

## 2 Chronicles 32b-36 – Chapter Study

### INTRO

#### I. THE REIGN OF SOLOMON CHS. 1-9

#### II. THE REIGN OF THE DAVIDIC DYNASTY CHS. 10-36

##### *M. Hezekiah Chs. 29-32*

1. **Cleansing of the temple Ch. 29**
2. **Hezekiah's great Passover 30:1-31:1**
3. **Reestablishment of proper worship 31:2-21**
4. **Sennacherib's invasion 32:1-23**

We ended our study last time with Assyria's invasion of Judah.

The northern kingdom of Israel has now been conquered and carried away into captivity.

Then the Assyrians marched south into Judah and laid waste to the fortress cities that provided the defensive bulwark for the capital of Jerusalem.

But God broke the siege the Assyrians set against Jerusalem by sending a plague that wiped out over nearly two hundred thousand.

Crippled by such losses, the Assyrian king Sennacherib retreated.

This brings us to v. 24.

##### **5. Hezekiah's sickness and prosperity 32:24-33**

**<sup>24</sup> In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death, and he prayed to the LORD; and He spoke to him and gave him a sign.**

In 2 Kings we learn this sickness occurred 15 years before Hezekiah's death.

It would have been the end of him but he plead with God to preserve his life, and he was answered.

The prophet Isaiah told him God heard & answered his prayer.

When Hezekiah asked for a sign that his days would be prolonged, God answered by causing the sun to go backward 10 degrees.

That miracle was so remarkable it caused the Babylonians, the foremost *astrologers* of the ancient world, to send emissaries to honor Hezekiah.

The Babylonians were rising as a major challenge to the Assyrians who were the dominant power.

They were looking to gather alliances with other powerful kingdoms that could defeat the Assyrian hegemony.

They figured anyone who could cause the sun to reverse it's course had to be powerful and send ambassadors to visit Hezekiah to gain his support in their bid to defeat Assyria.

Of course, God used this appeal by the Babylonians as a test to see if Hezekiah would trust in Him or in a human treaty as we'll see in a few verses.

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God did heal Hezekiah of this sickness & granted him 15 more years.

**<sup>25</sup> But Hezekiah did not repay according to the favor *shown* him, for his heart was lifted up; therefore wrath was looming over him and over Judah and Jerusalem. <sup>26</sup> Then Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the**

**wrath of the LORD did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah.**

This will be our text for Sunday so I'll save comment till then.

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What we read next looks back over all of Hezekiah's reign in summary.

**<sup>27</sup> Hezekiah had very great riches and honor. And he made himself treasuries for silver, for gold, for precious stones, for spices, for shields, and for all kinds of desirable items; <sup>28</sup> storehouses for the harvest of grain, wine, and oil; and stalls for all kinds of livestock, and folds for flocks. <sup>29</sup> Moreover he provided cities for himself, and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance; for God had given him very much property. <sup>30</sup> This same Hezekiah also stopped the water outlet of Upper Gihon, and brought the water by tunnel to the west side of the City of David. Hezekiah prospered in all his works.**

We mentioned the amazing engineering feat of Hezekiah's tunnel last time.

Prior to 1880, critics & skeptics of the Bible pointed to the lack of a tunnel in Jerusalem being evidence of the mythical nature of Scripture.

But the tunnel was found, complete with an inscription by the builders, locating it to the exact time mentioned in both Kings & Chronicles.

But instead of the critics reversing their unbelief, because of the evidence, they just shift their arguments to new ground.

This has happened time & again with faith in God & His Word, proving that unbelief isn't based on a lack of evidence but on a settled decision to not believe regardless of the evidence.

[Example of *Gabriel's Vision* – Rabbi Israel Knoll]

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**<sup>31</sup> However, regarding the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, whom they sent to him to inquire about the wonder that was done in the land, God withdrew from him, in order to test him, that He might know all that was in his heart.**

When the sun reversed its course, the Babylonians who specialized in celestial observations, immediately sought out the cause.

It didn't take long before they discovered that it was a sign of prolonging Hezekiah's life.

So they sent him some highly placed officials.

<sup>2nd</sup> Kings tell us when they arrived, Hezekiah tried to impress them by showing him all that wealth mentioned in the previous verses.

The Babylonians had come to gain Judah's support in their plans to defeat Assyria.

Hezekiah thought he could add to their sense of awe & desire to ally with him by showing them the treasures God had given him.

But the **result** of all this was to send those Babylonian officials home with a report to their king of Judah's great wealth.

It was that wealth that drove the Babylonians to come some years later & **attack** Jerusalem.

**Why** God **withdrew** from Hezekiah to allow him to be tested we'll take a look at on Sunday.

**<sup>32</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his goodness**

[faithfulness], indeed they *are* written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, *and* in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. <sup>33</sup> So Hezekiah rested with his fathers, and they buried him in the upper tombs of the sons of David; and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem honored him at his death. Then Manasseh his son reigned in his place.

***N. Manasseh 33:1-20***

**<sup>1</sup> Manasseh was 12 years old when he became king, and he reigned 55 years in Jerusalem.**

If 15 years were added on to Hezekiah, and his son Manasseh was 12 when he gained the throne, he was born during that extension.

In light of how wicked Manasseh was, it might have been better if Hezekiah had not had that last 15 years.

Indeed – because of all we learn of Hezekiah’s last years, it seems it would have been better if he’d died sooner rather than later.

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Manasseh’s reign was the longest of all the kings – from 697 to 642 BC.

**<sup>2</sup> But he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. <sup>3</sup> For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down; he raised up altars for the Baals, and made wooden images; and he worshiped all the host of heaven and served them. <sup>4</sup> He also built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, “In Jerusalem shall My name be forever.” <sup>5</sup> And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the 2 courts of the house of the LORD.**

The outer court & the court of the priests in front of the temple.

**<sup>6</sup> Also he caused his sons to pass through the fire in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom;**

He offered his own children up as sacrifices.

**he practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft and sorcery, and consulted mediums and spiritists.**

These things were all under the ban of God and spoken of as great abominations in the Law of Moses. [Exo 22:18 Deut. 18:10-12]

2 Kings 21:16 adds that Manasseh also executed many innocent people.

The justice system was perverted, turned into an agent of the state to confiscate the property & wealth of Manasseh’s enemies.

**He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger. <sup>7</sup> He even set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon his son, “In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put My name forever; <sup>8</sup> and I will not again remove the foot of Israel from the land which I have appointed for your fathers—only if they are careful to do all that I have commanded them, according to the whole law and the statutes and the ordinances by**

**the hand of Moses.”**

Not content to erect altars & idols in the courts, he even entered into the holy place & set up an idol there.

Ezra then gives a little foreshadowing by saying God had promised to keep Israel in the land, *as long as* they faithfully served Him. But if they forsook Him, that promise was forfeit.

**<sup>9</sup> So Manasseh seduced Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do more evil than the nations whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel.**

So what fate could they expect?

**<sup>10</sup> And the LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they would not listen.**

God sent prophets to the king and nation, but they were ignored.

Throughout Manasseh’s reign, bad things were happening to Judah.

God’s judgments were coming in the form of drought, famine, economic upheaval, enemy encroachments, disease, moral & societal disintegration.

The prophets said these things were the result of turning away from God & that if the people repented, God would relent.

But the prophets were ignored. They were labeled as religious kooks for calling the disasters the judgment of God.

Interesting that though the people were so ready to acknowledge idols, they were refused to recognize the Lord.

As we read this – I can’t help but see how the same is happening today.

**<sup>11</sup> Therefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the army of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh with hooks, bound him with bronze fetters, and carried him off to Babylon.**

Which at this time was a part of the Assyrian Empire.

The Babylonian campaign against Assyria during the days of Hezekiah had been defeated & the Assyrians occupied Babylon.

Up to this point in Manasseh’s reign, Judah was a vassal to Assyria.

But a civil war in Assyria caused Manasseh to break away.

When the revolt was put down, the Assyrians reasserted their control over Judah and took Manasseh hostage.

**<sup>12</sup> Now when he was in affliction, he implored the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, <sup>13</sup> and prayed to Him; and He received his entreaty, heard his supplication, and brought him back to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD was God.**

This is amazing! No king was more vile than Manasseh. He had 50 years to spread his abominations throughout Judah.

Yet when he humbled himself in genuine repentance, God heard & healed him! Manasseh teaches us that no matter how far gone someone may be, it’s never too late to turn back to God.

**<sup>14</sup> After this he built a wall outside the City of David on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, as far as the entrance of the Fish Gate; and it**

enclosed Ophel, and he raised it to a very great height. Then he put military captains in all the fortified cities of Judah. <sup>15</sup> He took away the foreign gods and the idol from the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the LORD and in Jerusalem; and he cast *them* out of the city. <sup>16</sup> He also repaired the altar of the LORD, sacrificed peace offerings and thank offerings on it, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel.

The *evidence* of his repentance was his reversal of all the corruption that had marked his previous reign.

**<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless the people still sacrificed on the high places, *but only to the LORD their God.***

The high places that had been erected all over the land were not removed as they ought to have been.

All the people did was to say they were worshipping God, not idols.

But as we've seen, this was contrary to the command of the Lord who said His people were to offer their sacrifices *only* at the temple where their worship would be informed by the teaching of the priests.

We cannot come to God as we *wish* Him to be, as we would mold Him.

Worship of God must be in Spirit & in truth – as He's revealed HIMSELF in His Word.

**<sup>18</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, his prayer to his God, and the words of the seers who spoke to him in the name of the LORD God of Israel, indeed they *are written* in the book of the kings of Israel. <sup>19</sup> Also his prayer and *how God* received his entreaty, and all his sin and trespass, and the sites where he built high places and set up wooden images and carved images, before he was humbled, indeed they *are written* among the sayings of Hozai.**

A record we no longer possess.

**<sup>20</sup> So Manasseh rested with his fathers, and they buried him in his own house. Then his son Amon reigned in his place.**

***O. Amon 33:21-25***

**<sup>21</sup> Amon was 22 years old when he became king, and he reigned 2 years in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup> But he did evil in the sight of the LORD, as his father Manasseh had done; for Amon sacrificed to all the carved images which his father Manasseh had made, and served them. <sup>23</sup> And he did not humble himself before the LORD, as his father Manasseh had humbled himself; but Amon trespassed more and more. <sup>24</sup> Then his servants conspired against him, and killed him in his own house. <sup>25</sup> But the people of the land executed all those who had conspired against King Amon. Then the people of the land made his son Josiah king in his place.**

Though Amon reigned only 2 years, as soon as he took the throne, he moved to restore the paganism that marked his father's earlier reign.

He was such a wicked king his own courtiers conspired to assassinate him.

They in turn were executed.  
This then led to the reign of Josiah – Judah’s last good king.

**P. Josiah Chs. 34-35**

**1. Josiah’s reformation Ch. 34**

**<sup>1</sup> Josiah was 8 years old when he became king, and he reigned 31 years in Jerusalem.**

Which means his dad was no more than 16 when he had him.

**<sup>2</sup> And he did *what was right in the sight of the LORD*, and walked in the ways of his father David; *he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.***

Josiah had a heart for God on the order of his great ancestor David.

This places Josiah in the august company of the previous kings, Jehoshaphat & Hezekiah.

**<sup>3</sup> For in the 8<sup>th</sup> year of his reign, while he was still young, [16] he began to seek the God of his father David; and in the 12<sup>th</sup> year [4 years after that, at 20] he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images.**

At 16, in the *thick* of his teenage years, when many kids struggle with morality – Josiah, holding far more power & autonomy than most people, harnessed all his natural inclinations and submitted himself to God.

And it wasn’t like he had such a great example from his dad Amon.

It seems his grandfather’s later years had a far greater influence on him.

At 16, his life stretched out before him, Josiah realized he had to choose a path; serve God or idols.

He chose God.

And after walking with Him for 4 years, he realized God had a mission for him.

He realized that his life affected others and that the choices he made could either bring blessing or cursing to many.

Blessing would be obtained by obedience to God so he set about to use the power given to him as the king to remove the evidences of idolatry that littered the land.

**<sup>4</sup> They broke down the altars of the Baals in his presence,**

Note that – Josiah went out to eradicate these pagan shrines personally! He was there.

He didn’t just send others out to do his bidding, he went with them to participate in cleansing the land.

**and the incense altars which were above them he cut down; and the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images he broke in pieces, and made dust of them and scattered *it* on the graves of those who had sacrificed to them. <sup>5</sup> He also burned the bones of the priests on their altars, and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem.**

This was the height of shame – to dig up graves and defile the bones.

Josiah did this to send a warning to anyone who would in the future consider a

return to the worship of idols.

He wasn't just working for the benefit of his own day.

He did this for the *long-range blessing* of the land & people.

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Just a few days ago we stood on a hillside near Bethlehem, looking across a gully to the opposite hillside; a shepherd's field.

All across the hillside were the remnants of ancient stone fences, built by many generations as people removed the limestone rocks that come to the surface each year.

The soil is rocky and makes sowing and plowing the fields a chore, so they remove the rocks and add them to the walls that allow them to make terraces on the hillsides for growing crops.

For centuries, each generation works its field, improving the quality of their field – not just for themselves, but for their descendants.

Everything they did, they did *with an eye to the future*, for those who would come after them.

That's the way it was for a good part of *our* history here in the US.

Our ancestors worked their farms & fields, or built their business, with the thought of passing on their work to the *next* generation, each one contributing something helpful & positive to the next.

But the Industrial Revolution changed all that.

Kids moved away from the country to seek their fortune in the city.

Modern economic & social forces stripped away the continuity between the generations.

The sense of *obligation* to those who come after us was lost.

Perfectly summed up by the bumper sticker I saw on a Winnebago years ago –  
*“We're Spending Our Children's Inheritance.”*

The credit & financial crises we see now is an example of how people today have no regard for those who come after them.

Pollution & environmental crises are another example of modernity living for the moment with no concern for those who come after them.

Today, those fields near Bethlehem are in disrepair. It's been years since anyone cleared the fields of rocks or added to the height of the walls – because the families who worked them have left.

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Though he was young, Josiah understood that while he had to do what was right for the moment in which he lived, he also had to consider the future & what was best for those who would come after.

So he dug up the pagan priests' bones & burned them on their altars to serve as a warning to all those who came after that if they turned from the Lord, they too might be so shamed when *they* died.

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The concern of many about the financial bailout being done right now is that while it might fix the problem, it's only temporary; for this moment, and that it *imperils* our *long term* financial health.

Some think it's a band-aid that hides a deeper infection that will ultimately lead to ruin.

Time will tell.

But let's learn the lesson here – we can't sacrifice the future for a temporary fix.

The future is built on what we do today.

We can avoid tomorrow's troubles by *doing today* what's *right for tomorrow*.

**6 And so he did in the cities of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, as far as Naphtali and all around, with axes.**

Josiah didn't just limit his reforms to Judah. He went clear up into the region around Galilee.

**7 When he had broken down the altars and the wooden images, had beaten the carved images into powder, and cut down all the incense altars throughout all the land of Israel, he returned to Jerusalem. 8 In the 18<sup>th</sup> year of his reign, when he had purged the land and the temple, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of the LORD his God.**

Once the campaign to eradicate idolatry was complete, Josiah set about to repair the temple in Jerusalem.

**9 When they came to Hilkiah the high priest, they delivered the money that was brought into the house of God, which the Levites who kept the doors had gathered from the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, from all the remnant of Israel, from all Judah and Benjamin, and which they had brought back to Jerusalem. 10 Then they put it in the hand of the foremen who had the oversight of the house of the LORD; and they gave it to the workmen who worked in the house of the LORD, to repair and restore the house.**

A special collection was made by the Levites for the restoring of the temple.

**11 They gave it to the craftsmen and builders to buy hewn stone and timber for beams, and to floor the houses which the kings of Judah had destroyed. 12 And the men did the work faithfully. Their overseers were Jahath and Obadiah the Levites, of the sons of Merari, and Zechariah and Meshullam, of the sons of the Kohathites, to supervise. Others of the Levites, all of whom were skillful with instruments of music, 13 were over the burden bearers and were overseers of all who did work in any kind of service. And some of the Levites were scribes, officers, and gatekeepers. 14 Now when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the LORD, Hilkiah the priest found the Book of the Law of the LORD given by Moses. 15 Then Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, "I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD." And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan. 16 So Shaphan carried the book to the king, bringing the king word, saying, "All that was committed to your servants they are doing. 17 And they have gathered the money that was found in the house of the LORD, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers and the workmen." 18 Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, "Hilkiah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan**

read it before the king. <sup>19</sup> Thus it happened, when the king heard the words of the Law, that he tore his clothes.

As the work of repairing the temple went forth, the workers made a discovery.

They found a scroll containing the Torah, the books of Moses.

A scroll like that would have been recognized by the workers as important so they took it to the high priest, who in turn gave it to one of Josiah's chief administrators – a scribe named Shaphan, who of course could read.

He then took it to the king and read it to him.

Up till that moment, everything Josiah knew about God is what he'd learned by oral instruction and tradition from the high priest.

The reading and study of the written word had been neglected for decades.

In fact, the Word of God had been lost in the house of God.

Worship & service was going on, but it was uninformed by God's Word; it was based on tradition.

When Josiah heard for the first time the Words of God, he realized how very far the nation & people had fallen from the Lord.

When he heard the words of Deuteronomy, how God would bless their obedience and curse their disobedience, he realized all the nation's problems lay in their great sin of turning away from God.

That things weren't worse already was due only to God's mercy.

Think of it – until Josiah's reforms, the Word of God was lost in the House of God.

People were going to the temple. The priests were doing their thing. Worship was going on.

There was activity and much of it was good – but God's Word was not regarded.

Because of that, some of what was going on was empty; vain ritual that **degraded** the people's knowledge of God.

This is why I'm greatly concerned for those local churches & denominations who give little heed to the study & teaching of the Bible.

The pastor may preach a sermon, but it's not a faithful exposition of the Scriptures.

It's a talk about spiritual things, with an occasional verse sprinkled on top like holy water, in an attempt to lend some basis for what he's saying.

You see, **it's all a question of authority**. Does the **preacher** or the **Word** have authority?

Some preachers assert **their authority** by stating **their** ideas, **their** opinions, & using Scripture to **validate** their points.

What they ought to do instead is to draw their ideas & opinions **from what the Scripture says**.

The authority is **in** the Word of God, & the only authority a pastor or preacher has flows from his **faithfulness to rightly divide that Word**.

I want you to know that when I study & teach, I'm not trying to come up with new things no one has ever seen before.

I'm not after "new revelation."

If it's new, it's probably not true & if it's true it's not new.

When I teach, my goal is to become invisible & simply lead you into a

personal encounter with the Spirit of God Who teaches you.  
When I share something, I don't want you to say, "Pastor, you're so gifted –  
Wow what insights you have!!"

I want you to say, "Well, duh, there it is right there. That's what the Word  
says!"

"I believe it, not because pastor says it – but because it's what the Word says –  
I can see it there for myself."

Be careful of those who claim to have special revelation and to find things in the  
Bible no one has ever seen before.

1 Peter 1:20 says that no scripture is of any private interpretation.

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**20 Then the king commanded Hilkiah, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Abdon the son of Micah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king, saying, 21 "Go, inquire of the LORD for me, and for those who are left in Israel and Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found; for great is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out on us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do according to all that is written in this book." 22 So Hilkiah and those the king had appointed went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tokhath, the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe. (She dwelt in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter.) And they spoke to her to that effect. 23 Then she answered them, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'Tell the man who sent you to Me, 24 "Thus says the LORD: 'Behold, I will bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants, all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah, 25 because they have forsaken Me and burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands. Therefore My wrath will be poured out on this place, and not be quenched.' " ' 26 But as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, in this manner you shall speak to him, 'Thus says the LORD God of Israel: "Concerning the words which you have heard— 27 because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words against this place and against its inhabitants, and you humbled yourself before Me, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you," says the LORD. 28 "Surely I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; and your eyes shall not see all the calamity which I will bring on this place and its inhabitants." ' ' " So they brought back word to the king.**

The sins of Judah under guys like Manasseh and Amon had tipped the scales of  
God's wrath inevitably over to judgment. It was only a matter of when.

Because Josiah had done the good and right thing, not only in his reforms, but  
in his response to the Word of God, judgment would be delayed.

In fact, during his life & reign, a period of peace & a measure of blessing  
would return.

As I read this – I can't help but think of our own time.

Certainly the sins of our nation have reached to heaven and called forth God's wrath.

But if we will turn to Him now in humility & repentance, reforming our behavior as is fitting for real repentance, then judgment can be delayed – giving those who hold out a season to come back to the Lord before judgment falls.

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As we look to the elections in just 3 weeks, we may be gravely concerned about who's elected president.

Don't fear. Trust God. Wicked Amon was followed by godly Josiah.

**29 Then the king sent and gathered all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. 30 The king went up to the house of the LORD, with all the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem—the priests and the Levites, and all the people, great and small. And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant which had been found in the house of the LORD. 31 Then the king stood in his place and made a covenant before the LORD, to follow the LORD, and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book. 32 And he made all who were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin take a stand. So the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. 33 Thus Josiah removed all the abominations from all the country that *belonged* to the children of Israel, and made all who were present in Israel diligently serve the LORD their God. All his days they did not depart from following the LORD God of their fathers.**

## **2. Josiah's great Passover 35:1-19**

**1 Now Josiah kept a Passover to the LORD in Jerusalem, and they slaughtered the Passover lambs on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the 1<sup>st</sup> 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.**

There were those among the priests and Levites who had remained faithful to the Lord no matter who reigned or what their policy was.

During the dark days of some of the wicked kings, these faithful priests had removed the ark and hidden it away so that it wouldn't be defiled.

Josiah told them to put it back in the holy of holies and leave it there.

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The question is – where did they hide it when a wicked king ruled?

Many scholars believe when Solomon built the original temple, he cut special rooms underneath the temple courtyard, possible one directly under the holy of holies.

These rooms were known only to the priests and that's where they hid the ark.

One Jewish tradition says that at the end of his reign, Josiah was given a vision of Judah's future and the destruction of the temple by the Babylonians, so he instructed the priests to hide the ark.

Several years ago, 2 well known archaeologists rabbis were digging along the side of the temple mount in the western wall and claimed they found a tunnel.

When they flashed their lights down its length, they said they saw something bright reflected back at them.

It was late in the day so they left, determined to return the next day and find out what it was.

But when they got back the next morning, the Arabs who control the temple mount had poured a huge plug of cement into the tunnel – sealing it.

Those rabbis are convinced what they saw was the ark.

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In vs. 4-17 we get an account of that great Passover and how it was observed.

**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. 19 In the 18<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Josiah this Passover was kept.**

In ch. 30, Hezekiah renewed the Passover after being neglected for many years.

But as great as that Passover was, Josiah's was even grander.

### **3. Josiah's fatal encounter with Necho 35:20-27**

**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.**

The year was 609 BC. Necho II was a leading Pharaoh of the 26<sup>th</sup> dynasty of Egypt.

Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire had fallen 3 years before to a union of Babylonian & Median forces.

The Egyptians were allies of the Assyrians so Necho marched a huge force north to retake the last Assyrian capital of Haran.

The Egyptians & Assyrians met the Babylonians with their Median allies at Carchemish near the Euphrates River in one of the most important battles of the ancient world.

Though the outcome was inconclusive, it left Egypt in control of all of Syria & Israel.

Judah had been in a kind of loose alliance with Babylon since the days of Hezekiah, so Josiah went out against Necho's army as they marched north.

The Egyptians used the Via Maris along the coastal plain of Israel.

Then they came through one of the passes near the fortress city of Megiddo where Josiah's forces had drawn up to pin them down.

**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." 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.**

Josiah didn't believe Necho really was speaking as if God had directed him to this campaign.

In fact, all this was ordained by God.

He was positioning the Egyptians to play a part in the final judgment of Judah. The telling component in all this is that nowhere do we ever read of Josiah seeking God about whether or not he ought to have marched out to meet the Egyptians. It seemed like the right thing – but he never sought God on it. And it resulted in his death.

**<sup>23</sup> And the archers shot King Josiah; and the king said to his servants, "Take me away, for I am severely wounded." <sup>24</sup> His servants therefore took him out of that chariot and put him in the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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. <sup>25</sup> 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. <sup>26</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Josiah and his goodness, according to *what* was written in the Law of the LORD, <sup>27</sup> and his deeds from first to last, indeed they *are* written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.**

**Q. Jehoahaz 36:1-4**

**<sup>1</sup> Then the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and made him king in his father's place in Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> Jehoahaz was 23 years old when he became king, and he reigned 3 months in Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup> Now the king of Egypt deposed him at Jerusalem; and he imposed on the land a tribute of 100 talents of silver and a talent of gold. <sup>4</sup> Then the king of Egypt made *Jehoahaz's* brother Eliakim king over Judah and Jerusalem, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. And Necho took Jehoahaz his brother and carried him off to Egypt.**

As a hostage.

Jehoahaz wasn't the compliant ruler Necho wanted so he deposed him and put his older brother Eliakim in his place – changing his name to Jehoiakim.

This change of name demonstrated Necho's control over Eliakim, so over Judah.

**R. Jehoiakim 36:5-8**

**<sup>5</sup> Jehoiakim was 25 years old when he became king, and he reigned 11 years in Jerusalem. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD his God. <sup>6</sup> Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against him, and bound him in bronze *fetters* to carry him off to Babylon.**

Which means the Babylonians defeated the Egyptians and asserted control over all the territory the Egyptians had held.

<sup>7</sup> Nebuchadnezzar also carried off some of the articles from the house of the LORD to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon. <sup>8</sup> 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.

#### **S. Jehoiachin 36:9-10**

<sup>9</sup> Jehoiachin was 8 years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem 3 months and 10 days. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD. <sup>10</sup> 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* brother, king over Judah and Jerusalem.

Jehoiachin was too young to rule.

He was nothing but a puppet being used by the anti-Babylonians interested in Jerusalem,

So Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king installed a guy he thought would be a bit more to the liking of the Babylonians – Zedekiah, Jehoiachin's 21 year old *uncle*.

Turns out Zedekiah started out submitting to Nebuchadnezzar, but then like his predecessor became the agent of the anti-Babylonian faction.

#### **T. Zedekiah 36:11-16**

<sup>11</sup> Zedekiah was 21 years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. <sup>12</sup> 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.*

The judgment of God had now begun against Judah and Jeremiah warned Zedekiah and his allies not to resist the Babylonians.

They refused to listen & rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, who brought the full fury of the Babylonian army against Jerusalem.

<sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> 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*.

No comment is needed. May we simply read it and take notice.

#### **U. The Babylonian Conquest and Exile 36:17-21**

**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. **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. **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 70 years.

Judah was exiled for 70 years because for 490 years, the people had failed to observe the sabbath year and allow their fields to lie fallow.

But 70 years later, the Persians had defeated the Babylonians and became heir to all her empire.

Then a new king arose who allowed the Jews to return to their land and rebuild.

#### **V. The Decree of Cyrus 36:22-23**

**22** Now in the 1<sup>st</sup> 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!**

Ezra, the scribe who wrote Chronicles, was one of those exiles who had returned to rebuild Jerusalem.

He concludes his account with Cyrus' command to rebuild the temple, whose destruction at the hands of the Babylonians 70 years before was the judgment of God on wicked Judah.

Ezra's point was that now as they rebuilt, they must not forget the lesson their past failure taught.