

2 Chronicles 35-36

Good evening and thank you for joining us! Would you please turn in your Bibles to 2 Chronicles 35? Well, tonight is the final night we're in the book as we'll study both chapters 35 and 36.

Next week-ISRAEL

Following week-Ezra

Now next week we'll study Israel's claim to the promised land, and the following week we'll begin our study in the book of Ezra, which is one of my favorite OT books.

Last time in our study we saw a Godly king take the throne of Judah, his name is Josiah. And Josiah was serious about getting right with God. You'll recall a copy of the scriptures was found during temple renovations and read to him.

King Josiah was in shock, and mourned over the imminent judgment that God was going to execute upon Judah. But you'll recall God tempered His judgment with mercy, as the Lord declared the judgment would not occur during Josiah's days. That judgment will of course be the Babylonians coming to conquer Judah.

Again we're gonna study both chapters 35 and 36, and the title of tonight's message is THE FALL OF JUDAH

Let's pray

1 Now Josiah kept a Passover to the LORD in Jerusalem, and they slaughtered the Passover lambs on the fourteenth day of the first month. 2 And he set the priests in their duties and encouraged them for the service of the house of the LORD. 3 Then he said to the Levites who taught all Israel, who were holy to the LORD: "Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David, king of Israel, built. It shall no longer be a burden on your shoulders. Now serve the LORD your God and His people Israel. You remember Manasseh was Josiah's grandpa. And Manasseh was the most wicked king in Judah's history. Manasseh desecrated the temple, and setup idol worship, and ritualistic prostitution in the house of God. Evidently, when Manasseh did all this-when he desecrated the temple, faithful priests had taken the Ark of the covenant outside of the Temple to protect it.

Verse 3 seems to imply the Levites held the Ark up on poles, and never sat it down outside the Temple. Imagine for 50-plus years the Levites serving shifts holding up, or at least guarding the Ark. 50 years! I grow weary and get discouraged when my trials last longer than a week!

4-7

4 Prepare yourselves according to your fathers' houses, according to your divisions, following the written instruction of David king of Israel and the written instruction of Solomon his son. 5 And stand in the holy place according to the divisions of the fathers' houses of your brethren the lay people, and according to the division of the father's house of the Levites. 6 So slaughter the Passover offerings, consecrate yourselves, and prepare them for

your brethren, that they may do according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses.”

7 Then Josiah gave the lay people lambs and young goats from the flock, all for Passover offerings for all who were present, to the number of thirty thousand, as well as three thousand cattle; these were from the king's possessions. Josiah was very generous here wasn't he? He personally provided thirty thousand lambs and goats for the Passover sacrifice, as well as three thousand cattle. This tells us how passionate King Josiah was to have a proper Passover celebration, he was willing to bear this significant expense.

8 And his leaders gave willingly to the people, to the priests, and to the Levites. Hilkiah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, rulers of the house of God, gave to the priests for the Passover offerings two thousand six hundred from the flock, and three hundred cattle. As is often the case, the generosity of the leader (King Josiah) prompted the generosity of others. 9-10

9 Also Conaniah, his brothers Shemaiah and Nethanel, and Hashabiah and Jeiel and Jozabad, chief of the Levites, gave to the Levites for Passover offerings five thousand from the flock and five hundred cattle.

10 So the service was prepared, and the priests stood in their places, and the Levites in their divisions, according to the king's command. Josiah was careful to make sure the passover was celebrated just the way God had commanded back in Exodus. 11-13

11 And they slaughtered the Passover offerings; and the priests sprinkled the blood with their hands, while the Levites skinned the animals. 12 Then they removed the burnt offerings that they might give them to the divisions of the fathers' houses of the lay people, to offer to the LORD, as it is written in the Book of Moses. And so they did with the cattle. 13 Also they roasted the Passover offerings with fire according to the ordinance; but the other holy offerings they boiled in pots, in caldrons, and in pans, and divided them quickly among all the lay people. There's some significance here, it says they did it quickly, but I don't know what it is.

14-15

14 Then afterward they prepared portions for themselves and for the priests, because the priests, the sons of Aaron, were busy in offering burnt offerings and fat until night; therefore the Levites prepared portions for themselves and for the priests, the sons of Aaron. This lasted for several hours

15 And the singers, the sons of Asaph, were in their places, according to the command of David, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun the king's seer. Also the gatekeepers were at each gate; they did not have to leave their position, because their brethren the Levites prepared portions for them. It's interesting, there is nothing specifically in the Law of Moses that commanded singing or a communal worship service at the celebration of Passover. It appears Josiah went above and beyond to make this an especially meaningful and memorable occasion.

Notice though in verse 15 that the gatekeepers stayed at their location while this celebration was going on. Josiah was mindful

of the security and was on guard even during this great celebration. Every guard stayed ready and on duty, and the Levites prepared portions for these faithful gatekeepers.

16-18

16 So all the service of the LORD was prepared the same day, to keep the Passover and to offer burnt offerings on the altar of the LORD, according to the command of King Josiah. 17 And the children of Israel who were present kept the Passover at that time, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days. 18 There had been no Passover kept in Israel like that since the days of Samuel the prophet; and none of the kings of Israel had kept such a Passover as Josiah kept, with the priests and the Levites, all Judah and Israel who were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. This celebration of Passover was so significant that you had to go back before the time of David and Solomon to find a keeping of Passover that was so well organized and joyfully conducted.

19 In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah this Passover was kept. This date is specified and is important, because this Passover was the last high point in the history of the nation of Judah.

And now we're about to see a Godly king, a Godly leader, make a terrible mistake.

20 After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Carchemish by the Euphrates; and Josiah went out against him. Let's take a moment

and remind ourselves of some history which will help provide some color on these verses.

At the time, 605 BC, the world was headed for a showdown. On the global scene the Babylonians were threatening the Assyrian empire.

In 612 BC, the Assyrian capitol of Ninevah was overrun by Babylonians. The capitol moved to Harran. In 608 Harran fell and the capitol was moved again to Carchemish. The battle of Carchemish became the last stand for the Assyrians.

The Egyptian king, Pharaoh Necho, was on his way to Carchemish to assist Assyria - when Josiah tried to do Babylon a favor by impeding the Egyptian army as it passed through Judah. His mistake cost Josiah his life.

So again big picture there's a huge geopolitical struggle between the declining Assyrian Empire and the emerging Babylonian Empire. The Assyrians made an alliance with the Egyptians to protect against the growing power of the Babylonians. Josiah tries to fight Egypt.

21 But he sent messengers to him, saying, "What have I to do with you, king of Judah? I have not come against you this day, but against the house with which I have war; for God commanded me to make haste. Refrain from meddling with God, who is with me, lest He destroy you." This is shocking! Pharaoh Necho understood the God of Israel was at work – arranging the rise and

fall of nations. This was not Josiah's fight. He should've never gotten involved.

22 Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself so that he might fight with him, and did not heed the words of Necho from the mouth of God. So he came to fight in the Valley of Megiddo. God had spoken to Josiah through the mouth of a pagan king, but for whatever reason, Josiah continued in this course of action, and it proves disastrous.

23-24

23 And the archers shot King Josiah; and the king said to his servants, "Take me away, for I am severely wounded." 24 His servants therefore took him out of that chariot and put him in the second chariot that he had, and they brought him to Jerusalem. So he died, and was buried in one of the tombs of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. The death of Josiah teaches us an important lesson - be careful about getting involved in someone else's fight. Josiah died because he stuck his nose where it didn't belong.

There's a parallel...

2 Samuel 2 18 Now the three sons of Zeruiah were there: Joab and Abishai and Asahel. And Asahel was as fleet of foot as a wild gazelle. 19 So Asahel pursued Abner, and in going he did not turn to the right hand or to the left from following Abner.

20 Then Abner looked behind him and said, "Are you Asahel?" He answered, "I am."

21 And Abner said to him, "Turn aside to your right hand or to your left, and lay hold on one of the young men and take his armor for yourself." But Asahel would not turn aside from following him. 22 So Abner said again to Asahel, "Turn aside from following me. Why should I strike you to the ground? How then could I face your brother Joab?" 23 However, he refused to turn aside. Therefore Abner struck him in the stomach with the blunt end of the spear, so that the spear came out of his back; and he fell down there and died on the spot. So it was that as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died, stood still.

We need to be careful of our pursuits!!

25-27

25 Jeremiah also lamented for Josiah. And to this day all the singing men and the singing women speak of Josiah in their lamentations. They made it a custom in Israel; and indeed they are written in the Laments.

26 Now the rest of the acts of Josiah and his goodness, according to what was written in the Law of the LORD, 27 and his deeds from first to last, indeed they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.

Chapter 36 moves in rapid succession, decades pass by in just a few words. And it records the final days of the nation Judah. God's judgment comes upon His people in the form of the Babylonian army. After their victory at Carchemish the Babylonians march south. They attack Judah on 3 separate occasions, and each time they deport a group of Jews to Babylon.

1-3

1 Then the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and made him king in his father's place in Jerusalem. 2 Jehoahaz^[fn] was twenty-three years old when he became king, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. 3 Now the king of Egypt deposed him at Jerusalem; and he imposed on the land a tribute of one hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold.

Pharaoh Necho, of Egypt had been soundly defeated at Carchemish. He was not a happy camper as he returned home. On his way back through Judah, the Pharaoh took out his frustrations on Josiah's successor, Jehoahaz. He imposes a tribute so now the king of Judah is really just a puppet of Egypt. Josiah's son only reigned a whopping 3 months

4-5

4 Then the king of Egypt made Jehoahaz's^[fn] brother Eliakim king over Judah and Jerusalem, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. And Necho took Jehoahaz^[fn] his brother and carried him off to Egypt.

5 Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD his God. " From now until the end of Judah the prophet Jeremiah will be God's voice to Jehoiakim and Judah's kings.

The first deportation of Jews occurs in 605 BC. Babylon is fresh off its victory at Carchemish and it sweeps south. The next kingdom to attack is Judah.

6 Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against him, and bound him in bronze fetters to carry him off to Babylon. History tells us Nebuchadnezzar received word his father had died, so he

set Jehoiakim free, and rushed back to Babylon to solidify his claim to the throne.

Nebuchadnezzar did take captive certain members of Judah's royal court, and brought them back to Babylon. You'll recognize their names: Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego. He also remembers the Temple treasures King Hezekiah had foolishly shown the Babylonian spies decades earlier...

7 Nebuchadnezzar also carried off some of the articles from the house of the LORD to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon. Keep verse 7 in mind when you read Daniel 5 – the story of the handwriting on the wall. One reason God was so infuriated with the Babylonian king Belshazzar, was that he used these same holy vessels as wine goblets at his drunken feast. Belshazzar mocked the God of Israel, so God decided to break up his party. Again that's Daniel 5
8-10

8 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, the abominations which he did, and what was found against him, indeed they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah. Then Jehoiachin his son reigned in his place.

9 Jehoiachin was eight^[fn] years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months and ten days. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD. 10 At the turn of the year King Nebuchadnezzar summoned him and took him to Babylon, with the costly articles from the house of the LORD, and made Zedekiah, Jehoiakim's^[fn] brother, king over Judah and Jerusalem. This was the second deportation to Babylonian. It

occurred in 597 BC. Along with King Jehoiachin, or as he's known elsewhere, Jeconiah or Coniah, Nebuchadnezzar also took a Jewish priest named Ezekiel captive to Babylon.

Before he leaves, Nebuchadnezzar puts another of Josiah's sons on the throne. He appoints Zedekiah to serve as his vassal or puppet king.

11 Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. 12 He did evil in the sight of the LORD his God, and did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke from the mouth of the LORD. Jeremiah warned Zedekiah to surrender to the inevitable. The Babylonian oppression was God's will - His judgment on Judah. To fight it was to oppose God

13 And he also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear an oath by God; but he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to the LORD God of Israel. God's will for the Jews was submission. You can read of all these details in the book of Jeremiah.

14 Moreover all the leaders of the priests and the people transgressed more and more, according to all the abominations of the nations, and defiled the house of the LORD which He had consecrated in Jerusalem. They not only stopped worshipping God they misused God's temple.

15 And the LORD God of their fathers sent warnings to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending them, because He

had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. 16 But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, till there was no remedy. There was no cure for Judah's rebellion – nothing to avert judgment.

17 Therefore He brought against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or virgin, on the aged or the weak; He gave them all into his hand. Zedekiah's alliance with the Egyptians against Babylon was the straw that broke the camel's back. Nebuchadnezzar said enough is enough.

18 And all the articles from the house of God, great and small, the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his leaders, all these he took to Babylon. 19 Then they burned the house of God, broke down the wall of Jerusalem, burned all its palaces with fire, and destroyed all its precious possessions. In 586 BC the walls of Jerusalem were breached - the city was destroyed, the Temple burned to the ground, and the remaining Jews were deported. The Babylonians showed no mercy

20 And those who escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon, where they became servants to him and his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, 21 to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths. As long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years. It's interesting, for 70 years the Jews were exiles in Babylon – but why 70? The Law of Moses commanded the Jews

to let the land lie dormant every 7th year. This allowed the land to replenish itself of its nutrients.

But their greed drove the Jews to ignore the Law. For 490 years, or 70 7th years, they refused to obey. God gave the land its 70 years of rest by removing the people to Babylon.

Ezra closes 2 Chronicles by mentioning the event that ends the Jewish exile.

(Ezra 1:1–4)

22 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying,

23 Thus says Cyrus king of Persia:

All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is among you of all His people? May the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up!

In 536 BC Babylon is conquered by the Medes and Persians. And one of the first proclamations made by the new emperor - the Persian king, Cyrus - was to allow the Jews to return to Jerusalem, and rebuild their temple.

Notice too, in verse 23 a pagan king acknowledges of the God of Israel as the source of his victories. Isaiah prophesied of Cyrus – even mentioned him by name – 100 years before he was born.

Isaiah 44:28 Who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd,
And he shall perform all My pleasure,
Saying to Jerusalem, "You shall be built,"
And to the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid." '

Isaiah 45:1 "Thus says the LORD to His anointed,
To Cyrus, whose right hand I have held—
To subdue nations before him
And loose the armor of kings,
To open before him the double doors,
So that the gates will not be shut:
2 'I will go before you
And make the crooked places[fn] straight;
I will break in pieces the gates of bronze
And cut the bars of iron.

Perhaps Daniel pointed this out to Cyrus – and it impressed him enough to give God glory, and be gracious to His people