

LESSON TWENTY-FOUR 34—36

JOSIAH'S REFORMATION THE LAST DAYS OF THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY. THE DECREE OF CYRUS

17. THE REIGN OF JOSIAH (Chapter 34—35)

INTRODUCTION

Josiah and Hilkiah led Judah in a wonderful revival of faith in God. The passover was a time of great rejoicing. Josiah's untimely death shortened Judah's time as a kingdom. Babylon came. Jerusalem was ruined. Captivity followed. At the end of the captivity Cyrus released the Jews for their return to Jerusalem.

TEXT

Chapter 34:1. Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign; and he reigned thirty and one years in Jerusalem. 2. And he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, and walked in the ways of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left. 3. For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father; and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the Asherim, and the graven images, and the molten images. 4. And they brake down the altars of the Baalim in his presence; and the sun-images that were on high above them he hewed down; and the Asherim, and the graven images, and the molten images, he brake in pieces, and made dust of them and strewed it upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them. 5. And he burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars, and purged Judah and Jerusalem. 6. And so did he in the cities of Manasseh and Ephraim and Simeon, even unto Naphtali, in their ruins round about. 7. And he brake down the altars, and beat the Asherim and the graven images into powder, and hewed down all the sun-images throughout all the land of Israel, and returned to Jerusalem.

8. Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land and the house, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, and Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of Jehovah his God. 9. And they came to Hilkiyah the high priest, and delivered the money that was brought into the house of God, which the Levites, the keepers of the threshold, had gathered of the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, and of all the remnant of Israel, and of all Judah and Benjamin, and of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 10. And they delivered it into the hand of the workmen that had the oversight of the house of Jehovah; and the workmen that wrought in the house of Jehovah gave it to mend and repair the house: 11. even to the carpenters and to the builders gave they it, to buy hewn stone, and timber for couplings, and to make beams for the houses which the kings of Judah had destroyed. 12. And the men did the work faithfully: and the overseers of them were Jahath and Obadiah, the Levites, of the sons of Merari; and Zechariah and Meshullam, of the sons of the Kohathites, to set it forward; and others of the Levites, all that were skilful with instruments of music. 13. Also they were over the bearers of burdens, and set forward all that did the work in every manner of service: and of the Levites there were scribes, and officers, and porters.

14. And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of Jehovah, Hilkiyah the priest found the book of the law of Jehovah given by Moses. 15. And Hilkiyah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, "I have found the book of the law in the house of Jehovah." And Hilkiyah delivered the book to Shaphan. 16. And Shaphan carried the book to the king, and moreover brought back word to the king, saying, "All that was committed to thy servants, they are doing. 17. "And they have emptied out the money that was found in the house of Jehovah, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and into the hand of the workmen." 18. And Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, "Hilkiyah the priest hath delivered me a book." And Shaphan read therein before the king. 19. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the

words of the law, that he rent his clothes. 20. And the king commanded Hilkiyah, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the king's servant, saying, 21. "Go ye, inquire of Jehovah for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found; for great is the wrath of Jehovah that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of Jehovah, to do according unto all that is written in this book."

22. So Hilkiyah, and they whom the king had commanded, went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tokhath, the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the second quarter); and they spake to her to that effect. 23. And she said unto them, "Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel: 'Tell ye the man that sent you unto me,' 24. Thus saith Jehovah, 'Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even 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 have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore is my wrath poured out upon this place, and it shall not be quenched.' 26. "But unto the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of Jehovah, thus shall ye say to him 'Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel: As touching the words which thou hast heard, 27. "because thy heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and hast humbled thyself before me, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith Jehovah. 28. "Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof.' " " And they brought back word to the king.

29. Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. 30. And the king went up to the house of Jehovah, and all the men of Judah and the inhabitants of

Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, both great and small: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of Jehovah. 31. And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before Jehovah, to walk after Jehovah, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of covenant that were written in this book. 32. And he caused all that were found in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. 33. And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel, and made all that were found in Israel to serve, even to serve Jehovah their God. All his days they departed not from following Jehovah, the God of their fathers.

Chapter 35:1. And Josiah kept a passover unto Jehovah in Jerusalem: and they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month. 2. And he set the priests in their offices, and encouraged them to the service of the house of Jehovah. 3. And he said unto the Levites that taught all Israel, that were holy unto Jehovah, "Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David king of Israel did build; there shall no more be a burden upon your shoulders. Now serve Jehovah your God, and his people Israel; 4. "and prepare yourselves after your fathers' houses by your courses, according to the writing of David king of Israel, and according to the writing of Solomon his son. 5. "And stand in the holy place according to the divisions of the father's houses of your brethren the children of the people, and let there be for each a portion of a fathers' house of the Levites. 6. "And kill the passover, and sanctify yourselves, and prepare for your brethren, to do according to the word of Jehovah by Moses."

7. And Josiah gave to the children of the people, of the flock, lambs and kids, all of them for the passover-offerings, unto all that were present, to the number of thirty thousand, and three thousand bullocks; these were of the king's substance. 8. And his princes gave for a freewill-offering unto the people,

to the priests, and to the Levites. Hilkiah and Zechariah and Jehiel, the rulers of the house of God, gave unto the priests for the passover-offerings two thousand and six hundred small cattle, and three hundred oxen. 9. Conaniah also, and Shemaiah and Nethanel, his brethren, and Hashabiah and Jeiel and Jozabad, the chiefs of the Levites, gave unto the Levites, for the passover-offerings five thousand small cattle, and five hundred oxen.

So the service was prepared, and the priests stood in their place, and the Levites by their courses, according to the king's commandment. 11. And they killed the passover, and the priests sprinkled the blood which they received of their hand, and the Levites flayed them. 12. And they removed the burnt-offerings, that they might give them according to the divisions of the fathers' houses of the children of the people, to offer unto Jehovah, as it is written in the book of Moses. And so did they with the oxen. 13. And they roasted the passover with fire according to the ordinance: and the holy offerings boiled they in pots, and in caldrons, and in pans, and carried them quickly to all the children of the people. 14. And afterward they prepared for themselves, and for the priests, because the priests the sons of Aaron were busied in offering the burnt-offerings and the fat until night: therefore the Levites prepared for themselves, and for the priests the sons of Aaron. 15. And the singers the sons of Asaph were in their place, according to the commandment of David, and Asaph, and Heman, and Jeduthun the king's seer; and the porters were at every gate: they needed not to depart from their service; for their brethren the Levites prepared for them.

16. So all the service of Jehovah was prepared the same day, to keep the passover, and to offer burnt-offerings upon the altar of Jehovah, according to the commandment of king Josiah. 17. And the children of Israel that were present kept the passover at that time, and the feast of unleavened bread seven days. 18. And there was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did any of the kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept, and the priests, and

the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 19. In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah was this passover kept.

20. After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Neco king of Egypt went up to fight against Carchemish by the Euphrates: and Josiah went out against him. 21. But he sent ambassadors to him, saying, "What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war; and God hath commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not. 22. Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself, that he might fight with him, and hearkened not unto the words of Neco from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo. 23. And the archers shot at king Josiah; and the king said to his servants, "Have me away; for I am sore wounded." 24. So his servants took him out of the chariot, and put him in the second chariot that he had, and brought him to Jerusalem; and he died, and was buried in the sepulchres of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. 25. And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah: and all the singing men and singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations unto this day; and they made them an ordinance in Israel: and, behold, they are written in the lamentations. 26. Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and his good deeds, according to that which is written in the law of Jehovah, 27. and his acts, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 34:1. Josiah was only eight years old when he became king. He reigned thirty-one years, in Jerusalem. 2. His was a good reign, as he carefully followed the good example of his ancestor King David. 3. For when he was sixteen years old, in the eighth year of his reign, he began to search for the God of his ancestor David; and four years later he began to clean up Judah and Jerusalem, destroying the heathen altars and the shame-idols on the hills. 4. He went out personally to watch as

the altars of Baal were knocked apart, the obelisks above the altars chopped down, and the shame-idols ground into dust and scattered over the graves of those who had sacrificed to them. 5. Then he burned the bones of the heathen priests upon their own altars, feeling that this action would clear the people of Judah and Jerusalem from the guilt of their sin of idol-worship. 6. Then he went to the cities of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, even to distant Naphtali, and did the same thing there. 7. He broke down the heathen altars, ground to powder the shame-idols, and chopped down the obelisks. He did this everywhere throughout the whole land of Israel before returning to Jerusalem.

8. During the eighteenth year of his reign, after he had purged the land and cleaned up the situation at the Temple, he appointed Shaphan (son of Azaliah) and Ma-aseiah, governor of Jerusalem, and Joah (son of Joahaz), the city treasurer, to repair the Temple. 9. They set up a collection system for gifts for the Temple. The money was collected at the Temple gates by the Levites on guard duty there. Gifts were brought by the people coming from Manasseh, Ephraim, and other parts of the remnant of Israel; as well as from the people of Jerusalem. The money was taken to Hilkiah the High Priest for accounting, 10, 11. and then used by the Levites to pay the carpenters and stonemasons, and to purchase building materials—stone building blocks, timber, lumber, and beams. He now rebuilt what earlier kings of Judah had torn down. 12. The workmen were energetic under the leadership of Jahath and Obadiah, Levites of the subclan of Merari. Zechariah and Meshullam, of the subclan of Kohath, were the building superintendents. The Levites who were skilled musicians played background music while the work progressed. 13. Other Levites superintended the unskilled laborers who carried in the materials to the workmen. Still others assisted as accountants, supervisors, and carriers.

14. One day when Hilkiah, the High Priest, was at the Temple recording the money collected at the gates, he found an old scroll which turned out to be the laws of God as given to Moses! 15, 16. "Look!" Hilkiah exclaimed to Shaphan, the

king's secretary. "See what I have found in the Temple! These are the laws of God!" Hilkiyah gave the scroll to Shaphan, and Shaphan took it to the king, along with his report that there was good progress being made in the reconstruction of the Temple. 17. "The money chests have been opened and counted, and the money has been put into the hand of the overseers and workmen," he said to the king. 19. Then he mentioned the scroll, and how Hilkiyah had discovered it. So he read it to the king. 19. When the king heard what these laws required of God's people, he ripped his clothing in despair, 20. and summoned Hilkiyah, Ahikam (son of Shaphan), Abdon (son of Micah), Shaphan the treasurer, and Asaiah, the king's personal aide. 21. "Go to the Temple and plead with the Lord for me!" the king told them. "Pray for all the remnant of Israel and Judah! For this scroll says that the reason the Lord's great anger has been poured out upon us is that our ancestors have not obeyed these laws that are written here."

22. So the men went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum (son of Tokhath, son of Hasrah). (Shallum was the king's tailor, living in the second ward.) When they told her of the king's trouble, 23. she replied, "The Lord God of Israel says, 'Tell the man who sent you, 24. " 'Yes, the Lord will destroy this city and its people. All the curses written in the scroll will come true. 25. For my people have forsaken me and have worshiped heathen gods, and I am very angry with them for their deeds. Therefore, my unquenchable wrath is poured out upon this place.' 26. "But the Lord also says this to the king of Judah who sent you to ask me about this: Tell him, the Lord God of Israel says, 27. 'Because you are sorry and have humbled yourself before God when you heard my words against this city and its people, and have ripped your clothing in despair and wept before me—I have heard you, says the Lord, 28. and I will not send the promised evil upon this city and its people until after your death.' " So they brought back to the king this word from the Lord.

29. Then the king summoned all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem, 30. and the priests and Levites and all the people

great and small, to accompany him to the Temple. There the king read the scroll to them—the covenant of God that was found in the Temple. 31. As the king stood before them, he made a pledge to the Lord to follow his commandments with all his heart and soul, and to do what was written in the scroll. 32. And he required everyone in Jerusalem and Benjamin to subscribe to this pact with God, and all of them did. 33. So Josiah removed all idols from the areas occupied by the Jews, and required all of them to worship Jehovah their God. And throughout the remainder of his lifetime they continued serving Jehovah, the God of their ancestors.

Chapter 35:1. Then Josiah announced that the Passover would be celebrated on the first day of April, in Jerusalem. The Passover lambs were slain that evening. 2. He also re-established the priests in their duties, and encouraged them to begin their work at the Temple again. 3. He issued this order to the sanctified Levites, the religious teachers in Israel: “Since the Ark is now in Solomon’s Temple and you don’t need to carry it back and forth upon your shoulders, spend your time ministering to the Lord and to his people. 4, 5. Form yourselves into the traditional service corps of your ancestors, as first organized by King David of Israel and by his son Solomon. Each corps will assist particular clans of the people who bring in their offerings to the Temple. 6. Kill the Passover lambs and sanctify yourselves and prepare to assist the people who come. Follow all of the instructions of the Lord through Moses.”

7. Then the king contributed 30,000 lambs and young goats for the people’s Passover offerings, and 3,000 young bulls. 8. The king’s officials made willing contributions to the priests and Levites. Hilkiah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, the overseers of the Temple, gave the priests 2,600 sheep and goats, and 300 oxen as Passover offerings. 9. The Levite leaders—Conaniah, Shemaiah, and Nethanel, and his brothers Hashabiah, Je-iel, and Jozabad—gave 5,000 sheep and goats and 500 oxen to the Levites for their Passover offerings.

10. When everything was organized, and the priests were standing in their places, and the Levites were formed into

service corps as the king had instructed, 11. then the Levites killed the Passover lambs and presented the blood to the priests, who sprinkled it upon the altar as the Levites removed the skins. 12. They piled up the carcasses for each tribe to present its own burnt sacrifices to the Lord, as it is written in the law of Moses. They did the same with the oxen. 13. Then, as directed by the laws of Moses, they roasted the Passover lambs and boiled the holy offerings in pots, kettles, and pans, and hurried them out to the people to eat. 14. Afterwards the Levites prepared a meal for themselves and for the priests, for they had been busy from morning till night offering the fat of the burnt offerings. 15. The singers (the sons of Asaph) were in their places, following directions issued centuries earlier by King David, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun the king's prophet. The gatekeepers guarded the gates, and didn't need to leave their posts of duty, for their meals were brought to them by their Levite brothers.

16. The entire Passover ceremony was completed in that one day. All the burnt offerings were sacrificed upon the altar of the Lord, as Josiah had instructed. 17. Everyone present in Jerusalem took part in the Passover observance, and this was followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread for the next seven days. 18. Never since the time of Samuel the prophet had there been such a Passover—not one of the kings of Israel could vie with King Josiah in this respect, involving so many of the priests, Levites, and people from Jerusalem and from all parts of Judah, and from over in Israel. 19. This all happened in the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah.

20. Afterwards King Neco of Egypt led his army (against the Assyrians) at Carchemish on the Euphrates River, and Josiah declared war on him. 21. But King Neco sent ambassadors to Josiah with this message: "I don't want a fight with you, O king of Judah! I have come only to fight the king of Assyria! Leave me alone! God has told me to hurry! Don't meddle with God or he will destroy you, for he is with me." 22. But Josiah refused to turn back. Instead he led his army into the battle at the Valley of Megiddo. (He laid aside his royal

robes so that the enemy wouldn't recognize him.) Josiah refused to believe that Neco's message was from God. 23. The enemy archers struck King Josiah with their arrows and fatally wounded him. "Take me out of the battle," he exclaimed to his aides. 24, 25. So they lifted him out of his chariot and placed him in his second chariot and brought him back to Jerusalem where he died. He was buried there, in the royal cemetery. And all Judah and Jerusalem, including even Jeremiah the prophet, mourned for him, as did the Temple choirs. To this day they still sing sad songs about his death, for these songs of sorrow were recorded among the official lamentations. 26. The other activities of Josiah, and his good deeds, and how he followed the laws of the Lord, 27. all are written in The Annals of the Kings of Israel and Judah.

COMMENTARY

In the history of the northern kingdom one last strong king, Jeroboam II, reigned from about 782 to 753 B.C. This period may be called "the Indian Summer of Israel". Jeroboam did not fear Jehovah; but he managed the government wisely so as to extend the borders of his kingdom and raise the living standards of the people. Within thirty years of the end of his reign Samaria was under Assyrian siege. Jeroboam was Israel's last hope. In like manner, Josiah was Judah's last hope.¹ He was only eight years old when he was placed on the throne. Like Joash who had the able assistance of the priest, Jehoiada, Josiah had the strong support of the priest, Hilkiah. This great high priest must share any commendation Josiah received for being a good king. Josiah's father and grandfather provided no real spiritual heritage. From the very beginning of his reign he sought Jehovah's will. Much idolatrous rubbish had been brought back into Jerusalem by Amon. This was destroyed under the new king. When Jeroboam I set up calf worship at Bethel, a prophet out of Judah predicted that one day Josiah would desecrate the heathen altars (I Kings 13:2). Josiah fulfilled this prediction (verses 5 and 6). The destruction of

¹Schultz, Samuel J., *The Old Testament Speaks*, p. 220

idolatry was widespread under Josiah.

The Temple needed repairing. Money was collected from the people in Judah and Benjamin and from certain sections out of the northern kingdom. Responsible persons such as Shaphan, Maaseiah, and Joah turned the money over to the high priest, Hilkiah, who administered the funds for Temple renewal. Carpenters, stone-masons, and other skilled artisans worked faithfully. The priests and Levites had the responsibility of over-seeing the work. At this time musicians were appointed. Door-keepers, Temple officers, and scribes (students of God's Law) were designated for service.

In the year 620 B.C., when the Temple renewal project was making good progress, "the book of the Law" was found in one of the storage rooms of the Temple. This was a most significant discovery. All evidence points to the complete Pentateuch (first five books of the Bible) as "the book of the Law". This book was found at this time because it had been lost through carelessness and disuse. It was more than just the Book of Deuteronomy which liberal critics say had been written by some enterprising priests about thirty years before. This liberal theory supposes that the priests "planted" the book and conveniently "found" it at this time.¹ This theory denies the Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy, the inspiration of the Scriptures, and the sincere faithfulness of Hilkiah and his associates. Such "explanation" of these events must be unalterably opposed by the honest student of God's Word.

The discovery of the book of the Law laid the foundation for a genuine revival of true religion in the days of Hilkiah and Josiah. Shaphan was a careful student of Jehovah's written Word. It was he who carried the "book" to the king. When Josiah heard God's Word he immediately became a mourner. "He rent his clothes". The king commanded Hilkiah and the other chief officers to get more information about what he had learned from the "book". "Inquire of Jehovah", the king

¹Harrison, Ronald K., *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 43-46
Larue, Gerald A., *Old Testament Life and Literature*, pp. 246, 247
Oehler, Gustave F., *Old Testament Theology*, p. 414

ordered. He knew that God's will and purpose had been totally disregarded. How could he and his people once more experience the grace and forgiveness of Jehovah? Huldah was a prophetess who was in Jerusalem. She had been called by God to speak for Him. Through her Jehovah revealed to Josiah that judgment was soon to come upon the southern kingdom "because they have forsaken me" (verse 25). Wrath like fire would be poured out upon Judah and it would not be quenched until it had accomplished its work. Josiah would be spared all of the troubles that were to come because he loved God and sought His will.

When Huldah's prophetic word was brought to the king he called a great convocation at the Temple. The whole populace out of Judah and Jerusalem was gathered to hear the reading of Jehovah's Word. This Word was "the book of the covenant" because it told about Jehovah's agreement with His people and their pledge to serve the one true God. The covenant which Jehovah entered into with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was renewed and the king caused the people "to stand to it". Josiah remained true to Jehovah throughout his life-time.

The original details of the Passover are recorded in Exodus, chapter 12. This book must have been a part of the "book" discovered by Hilkiyah because Josiah was careful to keep the feast just as it was written".¹ Once more the priests were respected leaders among the Hebrews. They were to serve according to their courses and they were to be careful to follow God's Word in all matters. The king provided thirty thousand lambs and kids for this passover. In addition to these, the princes brought in hundreds of other animals for "passover-offerings". The Passover animals were killed. Their blood was properly applied. The animals were "roasted" according to the original directions. All of the congregation shared in this wonderful memorial of the day when Israel became a free people. After all of the people were served in respect to the Passover, the priests and Levites served themselves. The priests and Levites also attended the Passover ritual in behalf of the musicians and the gate-keepers.

¹Spence, H. D. M., *The Pulpit Commentary*, II Chronicles, p. 428

Concerning this celebration the historian observed that "there was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet" (verse 18). It was a religious exercise long remembered among the Hebrew people. "No king of Israel ever kept such a passover as Josiah kept" (verse 18).

The city of Carchemish was on the Euphrates River far to the north of Canaan (about three hundred and seventy five miles from Jerusalem). Neco came up out of Egypt to go to war against Babylon in the regions far to the north and east. Josiah thought he had a responsibility with regard to these eastern allies, so he attempted to intercept the king of Egypt. Neco tried to move along the coastal plain and through the valley of Megiddo near Mount Carmel without any delay in relation to Josiah or Judah. The battlefield of Megiddo is one of the world's most famous military arenas. The "Armageddon" of Revelation is named after this well known plain resulting from a break in the Lebanon mountain chain near Mount Carmel. Neco claimed that God had sent him on his mission and said that if Josiah would fight against him, Josiah would be "meddling with God". Josiah's action here was ill-advised. He was mortally wounded in the battle. His reformation ended with his untimely death. He was accorded a very honorable burial and all of his people deeply mourned his departure. Josiah died in 609 B.C. Jeremiah, the prophet, began his ministry about 626 B.C. and was able to share many of the joys the people knew under Josiah's good reign. Jeremiah was renowned for his "lamentations" in which "the weeping prophet" poured out his sorrow for his people.

18. THE REIGN OF JEHOAHAZ (36:1-3)

TEXT

Chapter 36:1. Then the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and made him king in his father's stead in Jerusalem. 2. Joahaz was twenty and three years old when he began to reign; and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. 3. And the king of Egypt deposed him at Jerusalem, and fined the

land a hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 36:1. Josiah's son Jehoahaz was selected as the new king. 2. He was twenty-three years old when he began to reign, but lasted only three months. 3. Then he was deposed by the king of Egypt, who demanded an annual tribute from Judah of \$250,000.

COMMENTARY

Josiah's son, Jehoahaz, was put on Judah's throne during the crisis of Josiah's death. His name meant "Jehovah hath grasped", or "He has taken hold of me". The Egyptians asserted power over Jerusalem and took Jehoahaz (Joahaz) captive into Egypt. Eliakim (Jehoiakim) was Jehoahaz' brother. After Jehoahaz had reigned only three months, the Egyptians put Eliakim on the throne.

19. THE REIGN OF ELIAKIM (JEHOIAKIM) (36:4-8)

TEXT

Chapter 36:4. And the king of Egypt made Eliakim his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. And Neco took Joahaz his brother, and carried him to Egypt.

5. Jehoiakim was twenty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem: and he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah his God. 6. Against him came up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon. 7. Nebuchadnezzar also carried of the vessels of the house of Jehovah to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon. 8. Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and his abominations which he did, and that which was found in him, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah: and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 36:4. The king of Egypt now appointed Aliakim, the brother of Jehoahaz, as the new king of Judah. (Eliakim's name was changed to Jehoiakim.) Jehoahaz was taken to Egypt as a prisoner.

5. Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years, in Jerusalem; but his reign was an evil one. 6. Finally Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon conquered Jerusalem, and took away the king in chains to Babylon. 7. Nebuchadnezzar also took some of the golden bowls and other items from the Temple, placing them in his own temple in Babylon. 8. The rest of the deeds of Jehoiakim, and all the evil he did, are written in The Annals of the Kings of Judah; and his son Jehoiachin became the new king.

COMMENTARY

Jehoiakim became king at the age of twenty-five and ruled uneasily through eleven difficult years. In his time Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians came and took him captive along with other Hebrews (such as Daniel and his brethren). Jehoiakim made no attempt to serve Jehovah. The Babylonians robbed the Temple of many of its treasures in his time. Judah's light dimmed quickly during Jehoiakim's reign.

20. THE REIGN OF JEHOIACHIN (36:9, 10)

TEXT

Chapter 36:9. Jehoiachin was eight years old when he began to reign; and he reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem: and he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah. 10. And at the return of the year king Nebuchadnezzar sent, and brought him to Babylon, with the goodly vessels of the house of Jehovah, and made Zedekiah his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 36:9. Jehoiachin was eight years old when he

ascended the throne. But he lasted only three months and ten days, and it was an evil reign as far as the Lord was concerned. 10. The following spring he was summoned to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. Many treasures from the Temple were taken away to Babylon at that time, and King Nebuchadnezzar appointed Jehoiachin's brother Zedekiah as the new king of Judah and Jerusalem.

COMMENTARY

Whether Jehoiakim's son, Jehoiachin, was eight or eighteen years of age (II Kings 34:8) when he became king, he reigned only three months and served no good purpose while he was on the throne. Once more the Babylonians came "at the return of the year" (in the springtime) and robbed the Temple taking more captives (like those among whom Ezekiel lived). Jehoiachin was deported to Babylon. Jehovah's predictions through Moses in Deuteronomy, chapter 28, were being literally fulfilled.

21. THE REIGN OF ZEDEKIAH (36:11-17)

TEXT

Chapter 36:11. Zedekiah was twenty and one years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem: 12. and he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah his God; he humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of Jehovah. 13. And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart against turning unto Jehovah, the God of Israel. 14. Moreover all the chiefs of the priests, and the people, trespassed very greatly after all the abominations of the nations; and they polluted the house of Jehovah which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. 15. And Jehovah, the God of their fathers, sent to them by his messengers, rising up early and sending, because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling-place: 16. but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and scoffed at his prophets, until the wrath of Jehovah

arose against his people, till there was no remedy.

17. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldeans, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or virgin, old man or hoary-headed: he gave them all into his hand.

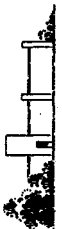
PARAPHRASE

Chapter 37:11. Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king and he reigned eleven years, in Jerusalem. 12. His reign, too, was evil so far as the Lord was concerned, for he refused to take the counsel of Jeremiah the prophet, who gave him messages from the Lord. 13. He rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, even though he had taken an oath of loyalty. Zedekiah was a hard and stubborn man so far as obeying the Lord God of Israel was concerned, for he refused to follow him. 14. All the important people of the nation, including the High Priests, worshiped the heathen idols of the surrounding nations, thus polluting the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem. 15. Jehovah the God of their fathers sent his prophets again and again to warn them, for he had compassion on his people and on his Temple. 16. But the people mocked these messengers of God and despised their words, scoffing at the prophets until the anger of the Lord could no longer be restrained, and there was no longer any remedy.

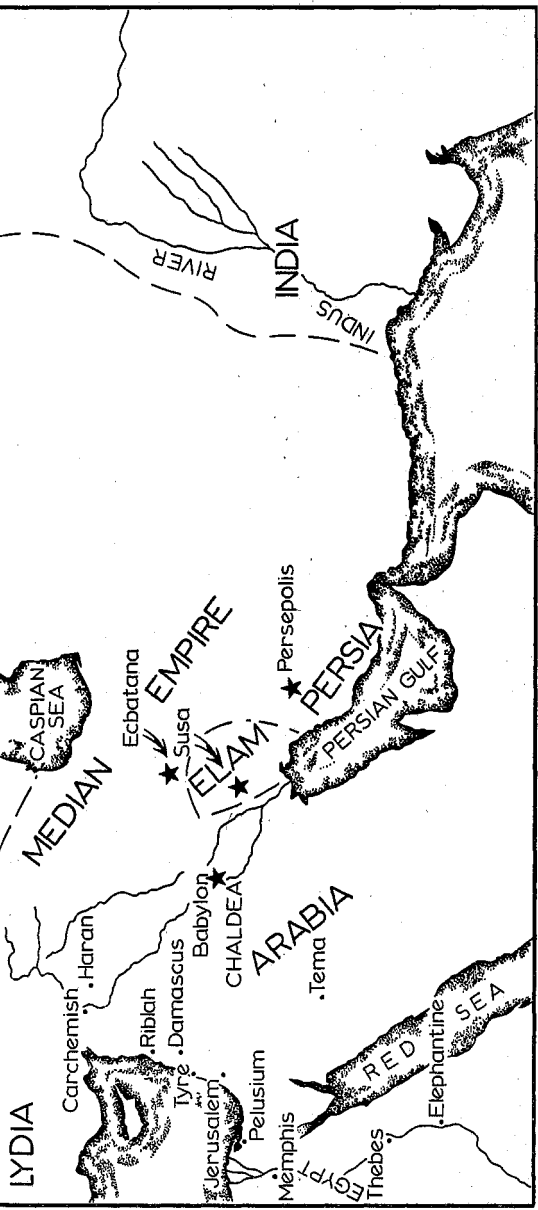
17. Then the Lord brought the king of Babylon against them and killed their young men, even going after them right into the Temple, and had no pity upon them, killing even young girls and old men. The Lord used the king of Babylon to destroy them completely.

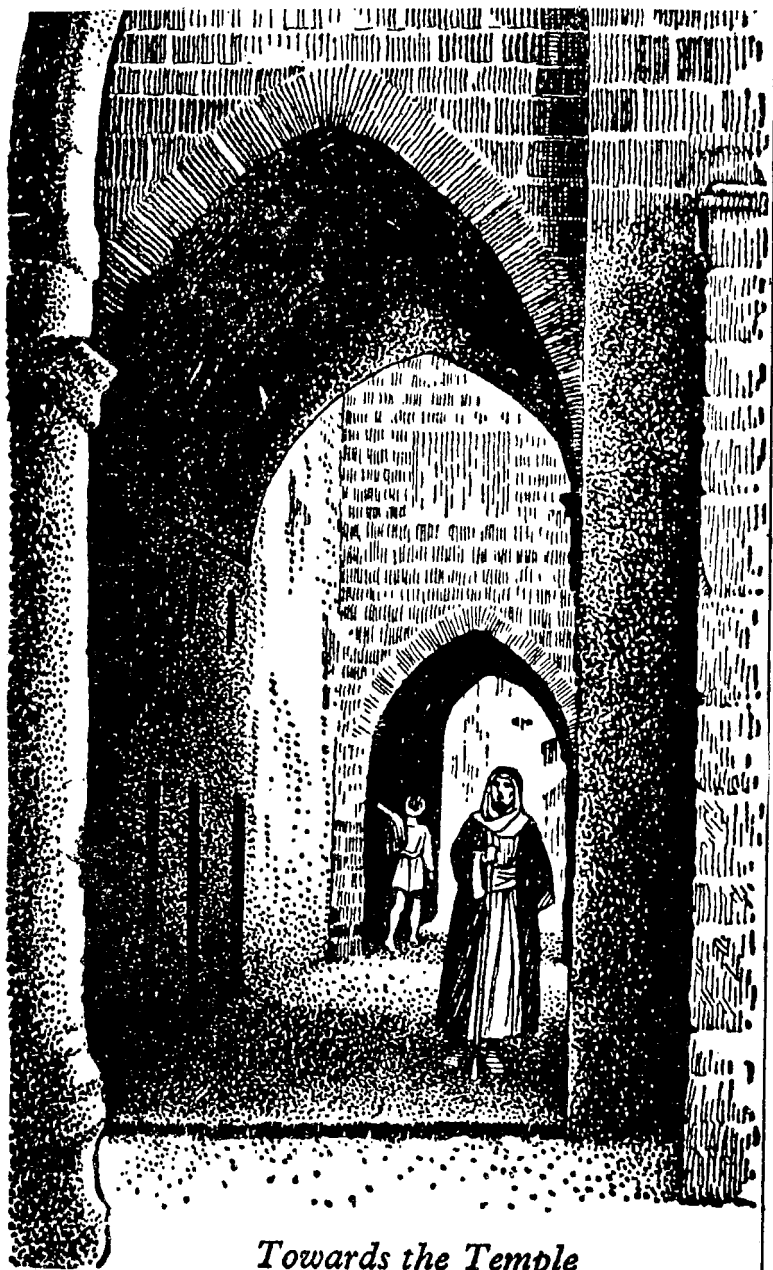
COMMENTARY

Jehoiachin's brother, Zedekiah, was put on the throne in Judah. Whatever he did was subject to Babylonian approval. The twenty-one year old king was to reign over Judah for the last eleven years of her history prior to the Babylonian captivity. Even though the time of judgment was so near,



**PLACES IN THE
BABYLONIAN (625 - 539)
AND PERSIAN (539 - 325)
EMPIRES**





Towards the Temple

Zedekiah made no real effort to do Jehovah's will. Jeremiah worked with the king. He tried to strengthen him in the Lord, but Zedekiah's goodness was anemic. Idolatries increased in Jerusalem and Judah. God's Temple was desecrated even by the priests who should have consecrated it. Prophets, such as Jeremiah, were ridiculed and thrown into dungeons and cisterns. All hope was gone. "There was no remedy" (verse 16).

22. JERUSALEM OVERTHROWN (36:18-21)

TEXT

Chapter 36:18. And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of Jehovah, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes, all these he brought to Babylon. 19. And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. 20. And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; and they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: 21. to fulfill the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths: for as long as it lay desolate it kept sabbath, to fulfill threescore and ten years.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 36:18. He also took home with him all the items, great and small, used in the Temple, and treasures from both the Temple and the palace, and took with him all the royal princes. 19. Then his army burned the Temple and broke down the walls of Jerusalem and burned all the palaces and destroyed all the valuable Temple utensils. 20. Those who survived were taken away to Babylon as slaves to the king and his sons until the kingdom of Persia conquered Babylon.

21. Thus the word of the Lord spoken through Jeremiah came true, that the land must rest for seventy years to make up for the years when the people refused to observe the Sabbath.

COMMENTARY

Does God mean what he says? Would He really allow the city of David to be destroyed? Certainly He would protect that "building of all buildings", Solomon's Temple!¹ It could never be removed! So, many had reasoned. In 587 B.C. the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar came for the third time against Jerusalem. They besieged the city for eighteen dreary months. During those terrible days the Hebrews were reduced to cannibalism to try to keep a remnant alive. Finally, in desperation, Zedekiah tried to escape. The Babylonians captured him and took him to Riblah far to the north on the Orontes River. There they killed his sons in his presence, gouged out the king's eyes and led him to Babylon. Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard for Babylon, was specifically assigned the detail of the destruction of the Temple. When they had carried out everything of value in that marvelous building, they burnt the Temple. Jerusalem was left in complete desolation. It was now ready for the jakals, owls, and scorpions of the desert. Many Hebrews died in the siege of Jerusalem. Others of them died at the hands of the Babylonians. A remnant was taken captive and deported to Babylon a thousand miles to the east by way of Damascus and Haran and the Euphrates River. Seventy years were to be spent in this captivity to compensate for the Sabbatical years which God's people had neglected to keep. For a period of five hundred years the Hebrews disregarded the seventh year. Through many of those years they also treated the Sabbath day as if it were a common day. Jeremiah had predicted that the captivity would extend through seventy years (Jeremiah 29:10). The writer of Chronicles knew that the Persian empire would incorporate and follow the Babylonian empire. So the Hebrews were taken captive by Babylon and those who were born in captivity were given their freedom by Persia.

¹Clarke, Adam, *A Commentary and Critical Notes*, Vol. II, p. 708

23. THE EDICT OF CYRUS (36:22, 23)

TEXT

Chapter 36:22. Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, 23. "Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, 'All the kingdoms of the earth hath Jehovah, the God of heaven, given me; and he hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whosoever there is among you of all his people. Jehovah his God be with him, and let him go up.' "

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 36:22, 23. But in the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus to make this proclamation throughout his kingdom, putting it into writing: "All the kingdoms of the earth have been given to me by the Lord God of heaven, and he has instructed me to build him a Temple in Jerusalem, in the land of Judah. All among you who are the Lord's people, return to Israel for this task, and the Lord be with you." This also fulfilled the prediction of Jeremiah the prophet.

COMMENTARY

Isaiah had predicted that Cyrus, king of Persia, would be a deliverer for the Hebrew people (Isaiah 44:28). Two hundred years before Cyrus appeared he was named by Isaiah as a shepherd for Jehovah. In the year 536 B.C. Cyrus came upon the stage of world history.¹ He was a shepherd king. His origin is obscure. All of the evidence in God's Word points to Cyrus' coming as an act of God. Daniel continued until the third year of the reign of Cyrus (Daniel 10:1). Daniel could very well have been Jehovah's agent who acquainted Cyrus with God's purpose for His people. The seventy years were fulfilled. The time had

¹Grosvenor, Melville, B., *Everyday Life in Bible Times*, pp. 278-286

Spence, H. D. M., *The Pulpit Commentary*, II Chronicles, p. 440

come for the Hebrews to be released. Cyrus published his decree and all of the Hebrews who desired to do so were free to go back to Palestine to build Jehovah's House. Ezra and Nehemiah tell how fifty thousand Jews (most likely a name given in derision of Judah) came back under the leadership of the Davidic prince, Zerubbabel and the priest, Jeshua, and how they finished Zerubbabel's Temple (the second Temple) about 516 B.C.¹

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

LESSON TWENTY-FOUR 34-36

986. How old was Josiah when he became king?
987. Why refer to David as Josiah's father?
988. Describe Josiah's reformation.
989. Explain the reference to the house of the priests.
990. How far to the north did Josiah's reform reach?
991. What were the Asherim?
992. According to 34:8 what very important project did Josiah undertake?
993. Carefully identify Hilkiah.
994. Who contributed to Josiah's program?
995. What kind of materials had to be provided?
996. Which of the tribes had special oversight of the work?
997. Describe the remarkable discovery made by Hilkiah.
998. Who was Shaphan?
999. Why did Josiah tear his garments?
1000. Who was Huldah?
1001. Concerning Jerusalem, what does Jehovah intend to do?
1002. How will Jehovah deal with Josiah?
1003. Explain the phrase, "to be gathered to one's fathers".
1004. For what purpose was a meeting called at the Temple?
1005. How long did Josiah serve Jehovah?

¹Cook, F. C., *The Bible Commentary*, I Samuel—Esther, pp. 432-433

1006. When was the passover kept by Josiah? Relate to the record in Exodus.
1007. Where was the ark to be housed?
1008. How would a priest sanctify himself?
1009. Who supplied the materials for the great passover?
1010. How was the passover lamb actually prepared?
1011. What is a caldron?
1012. Explain the nature of the ministry of the sons of Asaph.
1013. Relate the feast of unleavened bread to the passover.
1014. How is this passover compared with other passovers?
1015. Who was Neco?
1016. Carefully locate Carchemish.
1017. Locate Megiddo.
1018. How did Josiah go into battle?
1019. Who is this Jeremiah of 35:25?
1020. Who followed Josiah to the throne?
1021. What finally happened to Joahaz?
1022. Who was Jehoiakim and what finally happened to him?
1023. Who followed Jehoiakim to the throne and what happened to this king?
1024. Name Judah's last king.
1025. What was the nature of the oath which Nebuchadnezzar required of Judah's last king?
1026. Describe religion in Jerusalem at this time.
1027. Explain the attitude of the people toward the prophets.
1028. Who were the Chaldeans?
1029. What happened to the Temple?
1030. Describe the overthrow of Jerusalem.
1031. Name the empire that was to follow Babylon in world leadership.
1032. How long did the Babylon captivity last?
1033. How did this captivity relate to the sabbaths?

1034. What was the content of the declaration made by Cyrus, King of Persia?
1035. How did this decree affect the Hebrew people?
1036. What is the date of Cyrus' decree?