



LESSON 20 TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE

Israel		Judah	
Jeroboam	931–910	Rehoboam	931–913
Nadab	910–909	Abijah	913–911
Baasha	909–886	Asa	911–870
Elah	886–885		
Zimri	885		
Omri	885–874		
Ahab	874–853	Jehoshaphat	873–848
Ahaziah	853–852		
Joram	852–841	Jehoram	848–841
Jehu	841–814	Ahaziah	841
		Athaliah	841–835
Jehoahaz	814–798	Joash	835–796
Jehoash	798–782	Amaziah	796–767
Jeroboam II	793–753	Uzziah	792–740
Zechariah	753		
Shallum	752		
Menahem	752–742	Jotham	750–731
Pekahiah	742–740		
Pekah	752–732	Ahaz	735–715
Hoshea	732–722	Hezekiah	729–686
		Manasseh	696–642
		Amon	642–640
		Josiah	640–609
		Jehoahaz	609
		Jehoiakim	608–598
		Jehoiachin	598–597
		Zedekiah	597–586

In our previous lesson we noted the great lengths taken by Josiah to renew the covenant between the people and Jehovah. The Lord's house was repaired, His Law was found and read, covenant oaths were taken and a great work of purging the land of idolatry was undertaken. One aspect of Josiah's covenant renewal was not discussed, a celebration of the Passover unlike any since the days of Samuel (see 2Chronicles 35.18; 2Kings 23.22). The Passover feast was intimately tied to the covenant, for not only was its observance mandated by the Law (see Leviticus 23.5), but the feast commemorated one of the great blessings of the covenant: God delivering Israel from Egypt (Exodus 12). Now the Lord who had delivered His people from bondage was about to send them back into bondage (see 2Kings 21.12-15; 22.16-17). Could proper observance of the Passover cause the people to turn their hearts back to the Lord and at least postpone this disaster, if not prevent it?

Passover observed (2Chronicles 35.1-19; 2Kings 23.21-23).

We recently noted another great Passover observance, occurring in the days of king Hezekiah (see 2Chronicles 30). Yet, the text states that the Passover observed in Josiah's day was greater than the one celebrated by Hezekiah; greater than that observed at any time since Samuel (2Chronicles 35.18). A few factors may have contributed to this favorable designation:

1. Josiah's Passover was observed on the proper date (2Chronicles 35.1; see Leviticus 23.5). Recall that Hezekiah's Passover had to be delayed until the

second month because the priests had not consecrated themselves (see 2Chronicles 30.2-3).

2. Josiah sought to do all according to what was authorized in God's word. This authority was found in the Law of Moses (2Chronicles 35.6,12) and what was revealed by David and Solomon (2Chronicles 35.3-4,15). Note: one practice begun by Hezekiah was continued by Josiah, indicating its authorization by God; the Levites slaughtered ALL of the Passover lambs (2Chronicles 35.6). This change may have been necessitated by the fact that the blood was sprinkled on the altar and not on individual mantles (note 2Chronicles 35.11).
3. The priests and Levites are noted for their faithfulness in executing their duties (2Chronicles 35.4-6,10-15). This is in contrast to the Passover of Hezekiah when many of priests and Levites were ashamed because they had not consecrated themselves (2Chronicles 30.15).
4. The generosity of Josiah and other leaders of Judah (2Chronicles 35.7-9).
5. Finally, this Passover feast may have been better attended (2Chronicles 35.18). Recall that many in Israel refused Hezekiah's invitation to attend the Passover (see 2Chronicles 30.10).

A few other notes regarding this Passover feast will suffice. First, Josiah's instruction to "put the holy ark in the house..." is uncertain (2Chronicles 35.3). If and when the ark was removed is unknown. Perhaps when Manasseh placed idols in the Temple, or maybe when the Temple was being repaired. Second, notice the sacrifice of bulls (2Chronicles 35.8). These cattle would not have been part of the Passover offerings, but burnt offerings given at the same time. Portions of these would have been "boiled... in pots" as they were given to the priests and Levites (vs. 13). The Passover was to be roasted and none of it was to be boiled (see Exodus 12.9).

Too Little, Too Late (2Kings 23.25-27).

Josiah's efforts were commended in Scripture, but they were not enough. "Before him there was no king like him who turned to the LORD with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him. However, the LORD did not turn from the fierceness of His great wrath with which His anger burned against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked Him. The LORD said, "I will remove Judah also from My sight, as I have removed Israel. And I will cast off Jerusalem, this city which I have chosen, and the temple of which I said, 'My name shall be there.' "" (2 Kings 23:25–27, NASB95) In our next lesson we will look at the prophets from this time period, giving us a better understanding of the people and why the Lord was not relenting from bringing the covenant

curses on His people.

Josiah's observance of the Passover was not sufficient to mend the covenant that the people had repeatedly broken. Thankfully, a future descendant of Josiah would serve as our Passover lamb (John 1.29; 1Cor. 5.7), being slain for us and bringing us into covenant with God (Revelation 5.6-14).

Death of Josiah (2Chronicles 35.20-27).

The power structure of the Ancient Near East had changed dramatically during Josiah's 31 year reign. The Assyrian kings Esarhaddon (681-669 B.C.) and Ashurbanipal (669-627 B.C.) had extended Assyria's power into Egypt, conquering Thebes in 667 B.C. However, Assyrian power rapidly declined, particularly following the death of Ashurbanipal. Egypt quickly broke free from the Assyrian yoke and Assyria could do nothing to reassert their authority because they had problems much closer to home. Numerous peoples were rebelling against Assyria, chief among them were the Babylonians. "The future of Babylon lay with Nabopolassar, the king of the Sealand, who had proclaimed himself king in 626 B.C... In 612 B.C. Nabopolassar joined forces with Cyaxeres the Mede to capture Assyria's capital of Nineveh. The Assyrians retreated westward to the city of Haran, but it too fell to the Babylonians and their allies (e.g., the Scythians) in 610 B.C. The effort of the Egyptians and the Assyrians to retake Haran failed and the Assyrians never regained power." (Walter Kaiser, A History of Israel, pages 390-391).



As Assyrian power waned, Egypt changed policy toward their former

overlords. Pharaoh Neco of Egypt did not wish to see Assyria replaced by an even stronger Babylon, thus Egypt marched to bolster the Assyrian forces at Carchemish (2Chronicles 35.20). Neco took his forces through Judah, a move Josiah would not tolerate. The text indicates that God warned Josiah from interfering (see vss. 21-22), but the king did not listen and would perish in the fight at Megiddo.

All of Judah, most notably the prophet Jeremiah, mourned the passing of Josiah (vss. 24-25). The year was 609 B.C. and with the passing of Josiah the Lord's judgment on Judah loomed!