <sup>5</sup> Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years. <sup>6</sup> He walked in the ways of the kings of**

Israel, as the house of Ahab had done, for he married a daughter of Ahab. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, because of the covenant the LORD had made with David, the LORD was not willing to destroy the house of David. He had promised to maintain a lamp for him and his descendants forever.<sup>8</sup> In the time of Jehoram, Edom rebelled against Judah and set up its own king.<sup>9</sup> So Jehoram went there with his officers and all his chariots. The Edomites surrounded him and his chariot commanders, but he rose up and broke through by night.<sup>10</sup> To this day Edom has been in rebellion against Judah. Libnah revolted at the same time, because Jehoram had forsaken the LORD, the God of his fathers.<sup>11</sup> He had also built high places on the hills of Judah and had caused the people of Jerusalem to prostitute themselves and had led Judah astray.<sup>12</sup> Jehoram received a letter from Elijah the prophet, which said: “This is what the LORD, the God of your father David, says: ‘You have not walked in the ways of your father Jehoshaphat or of Asa king of Judah.<sup>13</sup> But you have walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and you have led Judah and the people of Jerusalem to prostitute themselves, just as the house of Ahab did. You have also murdered your own brothers, members of your father’s house, men who were better than you.<sup>14</sup> So now the LORD is about to strike your people, your sons, your wives and everything that is yours, with a heavy blow.<sup>15</sup> You yourself will be very ill with a lingering disease of the bowels, until the disease causes your bowels to come out.’”<sup>16</sup> The LORD aroused against Jehoram the hostility of the Philistines and of the Arabs who lived near the Cushites.<sup>17</sup> They attacked Judah, invaded it and carried off all the goods found in the king’s palace, together with his sons and wives. Not a son was left to him except Ahaziah,<sup>a</sup> the youngest.<sup>18</sup> After all this, the LORD afflicted Jehoram with an incurable disease of the bowels.<sup>19</sup> In the course of time, at the end of the second year, his bowels came out because of the disease, and he died in great pain. His people made no fire in his honor, as they had for his fathers.<sup>20</sup> Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years. He passed away, to no one’s regret, and was buried in the City of David, but not in the tombs of the kings.

**21:4–20** See 2Ki 8:16–24. (CSB)

**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” see note on 12:1. (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** *married a daughter of Ahab.* 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** *To this day.* See note on 5:9. (CSB)

*Libnah.* Located between Judah and Philistia. (CSB)

*because Jehoram had forsaken the LORD.* Not found in 2Ki 8:22. The Chronicler introduces this judgment as an indication of immediate retribution (see notes on 12:1–14; 12:2; see also Introduction to 1 Chronicles: Purpose and Themes). (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)

**21:12–20a** Not found in the parallel text in 2Ki 8. (CSB)

**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 (see note on 16:12). 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*. See NIV text note on 16:8. (CSB)

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*. See note on v. 5. 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)