

2 Chronicles 35:1-19

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[0 : 00] And to be in the house of the Lord, take your Bibles, go into the book of 2 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles chapter 35. 2 Chronicles chapter 35, we're getting really close, really near the end, but we'll be looking at verses 1 through 19.

1 through 19 of 2 Chronicles chapter 35, as we just make our way through Scripture. And we are still looking at the historical writings, of course.

Looking at the last great celebration before the fall of the Southern Kingdom. 2 Chronicles 35, verses 1 through 19. Before we get into it, let's pray.

Father, we thank you so much. We are thankful for the day you've given us. We're thankful for every opportunity we have of gathering together. So we pray that you lead us tonight as we open up the Word.

Lord, we pray that you give us wisdom and you give us understanding. We pray that as we read it, that we would not come just seeking information, but we would long to know the application.

[1 : 07] And that that application would find fruit in our own lives. That is, that we would use it for your glory and honor. So Lord, as we study the history of your people and your interactions with them, we pray that we as your people would grow closer and closer to one another and closer to you.

We ask that you be glorified in our understanding. We ask that Christ be magnified by our living out the truths that we find in Scripture in the world that you've placed us in.

So Lord, we pray that you equip us now to continue to walk in obedience when we leave this place. And we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen.

2 Chronicles 35, verses 1 through 19. We are looking at the last good ruler of the people of Judah. The last one who did what was right in the sight of the Lord in all the ways of his father David. To follow the wording of Scripture. Before the fall of the southern kingdom of Judah.

[2 : 14] By this time, historically, the northern kingdom of Israel has already fallen. The Assyrians actually are beginning to wane in power. Where they have come and like a whirlwind taking a lot of people captive.

A lot of people have fallen before them. The northern kingdom has been carried away into captivity. And just as quickly as they came onto the scene, they also begin to depart from the scene. So God brings judgment upon the Assyrians.

We read that in prophetic books of Nahum and other minor prophets. For their pride and their wickedness and even in their boasting of considering that what they had done had been by their own strength.

So the Assyrians are fading off the scene. Because by this time, historically, the Babylonians are beginning to rise to power. We know that the Babylonians will eventually come in and carry away the southern kingdom.

Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar. And all those leaders of the Babylonian Empire will lead the people of God away. Because of and based upon the decrees of God's commands that God has already pronounced judgment.

[3 : 16] By the time we come to this point, and we're looking at the reign of Josiah, God has already decreed judgment by the Babylonians upon the southern kingdom.

Yet it has been kind of stayed for the moment. Josiah will not see it, but their wickedness and their failings. If you remember when they found the book, the scroll of the book hidden in the temple. And they read that book, then the prophetic word of hold of the prophetess was that God would bring judgment. That the people would be carried away in captivity because of their wickedness and

their sin. And all of their rebellion and idolatry against the Lord God Almighty. But that it would not come in the days of Josiah. So we need to keep in mind that nothing Josiah does is going to stop the coming judgment. So we're not looking for a revival, if you will. It's not going to stop what has already been decreed. And God is still just.

[4 : 15] Even following Josiah, we see wicked kings rise up. We see people going about wickedly and the wickedness is still within their heart. And so God's judgment is just and right.

Even in light of the good that we see during the reign of Josiah. But it is worthy of repeating that here is the last good king. Even, I would say, until the king of kings comes and sets upon his throne. This is the last good king the people of Israel have. For we do not see another good king coming until we meet King Jesus. And he has not yet set upon the throne in this land ruling over his people. But for the time's sake, we see here in the first 19 verses a sincere time of worship. This is the last celebration of the Passover in the Old Testament historically that we will see.

But it is a sincere time of worship. The word of God says, Then Josiah celebrated the Passover to the Lord in Jerusalem. And they slaughtered the Passover animals on the 14th day of the first month.

[5 : 15] He set the priests in their offices and encouraged them in the service of the house of the Lord. He also said to the Levites who taught all Israel and who were holy to the Lord, Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel, built.

It will be a burden on your shoulders no longer. Now serve the Lord your God and his people Israel. Prepare yourselves by your father's households in your divisions according to the writing of David, king of Israel, and according to the writing of his son Solomon.

Moreover, stand in the holy place according to the sections of the father's households of your brethren, the lay people. And according to the Levites by divisions of a father's household. Now slaughter the Passover animals, sanctify yourselves, and prepare for your brethren to do according to the word of the Lord by Moses.

Josiah contributed to the lay people, to all who were present, flocks of lambs and young goats, all for the Passover offerings numbering 30,000 plus 3,000 bulls. These were from the king's possessions.

His officers also contributed a free will offering to the people, the priests and the Levites. Hilkiah and Zechariah and Jehiel, the officials of the house of God, gave to the priests for the Passover offerings, 2,600 from the flocks and 300 bulls.

[6 : 33] Konaniah, also in Shemaiah and Nathaniel, his brother, and Heshbiah and Jehiel and Jehazabed, the officers of the Levites contributed to the Levites for the Passover offerings, 5,000 from the flocks and 500 bulls.

So the service was prepared, and the priests stood at their stations, and the Levites by their divisions according to the king's command. They slaughtered the Passover animals, and while the priests sprinkled the blood received from their hand, the Levites skinned them.

Then they removed the burnt offerings that they might give them to the sections of the father's households of the lay people to present to the Lord, as it is written in the book of Moses. They did this also with the bulls.

So they roasted the Passover animals and the fire according to the ordinance, and they boiled the holy things in pots and kettles and pans, and carried them speedily to all the lay people. Afterward, they prepared for themselves and for the priests, because the priests, the sons of Aaron, were offering the burnt offerings and the fat until night.

Therefore, the Levites prepared for themselves and for the priests, the sons of Aaron. The singers, the sons of Asaph, were also at their stations according to the command of David, Asaph, Heman, and Juduthun, the king's seer.

[7 : 45] And the gatekeepers at each gate did not have to depart from their service, because the Levites, their brethren, prepared for them. So all the service of the Lord was prepared on that day to celebrate the Passover and to offer burnt offerings on the altar of the Lord, according to the command of King Josiah.

Thus, the sons of Israel, who were present, celebrated the Passover at that time, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days. There had not been celebrated a Passover like it in Israel since the days of Samuel, the prophet.

Nor had any of the kings of Israel celebrated such a Passover as Josiah did with the priests, the Levites, all Judah and Israel who were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

In the 18th year of Josiah's reign, this Passover was celebrated. 2 Chronicles 35, verses 1 through 19. The 18th year of Josiah's reign was a very, very busy year and an important year.

It was the 18th year of his reign that they began to restore the temple. It was in the 18th year of his reign that they found the scroll of the book of the law within the reading of the temple, or within the temple.

[8 : 57] It was then read in the presence of King Josiah, and there Hoda's prophetic word came to him. It is in the 18th year of his reign that they celebrate this Passover feast.

It is quite unique, isn't it, that we read here that this had not been celebrated in this fashion, in this manner, since the days of Samuel. And that no king in all of Israel had led the people to celebrate a Passover such as this.

That the last good king actually celebrates the Passover in the proper way. That he is the only king who led the people at such a time as that, such a wicked time when the judgment of God had already been decreed.

When the people of God, the half of them, had already been carried away into captivity, and the remaining remnant had been led away into idolatrous worship, and they had been skewed so often by wicked kings and wicked people.

And yet now, the reading of the word, and in the response to the word of God, we have such a celebration of the Passover festival, that we are told that no one before him celebrated the Passover in such a fashion.

[10 : 02] That means that David did not do it in such a manner, a man after God's own heart. Solomon, in all of his wisdom, did not lead the people to celebrate the Passover in such a manner.

And even the last Passover celebration, which we saw not too many chapters ago, in Hezekiah's reforms, Hezekiah did not lead the people to celebrate the Passover in such a fashion as Josiah did.

That is the last Passover celebration that is recorded for us before the Babylonian captivity. And the last one that we have recorded historically for us until we get to the New Testament is the greatest of them all.

It is the most proper celebration of the Passover. And it is one that is declared to be the one that was done in such a manner that none like it had ever come close.

It was a time of sincere worship. So what does it look like to have a time of sincere worship? Surely we do not come before the Lord in appointed festivals such as the Passover, though we are mindful of the Passover events because we know what the Passover is pointing to.

[11 : 14] This morning, when having my meeting with Miss Lauren before I shared with the church, I had already had a phone conversation, so I just asked, I said, where are you reading?

She said, you know, I have just been really moved lately reading the book of Exodus. I said, well, that is a great place to read because the book of Exodus, the Passover event, right, really declares and displays for us the redemption of man and such a picture there.

So we are mindful of the Passover, but yet it is not that we come together to celebrate a festival during the Passover. We do not have to come celebrate the Feast of Booths or the Feast of Tabernacles.

We do not have to come and celebrate the Feast of Life, all those things that were done by the people of God in the Old Testament. We are not as concerned about the gathering of the first fruits or the Feast of Pentecost, the end gathering.

We do not have appointed festivals where we come three to five times a year before the Lord to celebrate, but yet we still long to come before him with sincere worship.

[12 : 16] We are of the opportune now that we have the chance to come daily, even weekly as a corporate body, together, together, and our longing is that we would come with sincere worship.

So the application we find that is taking place here has just as much application as our time now. Though we are not celebrating a festival, we still want to come with sincerity and truth.

And what does it look like? Because Josiah led the people to do that. The first thing that we notice is that a time of sincere worship is focused, and really its force is based upon, number one, its focus.

It is easy to bypass it if we do not read the entirety of Scripture. But the wording of God is very intentional. The wording of God is very applicable.

This is why I choose to read out of the text that I choose to read out of, and this is why I believe Bible translations are important. This is why I did my study of Bible translations, and this is why I really dove into why I did that.

[13:23] We can do that any other time. We can have that discussion of, is any translation of Scripture okay? Well, yes, I mean, it could be at a certain level. But if you're going to study it, and you're going to look at the wording, then you want to make sure that you have a literal translation of Scripture.

And this is why, because sometimes in studying it, it is the literal words that matter. Notice what it says. Then Josiah celebrated the Passover to the Lord. That implies its focus.

And the reason we understand it implies its focus is because of the testimony of the rest of Scripture. Josiah led the people to celebrate the Passover to the Lord.

This was not a gathering together of celebration of national pride. This was not a gathering together of understanding who they were as the people of Israel as far as national identity goes.

Now, this is written after the Babylonian captivity, when the people are trying to figure out who they are. And the author of Chronicles, we refer to him as the Chronicler, reminds us that the greatest Passover celebration that took place was a celebrated Passover that was a Passover to the Lord.

[14:35] That is, it was focused on the Lord God Almighty Himself. It was a focus on what God had accomplished in the Passover event.

We know that the celebration of the festival in particular was to remind the people that without the shedding of the blood of the lamb, there would be no release from captivity. That without the shedding of the blood of the lamb, there would no being let out of the Egyptian enslavement. The unleavened bread was to remind them of the haste in which they left. And we know all the symbols and everything that is pointed to there. But yet, what they are focusing on is the fact that it was the Lord Himself who had released them and redeemed them.

It was the focus of the event to such an extent that nothing else seems to be important. Now, you say, well, maybe you're getting just a little too technical. Well, we've talked about this difference between the Old and the New Testament and the people of Israel in particular, that by the time we get into the New Testament, it is no longer described in such a fashion.

When Jesus is walking upon the face of the earth in flesh and blood and the Passover celebrations, we can date the life of Christ, at least the public ministry of Christ, to about three and a half years.

[15:47] And the way in which you date the public ministry of Christ is that you date it by the coinciding Passover celebrations, because that is when He goes back and forth to Jerusalem. And so we are told repeatedly of the Passover celebrations, and that is how we can date how many years of public ministry that He had.

But each time in the New Testament, it is the Passover of the Jews. It is not the Passover of the Lord. There is a great transitioning that takes place in what we call the intertestamental time, that here in Josiah, near the end of the people of God before the Babylonian captivity, they are celebrating the Passover to the Lord.

By the time Christ comes along some nearly 600 years later, and I know that's a long time in history, but it gives ample time to build so many traditions that you forget about what it was supposed to be to, that during the time of Christ, the Passover is no longer a Passover to the Lord, but it is the Passover of the Jews.

Are we being too picky in that assessment? No, because the Passover became a celebration more about who they were than what He had done.

And it was the focus of their national identity that became so important to them in the midst of a land in which they were no longer the sole owners of.

[17:12] They were under the hand of Roman rule. So to try to set themselves apart from everyone else around them, they began to celebrate these festivals and these events as national identity.

This is who we are rather than who He is. We must be careful that when we gather together, that when we come to a time of worship, that the primary focus of our gathering together, I would say that all of our focus of our gathering together is what the Lord God Almighty is doing and who He is rather than who we are.

I had the opportunity this past week to take a young man out to lunch who's not from the South. We sat down and we started talking about the difference between churches in the South and churches from where he had come from.

He began to talk about how there are so many churches down here and so sparse churches from where he's at. And he began to ask me questions and wanted me to define what it looks like to be Baptist and what is Baptist and what is Southern Baptist and all these other things.

And I told him, I said, well, just on the front end, I'm probably not the best person to ask what a Southern Baptist is. I can give you the historical information, but my primary concern is what is biblical and what we are, not what a denomination is.

[18 : 39] Now, I can explain it to you. I can tell you why they do what we do, but you need to know on the front end, the most important thing for me is the biblical mandate, not the denominational mandate.

When we gather together, we need to understand where our focus is. Are we focusing on it being to the Lord or are we focused on it being to who we are?

It is not our identity that is primary, but rather his position. So a sincere time of worship begins with a proper focus.

We say, well, sure, pastor, that should be understood. Well, it should be, and too often it ought to be, but it is not. It is a proper focus. Secondly, we see here that a sincere time of worship takes place when there is a clear calling and people are operating according to that calling.

It tells us in verse two, he set the priest in their offices and encouraged them. The Legacy Standard Bible says that he strengthened them, that is, he equipped them in the service of the house of the Lord.

[19 : 51] Josiah not only celebrated the Passover to the Lord, but he celebrated the Passover with a reminder of those who were called to a specific and particular office.

And the people that were called, he empowered and equipped and even strengthened to do the very thing they were called to do. This portion of scripture, though it seems to have very little application, is really, could be plugged into Ephesians 4.

If you really want to look at the Old Testament parallel of Ephesians 4, of every piece doing their part and all the joints and ligaments fitting together, because we have the priest here and he puts the priest in place and he strengthens them and encourages them to do their work.

And then it says in verse three, and he also said to the Levites, you know, those laborers who taught all Israel and who were holy to the Lord, put the holy ark of the house, holy ark in the house which Solomon, the son of David, of Israel built.

It will be a burden on your shoulders no longer. I'll tell you, this is really an amazing thing. What he is saying is, I'm calling you to a service that is not a burden. Right?

[20 : 54] Take the burden off your shoulder. Put the burden in the house. You should not carry it any longer before you have a work to do, a work and a labor. He says, put it down for it should be a burden no longer.

Now serve the Lord your God and his people Israel. And he's calling them to do the very thing that God had called them to do at the very beginning. And he's equipping them and encouraging them to do that.

We read here of the singers and the musicians playing, of the gatekeepers staying at the gate. And every part and every portion is operating according to their calling.

And as they operate according to their calling, the priests are doing what the priests should do. The Levites are doing what the Levites should do. The musicians are doing what the musicians should do. The gatekeepers are watching the gate as the gatekeepers should do.

The entirety of the people have the opportunity there to celebrate the Passover as they ought. And that is, worship is unhindered because each and every one, while they are not doing everything, each one is operating according to the calling of the Lord.

[22 : 01] And the calling is reiterated, he says, as David has written and as Solomon, his son, has written. So this is not a new calling. Right? He is reminding them of what God had already called them to do.

And then he's equipping them to do it. It is a wonderful picture of everyone doing their part. It is Josiah who is leading this. But Josiah is not the priest.

Josiah is not the Levite. Josiah is just the king. And so what he does is he calls out the call and says, yes, I want to equip you to do this work. I want to encourage you to take part in this. And it is a beautiful picture of sincere worship happening because individuals are operating within the calling of the Lord in their lives. And they're not asked to do anything other than that. They are confined to that, but they are also empowered in that. And Josiah makes every effort, by the way, never miss this. It is the king who empowers them and strengthens them to operate in their calling.

[23 : 01] If you ever want to look at types of Christ, it is Christ who empowers us and equips us to operate as he strengthens us in our calling. We are not all called to do the same thing, but it leads to sincere worship when each one understands that and each one is equipped and encouraged in that.

So we see focus. We see calling. The third thing that we notice here is that sincere worship happens when there are ample or abundant provisions. There are the provisions for worship. It tells us in verse 7, Josiah contributed to the lay people. The lay people would be the common people around there. We'll see that. Not Levites, not priests, not musicians, not gatekeepers. They're just the lay people. So Josiah contributed to the lay people, to all who were present, flocks of lambs and young goats, all for the Passover offering, numbering 30,000 plus 3,000 bulls. Again, don't miss this application. From the abundant resources of the king come the provisions to worship. The king provides the means to worship the Lord God as they ought.

[24 : 13] Now the celebration of the Passover, each one was to bring his own lamb. Remember that, right? If you as a family were too small to eat a whole lamb, then two families would get together and you would bring a lamb into your house and you would have that lamb into your house and you would watch that lamb for seven days and after observing that lamb for seven days and making sure that that lamb was perfect and spotless and blameless without any blemish.

That's why Christ went on display for the Passion Week. We understand that. So that family would take that lamb, that perfect lamb that had lived within their house and they had grown to love that lamb and they had held it so close and they had seen that it was perfect and all of its beauty and they would take that lamb and each family would take their lamb and lay it on the altar and give it to the priest and that's how they would celebrate the Passover.

That each one was responsible to bring their own lamb. But here we notice that it is from the abundance of the King that the provisions of the Lamb come. The King provides the means to worship.

Don't miss that because we know that Christ himself provides us with the opportunity to come into the presence of Holy God unimpeded, unhindered because what we have, what we need to come before him in sincere worship is provided to us by another.

And not only does the King provide, but it says his officers also contributed a free will offering to the people. Remember that water never rises above its source but the source of water can bring the level up too because now we see his officers contributing and then we see the officials of the house of God gave.

[25 : 46] They gave a little bit as well and then some of the Levites, the officers of the Levites contributed to the Levites for the Passover offering. What we notice is there are ample provisions for all to worship.

It began with the giving of the King. It began when the King looked at his own flocks and his own herds and he gave from what was his own and he gave it to the lay people, the common people and then all of a sudden his officers began to give and then the officers of the house of God began to give and then the Levites, the officers of the Levites began to give and now worship becomes a reality and the celebration of the Passover is amply provided for for every individual because now there are provisions.

No one lacks what they need to come before the Lord God Almighty because the lambs and even the bulls have been provided. So we notice here the provisions.

This sincere time of worship that was like none who went before it is based solely upon the provisions of the few but the multitude give. The multitude are given the opportunity to worship because of these few who gave which leads us to the final thing.

It's a proper focus as people operate within their calling and there are ample provisions but the final thing is it was inclusive. Look at the inclusion of all.

[27 : 05] This is probably the most beautiful thing in this passage is that when the people are operating according to their calling the Levites are told to let the burden of the Ark of the Covenant off their shoulders and to go serve the people of the Lord.

We notice then the Levites were handing the blood to the priests. The priests were sprinkling the blood around the altar for that is what the priests are to do to bring the blood into the presence and to atone for the sins of the nation.

But while the priests are sprinkling the blood the Levites are skinning the animals and they notice this and then the Levites take it and they give it to the lay people so that they can in turn give it and lay it upon the altar so they can take it and go back home.

And it's a beautiful picture of those who had an intercession between them, right? Everyone is included in this act of worship. The priests the Levites the lay people the common people but it doesn't stop there because the priests are working, right?

That's a day of work for them. That's a day of labor. The gatekeepers they're working because there's a great influence of people so they're guarding the gates. The musicians they're working because they are having to play the instruments as people go back and forth so it's not like they have a day off this is a day of work and a day of labor for them but yet because of the calling of the Levites notice what it says the Levites also provided the lambs for the priest and the sons of Aaron because they were busy offering the blood they took lambs for them and then the Levites prepared lambs for the musicians and then the gatekeepers did not have to leave their post because the Levites prepared lambs for them that by the time we get to the end of the day everyone that was present had the opportunity to worship the priest could eat their Passover meal the gatekeepers could eat their Passover meal the musicians could eat their Passover meal why because they were dependent upon the Levites operating according to their calling it is a beautiful picture of the people of God serving one another and each one being included none being excluded because they were quote working or that was a work day for them they couldn't genuinely worship because they were distracted with other things the gatekeepers were maintaining their post the musicians were playing their instruments and the priests even offering the blood but yet at the end of the day everyone that was present everyone that was there had the opportunity to worship why because they were serving one another what a beautiful picture a wonderful

[29 : 55] Old Testament picture of serving one another that is so unique to this passage that the Levites are not only fulfilling their task because what was their charge put down that ark and serve the Lord your God and his people and they began to serve the people in such a fashion not only were they giving it to the Levites they would look around and say well what about our brothers who are working let's ensure that we have the opportunity to let them do it as well and the inclusive nature of this worship led to this final statement thus the sons of Israel who were present celebrated the Passover at that time and the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days there had not been celebrated a Passover like it in Israel since the days of Samuel the prophet nor had any of the kings of Israel celebrated such a Passover as Josiah did with the priests the Levites all Judah and Israel who were present and the inhabitants of Jerusalem that is everyone celebrated together because the focus it all began with focus it was to the Lord the Levites didn't say well I have to do this for the priest or I have to do this for the lay people or I have to do this no it was

I am doing this to the Lord so that my brothers and my sisters have the opportunity to worship and to celebrate with me and it is a sincere time of worship like none other and it is so unique and it is sad that it is really on the brink of their downfall that following this time of worship Josiah will die in battle we will get to that in just a moment and then the continual downfall of the people will eventually lead to the Babylonian captivity but it reminds us that when we come together as the people of God we come seeking a sincere time of worship and it must be with a proper focus according to our calling because of the provisions which the king has made and inclusive of all those around us we are seeking to serve one another love one another so that we may all worship together to the glory of the Lord himself we find it in 2nd chronicles 35 1-19 let's pray together and then we'll be dismissed put