



KINGS OF ISRAEL III: 1 & 2 CHRONICLES

WEEK 4,5

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OUTLINE

THE TEMPLE: JUDAH'S GLORY

FROM REHOBOAM TO EXILE

In Darker Shades

Neither Darker, Nor Lighter

In Lighter Shades

SHINING STARS IN THE DARKNESS

Josiah

Return from Exile



INTRODUCTION

In the Southern Kingdom, the temple and loyalty to God features heavily what we read about the kings up through Jehoshaphat. While many of these kings are quite flawed in their own right, their continual obedience to the Temple requirements contrasts with their counterparts in the north.

There is distinct turn for the worst among Davidic kings when Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram, marries Athaliah, Ahab's daughter. This is somewhat recovered in Jehoram's grandson, Joash, while under the leadership of the priest Jehoiada. It doesn't take long for spiritual chaos to reign again.



ABIJAH'S SPEECH

In Kings, there is the typical regnal formula and nothing more concerning Abijah, son of Rehoboam. There we read:

I Kings 15:3—He committed all the sins his father had done before him; his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his forefather had been.

In Chronicles, there's a confrontation between Abijah and Jeroboam:

- ▶ He chastises Jeroboam for kicking out the Levites, the priests of Israel (cf. II Chron 11:13-17).
- ▶ The language Abijah uses is noteworthy. "We have not forsaken the LORD... You have forsaken him..." (II Chron 13:10,11).

There must have been syncretism left over from Solomon (see I Kings 14:23-24). In other words, Jeroboam completely abandoned worship of God, whereas the Southern Kingdom worshipped God *along with* the other gods.





ASA'S LOYALTY

Asa is the first king since David who worshipped God alone. On top of destroying the high places and alien forms of worship, he reestablished a covenant with the tribes under his oversight:

2 Chronicles 15:12-13 NIV [12] They entered into a covenant to seek the Lord, the God of their ancestors, with all their heart and soul. [13] All who would not seek the Lord, the God of Israel, were to be put to death, whether small or great, man or woman.

Why such a violent response?



ASA'S LOYALTY?

Why such a violent response?

- ▶ The Law requires it (cf. also Deut 13:6-11):
Deuteronomy 17:2-5—If a man or woman living among you in one of the towns the LORD gives you is found doing evil in the eyes of the LORD your God in violation of his covenant, and contrary to my command has worshiped other gods, bowing down to them or to the sun or the moon or the stars in the sky... If it is true and it has been proved that this detestable thing has been done in Israel, take the man or woman who has done this evil deed to your city gate and stone that person to death.
More deeply why would the law require it?
- ▶ The religious atmosphere the surrounding nations involved child sacrifice and extreme sexual deviance (Lev 18).
- ▶ If the creator God brings life, moving away from Him brings death. Cf. I John 4:19, "We love because he first loved us" and the two greatest commandments (Matt 22:37-40).
- ▶ Such factors point to the threat to the community this creates.



JHOSHAPHAT'S BATTLE

As with other kings of Judah, we get a deeper window in Jehoshaphat's life in Chronicles. In an act of faithfulness, he pleads with God to deliver Judah from Moabites, Ammonites and others. Several features stand out:

- ▶ Jehoshaphat makes his appeal *at the temple and before the people*.
- ▶ He appeals to God's commitment to Israel doubly by noting the removal of the Canaanite nations and God's special relationship to Abraham.
- ▶ He urges God to recognize the temple as carrying His Name.
- ▶ He notes Israel's faithfulness not to harass these specific nations during the Exodus.
- ▶ He calls on God to recognize Israel's commitment (in Solomon) to using the temple to make exactly this appeal, which God affirmed in the fire from heaven.

His prayer is drenched in history, especially of God's promises.



JOASH'S REPAIRS

The child-king Joash is best known for urging the priests to repair the temple. He is one of a few kings of Judah about whom we have a decent amount of information in I,II Kings.

After a few hundred years and an unfaithful nation, it's no surprise that the temple had become dilapidated. In Chronicles, we also discover that the children of Athaliah (Joash's grandmother, so his uncles) had stolen the holy utensils. This implies a protracted season of dereliction by the time Joash was old enough to do these types of things:

- ▶ Order the priests to immediately repair the temple (II Chron 24:5).
- ▶ After failing to repair the temple, Joash cites Moses against them (II Chron 24:6).



JOASH'S REPAIRS

In spite of Joash's initiation, Jehoiada is given all the credit:

II Chron 24:14b-16 NIV—As long as Jehoiada lived, burnt offerings were presented continually in the temple of the LORD. Now Jehoiada was old and full of years, and he died at the age of a hundred and thirty. He was buried with the kings in the City of David, because of the good he had done in Israel for God and his temple.

Such language reads almost like the regnal formula for kings! This shouldn't surprise us given Joash's spiritual degradation. In any case, his spiritual health even in his early years was rooted in Jehoiada's leadership.



UZZIAH'S JUDGMENT

In Kings, the leprosy of Uzziah (=Azariah) is described somewhat colorlessly:

II Kings 15:5—The LORD afflicted the king with leprosy until the day he died, and he lived in a separate house. Jotham the king's son had charge of the palace and governed the people of the land.

We read in II Chronicles that Uzziah's leprosy was a judgment for offering "strange fire," for profaning the temple (cf. Lev 10:1-3; Num 16:1-50, esp. v.35).



UZZIAH'S JUDGMENT

In II Chronicles 26:18, Azariah the priest's confrontation effectively distills the theological issues—

- ▶ “It is not right for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD”—No matter how good a king is, he's not a priest. (Cf. Heb 6:20-7:28, esp. 7:11).
- ▶ “That is for the priests, the descendants of Aaron...”—Another highlight that Aaron's sons only are priests, not even other Levites.
- ▶ “...who have been consecrated to burn incense.” Even sons of Aaron must perform purification, only offering incense in prescribed ways (Lev 8-10).

This judgment seems extreme, but comparable episodes are much more severe. Don't forget Uzzah! (I Ch 13:11; cf. Lev 10:2) The text represents the episode as if his leprosy is a shot across the bow (26:19-20).



HEZEKIAH'S STRENGTH IN THE LORD

In spite of being the son of one of the worst kings up to that point (Ahaz), Hezekiah displays extraordinary spiritual leadership. While Kings highlights Hezekiah's overall spirituality, there is little mention of how he re-opened and purified the temple after his father closed the doors.

This passage supplies a succinct summary of the whole episode:

2 Chronicles 29:15—When they had assembled their fellow Levites and consecrated themselves, they went in to purify the temple of the LORD, as the king had ordered, following the word of the LORD.

Hezekiah initiates the purification and repair, ordering the Levites to get to work. The Levites efficiently follow the Law and the parameters established by David.



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INTRODUCTION

The large center of Chronicles deals with David, Solomon and the Temple. As the above section indicated, the temple still plays a prominent role in the biographical information. But there is more than that. Here we will examine three different possibilities:

1. **Darker Shades** The additional information provides a much “darker” portrait of the king.
2. **Neither Darker, Nor Lighter** While more information is given, Chronicles confirms the moral verdict provided by Kings.
3. **Lighter Shades** The additional information provides a much “brighter” portrait of the king.



ASA IN THREE DIMENSIONS

As with many of the figures in Chronicles, Asa receives a few paragraphs in Kings, but much fuller portrait of several chapters in Chronicles.

Asa is represented explicitly as a good king in both texts (I Kings 15:11, II Chron 14:2). In Chronicles, his legacy is fleshed out, but also his errors. Here are some clear positives:

- ▶ Spiritual leadership in removing idols and altars, reinstating the law
- ▶ Strong leadership in defensive building projects and in war against Cushites
- ▶ Spiritual prayers (II Chron 14:11)



ASA IN THREE DIMENSIONS

His later behavior exhibits a break down in his faith, left mostly unaddressed in Kings:

- ▶ Rather than praying as he did with the Cushites, he pays a large sum for foreign military aid.
- ▶ Imprisoning and therefore silencing prophets, oppressing the people
- ▶ Instead of trusting God for healing, he only relies on the physicians. (Note: This is not “super-spiritual” teaching against medicine. The example of Hezekiah in II Kings 20:7 shows that prayer and medicine work together).

The puzzling remark, “Asa’s heart was blameless all his days,” (II Chron 15:17) is best understood within its immediate context, i.e. narrowly in terms of idolatry. In many ways, such fidelity puts him way ahead of a number of his counterparts.



JOASH

We learn in Kings that Joash's godliness was limited to the lifetime of Jehoiada. Chronicles fills in the holes as to how much he deviated after Jehoiada's death:

- ▶ Rather than continuing to listen to godly people (priests), he sought council with "officials of Judah." Royal officials were often family members. While speculative, one wonders if these were Joash's cousins, leftovers from the Omrid infiltration of Judah.
- ▶ They pursue other gods, neglecting the recently repaired temple.
- ▶ In a triple act of treachery, Joash kills Jehoiada's son—God's messenger—in the temple courtyard!

Jehoiada can't necessarily be blamed for Joash, but we would hope for a better result in discipleship when we're gone. What would be signs that a disciple had internalized the godly values you've imparted?

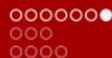


HEZEKIAH

Hezekiah's godly life in Chronicles is almost entirely harmonious with Kings. And yet we find this opaque remark:

2 Chronicles 32:25-26—But Hezekiah's heart was proud and he did not respond to the kindness shown him; therefore the LORD's wrath was on him and on Judah and Jerusalem. Then Hezekiah repented of the pride of his heart, as did the people of Jerusalem; therefore the LORD's wrath did not come on them during the days of Hezekiah.

The author provides little concrete guidance as to what this refers. What are some options?



HEZEKIAH

What are some interpretive options for II Chron 32:25-26?

1. This refers to the bizarrely warm reception he provides the (idolatrous) Babylonian envoys and the subsequent rebuke of Isaiah.
 - ▶ In favor of this explanation, since this episode is in both Isaiah and Kings, the author might be simply offering an abbreviated version of it within the final summary of Hezekiah's life.
 - ▶ Against this interpretation, Hezekiah's remarks in II Ki 20:19 do not really look much like a repentance.
2. This refers to some other event about which we have no further information.
 - ▶ Such a disappointing possibility shouldn't be ruled out. The author's sources demonstrably extend past what's available to us.
 - ▶ This explanation addresses the oddness of the fact that Chronicles *tends* to have more not less information about the kings of Judah.



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CLOSE FIT: UNODLY KINGS

While some greater depth is added, some figures are just as bad we found them:

1. Jehoram—Murdered his brothers, married Ahab's daughter, suffered ignominious death.
2. Ahaziah—Son of Jehoram, no better either
3. Amaziah—God grants him victory over Edom, responds by worshipping Edom's gods
4. Ahaz—Closed the doors to the temple; explicitly described in Chronicles as engaging in child sacrifice.
5. Amon—Returned to idolatry, in spite of his father's repentance
6. Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah—The final run of kings are given very brief life summaries, even shorter than in I,II Kings.



CLOSE FIT: A GODLY KING

Not much bad is said about Jehoshaphat. Here are some of his accomplishments:

- ▶ Destroyed the worship of other gods within the borders of Judah (cf. Josiah later).
- ▶ A unique credit to his name comes from his “evangelistic” effort: sending officials out into Israel to teach the people God’s word.
- ▶ He established judges throughout Judah, giving them stern instructions to administer justice in line with God’s law.
- ▶ His tragic flaw was his relationship with Ahab, also addressed in Kings. Even here, he seems to humbly accept the rebuke from prophet Hanani.

The other close-fit king is Josiah, treated more below.



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REHOBOAM

There are not many kings cast in a brighter light in Chronicles. Rehoboam is one of few exceptions:

- ▶ Rehoboam reigned a total of 17 years. Within the first five, he was unfaithful.
- ▶ A prophet alerted Rehoboam and his counselors that Shishak's attack was a result of their unfaithfulness. This brought about their repentance.
- ▶ Presumably, the remainder of his reign was characterized by some limited form of godliness.

2 Chronicles 12:12 NIV Because Rehoboam humbled himself, the LORD's anger turned from him, and he was not totally destroyed. Indeed, there was some good in Judah.



MANASSEH

Manasseh is singled out as the worst king in Judah.

- ▶ Jeremiah 15:4—"I will make [my people] abhorrent to all the kingdoms of the earth because of what Manasseh son of Hezekiah king of Judah did in Jerusalem."
- ▶ 2 Kings 24:3—Surely these things happened to Judah according to the LORD's command, in order to remove them from his presence because of the sins of Manasseh
- ▶ 2 Chron 33:9—But Manasseh led Judah and the people of Jerusalem astray, so that they did more evil than the nations the LORD had destroyed before the Israelites.

Although Ahaz also performed child sacrifice, one suspects that Manasseh has less excuse given the great reforms of his father Hezekiah.



MANASSEH

It is with great surprise that we find in Chronicles that Manasseh repented! What we see here is true repentance (heart change represented in action):

- ▶ 33:12—After Assyrian capture, Manasseh “humbled himself greatly”
- ▶ 33:13—God restored him to his place, confirming his fresh faith.
- ▶ 33:15,16—Removed idols from the temple, reinstated proper worship
- ▶ 33:16—Called on Judah to serve God.

Commentators often note the parallel between Manasseh himself and the final outcome of the whole nation.



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MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF JOSIAH

Josiah is the only king about whom neither Kings nor Chronicles has anything bad to say, offering such extraordinarily high praise:

2 Chron 34:2—He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and followed the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left.

Here are his major accomplishments:

- ▶ He began pursuing God at a young age, roughly age 16.
- ▶ While previous kings undermined and outlawed idolatry in Judah, Josiah destroyed idols and centers of worship far beyond his borders. He went to Bethel in the far north and desecrated Jeroboam's entire rival religious site—including graves (II Kings 23; cf. I Kings 13).
- ▶ Rather than give up in the face of God's pronounced judgment, he continued to pursue spiritual and moral reform.
- ▶ Josiah's Passover uniquely combined celebration and obedience.



PECULIAR TIMING

Two major (interrelated) questions are raised by the timing of Josiah's reforms and the exile:

1. Why wouldn't God relent of his coming judgment in light of Josiah's humility and obedience?
2. Why would God empower such an awesome spiritual revival in the shadow of a seventy year exile?



PECULIAR TIMING

1. Why wouldn't God relent of his coming judgment in light of Josiah's humility and obedience?
 - ▶ As "consolation," the worst will come after Josiah.
 - ▶ There is never a guarantee that we will be spared from the consequences of poor decisions. The sum of individual members' sins, let alone the kings', can't be indefinitely forestalled.
 - ▶ God's dealings with the nations are extremely mysterious. There could be moral and spiritual factors at play that extend far beyond any individual's decisions (Cf. Gen 15:16).
2. Why would God empower such an awesome spiritual revival in the shadow of a seventy year exile?
 - ▶ Spiritual revivals are good things, no matter how long they last.
 - ▶ What if God was preparing the hearts of the nation to spiritually survive the exile? This could have been a spiritual priming for the deeper form of national discipline in the exile.



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THE REMNANT

Compared to Kings, the end of Chronicles is much more encouraging. There are several chapters devoted to the benevolent reign of Josiah, followed by a single rapid-fire chapter summarizing his evil successors. The very last verse has the nation back in its land, preparing to rebuild the temple.

While not addressed in Chronicles, two problems remain with an unanticipated single solution:

1. No post-exilic son of David received permission to reign as king.
2. The glory of God never entered the newly built temple as it did in the Tabernacle and Solomon's temple.



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