

June 7: 2 Chronicles 20-22 and John 16: 1-15

The Moabites, Ammonites, and some of the Meunites decide to take up arms against Jehoshaphat. He is terrified. Rather than try to solve the problem on his own, he calls the people to fast and he prays to The LORD. Jehoshaphat concedes that they are powerless against these enemies. The only One that can save them is God. God responds by saying that the battle belongs to Him. The LORD destroys their enemies and the people walk away with an abundance of plunder from their fallen foes.

Jehoshaphat dies and his son Jehoram becomes king. Rather than act like his father, Jehoram decides to act like the kings of Israel. To protect his reign, he slaughters the rest of his brothers. His reign lasted eight years. Since he has been so evil, God sends a word of judgment through the prophet Elijah. Jehoram will get a disease of the intestines that will cause them to come out day after day. He dies just as The LORD said he would. The people do not have a fire in his honor. The text informs us that Jehoram died to “no one’s regret”. He was such a disliked king that he was not even buried in the tombs of the kings.

Ahaziah becomes king in his place. This is where things can get slightly confusing since there is a duplication of names in the northern kingdom (Israel) and the southern kingdom (Judah). In the northern kingdom, Ahab had two sons, Ahaziah and Jehoram. When Ahab died, Ahaziah became king. Ahaziah died and Jehoram became king. In the southern kingdom Jehoshaphat was succeeded by his son Jehoram. When Jehoram died, he is succeeded by his son Ahaziah (Jehoshaphat’s grandson). I hope that this helps with keeping the names straight of the various kings in both kingdoms!

Ahaziah reigned in Judah for one year. When he is killed, his mother usurps the throne. She sets about killing all of the royal heirs to the house of Judah. However, she misses on. Joash was rescued. While Athaliah, Ahaziah’s mother, was reigning over the land, Joash was hidden in God’s temple.

In the New Testament reading, Jesus continues explaining that persecution is headed their way. It will get so bad for them that a time is coming when someone thinks they are doing a good thing for God when they kill a believer. Jesus is telling them this so that they will remember He told them these things when the terrible times are upon them. Jesus also explains that He has to go so that they can receive the Counselor. The Counselor will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment.

June 8: 2 Chronicles 23-25 and John 16: 16-33

After seven years of Athaliah’s reign, Jehoiada the priest finally gathers courage to take up arms against her. He took the commanders of hundreds into a covenant with him. They all agreed that the fallen king’s son should reign, not his mother. They bring out one of the king’s sons, put a crown on his head, and made him king. When Athaliah hears the cries of “long live the king” she tears her clothes and declares treason. Jehoiada the priest directs the commanders to take her out between the ranks and put any of her followers to death.

Jehoiada makes reforms in Judah. The temple of Baal was torn down. The altars and images were broken into pieces. The priest of Baal was executed at the altars. Joash becomes king at the age of seven and reigns 40 years. He does what is right in The LORD's sight. They begin repairing the temple and the burnt offerings to The LORD are established again.

However, Jehoiada passes away. Shortly after this happens, Joash becomes apostate. He no longer worries about doing what is right in God's sight. Without Jehoiada to show him the way and give guidance, Joash consults with the rulers of Judah. They decide to abandon the temple of Yahweh and begin serving the Asherah poles and the idols. God's wrath brews against Judah, but He sends them prophets, warning them to return to Yahweh. The people will not believe, though. They keep on with their idolatry.

The Arameans take up arms against Judah. Joash is wounded in the battle and takes to his bed to recover. His servants conspired against him and assassinate Joash since he had killed the sons of Jehoiada. Amaziah becomes king in his place. Amaziah launches an offensive against Edom and wins. With this military success under his belt, he decides to go up against Israel. He asks to meet with their king. The Israelite king warns him not to do it, but Amaziah will not listen. The people of Judah are routed before Israel and they flee to their own tents. This gives the Israelite king ample opportunity to destroy things within the city of Jerusalem.

In the New Testament reading, Jesus explains to the disciples that they will have mourning, but that mourning will turn to joy. We certainly see this very thing played out in Christ's crucifixion. The people rejoice that Jesus has been killed while the disciples mourn. However, that mourning is turned to joy when they come face to face with the resurrected Savior. Christ has the victory over the grave. As His followers, we do to. It is not from anything that we have done, but for what our awesome and amazing God has done for us.

June 9: 2 Chronicles 26-28 and John 17

Uzziah becomes king of Judah. He is a good king and did right in the sight of The LORD. One of the first things he did was restore the city of Elath. Elath was at the northern tip of the Red Sea. By restoring this city, Uzziah was making Judah a player among the major world powers since it had access to the Mediterranean and Red Seas. Uzziah grows stronger, but in his strength, he becomes arrogant. He decides to burn incense on the incense altar, an act that only the priests could perform. The priests confront him about it. Uzziah does not relent until a skin disease breaks out on his head.

Jotham takes over from Uzziah. He too does right in The LORD's sight. Even though he is acting in an upright manner, the people still behave poorly. Jotham did not waiver in his obedience to God's commands. What a testimony that Jotham had. Are we living a life that when we pass people will say the same about us, that we did not waiver in obeying God?

Ahaz becomes king of Judah. He is a wicked king. He burns incense in the Valley of Hinnom and sacrifices his children to the false gods. As a result, Ahaz is handed over to the king of Aram. Rather than seeing that Ahaz is in this new predicament because he treated The LORD with contempt, Ahaz decides that he should follow and sacrifice to the gods of Damascus. He

assumed that these false gods were more powerful because Damascus had defeated him. Ahaz takes all of the utensils in the temple and cuts them up. He also seals the doors of the temple and made altars on every street corner. When Ahaz dies, he is buried in the city, but is not buried with the kings.

In John, Jesus prays for Himself, His disciples, and everyone else who believes in Him. Jesus knows that His hour has come. So, He asks The Father to give Him strength. Jesus prays that His disciples will be sanctified by the truth. He does not pray that they be taken out of the world, but that they are protected from the evil one. As believers, we should expect that we are going to run into problems. When this happens, God will not necessarily remove the problem from us, but He will give us the tools to get through it. Further, He will be with us every step of the way.

June 10: 2 Chronicles 29-31 and John 18: 1-23

Hezekiah becomes king of Judah. He is nothing like Ahaz. Hezekiah opens the doors of the temple and repaired them. He orders the Levites to consecrate themselves and the temple of Yahweh. The priests entered the temple and took out all of the unclean and detestable things. When this is all complete, Hezekiah reinstates worship in the temple. Many sacrifices are made to atone for the sins of the people.

The king also reinstates observation of the Passover. The celebration and remembrance of the Passover was a command that God gave Moses and the Israelites after they were freed from Egypt. Hezekiah is taking the people back to the God's Law. Through his efforts we see a great revival sweep through the people of Judah.

Hezekiah identifies one problem. Since the celebration of Passover and the observation of the Law happened so quickly, many of the participants had not gone through the ritualistic cleansing. Even though they were unclean, they still ate the Passover. Hezekiah prays on their behalf asking that God provide atonement for them. God does not strike these ritualistically unclean believers. As believers, it is not the ritual that makes us clean. Instead, it is Christ's atoning work that makes us clean.

In the New Testament reading, Jesus and the disciples complete their meal. From there, they go to the Garden of Gethsemane. While they are there a company of soldiers and some of the temple police arrive to arrest Jesus. Jesus hands Himself over to them. Peter draws his sword and cuts the ear off of Malchus, the high priest's slave. Jesus rebukes Peter for his action. Though this account does not mention it, we know that Jesus healed Malchus's ear. I wonder what his reaction was to being healed. Did he decide he could no longer go along with this plan? Or did he continue on with the orders of the priests?

June 11: 2 Chronicles 32-33 and John 18: 24-40

Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, decides to enter Judah, laying siege to the fortified cities. Seeing what Sennacherib was doing, Hezekiah consulted with his military commanders and other officials. They decided to stop up the springs, cutting off the fresh water. He rebuilt the broken walls of Jerusalem and repaired the supporting terraces. Sennacherib's servant makes a

speech to the people of Judah, urging them to abandon Yahweh and Hezekiah. As far as the servant is concerned, there is no one that can stand against Sennacherib.

Hezekiah does the logical thing and prays about it, crying out to heaven. God delivers the people. Unfortunately, after all of this, Hezekiah becomes puffed up with pride and he is struck with an illness that will surely end his life. Hezekiah seeks God again and The LORD's wrath did not come on him or the people during his lifetime.

Manasseh becomes king after Hezekiah at the age of 12. He is a terrible and evil king. This seems odd that he would go and do the exact opposite of his father, considering that he had witnessed how God had delivered the people during Hezekiah's time. Nevertheless, Manasseh decides that he is going to follow the false gods. God continually tries to get ahold of Manasseh, but he will not listen. So God sends judgment to him by way of Assyria. Manasseh is bound up and taken to Babylon. Then he decides to pray and seek God. The LORD delivers Manasseh. When he arrives back in Judah, he removes the foreign gods and the idol from the temple. When he passes away, his son Amon takes the throne. Amon is a horrible king and only reigns two years.

In the New Testament reading, Jesus is taken to Pilate. Pilate can find no charges against Jesus. The two have an interesting conversation in which Pilate asks Jesus what truth is. What Pilate does not realize, is that he is standing before The Truth. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.

June 12: 2 Chronicles 34-36 and John 19: 1-22

Josiah becomes king at the age of eight and reigns for 31 years. He is a good king and has a wonderful reign. He seeks God at an early age and makes reforms, tearing down the pagan altars and other items used for worshipping false gods. Josiah also repairs the temple. When his people finds the book of the Law written in Moses's hand, he realizes just how far away the people were from God and sets about making things right. Things are going great for him. Unfortunately, we see his downfall through Neco the king of Egypt. Neco was after another kingdom. He was not concerned with attacking Judah. Neco sends word to Josiah that he should not march out against him. He tells Josiah that God told him to go after another dynasty. Josiah does not listen. He still marches against Neco. Even though he disguised himself, he was killed by Neco's archers. In all that Josiah had done to make the people right with God, he made one fatal flaw. He did not consult God before marching out. As believers, our goal is to walk with God in everything we do. Whenever we come across something that needs more clarification, we can seek His advice.

This marks the end of Judah. After Josiah, there are a series of wicked kings that follow him. The last king of Judah is Zedekiah. He had been placed on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar. Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar and The LORD. As a result, Judah fell and the people were deported to Babylon.

Cyrus becomes king of Persia. Cyrus is concerned that the gods of the foreign nations might cause trouble for his kingdom. He decrees that The LORD the God of heaven has given him all

the kingdoms of the earth and has appointed him to build a temple to God in Jerusalem. God used the pagan king as an instrument to issue His command. Authority derives from The LORD.

In the New Testament reading, we also read about authority coming from God. Pilate does not want to crucify Christ. Instead, he has Jesus whipped, but it does not satisfy the people. He interviews Christ again and when Jesus is silent he asks Jesus if He knows about his authority. Jesus responds that Pilate would not have any authority if it had not been granted by God.

Jesus is taken to the cross. A sign with His crimes is posted above Him. All the sign read was "JESUS THE NAZARENE THE KING OF THE JEWS". The Jews are upset with the wording, wanting Pilate to change it to say that "He said He was king of the Jews." Pilate refuses their request. The pagan leader had a better understand of who Jesus was than the people that had been waiting for Him.

June 13: Ezra 1-2 and John 19: 23-42

Ezra and Nehemiah were considered as a single book until the third century A.D. Both Ezra and Nehemiah have material found in the other and they complete each other. We do not know who wrote the book of Ezra, but it is believed the person that gave us the Chronicles is most likely the author.

Ezra starts off right where 2 Chronicles left off, citing Cyrus's decree to restore the temple in Jerusalem. The leaders of Benjamin and Judah along with the priests and Levites, prepared to go up and rebuild the temple. King Cyrus even returned the articles that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple.

We see the list of people motivated to go back to Jerusalem. There are hundreds if not thousands of these people coming back. One group is not as large, though. The Levites only have 74 men return. We do not know why the number of Levites returning was so small. One theory is that not many Levites were carried away to Babylon at the fall of Jerusalem. The other theory is that not many were motivated to go back and start again. Many years later when Ezra is preparing to return again, he only gets 38 more volunteers.

The singers, gatekeepers, and temple servants are listed. The presence of singers was important in establishing worship at the temple again. The people are motivated to get back and begin worshipping God again! The old saying goes that we don't know what we have until it's gone.

In the New Testament reading, Jesus provides comfort for His mother by telling John to look after her. It was difficult for widows in those times. They would rely on their children to take care of them. Jesus cries that His work is finished and draws His last breath.

Since a festival is coming, they don't want the bodies to remain up. They break the legs of the two men Jesus was crucified with, but when they get to Jesus, they see that He is already dead. To ensure that He was gone, they take a spear and pierce His side. Blood and water flow from the cut. This is proof of an actual crucifixion. Crucifixion was in many ways a death of asphyxiation. The weight of the body on the arms would cause fluid to fill the lungs of the

victim, essentially drowning them. In fact, some crucifixions in the Roman Empire were carried out by suspended the victim on a cross by his arms with no foot support. After three days of that, the victim's lungs would fill with body fluid. This detail of blood and water flowing from His side is proof that the death of Jesus was a true physical death.

Joseph of Arimathea retrieves Christ's body and buries Him in a tomb. He begins the process of anointing the body, but he does not finish the task.

June 14: Ezra 3-5 and John 20

The Israelites restore animal sacrifice. They begin working on the temple. When the foundation is laid, there is an interesting event. There are shouts of joy, but there are also shouts of mourning. The older Israelites that had seen God's temple in its original glory, see that this new temple is not nearly as ornate as the first. They mourn for the past. The younger Israelites, that had never seen the original temple are shouting for joy. They are looking to the future and are happy to see that God has blessed them in allowing them to come back. The shouting of both parties was so great that it could be heard from far away.

There is nothing wrong with looking at the past, as the older Israelites did. However, we cannot live in the past. If we stay in the past, then we cannot move forward.

Some enemies come and ask to help build the temple with the Israelites. The Israelites deny their request. Rather than take the "no" this group then begins antagonizing them and opposing the building efforts. Artaxerxes sends a formal letter stating that they must stop rebuilding the temple.

The rebuilding effort begins again in the second year of King Darius's rule. When Tattenai, the governor sees they are rebuilding, he sends a letter to Darius asking him to launch a formal investigation to see if Cyrus had in fact ordered the Israelites to rebuild the temple.

In the New Testament reading, the women go to Christ's tomb to finish anointing His body. When they get there, they find that He is no longer in the tomb. They rush to tell the disciples. John and Peter run to the tomb. We know that John made it to the tomb faster than Peter did because he records that he made it to the tomb before Peter did.

At one point, Christ appears to the majority of the disciples. He shows them His hands and His side. They rejoice when they see Him. Thomas was not there when Christ met with them. He says that he will not believe unless he sees the mark and puts his finger into the mark of the nails and hand in his side, he won't believe. This one moment in Thomas's life forever earned him the title of the "Doubting Thomas".