

**The Reunited Kingdom, part 17
(2 Chronicles 29:1–36:23)**

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**The Final Events, part 1: Jehoahaz; Jehoiakim; Jehoiachin
(2 Chronicles 36:2-10)**

The Final Events 36:2-23

As the Chronicler neared the exile of Judah to Babylon, he reported on the final kings of Judah in rapid succession. This material has a number of motifs that occur on several occasions and reveal his outlook on these events.

Comparison of 36:2-23 with 2 Kgs 23:30b-25:30 and Ezra 1:1-3

The Chronicler relied on Kings for most of his closing chapter. The final portion (36:22-23) parallels Ezr 1:1-3. Despite these similarities, a number of significant variations occur which reveal the Chronicler's unique perspectives (see figure 63).

Several types of variations occur. First, the Chronicler omitted all maternal notices for these kings (2 Kgs 23:31b,36b; 24:8b,18b). The reason for these omissions is not clear. He kept and omitted such notices in earlier portions of his history for no apparent reason, but dropped all such notices after Hezekiah (see comments on 13:1-2a). Here he may have dropped these notes to avoid distracting his readers' attention from more important matters in these passages.

Second, the Chronicler repeated all evaluations of these kings (36:5b // 2 Kgs 23:37; 36:9b // 2 Kgs 24:9; 36:12a // 2 Kgs 24:19) with the exception of Jehoahaz (36:2-3 // 2 Kgs 23:31-33). In this case the deposing and taxation of Judah's king served as sufficient evidence that the Chronicler evaluated his reign negatively.

Third, the Chronicler either loosely followed the descriptions of trouble and exile experienced by each king or severely abbreviated them (36:6-7 // 2 Kgs 24:1-4; 36:10a-b // 2 Kgs 24:10-16; 36:15-21 // 2 Kgs 25:1-30). As we will see below, the Chronicler shaped his record of these events to emphasize his own theological perspectives on this period in Israel's history.

2 Chr		2 Kgs
	<i>Jehoahaz</i>	
36:1-2	Summary of Reign	23:30b-31a
-----	Maternal Notice	23:31b
-----	Evaluation	23:32
36:3-4	Trouble and Exile	23:33-34
	<i>Jehoiakim</i>	
-----	Tribute to Egypt	23:35
36:5a	Summary of Reign	23:36a
-----	Maternal Notice	23:36b
36:5b	Evaluation	23:37
36:6-7	Trouble and Exile	24:1-4
	(loosely parallel)	
36:8a-c	Other sources	24:5
-----	Death	24:6a
36:8d	Successor	24:6b
-----	Babylonian Dominance	24:7
	<i>Jehoiachin</i>	
36:9a	Summary of Reign	24:8a
-----	Maternal Notice	24:8b
36:9b	Evaluation	24:9
36:10a-b	Trouble and Exile	24:10-16
	(severely abbreviated)	
36:10c	Successor	24:17
	<i>Zedekiah</i>	
36:11	Summary of Reign	24:18a
-----	Maternal Notice	24:18b
36:12-14	Evaluation	24:19-20
	(expanded)	
36:15-21	Trouble and Exile	25:1-26
	(severely abbreviated)	
-----	Jehoiachin Released	25:27-30
36:22-23	Return from Exile	Ezr 1:2-3

Comparison of 2 Chr 36:1-23 with 2 Kgs 23:70b-25:30 and Ezra 1:2-3 (figure 63)

Fourth, beyond these regular variations, the Chronicler significantly shortened his account of two reigns. 1) Jehoiakim's reign omits his tribute to Egypt (2 Kgs 23:35), his death (2 Kgs 24:6a) as well as

a note explaining Babylonian dominance in the period (2 Kgs 24:7). These omissions had the effect of simplifying Jehoiakim's reign and conforming it to the literary pattern established in the records of the other kings of this chapter (see figure 64 below). 2) The Chronicler omitted the closing episode of 2 Kings 25:27-30 which describes Jehoiachin's release from prison. This event had given hope to the readers of Kings that release from exile may have been imminent. By the time of the Chronicler's writing Jehoiachin's release had proven to be insignificant. For this reason, the Chronicler replaced it with a record of the return from Babylon under the Cyrus edict (36:22-23).

Fifth, the Cyrus edict of 36:22-23 does not appear in the book of Kings, but it parallels Ezr 1:1-3. The Chronicler's version of the edict is only half as long as Ezr 1:2-4. 36:23 closely parallels Ezr 1:2-3a, but it has no correspondent for Ezr 1:3b-4. Explanations of these differences have taken at least four main directions. 1) Some interpreters see the passages as separate accounts based on a common source. 2) Some argue that the material was duplicated because the books of Chronicles and Ezra were originally one and later divided. 3) Still others have urged that Chronicles copied from the book of Ezra. 4) Finally, other interpreters have suggested that the book of Ezra copied from Chronicles. As these positions illustrate, one's outlook on the relationship between these two texts depends on much more basic issues of authorship and date (see: *Introduction: Authorship and Date*). Although the first option seems most likely, it is impossible to prove beyond doubt.

Jehoahaz (36:2-4)

Summary of Jehoahaz's Reign (36:2)

Exile, Tribute, and Successor (36:3-4)

Jehoiakim (36:5-8)

Summary of Jehoiakim's Reign (36:5)

Exile, Tribute, and Successor (36:6-8)

Jehoiachin (36:9-10)

Summary of Jehoiachin's Reign (36:9)

Exile, Tribute, and Successor (36:10)

Zedekiah (36:11-21)

Summary of Zedekiah's Reign (36:11-14)

Exile, Tribute, and Successor (36:15-21)

God Has Pity on Israel (36:15)

God's Anger Stirred against Israel (36:16)

God Sends Punishment against Israel (36:17-20)

God Has Pity on Israel (36:21-23)

Release from Exile (36:22-23)

Outline of 2 Chr 36:1-23 (figure 64)

Structure of 36:2-23

This last section of Chronicles consists of a series of four fairly uniform accounts, the last of which extends beyond the others to include the release of Israel's remnant from Exile (see figure 64).

As this outline indicates, each section of this material presents the pattern of summary and evaluation followed by trouble leading to exile. The only break from this pattern occurs in the reign of Zedekiah which adds Israel's release from Babylon (36:22-23).

Jehoahaz (36:1-4)

The death of Josiah (35:20-25) in 609 B.C. brought such political turmoil to Judah that two other kings reigned before the year came to an end (see 21:1; 23:20-21; 26:1; 33:25; 36:1). Jehoahaz (also named Shallum [1 Chr 3:15]) was the second of the three kings who reigned in 609 B.C. Although the Chronicler followed the record of Kings more closely here than in the other parts of this final series, his thematic concerns are evident.

Summary of Jehoahaz's Reign (36:1-2)

The Chronicler summarized Jehoahaz's reign with a report consisting of two brief notices. Following 2 Kgs 23:31, he noted that Jehoahaz was **twenty-three years old** and only reigned **three months** (36:1). The brevity of Jehoahaz's reign immediately indicated that conditions were not good for the Judahite king. He reigned under the judgment of God (see *Introduction: 10-27*) *Divine Blessing and Judgment*). As we suggested above, the omission of Jehoahaz's evaluation (2 Kgs 23:2) is unusual for this chapter, but the Chronicler probably felt Jehoahaz's terrible experience sufficiently exposed the nature of his kingdom.

Tribute, Exile, and Successor (36:3-4)

In a fashion that will appear throughout this chapter, the Chronicler included three elements in his description of Jehoahaz's trouble and exile. First, he noted that a fine was imposed on Judah by a foreign power (36:3). The other examples of such impositions in this chapter, involved the removal of temple treasures (see 36:7,10,18). This connection emphasized that the sins of Judah's kings brought harm to the temple itself. Here, however, the temple is not explicitly noted.

Second, the Chronicler mentioned in each case that the king of Judah was exiled to a foreign land. In this example, **Neco ... carried him off to Egypt** (36:4). In the other cases, King Nebuchadnezzar took Judah's kings to Babylon (see 36:7,10,20).

Third, the Chronicler mentioned the successor to the king who had been exiled. Neco put Eliakim in the place of Jehoahaz (36:4). Notices of succession appear for all the kings in this final chapter

except Zedekiah, the last king of Judah (see 36:8,10). Following 2 Kgs 23:34, the Chronicler noted that Neco changed Eliakim's name to **Jehoiakim** (36:4). Neco's ability to set up Judah's king and to change his name indicated his dominance over Judah. The king of Judah was little more than a puppet of Egypt. A similar circumstance occurs in 36:10 when Nebuchadnezzar made Zedekiah king.

Put simply, the Chronicler quickly covered the reign of Jehoahaz as entirely negative, and left Judah under foreign control. As far as the Chronicler was concerned, Jehoahaz had no redeeming qualities worth mentioning.

Jehoiakim (36:5-8)

Continuing his rapid coverage of the last kings of Judah, the Chronicler turned to the third king who began his reign in 609 B.C. Jehoiakim ruled Judah 609-598/7 B.C.

Summary of Jehoiakim's Reign (36:5)

As expected in this chapter, the Chronicler began his record of Jehoiakim by noting that he began to reign when he was **twenty-five years old**; his reign lasted **eleven years** (36:5). Despite the length of his reign, the Chronicler characterized Jehoiakim's reign as entirely negative. He did **evil in the eyes of the Lord his God** (see 36:9,12; for the Chronicler's use of this evaluative terminology see comments on 24:2).

Tribute, Exile and Successor (36:6-8)

The Chronicler omitted Jehoiakim's interaction with Neco (see 2 Kgs 23:35) in order to concentrate on trouble caused by Nebuchadnezzar. The three main themes of this chapter appear in this material. First, the theme of exile appears. As the Chronicler put it, **Nebuchadnezzar ... attacked him and bound him with bronze shackles to take him to Babylon** (36:6). It is unclear whether or not Jehoiakim was actually taken to Babylon. The Chronicler merely noted that he had been bound in order to be taken. Perhaps the threat of exile sufficed to subdue Jehoiakim. If the king was actually taken away, he left in 605 B.C. when Daniel and his companions were exiled (36:7; see Dan 1:1-3; Jer 46:2).

Second, the motif of tribute occurs again in this passage (see 36:10,14,18-19). **Nebuchadnezzar ... took to Babylon articles from the temple ... and put them in his temple there** (36:7). By mentioning that these treasures came from the temple, the Chronicler joined together the fate of Jerusalem's king and temple. Just as his history set forth these two institutions as indispensable for the blessings of God (see *Introduction: 4-9*) *King and Temple*), here he connected the fall of one with the other (see 36:10,14,18-19).

Third, after mentioning other records for **the detestable things** Jehoiakim did as well as **all that was found against him** (36:8), the Chronicler noted that Jehoiachin succeeded Jehoiakim. As the account of Kings reports, Jehoiakim was submissive to Nebuchadnezzar for three years, and then rebelled (see 2 Kgs 24:1). It is not clear how Jehoiakim died, but Jer 22:18-19 suggests that he did not die by natural causes. In all events, it is clear that the Chronicler had nothing positive to say about this king of Judah.

Jehoiachin (36:9-10)

The next king of Judah was Jehoiachin. He reigned in the year 598/97 B.C., but was taken to exile in that same year.

Summary of Jehoiachin's Reign (36:9)

The Chronicler abbreviated his record of Jehoiachin's reign so that it would match the pattern of presentation throughout this chapter (36:9-10 // 2 Kgs 24:8-17). It should also be noted that the Chronicler omitted Jehoiachin's release from prison in Babylon (2 Kgs 25:27-29). This scene is the last segment of the book of Kings and was probably intended to inspire hope in the readers of that book for release from exile through the Davidic line. The Chronicler, however, shifted attention away from Jehoiachin's release because he wrote after this event had been eclipsed by the Cyrus edict (see 36:22-23).

Consequently, the Chronicler merely summarized Jehoiachin's reign. He became king at **eighteen years** of age and reigned **in Jerusalem** only **three months and ten days** (36:9). Jehoiachin also received a thoroughly negative evaluation from the Chronicler's hand. **He did evil in the eyes of the Lord** (36:9b; see 36:5,12; for the Chronicler's use of this evaluative terminology see comments on 24:2).

Tribute, Exile and Successor (36:10)

Once again the Chronicler noted three things that occurred in this king's reign. First, **Nebuchadnezzar ... brought him to Babylon** (36:10). Second, **articles of value from the temple** were also brought to Babylon (36:10). The vital connection between monarch and temple continues in this passage (see 36:7,14,18-19). Third, the nation of Judah was at such a low state that Nebuchadnezzar **made Jehoiachin's uncle, Zedekiah, king over Judah** (36:10). As Neco imposed Eliakim on Judah (36:4), so Nebuchadnezzar put the man of his choice over the people of God. By any measure, the kingdom of Judah was barely surviving at this point in its history.