

# Homiletics Analysis: 2 Chronicles 22

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## Content & Intent

### **This Text — Content:**

Second Chronicles 22 narrates the catastrophic consequences of the house of Ahab's influence penetrating the royal line of Judah. The chapter opens with Ahaziah's accession at age forty-two (or twenty-two in parallel accounts), emphasizing immediately that "his mother was his counselor in doing wickedly" (v. 3). Ahaziah walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, made war alongside Joram of Israel against Hazael of Aram, and was wounded. While Ahaziah visited the wounded Joram at Jezreel, Jehu — God's appointed instrument of judgment against the house of Ahab — executed both Joram and then Ahaziah himself. The Chronicler makes explicit that "the destruction of Ahaziah was from God" (v. 7). With Ahaziah dead, his mother Athaliah seizes the throne, slaughters all the royal heirs of Judah, and appears to extinguish the Davidic line entirely. Yet one infant — Joash — is secretly rescued by Jehosheba, daughter of King Jehoram and wife of the priest Jehoiada, and hidden in the temple for six years while Athaliah reigns. The chapter closes on this precarious concealment: the heir alive, the usurper on the throne, the promise hanging by a thread.

### **This Text — Intent:**

God is seeking to accomplish in the reader a deepened confidence that His covenant purposes are indestructible even when circumstances make their survival appear impossible. The chapter is deliberately structured to produce this effect: it drives the reader to the edge of apparent catastrophe — the Davidic line massacred, a pagan queen on the throne — and then quietly, almost anti-climactically, reveals that God has already preserved what was necessary. The intent is not primarily to warn against wicked counsel or poor alliances (though those themes are present), but to demonstrate that human wickedness, even of the most catastrophic scale, cannot undo what God has sworn. The preservation of Joash is not a narrative accident; it is the Chronicler's theological center of gravity in this chapter — proof that the covenant with David holds even in the darkest hour.

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**Subject Sentence:** The Davidic covenant survives Athaliah's attempted extermination through God's sovereign, hidden preservation.

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**Primary Claim:** God is demonstrating that no human conspiracy — however violent, however complete — can extinguish a promise He has sworn to keep; when the covenant appears most vulnerable, He has already secured what He has pledged.

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## Interpretive Evaluation

**The Relationship Between Human Wickedness and Divine Sovereignty:** Some readers, particularly those with Arminian or Wesleyan instincts, read this chapter primarily through the lens of human responsibility — emphasizing Ahaziah’s choices, Athaliah’s violence, and Jehosheba’s courage as the determining factors in the outcome. The chapter certainly foregrounds human agency: Ahaziah chose wicked counsel, Athaliah chose murder, Jehosheba chose risk. These details are real and are not to be dissolved. However, the Chronicler himself provides the interpretive key: “the destruction of Ahaziah was from God” (v. 7). This is not incidental phrasing. The Chronicler uses this kind of explicit divine-causation language to guide the reader’s theological understanding. The Reformed reading — that God’s sovereign purposes move through and beneath the human choices narrated — is not imposed on the text; it is the Chronicler’s own frame. Acknowledging human agency is appropriate; making it the primary theological register misreads what the Chronicler is doing.

**Jehosheba’s Courage and the Danger of Heroic Moralism:** A common homiletical treatment of this chapter focuses on Jehosheba as a model of courageous, selfless action — “be like Jehosheba.” This reading is not wrong in its admiration for her act, but it is wrong in making her the protagonist. The Chronicler’s point is not that heroic humans rescue God’s plan when it falters; the point is that God’s covenant survives because God sustains it, using Jehosheba as His instrument. The Clowney anti-moralism principle applies directly: reducing this passage to “courageous people can make a difference” domesticates it and evacuates its theological force. Jehosheba is real, her courage is admirable, and her act is used by God — but she is a servant of the covenant, not its guarantor.

**Dispensational Readings and the Davidic Covenant:** Dispensational interpreters often read this chapter with sharp attention to the Davidic covenant’s continuity, correctly noting that the preservation of Joash ensures the messianic line’s survival. This instinct is exegetically sound and should be acknowledged. Where Dispensational readings may overreach is in treating this preservation primarily as guaranteeing a future ethnic-national Davidic throne in Jerusalem, disconnecting the covenant’s fulfillment from Christ. The Reformed reading sees the preservation of Joash as a pivot point in the covenant line that runs from David through the exile, through the faithful remnant, to its ultimate fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ — the Davidic heir who cannot be killed permanently, in whom no Athaliah can finally prevail.

**Verdict:** The Reformed reading, which holds together human instrumentality and divine sovereignty, covenant-historical movement and Christological fulfillment, is the reading that best accounts for the Chronicler’s own explicit theological commentary and the passage’s canonical function. The Dispensational instinct to track the Davidic covenant carefully is a genuine contribution, properly recalibrated toward Christ as its goal.

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## Key Canonical Support

- **2 Samuel 7:12-16** — The Davidic covenant itself: God’s oath that David’s line and throne would be established forever; 2 Chronicles 22 is the most extreme test of that oath, and the preservation of Joash is its vindication at the moment of apparent failure.
- **Genesis 3:15** — The protoevangelium establishes the pattern: from the beginning, the seed of the woman is under assault by the serpent, and yet God sustains the line through every threat; Athaliah is a late but sharp expression of this primordial opposition.
- **Psalms 89:28-37** — God swears He will not violate His covenant with David even if David’s sons forsake His law; He may discipline them, but He will not utterly cast off the line; 2 Chronicles 22 dramatizes exactly this — Judah’s kings have been faithless, judgment has come, but the line is not cut off.
- **Matthew 1:1-17** — The genealogy of Jesus Christ traces the covenant line through the exile and return, implicitly passing through the single surviving infant Joash; Athaliah’s massacre and the preservation of the seed are woven into the very lineage of the Messiah.
- **Revelation 12:1-6** — The cosmic pattern of the dragon’s assault on the woman’s seed and its ultimate failure is the canonical fulfillment of what 2 Chronicles 22 dramatizes at the historical level; the Davidic heir cannot be finally destroyed.

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**Aim:** To bring the reader to a place of settled, scripturally grounded confidence that God’s covenant promises are secured not by the strength of human instruments but by the faithfulness of God Himself, even when those promises appear most imperiled.

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## Content Table

| Verse(s) | Content                                                                        | Notes                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1        | Ahaziah made king by the people of Jerusalem; forty-two years old at accession | Parallel in 2 Kings 8:26 gives twenty-two; likely a scribal transmission issue in Chronicles; the Chronicler’s theological concerns are not affected by the variant |
| 2-4      | Ahaziah’s mother Athaliah is named as his counselor in                         | Key indictment: the corruption of counsel; “his                                                                                                                     |

| Verse(s) | Content                                                                                                                     | Notes                                                                                                                                                                   |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|          | wickedness; he follows the house of Ahab                                                                                    | mother was his counselor in doing wickedly” — foreign influence through covenantal union                                                                                |
| 5-6      | Ahaziah goes to war with Joram of Israel against Hazael of Aram; Joram wounded; Ahaziah visits the wounded Joram in Jezreel | Alliance with apostate Israel leads directly to exposure to divine judgment; Jehu is already in motion                                                                  |
| 7        | “The destruction of Ahaziah was from God” — Jehu, appointed to cut off the house of Ahab, encounters Ahaziah                | The Chronicler’s explicit theological editorial; God is identified as the agent working through Jehu                                                                    |
| 8        | Jehu kills Ahaziah’s relatives and servants                                                                                 | The judgment on the house of Ahab sweeps across all who are aligned with it                                                                                             |
| 9        | Ahaziah sought and killed; buried “because he is the son of Jehoshaphat who sought the LORD”                                | Even in judgment, the Davidic lineage is noted; the burial is granted because of Jehoshaphat’s legacy — covenantal memory still functions                               |
| 10       | Athaliah destroys “all the royal offspring of the house of Judah”                                                           | The apparent extinction of the Davidic line; the darkest moment of the chapter                                                                                          |
| 11       | Jehosheba takes Joash from among those being killed and hides him                                                           | The pivot: hidden rescue; Jehosheba identified as daughter of the king and wife of Jehoiada the priest — positioned at the intersection of royal and priestly authority |
| 12       | Joash hidden in the temple for six years while Athaliah reigns                                                              | Six years of concealment; the covenant preserved in secret while the usurper holds public power                                                                         |

## Divisions Table

| Division | Verses | Label                                                                    |
|----------|--------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1        | 1-6    | The Corruption of Alliance:<br>Ahaziah Walks in the Way of<br>Ahab       |
| 2        | 7-9    | The Judgment of God:<br>Ahaziah's Destruction Is<br>from the LORD        |
| 3        | 10     | The Apparent Extinction:<br>Athaliah Destroys the Royal<br>Offspring     |
| 4        | 11-12  | The Hidden Preservation:<br>The Covenant Heir<br>Concealed in the Temple |

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## Subject Sentence & Primary Claim (*restated*)

**Subject Sentence:** The Davidic covenant survives Athaliah's attempted extermination through God's sovereign, hidden preservation.

**Primary Claim:** God is demonstrating that no human conspiracy — however violent, however complete — can extinguish a promise He has sworn to keep; when the covenant appears most vulnerable, He has already secured what He has pledged.

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## Applications (Five)

**1. Recalibrate where you locate the security of God's promises.** (*Mind/belief*) The chapter drives the reader to confront a question that feels almost unanswerable at verse 10: is the covenant finished? The Chronicler's answer — hidden in verse 11's quiet rescue — is that God had already acted before the question became unbearable. The application for the reader is a recalibration of belief: the security of God's covenant promises does not reside in visible institutional continuity, political stability, or the absence of threat. It resides in God Himself. The reader who has located their confidence in the church's cultural power, their denomination's stability, or the apparent strength of Christian witness in their nation needs this text. The promise is not safe because the situation is safe — it is safe because God is faithful.

**2. Grieve the real damage that wicked counsel does, without despairing of God's purposes.** (*Affections/worship*) Ahaziah was destroyed because he took counsel from his mother in wickedness and allied himself with the apostate house of Ahab. This is not a minor theme — the Chronicler foregrounds it to show that wicked alliance and wicked

counsel produce catastrophic outcomes. The reader is invited to feel the weight of this: bad spiritual counsel given to children, bad alliances entered into by believers, the normalizing of ungodly influence — these things do real damage. The appropriate affective response is grief, not fatalism. But the grief is not the final word. God's purposes survived Athaliah. He redeems the wreckage. Both realities must be held: the damage is real, and the covenant is indestructible.

**3. Identify the Athaliahs — the usurpers — that occupy the throne in your own life.**

*(Affections/worship)* Athaliah is the paradigmatic idol figure in this chapter: a power that seizes the throne by violence, claims total sovereignty, and seems to hold it successfully for years. The reader should be asked: what has seized the throne of your heart, your household, your priorities — not through invitation but through accumulated compromise and wicked counsel? What appears to have won, to have killed off what was good? The Keller idol-diagnosis lens applies: Athaliah is a figure for every false sovereign that displaces the rightful king. The reader's response should be not merely intellectual identification but affective reorientation — grief and desire for the rightful King to be restored.

**4. Act faithfully within the small sphere of your influence, trusting God with the outcome.**

*(Will/behavior)* Jehosheba did not rescue the Davidic throne — she rescued one infant, hid him in one room, for six years. She could not see 2 Chronicles 23. She could not know that this concealed child would become the king who broke Athaliah's power. She acted within the sphere available to her, at personal risk, in faithfulness to what she knew — that this child mattered. The application is not heroism; it is faithfulness in the small and the hidden. The reader who cannot see how their faithful, unglamorous, unrewarded act of obedience connects to God's larger purposes should be encouraged by the structure of this text: the preservation of the covenant happened in a hidden room, tended by one person, invisible to the world. Do the thing God has given you to do.

**5. Bring the hidden things — the endangered things — before God in prayer rather than writing them off as lost.**

*(Will/behavior)* The six years of Joash's concealment are a picture of the period between promise and fulfillment — the time when what God has pledged seems hidden, precarious, and forgotten by the world. The reader who is tempted to write off a prodigal child as spiritually dead, a marriage as beyond recovery, a church as irredeemably compromised, or a spiritual longing as permanently unfulfilled should be brought to this text. The covenant heir was hidden for six years. The reader's practice — their concrete, behavioral response — should be sustained, specific, un-panicked intercession for the things that appear lost. God is not absent from the hidden room.

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## Theological Importance

**Theological Importance:** This passage teaches that God's covenantal faithfulness is not contingent on the faithfulness of the human instruments through whom His purposes move, nor on the apparent stability of the institutions He has established. The house of

David had been profoundly compromised through generations of syncretism, political alliance with Israel, and the infiltration of Baal worship through Athaliah herself. By every visible measure, the covenant should have been forfeited. Instead, the text reveals a God who sustains His oath precisely in the moment when all human grounds for hope have been eliminated — the covenant secured in a hidden room, preserved by an act that the world could not see. The passage also teaches that divine judgment and divine preservation operate simultaneously: Jehu's judgment on the house of Ahab is real and sweeping, and yet in the same movement, God is quietly protecting the one thread on which His promise depends. These are not in tension — they are both expressions of God's sovereign control over history in fulfillment of His sworn word.

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## Reformed Theological Significance

**Reformed Theological Significance:** This passage is a vivid, historical demonstration of the doctrines of divine sovereignty and covenant faithfulness operating together — what Reformed theology calls the persistence of election. God's purpose for the Davidic line did not rest on the merit or faithfulness of any particular Davidic king; it rested on the grace of God's sworn promise, which survived apostasy, political catastrophe, foreign usurpation, and massacre. The preservation of Joash is, in miniature, the preservation of the messianic line — the line that would ultimately produce the Lord Jesus Christ, the Davidic heir in whom every covenant promise finds its Yes and Amen (2 Cor. 1:20). Reformed theology insists that God's electing purpose cannot be thwarted by human rebellion or demonic opposition, and 2 Chronicles 22 gives that doctrine flesh and blood and a hiding place in the temple. The passage also resists every form of moralism: the covenant was not preserved because Israel as a whole was faithful, because the Davidic kings had earned their place, or because Jehosheba's heroism was sufficient to the task. It was preserved because God is faithful to what He has sworn — which is, at bottom, the gospel's own logic.

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## Main Takeaway

God swore to maintain the Davidic line, and when every human mechanism of that promise had been destroyed — the king dead, the heirs massacred, a pagan queen on the throne — He kept it anyway, in a hidden room, through one woman's faithful act, for six years. The covenant did not survive because circumstances allowed it to. It survived because God does not abandon what He has sworn. What He has promised you in Christ is no less secure than that.

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## Preaching/Teaching Pitfalls

- **Reducing the chapter to a morality tale about wicked counsel or bad alliances.** The counsel-and-alliance themes are genuinely present and should not be ignored, but they are the chapter's diagnostic setup, not its theological center. Preachers who spend the bulk of their time on Ahaziah's choices and Athaliah's villainy without arriving at the preservation of Joash as the theological payload will preach a sermon that is true but inert — accurate diagnosis without the gospel. The chapter's weight falls on verses 11-12, not on verses 2-6.
- **Making Jehosheba the protagonist and her courage the main point.** This is the most common pitfall in exposition of this passage. Jehosheba is real, her risk is real, and her act is to be honored — but she is an instrument of the covenant, not its guarantor. Preaching “be like Jehosheba” produces admirable resolve in hearers but does not produce faith in God. The question the text is answering is not “will someone act courageously?” but “will God keep His promise?” — and the answer is yes, and He used Jehosheba to do it.
- **Treating the chapter as historically isolated rather than covenant-historically situated.** The full force of 2 Chronicles 22 is only felt when the reader understands that Athaliah's massacre is an assault on the messianic line — that what she nearly extinguished was the line that would produce Jesus of Nazareth. A sermon that does not at minimum gesture toward the Davidic covenant's ultimate fulfillment in Christ will leave the passage's canonical weight unrealized. This is not forced allegorizing — it is reading the text in its canonical location.
- **Ignoring or minimizing verse 7's explicit theological commentary.** “The destruction of Ahaziah was from God” is the Chronicler's own interpretive key to the chapter. Preachers who read past this verse without dwelling on it miss the author's own signal about how to read what follows. The divine agency behind Jehu's actions is not incidental — it is what makes the whole chapter coherent as a theological statement rather than merely a political narrative.
- **Preaching only comfort without confronting the chapter's sharp warnings about compromise.** The preservation of the covenant is the chapter's comfort, but the path to near-extinction is lined with specific, accountable decisions: alliance with apostate Israel, following wicked counsel, walking in the ways of the house of Ahab. Preachers who rush to the comfort of the hidden Joash without letting the congregation feel the weight of how the Davidic house nearly perished through accumulated compromise will produce hearers who draw the wrong conclusion — that God's covenant faithfulness makes our choices inconsequential. They are not inconsequential. The damage Athaliah's infiltration did was real. God preserved through it, but He also judged through it.

- **Collapsing the six years of concealment into a quick narrative point.** Six years of hiding is not a trivial detail. It is a sustained period of hiddenness, vulnerability, and waiting — during which every human observer would have concluded that the Davidic throne was gone and would not return. Preachers should let those six years sit with their congregation. The people of God frequently live in the period between promise and fulfillment, between the planting and the harvest, between the hidden room and the coronation. The six years of Joash are pastoral material for every believer who is waiting on a promise that appears to have been extinguished.