

Bible Reading Schedule The Golden Thread

June 12 – 2 Chronicles 6: 12 – 42

Solomon is very faithful as he begins his reign as king. He carries out the work that his father David left him to do and builds a magnificent temple to the Lord. In today's reading Solomon dedicates that temple. As Solomon prays, he marvels that God would be willing to come and dwell in a house built by men, and Solomon prays that this Temple will be a house of true worship—a place where forgiveness of sins can be found—a place where sinful men can be reconciled to a holy God.

Solomon's Temple is no longer. It was destroyed in about 584 BC by the Babylonians. When Israel returned from captivity at around 540 BC the temple was re-built, and it remained standing until 70 AD, when it was destroyed by the Romans. For 2000 years there has not been a Temple in Jerusalem. So, where do we go to worship God? Where do we go to find forgiveness? Paul says something very interesting in

1 Corinthians 3:16 *Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?*

Stop and think about that for a minute. If it was amazing that God would come and dwell in a magnificent temple that Solomon built, how much more amazing is it that God would come and dwell in our hearts? If that doesn't amaze you, then you are missing something. What for one minute would make us think that we are worthy to have the Spirit of the Living God come and live inside of us? There is nothing about us that makes us worthy to have God dwell in us. It has to be as a result of something that comes from outside of us. It has to be that Jesus has made us worthy by removing our sin as far as the east is from the west. It has to be because Jesus has cleansed us and made us holy so that our lives are a place where a holy God can dwell.

Ephesians 2:19-22 *Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him*

you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

June 13 – 2 Chronicles 15

King Asa took to heart the words that Solomon spoke as he dedicated the Temple to the Lord. As Asa becomes king he realizes Judah's sinfulness, and he leads them in repentance. The repentance that is shown here is true repentance. It is a repentance that is not just being sorry for sin, but a repentance that leads to a change in actions.

2 Corinthians 7:10 *Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.*

Notice how Asa leads his people in repentance. First, they seek forgiveness for breaking the covenant. Next, they renew the covenant and promise to be faithful in serving the Lord. Finally, they prove their sincerity in their actions. They destroy the idols, they give to God what is rightfully his, and they live lives that are wholeheartedly committed to serving God. That is what real repentance looks like.

As we read the New Testament we are impressed with God's grace, and we realize that we are saved by grace alone.

Ephesians 2:8-9 *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.*

But the New Testament also makes it clear that our actions, the way we live, is the proof that our salvation is real.

Ephesians 4: 22 – 23 *You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

James 2:26 *As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.*

Asa's repentance led to a change in the way Judah lived, the same should be true in us. If we really understand the grace we have been shown, if we are truly repentant over our sin there should be evidence in the way we live our lives. Of course, that doesn't mean that we will be perfect in all we do, but it does mean that we will strive

to live very differently from the world. We weren't saved just so we can go to heaven one day. We were saved to serve today, and if we are not, then it might be an indication that all is not right between us and God.

Ephesians 2:10 *For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

June 14 – 2 Chronicles 20: 1 – 30

Verse 12 of this passage where Jehoshaphat prays, “Lord, we don't know what to do, but our eyes are on you,” is perhaps one of the more interesting prayers in all of Scripture—what an honest prayer. From Jehoshaphat's prayer and the circumstances in this passage, it is clear that the Israelites find themselves in a situation in which they have no clue what they should do, so they turn to God for guidance. They make no pretense of trying to tell God how to fix or manage their problem like we often do. They just simply acknowledge their inability and turn their eyes to heaven. You would think that people would do this more often, but we don't. Whether we are talking about people in the Bible or ourselves, prayer so often seems to be a last resort.

But it wasn't with Jesus. Jesus was a man of prayer and was constantly in prayer. Turning his eyes toward heaven and praying seems like it came as naturally to Jesus as taking a breath.

Mark 1:35 *Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.*

Luke 5:16 *But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.*

John 17:1 *After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed:*

The verse from John 17 is particularly revealing. Notice how Jesus prayed. He looked toward heaven. Jesus didn't look to himself to find the answers; he looked to his Father in heaven. Why don't we do the same? I think it is because of our pride. Prayer is often our last option, and we only do it we run out of our resources.

*What a friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry Everything to God in prayer!
Oh, what peace we often forfeit, Oh, what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry Everything to God in prayer!*

Oh that we would be more like Jehoshaphat, or even better, more like Jesus, and turn to God first for help.

Psalm 121:1-2 *I lift up my eyes to the hills-- where does my help come from? ² My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.*

June 15 – 2 Chronicles 30: 1 – 31:1

Usually we think of the Old Testament in terms of rules God makes that people have to follow. When we do that, we start to think that God only cares about the rules or The Law. As this account from the life of King Hezekiah shows us, nothing could be further from the truth. God had indeed established rules or patterns for how and when the Passover was to be celebrated, but Israel had backslidden so far that even as their hearts were turned toward worshipping God, they were unable to prepare themselves to do it, so that it could be done in the proper timeframe, according to the rules God had set out regarding how they were to celebrate Passover.

Even though they celebrated the Passover a month later than the normal time it was celebrated, there were still many people who came to the celebration that were ceremonially unclean. Normally, this would have prohibited their partaking in this celebration, but Hezekiah boldly allows even those who were ceremonially unclean to participate in celebrating the Passover. In verse 19, Hezekiah prays and asks God to pardon all who participated but were unclean, and God heard Hezekiah's prayer and healed the people.

As we read this, we can't be sure if an illness had broken out among the unclean participants or if verse 20 is a reference to God healing the people from their uncleanness, but either way the effect is the same. People who were unworthy to worship, were made able to worship. That is exactly what our Great King Jesus does for us. We are unworthy to worship, unclean because of our sin, but through the

cross and through Jesus interceding on our behalf we are made clean and able to worship.

Hebrews 7:24-25 *because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. ²⁵ Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.*

We don't have to clean ourselves up before we can come to Jesus. We come just as we are.

Matthew 9:12-13 *On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ¹³ But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."*

It is after we come to Jesus and he works in our hearts that we become clean. It is after we come to Jesus and worship, that we then become able to go and serve. Notice how that is true even in today's reading from 2 Chronicles. What happened after the Israelites came to Passover and worshipped God? First, they were filled with joy because of worship (30: 23). Second, they were blessed by God, because of worship (30:27). Third, they went out and served and cleansed the land of its idolatry (31:1). There is a pattern there for us. We come to Jesus in our brokenness; Jesus cleanses of our sin; we worship; we are filled with joy; we are blessed; and then we go out and serve and become a blessing to others. What God desires more than anything else is that we come and surrender our hearts to Him.

June 16 – 2 Chronicles 34

As you read through 2 Chronicles, it is almost like the children's game hide and seek. Depending on the king that Israel has, they either are seeking God or hiding from God. In today's reading, a new king takes the throne of Israel, and he is only 8 years old. The chronicler tells us in chapter 33 that the kings who came before Josiah were wicked and led Israel astray, but Josiah, even at a young age, began to seek the Lord (verse 3), and shortly after he sought the Lord he began to act to cleanse the land of the idolatry the previous kings had brought into it. Next, when Josiah was 26 years old he began the work of restoring the temple (verse 8). The once glorious

temple of the living God was not only in a state of disrepair, but it had also been defiled by the previous kings who had brought idols into it. We can see just how far Israel had strayed from worshipping God in verses 14 - 28. Not only had they disregarded and failed to obey the law of God, but they had drifted so far away from God that they seemed to be completely unaware that the Book of the Law even existed. Look at verse 18, the ones who find the Book of the Law refer to it simply as a book, and they have little understanding what its importance is. But after Josiah hears what is written in the Book, he is moved to tear his robes—a sign of distress—and he immediately seeks to understand what is going to happen because Israel has drifted so far away from God. The news is bad. Israel is going to be destroyed and sent into exile because of their disobedience. But the news isn't so bad for Josiah, because God tells Josiah that all of the bad things won't happen during his lifetime.

What is really interesting is that Josiah doesn't give up in the face of the bad news and he doesn't sit back and rest in the good news for his own life. Instead Josiah does his best to lead the people, from the greatest to the least, to repentance (verses 29 – 33).

We live in a day that is very similar to Josiah's day. People seem to have forgotten that there is a God whom they are accountable to. The standards God has set for us are forgotten and ignored. But like Josiah, we live in a day where judgment is just around the corner. The news is really bad for those who have chosen to live their lives in rebellion against God. But for those who are trusting Christ as their savior the news is good, because we will escape the judgment. So how do we as followers of Christ react to this news? Do we just sit back safe and secure in the knowledge that the coming judgment won't touch us? The Book of Revelation is a book about the coming judgment and in this book we find God gives John (the writer) some very specific instructions:

Revelation 10:9-11 *So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, "Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey." ¹⁰ I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour. ¹¹ Then I was told, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings."*

This little scroll represents the Gospel of Jesus Christ. John is told to take the Gospel deep into his soul (to eat it), and John is also told by the angel that the Gospel will taste sweet to him, but it will turn his stomach sour. Think about what that means. The Gospel is sweet to those who trust Christ as their savior, but the Gospel also is news of a coming terrible judgment on those who reject it. If we stop and think about all those we know who are lost and without Jesus, it should turn our stomachs as we realize what awaits them on judgment day. Just like Josiah, what is sweet news for us is horrible news for many others. So what do we do? Do we just sit back? No, look again at Revelation 10: 11. John is told to take the news to the world around him. John is told to give his best effort to turn people away from the coming disaster. That is what we are called to do as well. We are not called to sit in a holy huddle safe and secure waiting for Jesus to come again. We are called to go out into the world and call our world to faith and repentance in Christ. Just as Josiah worked to save his generation from the coming disaster we are called to do the same.

June 17 – 2 Chronicles 36: 15 – 23

In spite of men like David, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah, Israel continued to slide further and further away from God, and the day finally comes when God says enough. You may remember from our study in 2 Kings that this day had already come for the 10 northern tribes. They were carried into exile in 722 BC by the Assyrians, and they are gone from history never to be heard of again. But the two southern tribes, Judah and Benjamin, survived for a while longer. They were not carried off into exile until 586 BC when the Babylonians came and destroyed Jerusalem including the beautiful temple that Solomon had built. We saw yesterday why this was going to happen. It is because the people of God were unfaithful to God, and they turned from the true God to worship idols. But even though Judah and Benjamin are carried off into exile, what happens to them is very different from what happens to the 10 northern tribes. Unlike those tribes Judah will rise again from the ashes. Judah will return from exile and once again become a nation. Even as they are being carried off into exile, the writer of Chronicles tells us of a day in

the future when they will return to Jerusalem and rebuild its walls and rebuild the temple. This will happen as a result of an edict issued by Cyrus the King of Persia, which the writer of Chronicles references in verse 23. Why does God continue to protect this small unfaithful tribe of people? Because this is the tribe that the Messiah will come from.

Genesis 49:10 *The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.*

This is David's tribe.

1 Chronicles 17:11-15 *When your days are over and you go to be with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹² He is the one who will build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever. ¹³ I will be his father, and he will be my son. I will never take my love away from him, as I took it away from your predecessor. ¹⁴ I will set him over my house and my kingdom forever; his throne will be established forever." ¹⁵ Nathan reported to David all the words of this entire revelation.*

Even when we aren't faithful to do the things that we have promised to do, God is always faithful, and always at work carrying out His plan to save us from our rebellion against Him.

Luke 1:31-33 *You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."*

What a comfort to know that we can't do anything to ruin God's plans to save us from our sins! We can cause trouble in our lives and bring pain and suffering to our lives through our rebellion, but God will still be at work to redeem us and make us His.

June 18 – Ezra 2: 68 – 3: 13

The book of Ezra is a book about Israel (the tribe of Judah) returning to the Promised Land after being exiled in Babylon and Persia. As

you may recall, when the Babylonians conquered Judah they destroyed Jerusalem and the temple. Now as the Israelites return there is no where for them to worship, and no where for sacrifices to be made. So after they had settled once again in their homes, some began to make an effort to rebuild the altar and the temple. One of the men who led this effort was Zerubbabel. What is interesting is that as we look at the genealogies in the Bible we find Zerubbabel's name as a descendant of King David, and followed in the line of the kings and he was also part of the lineage of Jesus.

1 Chronicles 3:9-19 *All these were the sons of David,.... Solomon's son was Rehoboam, Abijah his son, Asa his son, Jehoshaphat his son, ¹¹ Jehoram his son, Ahaziah his son, Joash his son, ¹² Amaziah his son, Azariah his son, Jotham his son, ¹³ Ahaz his son, Hezekiah his son, Manasseh his son, ¹⁴ Amon his son, Josiah his son. ¹⁵ The sons of Josiah: Johanan the firstborn, Jehoiakim the second son, Zedekiah the third, Shallum the fourth. ¹⁶ The successors of Jehoiakim: Jehoiachin his son, and Zedekiah. ¹⁷ The descendants of Jehoiachin the captive: Shealtiel his son, ¹⁸ Malkiram, Pedaiah, Shenazzar, Jekamiah, Hoshama and Nedabiah. ¹⁹ The sons of Pedaiah: Zerubbabel*

Matthew 1:12-16 *After the exile to Babylon: Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, ¹³ Zerubbabel the father of... ¹⁶ and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.*

We'll talk more about Zerubbabel as we come to the prophets Zechariah and Haggai, but for now just notice that God is once again using someone from the tribe of Judah and David's family line to carry out His plans. Unfortunately for the returning exiles, Zerubbabel is just a shadow of the greatness that had been in David and the coming greatness of Jesus, but nonetheless Zerubbabel would be the one God would use to spearhead the rebuilding of the temple.

This second temple doesn't begin to compare to the greatness of Solomon's Temple. That is why in verses 10 -13, as the builders lay the foundation there is both rejoicing by the younger folks who had not seen the glory of the original temple and crying by the older folks who realized that this temple and their country was merely a shadow

of its former greatness. But yet, this would be the very temple that Jesus would refer to as His Father's House (John 2:16).

As you think about the Bible it is truly a book about the Temple of the Lord. One of the great efforts of Moses' life was to build the Tabernacle (the forerunner to the temple) and set up worship there. David and his son's Solomon's lives were consumed with building the temple. Ezra and the books of Haggai and Zechariah are all about building this second temple, and then Jesus comes and says that he is the true temple.

John 2:18-21 *Then the Jews demanded of him, "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"* ¹⁹ *Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."* ²⁰ *The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?"* ²¹ *But the temple he had spoken of was his body.*

The Jews did destroy the temple that was Jesus by killing him on the cross, but again God rebuilt the temple, by raising Jesus from the dead. By doing that God made it possible for us to become part of a new and glorious temple—the body of Christ.

Ephesians 2:19-22 *Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household,* ²⁰ *built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.* ²¹ *In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.* ²² *And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*

Even though Zerubbabel's temple didn't begin to compare to the glory of Solomon's temple, it was an important step toward bringing the true, great, and glorious temple—Jesus, our savior.