

2 Chronicles 35-36

The kingdom of Judah is beginning to experience renewal; they're going through revival as we enter into the scene tonight. And that's a great thing, unfortunately it's the last revival they'll see prior to the next season of rebellion and being carried off into captivity under the heavy hand of God's judgment. The carrying off into captivity of the kingdom of Judah is about 1 generation away at this point. But at the present, things are actually looking up. Amon, you recall was assassinated, his son Josiah was placed on the throne and unlike his father Josiah was a righteous man, loved the Lord, longed to be pleasing to the Lord. And so while he was still young he began seeking the Lord whole heartedly. You remember he was placed on the throne when he was only 8 yrs old. By the time he was 16 he began to seek the Lord and by the time he was 20 their were significant changes being made across the country of a spiritual nature that did away with ungodliness and promoted godliness. We made the point that you can't seek the Lord, come into a relationship with the Lord, but that the Lord won't begin to make changes not only *in* your life, but *around* your life as well. There's going to be certain things that you send down the road, that you no longer want anything to do with because you've been awakened to the reality that it's nothing but unhealthy for you spiritually. There will be certain people that bring you down, that cause compromise in your life; you have to cut them loose, you have to love the Lord more than you do anyone, or anything else. If you're seeking the Lord He's going to make changes both *in* your life, and *around* your life.

As those changes were taking place one of the things that surfaced in his heart as a priority was the restoration of the temple. He placed priority upon the place that people come together corporately, and seeking the Lord together as a family, look to the Lord collectively, and draw near to Him personally. Some people are of the persuasion that you don't need to come to church to be saved, and they're right. But if you love the Lord, if you're seeking the Lord you're going to sense the priority of coming together with His people, coming under the teaching of His word, seeking Him and His ways. It's simply something God has ordained, the man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; that's what the bible says. If you love God, you're going to love God's people, be around God's people, worship together with His people.

As they were restoring the temple you recall that there was a rediscovery of the word of God. They brought the king the book they'd found, they read it to him and he couldn't believe the things he was hearing. They slipped so far down as a nation, God's judgment was imminent, he cried out, tore his clothes, humbled himself and sought to hear from the Lord, "God what can we do?" The answer was basically, "At this point...nothing; judgment is coming." But God told him that because his heart was tender, because he humbled himself and repented (tore his clothes) that He would delay His judgment until Josiah had been gathered to his grave. The bible teaches us that, "*God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.*" James 4:6 So God was gracious toward Josiah because he had tender heart toward the things of God; he was humble and repentant before the Lord. The same thing holds true for us; God's judgment is diverted from us through repentance, coming to Christ, humbling ourselves, having a heart that's tender before Him.

After the news of God's grace toward him he gathered together all the elders of Judah and made a public decree of his commitment to the Lord. He wasn't a "closet" Christian, a

“secret” servant. He proclaimed his commitment publicly, and made a covenant before the Lord to keep the commandment, the testimonies, and the statutes of God’s word with all his heart, and all his soul.

He wasn’t going to be a hearer only, but a doer of the word of God as well. It’s so easy for us to be *hearers of God’s word, agrees with God’s word*, but being a doer of it is another thing altogether. A lot of people will be a doer until it imposes an inconvenience or a personal sacrifice then they’re done, Josiah said, “God I’m committed to You, and to the doing of Your word wall my heart, and with all my soul.” Look at Vs 33 of Ch 34

Vs1-2

Remember the Passover was that meal that looked back to the night they were delivered as a nation from the chains and bonds of Egypt. Each family was to slaughter a lamb (breaking none of its bones), they were to roast it in a fire and eat it in haste. They were to take some of its blood and place it over the doorposts and lintels of their homes. And as the angel of the Lord passed over the land whoever’s home was found under the blood of the lamb would be spared God’s judgment of death. But any home found with out the blood would fall under the judgment of death to the 1st born. So as the Angel passed over that night He found the houses of Israel under the blood, the houses of Egypt weren’t. So there was a great outcry in Egypt, death fell upon the 1st born of every home, and that was the final straw, no more plagues they set Israel free. God had said, “I want you to remember your deliverance, how I’ve freed you from bondage. Each yr you’re to celebrate in the same manner of taking a lamb slaughtering it, eating it in haste on the same day you were delivered from Egypt.”

Now obviously that was a foreshadowing to what God was yet to do in Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. He was slaughtered, His blood was shed, now if we’ll but apply the blood of Jesus Christ to the doorposts and lintel of our heart God’s judgment will Passover us. And Jesus said with regard to the elements of communion, “As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, do so in remembrance of Me.” We’re to remember the fact that we were slaves of sin, in bondage, nothing we could do about it. But through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ we’ve been set free, remember what God has done for you. So Josiah is remembering the Passover, keeping the Passover on the day it was commanded of them in the word of God; the 14th day of the 1st month.

And here’s what I want you to see in Vs 2 (I underlined it), not only did he set the priests in their duties (delegating, facilitating, good management of his people) but he “...encouraged them for the service of the house of the Lord.” I believe that it’s so important that if you’re over a particular area of ministry, be it a project, be it an ongoing aspect of our worship service, the upkeep of the grounds, or the facility in general, that with regard to those who serve under your lead you do well to *encourage* them for the service of the house of the Lord. It’s amazing how far a little encouragement will carry a person, it will boost their moral, cause them to want to work and commit even more, the fact that you notice them and are thankful for them, and appreciate their willingness, their availability, it goes miles. There are numerous places in the bible whereby we see people being strengthened in the inner man in order that they might continue in their purpose through a word of encouragement. It’s just healthy, who doesn’t like to be encouraged? Now to the flipside of that I’d also tell you that if you’re always discouraging, never have anything positive to say to those under you, can’t find the good in

anything, their efforts, their attempts, their heart, their desire to bless. If all you ever say is negative, you're a "Debby downer" then people won't want to carry on, they'll be disheartened, disillusioned, they won't want to serve anymore, or be around you, serve with you, what's the point? No matter what they do it's never good enough, it's never positively reinforced, but only viewed in a negative light.

Josiah encouraged those under him in their service of house of the Lord.

Vs3-6

He encouraged them *in* their service, then set them *to* their service. "Now serve the Lord your God and His people." I love that, this is part of why we come together before services to pray each Sunday and each Wednesday. We enjoy one another's fellowship, we're encouraged in our service and then it's time for the rubber to meet the road, "Now serve the Lord your God and His people." and That's obviously not a command that's limited to the 4 walls of a formal setting, it should be applied in the entirety of our sphere of service to the Lord which is to be a 24/7 type of availability.

But we read here that the ark was reinstated in the temple, apparently during the reign of Manasseh &/or perhaps Amon it was removed from the temple when the king had the temple defiled through pagan idols and altars. But now Josiah says, "Don't be burdened any further, bring it back to its ordained resting place."

And he tells them to consecrate themselves, and to slaughter the Passover offerings, preparing them (notice Vs 6) *according to the word of the Lord*. And we're going to see this a couple more times as we make our way through this Ch, they were very careful to honor the *word* of God in their *service* to God. When we're serving the Lord it's not to be some sort of random chaos, each of us kinda doing our own thing however we feel it should be done. There's not a general "I kinda got this thing worked out between me and God" approach in our dealings with God or man on behalf of God. He's very specific in His word regarding our service and we're to be careful to facilitate our service in such a way as to allow the people (as well as ourselves) to operate (that is be apart of a worship service) that accords with the layout that God's word establishes.

Vs7

This is something else that's incredible, not only was he passionate about honoring God's Word, but he was willing to count the cost personally in aiding others to do the same. He *personally* provided 33,000 sacrifices for families that couldn't afford their own. In was in his heart that what he did before the Lord he did properly, no skimping, but to the very best of his ability. What an example for you and me, no 2nd rate service as unto the Lord, we're to give Him a 1st fruits effort. The bible says, "*And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.*" Col 3:23-24 He was doing what he was doing heartily, serving the Lord passionately.

Vs8

2 Things here briefly, #1 The people *around* us will respond *to* us, we're all examples in one form or another. It's either bad or it's good but it's an example nonetheless, Josiah gave; what was the result? The other leaders around him became givers as well, his example spurred them on, provoked them to good works, they forked over another 2,900 sacrifices. Generosity is

contagious, they were discovering the principle that Jesus laid out when He said, *“It is more blessed to give than to receive.”* Acts 20:35 So #1 The people *around* us will respond *to* us, the leaders wouldn’t have given anything had Josiah not set the standard and shown the example. Of course on the flipside of that is the fact that people around us are *impacted* by us. There was going to be 10’s of thousands of people blessed by this, we speak occasionally how sin impacts the people around us. So does our obedience, it blesses people, the whole nation would be blessed by this.

#2 I’d have you note 2 words that describe the attitude of these leaders here in Vs 8. “Gave willingly,” not grudgingly or because they felt guilty into it, it was willing.

Which of course reminds us of the principle that the Holy Spirit put forth through Paul when he said, *“So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.”* 2 Cor 9:7 So important in our giving that we give what we give willingly, not of necessity.

Vs9-14

So 2 more times in that particular portion we seen emphasis placed upon their compliance and strict attention to the Word of God. We also noted how that they served the people 1st, then themselves. Jesus said if you want to be the greatest in the kingdom you become the servant of all, for even the Son of Man didn’t come to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many. They made sure the needs of others were met, and weren’t concerned for themselves, and the Levites noticed the overwhelming demands placed on the priests and so they said, “Hey, we’re going to score supper for these guys, minister to them because they’re busy ministering to others.” So it’s simply an awesome time, body life is going on, people being sensitive to one another’s needs, ministering to each other, celebrating the Passover.

Vs15-19

Remember Hezekiah held a Passover that hadn’t been rivaled since the days of Solomon. But Josiah topped even that, not because he was trying to top it but because he so passionately and so fervently sought to give heed to God’s Word. He gave more personally, paid more attention to the Word of God specifically, held the Passover on the same day it was required, had worship leaders singing and celebrating. It was just over the top, unlike anything they’d experienced as a nation since the time of Samuel the prophet. I love it when people take their service to the Lord serious, and refuse to do anything but their very best. It’s so awesome to be apart of, and so glorifying to the Lord, it’s just a good thing all the way around.

Vs20-24

Obviously there are a # of points of interest in this passage not the least of which is, “What just happened and how?” I think there’s a very practical lesson in all this for us and that is this; people who walk with the Lord, who love the Lord, and want to lead lives that are pleasing to the Lord still make mistakes. It doesn’t matter how good you are, how godly of a life you lead, you are still a fallible human being, you’re just not always going to hit the mark. Sometimes we have this illusion that as long as we’re walking with God seeking to be near *to* God that somehow everything is always going to work out and we’re under this “magical” sort of hedge whereby we can do no wrong and nothing harmful can befall us. Oh it’s true that until God’s finished with us we don’t need to worry, yet it’s equally true that we’re not to tempt the Lord our God, place ourselves in precarious positions unnecessarily. We’re not invincible.

The king of Egypt was coming against the Babylonians in aid to the Assyrians and on route he was passing through the area of Judah. For whatever reason Josiah decides he doesn't like the idea of Egypt aiding Assyria and so he seeks to hinder that and thwart his purpose. Now, this wasn't his fight, it had nothing to do with him. Prov 26:17 says, "*He who passes by and meddles in a quarrel not his own Is like one who takes a dog by the ears.*" You're just making unnecessary trouble for yourself and you can expect to be bitten. And Necho even warned him, "Hey I don't want any trouble with you just leave me be. God has sent me to deal with this and it's best for you not to get in the way." and I don't know if Josiah perhaps thought, "Hey, no Gentile is going to tell me what the God I serve wants from me!" and The question comes up, was what Necho said really from God? and The answer is, "Yes" Vs 22 tells us it was. Which brings up another interesting point. When Jesus started His ministry people were like, "Isn't this just the carpenters son?" After His resurrection Mary thought He was a gardener, when He was walking to Emmaus beside the 2 disciples they thought He was just some stranger.

What's my point? That sometimes a word from God comes to us in what may seem to us to be an obscure or unexpected situation or person. Some "stranger," the "gardener," the "carpenters son" yet in reality God is seeking to speak to us. Here's Josiah, the king of Egypt says to him, "Hey God has sent me on a mission, back off before you get hurt." An unexpected person bringing a proclamation from God, was he a believer? I don't know, God has moved through unbelievers in the past, but it was a word from the Lord for Josiah nonetheless.

But Josiah went out against him anyway. Why he disguised himself I have no idea, we don't read where he sought to verify the word from the Lord, or seek after God concerning it or anything, and it cost him his life. We shouldn't presume upon the Lord, we're believers therefore there's no mistake we can make but that God won't have our back. We're to be careful to heed His word, His way. This doesn't mean he didn't really finish well or anything like that (at least I don't see it that way). It means even the best of men are at best men and we all miss it from time and again, overall the bible is clear that he sought the Lord all the days of his life never veering to the left hand or to the right. It's unfortunate but he died seeming premature because he didn't heed God's warning. Heed the warnings of God's word, they're there for a reason.

Vs25-27

Ch 36

Vs1-4

So starts the slippery slopes of downward declension that lead to the irreversible fate of captivity. After the king of Egypt killed Josiah they placed his 23 yr old son on the throne and he lasted 3 months before the king of Egypt took him off the throne, took him to Egypt imposed a tax upon the nation, placed his brother on the throne in his place, and changed his name from Eliakim to Jehoiakim. Which simply implies that he was subject to the ruler of Egypt and under his authority, he was just a puppet king. As for his wicked brother who was taken into captivity you can read in Jeremiah 22 that he was going to die there as well. God told him that he'd die in the land of his captivity see this land no more.

Now his brother is placed on the throne and he's a wicked man as well, and it's during *his* reign that Egypt falls to Babylon and so he begins his reign under the authority of Egypt, but ends it under the authority of Babylon.

Vs5-7

Now we read that he bound him, but apparently he didn't actually take him, perhaps binding him was intimidation enough. But Jeremiah 22 tells us that when he died, the people didn't mourn him at all, they just dragged his dead body outside the gates of Jerusalem and gave him the burial of a dead donkey. But it was at this time that the 1st deportation to Babylon took place and the 70 yrs of captivity began, (it was 605 B.C.) Nebuchadnezzar took the choicest of the people and the riches of the land. In this 1st wave of captives was a young man by the name of Daniel, along with his buddies Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego.

Vs8-10

Most people believe that when we read that Jehoiachin was 8 yrs old that, that is a copyist error and should read "18" I tend to agree because it seems awfully difficult to see an 8 yr old reigning 3 months and being wicked in the sight of the Lord (though I suppose it's possible). But in Vs 10 you see the 2nd wave of deportation taking place along with more of the treasures of the house of the Lord and in this wave a priest by the name of Ezekiel was taken and when he gets to Babylon his prophetic ministry will begin.

Vs11-14

Zedekiah is the last king of Judah, and once again we have the sad reality of his wickedness. As to where Josiah humbled himself Zedekiah didn't, as to where Josiah repented, Zedekiah rebelled, as to where Josiah had a tender heart, Zedekiah hardened his heart, stiffened his neck against turning to the Lord. Now Jeremiah had prophesied that he would be taken to Babylon, Ezekiel (who was in Babylon) had prophesied that he wouldn't see it, so it seems there's a contradiction here. In reality they were both true... "How so?" Nebuchadnezzar came against him pursued him till he overcame him, put all his sons to death before his eyes and then put his eyes out and took him to Babylon. So he didn't see it, but he was taken there and placed in prison until his dying day, the last thing he ever saw was the death of his sons.

Vs15-16

Wow, what a tragic day indeed when God finally is left with no choice but to bring judgment because there's no remedy for one's rebellion and wickedness. If you resist the word of God, don't give heed to messengers of God, if you rebel against the compassion and mercy of God, what else is left but the judgment of God?

Vs17-21

God was "multi-tasking" in His judgment, there was no remedy for their wickedness, they wouldn't repent, judgment was imminent. But along with that God had told them that every 7th yr in the land they were to let the land lie fallow, not cultivate it so it could rest and be replenished. He promised to provide twice as much for them the 6th yr so that they could let the land rest the 7th. 490 yrs they'd been in the land and not once did they honor the Sabbath yr. So if you've ever wondered why the judgment of captivity was placed upon them to the # of 70yrs it's because 1 yr ever 7 yrs through a 490 yr period brings you a total of 70 Sabbath yrs they owed the land. And God made sure the land got its due.

Now by the time 70 yrs was up the Babylonian empire had fallen the Medo-Persian empire was the new “super power” on the earth. Now what’s interesting is that a couple of hundred yrs prior to Cyrus being the ruler of the known world God had given Isaiah a prophecy whereby He called Cyrus by name (Is 44:28) saying that he’d be the one to release the Jews to go and rebuild and restore the temple in Jerusalem. Of course shortly thereafter Nehemiah was released to restore and rebuild the walls, then Daniel kicks in showing the time clock count down till Messiah the prince and His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, there’s just all sorts of things linked together in there. But that’s how Daniel (because of Jeremiah’s prophecy, along with Cyrus coming to the throne) knew that it was time for them to be released and set himself to praying and seeking the Lord, confessing the sins of the nation and all when God began to speak to him in the visions pertaining to things even regarding the end of time. But to finish this up we read here in Vs 22-23

Sort of a 2nd exodus, not from Egypt but from Babylon. So the book of 2nd Chronicles ends on a high note, though times had been dark, God is faithful, and He remembers His word, His promises, His people, and He is compassionate and tender in mercy. We serve a God of new beginnings, hey you may have been enslaved to sin for 70 yrs, God will set you free, He gives us new life, a new beginning in Jesus Christ If man be in Christ he’s a new creation, old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Prayer Points:

Lord we’re thankful for Your faithfulness, You are the God of new beginnings, who shines light into darkness that we might be drawn to repentance, that we might see clearly who You are, and our sin for what it is. Give us hearts eager to repent, soft and tender toward You, thank You for Your Word, continue to have Your way in us...in Jesus’ name.