

## AUGUST 4

This is another “red letter,” “go-out-and-get-yourself-a-Frappuccino” day. You are finishing 2 Chronicles and beginning 1 Corinthians.

### 2 Chronicles 35-36

Believe it or not, Ezra is wrapping up 2 Chronicles. You look at the amount of space he is giving Josiah and how little he will give the kings after Josiah and realize that Ezra is trying to make an important point to the people reading this history. The revival under Josiah came by God’s grace. As spectacular as it was, it only took one generation to reverse all of the positive influence that the Lord had brought in under Josiah. Hope is always found in following the Lord, not in following men.

#### 2 Chronicles 35

Vs. 1-6 In putting the worship of Israel in order, notice that Josiah had given the Levites the task of teaching all of Israel, as God had meant them to do. All of the priests and Levites were ready to serve the people at the Passover. Josiah followed all that David and Solomon had set in order, and now he had Exodus through Deuteronomy to guide him in the preparation. Notice the reference to the ark of the covenant. This will be the last time we will hear of it. Apparently it had been moved out of the Holy of Holies. It was put back by the Levites, and they were told not to carry it in the procession that was part of the Passover feast. Sometime after this the ark was taken or destroyed.

Vs. 7-9 Josiah led by example and others willingly followed. Not only that, but Josiah gave of himself and his resources, not just to be an example, but to enable the people to come to the Lord in worship and devotion. Judah was in decline, and the chaos caused by the Assyrians brought enough instability and lawlessness, that the people began migrating to Jerusalem and no longer were supporting themselves from their lands. By this time most of the people would have been pretty poor. Josiah’s generosity was infectious.

Vs. 10-14 The Book of Moses was Genesis-Deuteronomy. Josiah had this and they followed it. Notice the references to *the sons of Aaron*. They considered those books to be precious and they respected and obeyed what was written in them. We need to have that same wonder for the Word, and particularly for the Gospels and Acts, our first five books.

Vs. 15-19 Just as David had designed it, Josiah had the singers and gatekeepers participating in worship. The sincerity and power of this Passover is expressed here. Imagine this, no other king, not even David or Solomon or Hezekiah, had honored God this way.

Vs. 20-27 Ezra is skipping ahead now 13 years after this Passover to continue the story and get Josiah killed. Ezra's point in the book has now been made regarding leadership and regarding God's grace to this nation. Now it's time to end the story. This morning I was reading about John the Baptist, and it made me think the same thing about Josiah. God just wanted him out of the way so He could continue His plan.

V. 21 In a way this was unnecessary. Josiah was not a fighting king. As the Egyptian army went through his land they would have looted and pillaged the towns along the way. It must have been that Josiah had seen God blessing so much of his work that he thought he would be blessed by God in fighting Egypt. I wonder if he asked God about this.

V. 22 How would Josiah have known Pharaoh’s words were from God? I guess he should have asked a prophet. He had Jeremiah standing there and could have asked him. Also, it wasn't a good idea to imitate Ahab's trick, especially since it didn't work for Ahab. Actually, it was probably a common ploy among kings. But if God is with you, why bother?

V. 25 This was a huge loss and major event for Israel. We never hear of them singing of the loss of David or anyone else. Not only that, Jeremiah was inspired by the Spirit to write a lament and sing it. Not only that, *to this day* means it was sung all the way through the 70-year exile and up to the time Ezra was writing this, 100 years after the first return of the people. That is a great honor to Josiah.

Vs. 26-27 Josiah doesn't have anything said negatively about him. In reading this, I think his time was over. He had done what God put him on the earth to do, and now it was time for God to retire Josiah and bring judgment on Judah. As an act of grace, although the kings who follow Josiah are bad kings, during Josiah's revival of Israel, God was making a way to save Israel during their exile in Babylon. The national revival seems to have ended, but it just went underground and was deported. God would fan it to life again through the hearts of four teenage boys and a very unusual prophet named Ezekiel. And too, Jeremiah was also a product of Josiah's revival.

## 2 Chronicles 36

Vs. 1-4 We've seen this before in 2 Kings. To show that he was in charge, the Pharaoh removed the king appointed by the people and appointed Jehoiakim to be king.

Vs. 5-8 This began the Babylonian exile when Daniel and his friends were taken. This is the first deportation. Thankfully Jehoiakim was obedient to Neb for three years, giving the Lord time to establish Dan & Co. in Babylon. We get some new information here. Somehow Jehoiakim was captured, without Jerusalem being approached by the Babylonian army. Maybe he was on vacation. Jehoiakim was either released or escaped and returned to Jerusalem where he died and was given the burial of a donkey. Nebuchadnezzar was mad and came to Jerusalem again, but even Neb knew the fear of God by this time.

Vs. 9-10 This was the second deportation when Ezekiel was taken along with 12,000 skilled workers. Now there was no tech support in Israel. This left the country destitute. Neb also took more out of the temple. It could be that he took the ark. As we saw in Kings, Jehoiachin's surrender of the city was in obedience to Jeremiah's preaching. His obedience would be rewarded later.

Vs. 11-14 Zedekiah was the final king of Judah; and because of this rebellion, the city and temple were destroyed. He was not only ungodly, but he was also a coward. His nobles led the kingdom. Notice that in spite of all the bad things that were happening, Zedekiah would not humble himself before the Lord. In Jeremiah we will see the personal conversation that Jeremiah had with this wimpy king.

Vs. 15-16 This is Ezra's commentary. The returnees needed to watch their hearts too.

Vs. 17-21 This is a summary of Nebuchadnezzar's final visit to Jerusalem. The destruction was total and the violence done to the people was shocking. Yet God had warned them that this would happen. The fact that Neb found and released Jeremiah shows that he understood that God was using him to bring judgment to Israel. It is likely that Neb had Daniel advising him.

V. 21 Apparently no king of Israel ever gave the land its Sabbatical seventh year when there would be no sowing or reaping. The 70 years of the exile were designated by God for every Sabbath year that was missed. This means that Israel had gone 490 years without giving the land its Sabbath. They had never obeyed God in this. That ought to be shocking and make us think about what we might be neglecting. It is probably something very simple, something we might think we're actually doing and something totally indispensable in our devotion to Jesus.

Vs. 22-23 Years before this, while Hezekiah was king, Isaiah had predicted that a king named Cyrus would send the people back to Israel out of exile. (Isaiah 45:1) This is great grace on

God's part to preserve His people during their exile. Even in Deuteronomy, the Lord already knew the people would rebel; and He knew how He would save and preserve them in exile.

After 2 Chronicles the Hebrew Bible has the books that naturally follow the end of the exile: Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther. All three of these people lived after the return of the people and during the Persian Empire. But what Ezra doesn't mention here is the event that happened just before Cyrus told the Jews they could go home. It's the purrrrrfect kid's story (Daniel 6) and it is much deeper than anyone realizes.

### **1 Corinthians 1:1-17**

Back in my first year of marriage with Beth, sometime before Easter, she came up with the idea to memorize 1 Corinthians 15:51-58, so that by Easter of 1979 we would have it memorized and could say it to each other. You do lots of crazy things your first year of marriage. During that time, I was driving from Waukegan to Kenosha every day for school, 45 minutes there and 45 minutes back. This was in the days before smart phones and texting. So I memorized. I really enjoyed those few verses, and so I set a goal to memorize all of 1 Corinthians 15 by Easter. And I did it. Now, I was becoming a memorizing junkie; and I still had that long drive every day, so by the time I graduated from Parkside in May 1981, I had memorized all of 1 Corinthians. What a blessing that has been in my ministry and personal life. That was over 30 years ago, and Beth has been with the Lord since 2002. Yet every couple of weeks when I go over 1 Corinthians, I think that this was all because of the suggestion and encouragement of the girl God gave me who was my dearest friend on earth. Thanks, Beth.

V. 1 Notice Sosthenes. Last time we saw him was in Acts 18:17 as an unbeliever getting beaten up. Now he is a brother, and it is important that Paul is mentioning his name here because he was a respected person and could validate the issues mentioned in this letter. Probably, when some of the Corinthians heard his name being mentioned by Paul in this letter, they said, "oh, oh."

V. 2 *All those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ* is an important message and connection for this very "elite" church. Paul will use words like this to bring them back to earth several times. Paul will show them that "they" are out of step in their pride and arrogance. Behind their criticism of Paul might be the suspicion that he gave this church harder instructions than he had given other churches. This church certainly thought they were better than other churches because of the spiritual gifts they had received. Paul will address all of these things.

Vs. 4-9 This church burst into life with all sorts of manifestations of the Spirit. In chapters 12-14 Paul will "minister" to them to give the right perspective on these gifts, especially tongues. The main church in Corinth was directly next door to the synagogue, and I think this accounts for the outpouring of tongues and the other sign gifts.

Vs. 10-16 The problem Paul begins to address here will continue until the end of chapter 4.

V. 11 *Chloe's people* probably signifies a church that met at this person's house. Chloe's people were "snitches." Sosthenes might have been a part of that group or he was the messenger telling of issues in the church. He also brought with him a list of questions the leaders/people had for Paul.

Vs. 12-13 The Corinthians were focusing on names and purity of teaching. We'll see in 2 Corinthians that they had self-appointed "super-apostles," who were causing people to focus inward. We'll see that they had not only lost sight of the harvest, but some of their groups were a horrible testimony for Christ in Corinth.

Vs. 14-17 It is hard to read these verses and think, as some people do, that baptism is necessary for salvation. Paul didn't think it was. It is the preaching of the gospel that is vital for salvation. Baptism is a sign of devotion to Christ and is important, but not vital to salvation.

What we'll see from Paul is that our message and walk in the harvest always remain simple and focused, if we are following our Lord and living only for Him, doing His work and reaching out to the lost.

### **Psalm 27:1-6**

Laura already had the last verse of Psalm 27 memorized, so she encouraged me to memorize the whole thing with her and we did. Surprisingly, this has been a major blessing and a help during a very crucial time of our lives. Once again, I've been blessed by the suggestion and encouragement of the girl God has given me to be my dearest friend on earth. Thanks, Laura.

If you're going to memorize this, look at a couple of different translations. We memorized it in the KJV; and I like the sense of the psalm better there, particularly the last verse, than in the ESV. It's too bad they split the psalm over today and tomorrow because David is driving toward the proclamation at the end...*Wait on the Lord*. I'd suggest reading the entire psalm today and tomorrow.

V. 1 This is the statement of what God had become to David in all of his years of trouble.

V. 2 This is something David had seen over and over again during these years of running.

V. 3 Imagine what it would be like to have this kind of strength of heart and confidence. This is peace that knowing and abiding in our Lord can give us.

V. 4 This became the great passion of David's heart. This is why David had to have the ark of the covenant in Jerusalem, why he wanted to build a temple for the Lord, and why even when he was told he couldn't build the temple, he still sought the Lord for the temple plans and amassed materials for its building.

V. 5 This is the first indication that David is still experiencing troubles. He knows the Lord will save him.

V. 6 Another passion of David was to give testimony to God's deliverance and mercy.

### **Proverbs 20:20-21**

V. 20 I'm sure there are different ways to understand what *lamp* means, but if it is "understanding," then I think I get this. Jesus said, "*The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light,* <sup>23</sup>*but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!*" (Matt. 6:22-23) Jesus was talking about our ability to understand.

So many people are taught to blame and "curse" their parents, without ever noticing that we are on a dying planet where every one of us is diseased and dying. I recently had to go back through some photos of my grandparents and great grandparents and even beyond. It is all so sad. One lost generation behaved like lost people influencing the next lost generation. Someone who was dear to me in all of that mess began cursing those around her early in life, and you could say that her light went out a long time ago. Understanding God's Word and his compassion for a dying world gives us compassion and understanding and keeps our lamp seeing clearly.

V. 21 This is another one of those "understanding" kinds of proverbs. Just like those who curse their parents, these people don't have enough understanding to know that what comes to us too easily won't be appreciated.