

Who was King Jehoram / Joram in the Bible?

There are two kings in the Bible referred to as King Jehoram/Joram. The first was the son of King Jehoshaphat, and he ruled in the southern kingdom of Judah from 853 to 841 BC. The other King Jehoram was the son of the wicked King Ahab, and he ruled in the northern kingdom of Israel from 852 to 841 BC. The name Joram is a shortened form of Jehoram. Complicating matters is the fact that both Jehorams were brothers-in-law to each other.

Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat was 32 years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for four years with his father and another eight years on his own in Judah (2 Kings 8:16-17)—a total of twelve years. Although Jehoshaphat had been a good and godly king, Jehoram did not follow in his father's footsteps. He married Athaliah, daughter of King Ahab (and sister of Ahab's son Joram), and he became an evil ruler. But, in spite of King Jehoram's wickedness, God kept his covenant with David and refrained from destroying Judah (2 Kings 8:19).

Sadly, God's mercy had no effect on Jehoram's behavior. He led his kingdom into idolatry and lewdness, and he caused both Edom and Libnah to revolt against Judah (2 Chronicles 21:8, 11). So God sent word through the prophet Elijah that, because Jehoram had led the people into sin, there would be a devastating attack on Jehoram's house and Jehoram himself would be struck with an incurable bowel disease (verses 14-15). As part of God's judgment, the Philistines and Arabs "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, the youngest" (verse 17). The disease killed Jehoram in a gruesome and agonizing manner at the age of 40. The people did not mourn this wicked king (verses 18-20).

The other Jehoram (or Joram), son of Ahab, took the throne of Israel in the second year of his brother-in-law's reign in Judah, and he was just as corrupt. He certainly had a poor example in his father. Ahab had turned the people to idolatry, leading them away from the true God of their fathers to the worship of his wife Jezebel's god, Baal. Ahab had famously clashed with the Elijah on many occasions, and his wicked rule had led to God's punishment over the whole land in the form of a years-long drought. The consequences of Ahab's choices carried into his son's reign. Ahab had previously taken control of Moab and forced the people to pay tribute, but, when Joram took the throne, Moab rebelled, forcing Joram into war (2 Kings 3:4-5).

King Joram called for help in the battle from King Jehoshaphat of Judah and the king of Edom, and the combined armies set out on a march through the wilderness toward Moab (2 Kings 3:8). Along the way, they ran out of water. Jehoshaphat made inquiries and discovered that Elisha, a prophet of God and Elijah's successor, was nearby. Elisha was brought before the kings, and Joram asked for help from God. Elisha wanted to refuse Joram, but he agreed to help for Jehoshaphat's sake (verse 14). Through God's power, Elisha filled a dry stream bed with water for the troops, and he also promised that God would deliver Moab into their hands (verses 15-18). The prophecy came true, and Moab fled before Israel (verses 20-27).

In spite of this miracle and the victories in subsequent battles God granted, King Joram continued in his evil ways. Although he had brought Baal worship to an end in Israel, "he clung to the sins of Jeroboam" (2 Kings 3:3), and his demise was sure. Joram was injured in a battle with the Aramians (2 Kings 9:15). God charged Jehoshaphat's son Jehu to destroy the entire house of Ahab (2 Kings 9:6-10). Jehu obeyed, and, after

confronting Joram, he shot Joram between the shoulders with an arrow (verse 24). Unfortunately, Jehu stopped obeying God after he had wiped out Ahab's family. King Jehu became yet another deficient ruler who continued leading the people of Israel into sin (verse 31).