

I’ve titled this sermon “the Last Supper”

because Josiah’s Passover was the greatest feast since the days of Samuel (v18)

Yes, in the days of Hezekiah they had kept the Passover –

but the Chronicler wants us to understand that even Hezekiah’s Passover fell short.

The eighteenth year of Josiah was quite a year.

It was in the 18<sup>th</sup> year of Josiah that they started work repairing the temple.

It was in the 18<sup>th</sup> year of Josiah that they found the law.

It was in the 18<sup>th</sup> year of Josiah that he renewed the covenant.

It was in the 18<sup>th</sup> year of Josiah that he destroyed idolatry.

And it was in the 18<sup>th</sup> year of Josiah that they observed the Passover.

We don’t know much about the other 30 years of Josiah’s reign–

but the 18<sup>th</sup> year was quite a year!

What happened to the Passover?

We often read the Mosaic Law,

and we assume that the Law *describes* what faithful Israelites did.

But in fact, the Law only professes to state what faithful Israelites *should do*.

Laws, by definition, are *prescriptive*, not *descriptive*.

We saw last time that the Law of Moses was lost for years – perhaps centuries.

If the statute-book is misplaced,

how much more the practices and customs that went with it!

For nearly 800 years the Passover had fallen into disuse.

Did the faithful still remember it in their homes?

Did the priests still celebrate it in the temple?

Certainly Solomon had ordered the sacrifices for the feasts (2 Chron 8:13),

but Chronicles never mentions any public celebration of the Passover

until Hezekiah renewed the Passover (2 Chron 30).

Here Chronicles tells us that the public celebrations of the Passover since Samuel were very rare (35:18).

And if you think about it,

if Israel had never gotten into the habit of keeping the Passover,

then even the faithful would not have remembered it.

After all, there would have been only a handful of copies of the Law.

There was supposed to be one in the temple and one for the king –

any further copies would be dependent upon someone paying out a lot!

It’s important to study the Law and the Prophets

for the picture of what Israel was supposed to be –  
but we must always remember that Israel was *never* what Israel was supposed to be!

Of course, the same thing is true in the NT.

We sometimes idealize the first century and dream of what it would have been like  
to live in the days of the apostles.

But all you need to do is read the NT epistles carefully  
and you will see that the first century church was a mess!

Churches were splitting right and left –  
false teachers were running around all over the place,  
and people treated the apostles just like they treat faithful pastors today!

There never was a time when the church was what she was supposed to be.

And yet, that never works as an excuse!

We are still called to love the LORD our God with all our heart.

We are still called to be holy as he is holy.

We are still called to seek *first* his kingdom and his righteousness!

And that is why we need to listen to the story of Josiah.

Because that is what Josiah did – until the end of his life.

## **1. The Great Passover of Josiah (35:1-19)**

### **a. Josiah's Orders (v1-6)**

*35 Josiah kept a Passover to the LORD in Jerusalem. And they slaughtered the Passover lamb on the fourteenth day of the first month. <sup>2</sup> He appointed the priests to their offices and encouraged them in the service of the house of the LORD. <sup>3</sup> And he said to the Levites who taught all Israel and who were holy to the LORD, "Put the holy ark in the house that Solomon the son of David, king of Israel, built. You need not carry it on your shoulders. Now serve the LORD your God and his people Israel. <sup>4</sup> Prepare yourselves according to your fathers' houses by your divisions, as prescribed in the writing of David king of Israel and the document of Solomon his son. <sup>5</sup> And stand in the Holy Place according to the groupings of the fathers' houses of your brothers the lay people, and according to the division of the Levites by fathers' household. <sup>6</sup> And slaughter the Passover lamb, and consecrate yourselves, and prepare for your brothers, to do according to the word of the LORD by Moses."*

The book of Kings spent only three verses on Josiah's Passover –  
the Chronicler devotes 19 verses to it.

Verses 1-6 start with Josiah's orders that he gave to the priests.

Verse 3 suggests that among the abominations of Manasseh and Amon  
was the desecration of the Holy of Holies.

Josiah tells the priests to put the holy ark in the house that Solomon built.

That would imply that the ark was *not* in the Holy of Holies, where it should have been.

Josiah's speech may suggest that the priests had been derelict in their duties.

Even now, in the 18<sup>th</sup> year of his reign,

he has to push the priests to do what they should have been doing all along.  
This highlights the idea that we suggested last week,  
that Josiah faced resistance against his reforms –  
perhaps even from the priests!

Verse 4 makes reference to the writing of David and the documents of Solomon,  
regarding the arrangements for the temple.

We don't know anything about these records,  
unless they refer to the same documents that the Chronicler used  
in compiling his discussion of the liturgical work of the temple.

#### **b. The Contributions for the Passover (v7-9)**

<sup>7</sup> Then Josiah contributed to the lay people, as Passover offerings for all who were present, lambs and young goats from the flock to the number of 30,000, and 3,000 bulls; these were from the king's possessions. <sup>8</sup> And his officials contributed willingly to the people, to the priests, and to the Levites. Hilkiyah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, the chief officers of the house of God, gave to the priests for the Passover offerings 2,600 Passover lambs and 300 bulls. <sup>9</sup> Conaniah also, and Shemaiah and Nethanel his brothers, and Hashabiah and Jeiel and Jozabad, the chiefs of the Levites, gave to the Levites for the Passover offerings 5,000 lambs and young goats and 500 bulls.

In the Law, it appears that each family was supposed to bring its own lamb,  
but by Josiah's day, it is clear that the king and his officials are providing the sacrifices.

The bulls would be for burnt offerings and peace offerings  
The lambs, of course, would be for the Passover itself –  
one lamb per household (although small households could share).

If Josiah contributed 30,000 lambs and young goats,  
and the officers and chiefs contributed 7,600,  
that would suggest that around 37,600 households were present for the Passover.

Since "best guess" estimates for the whole population of Judah at this time  
would be around 300,000 –  
these numbers may well be exactly on target,  
since not *everyone* from the whole country would be there –  
and they would have some extras from around Israel.

It is worth noting that we encounter the same names in verse 9  
as we saw in Hezekiah's Passover (31:12-13).

Then again, we saw in the genealogies that names often repeated in priestly families,  
so it would not be surprising to hear that 80 years later

there are priests with the same names.

Verses 10-15 then give the details of the Passover sacrifices.

**c. The Details of the Passover Sacrifices (v10-15)**

<sup>10</sup> *When the service had been prepared for, the priests stood in their place, and the Levites in their divisions according to the king's command. <sup>11</sup> And they slaughtered the Passover lamb, and the priests threw the blood that they received from them while the Levites flayed the sacrifices.*

<sup>12</sup> *And they set aside the burnt offerings that they might distribute them according to the groupings of the fathers' houses of the lay people, to offer to the LORD, as it is written in the Book of Moses. And so they did with the bulls. <sup>13</sup> And they roasted the Passover lamb with fire according to the rule; and they boiled the holy offerings in pots, in cauldrons, and in pans, and carried them quickly to all the lay people. <sup>14</sup> And afterward they prepared for themselves and for the priests, because the priests, the sons of Aaron, were offering the burnt offerings and the fat parts until night; so the Levites prepared for themselves and for the priests, the sons of Aaron.*

<sup>15</sup> *The singers, the sons of Asaph, were in their place according to the command of David, and Asaph, and Heman, and Jeduthun the king's seer; and the gatekeepers were at each gate. They did not need to depart from their service, for their brothers the Levites prepared for them.*

Notice the order:

they slaughtered the Passover lamb, and the priests threw the blood (on the altar),  
while the Levites flayed the sacrifices (to prepare them for cooking);  
then they set aside the burnt offerings, so that each clan might offer them to the LORD  
(in other words, the clan leaders would come and place their hands  
on the heads of the burnt offerings –  
thereby ritually enacting the transfer of life and death);  
then they boiled the Passover lamb with fire.

Verse 13 needs some comment.

When it says “they roasted the Passover lamb with fire according to the rule;  
and they boiled the holy offerings in pots...”  
the problem is that the verb is the same in both cases.

It says that they boiled the Passover lamb with fire – and boiled the holy offerings in pots.

As we saw in Hezekiah’s Passover,  
the history of the Passover is an interesting one.

In Exodus 12-13, the Passover appears to be a family meal –  
there are no references to priests,  
and the meat is to be roasted –  
there is a very clear prohibition against boiling the meat (12:9)  
(the word here is “bashal”).

But of course, the Passover institution occurs before there are priests –  
and before there is any sanctuary for worship.

Deuteronomy 16:6-7, however, says

“you shall cook it and eat it at the place that the LORD your God will choose”

Now, the ESV translates “basha” as “cook” –

but it is the exact same word used in Exodus 12:9 as the form of cooking  
*forbidden* for the Passover lamb!

namely, *boiling*.

It will not do simply to translate the word differently!

The point is that the same word that Moses forbids in Exodus 12

is the very word that Moses uses in Deuteronomy 16

(and then is used both by Hezekiah and Josiah in Chronicles).

You shall not “basha” it – and then Deuteronomy and Chronicles

both say to “basha” it!

As I suggested when we covered Hezekiah,

there is a transformation of the Passover

from the original event to the celebration of that event.

It’s very much like the Lord’s Supper.

We don’t do exactly what Jesus did at the *Last Supper*.

Rather, that Supper has taken on a ritual form,

as Paul describes it in 1 Corinthians 11.

(In other words, within a generation, the ritual meal displaced the original)

The same thing happened to the Passover 1400 years earlier!

The people of Israel did not try to “replay” the original Passover –

rather, following the clear teaching of Moses,

they commemorated it.

Likewise, we do not try to “replicate” the original “Last Supper,”

rather, following the clear teaching of the apostles ,

we commemorate it.

In Hezekiah’s time, the priests and Levites slaughtered the Passover lamb

on behalf of the unclean

(suggesting that those who were clean slaughtered their own lambs);

in verse 11, it appears that by Josiah’s day, the priests and Levites

slaughter *all* of the Passover lambs.

Some might argue that the priests were wrong –

after all, Israel was not known for faithfulness to God’s law!

But verse 12 emphasizes their fidelity to the law!

“as is written in the Book of Moses...”

verse 13 – “according to the rule”

verse 15 – the singers were in their place “according to the command of David,” et al.

So these changes in practice were approved by the Chronicler  
as being entirely in keeping with the law of Moses and the commands of David.

There is no change in the substance of the ritual –  
they are still using bulls and lambs,  
and the people are still partaking of the lamb.  
In other words, all the essential aspects of the Passover are there.

**d. Nothing Like It Since the Days of Samuel (v16-19)**

*<sup>16</sup> So all the service of the LORD was prepared that day, to keep the Passover and to offer burnt offerings on the altar of the LORD, according to the command of King Josiah. <sup>17</sup> And the people of Israel who were present kept the Passover at that time, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days. <sup>18</sup> No Passover like it had been kept in Israel since the days of Samuel the prophet. None of the kings of Israel had kept such a Passover as was kept by Josiah, and the priests and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel who were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. <sup>19</sup> In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah this Passover was kept.*

We are told that no such Passover had been celebrated since the days of Samuel.  
The Chronicler had already told us about Hezekiah's Passover –  
when Hezekiah and his officers gave 2,000 bulls and 17,000 sheep.  
In other words, Josiah has twice as many offerings (3,800 and 37,600) –  
suggesting at least twice as many people.

(Now, at the dedication of the temple, Solomon offered 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep –  
but that was at the Feast of Booths – not Passover!)

In Kings, Josiah is portrayed as the greatest king:  
*Before him there was no king like him,  
who turned to the LORD with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might,  
according to all the Law of Moses, nor did any like him arise after him.*

In Chronicles Josiah celebrates the greatest Passover.  
In other words, what makes you the greatest king (for the Chronicler)  
is that you celebrate the greatest feasts!

And this continues in the NT.

Jesus fed 5,000 and 4,000 in the gospels  
(which by Josiah's standards was pretty flimsy).  
And Jesus only had 12 people with him in his Last Supper,  
but then again, Jesus showed us that the only way to glory is the way of the cross–  
and he now feeds the multitudes with his own body and blood,  
as he prepares for the glorious wedding supper of the Lamb,  
when he will feed billions!

And while the Lord's Supper is the way that we express this sacramentally,  
we should also express this in our daily lives.

[I'm not going to pretend that one turkey and a quarter of a pig – with 40 people – puts me anywhere near that company!

But how we feast together – and, of course, how we fast together – will say something about how we live out the hospitality of our king!]

But then it all falls apart.

Josiah reminds us of the days of the Judges.

In those days there was no king in Israel, everyone did what was right in his own eyes. Now, it would be more accurate to say,

In those days there was a king in Israel,  
but everyone *still* did what was right in his own eyes anyway!

And eventually the king followed his people.

## 2. The Death of Josiah (35:20-27)

### a. Josiah's Folly (v20-22)

<sup>20</sup> *After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Neco king of Egypt went up to fight at Carchemish on the Euphrates, and Josiah went out to meet him.* <sup>21</sup> *But he sent envoys to him, saying, "What have we to do with each other, king of Judah? I am not coming against you this day, but against the house with which I am at war. And God has commanded me to hurry. Cease opposing God, who is with me, lest he destroy you."* <sup>22</sup> *Nevertheless, Josiah did not turn away from him, but disguised himself in order to fight with him. He did not listen to the words of Neco from the mouth of God, but came to fight in the plain of Megiddo.*

In Kings, the entire story of Josiah's death is told in one verse:

*In his days Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt went up to the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates.  
King Josiah went to meet him,  
and Pharaoh Neco killed him at Megiddo, as soon as he saw him.*

The Chronicler spells out the story in greater detail.

Neco was allied with the Assyrians,  
and was on his way to join Ashur-uballit II against an upstart Babylonian general,  
the crown prince of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar.

Carchemish is a city on the Euphrates River  
(on the border between modern Syria and modern Turkey).

Nebuchadnezzar was pushing the Assyrians back up the Euphrates,  
and Neco was in a hurry trying to rescue the Assyrians  
(the Egyptians had frequently quarreled with the Assyrians,  
but they feared the Babylonians more).

Neco's expedition would fail,  
and Nebuchadnezzar would shortly rise to the throne of Babylon.

But while on the way up the coast of Philistia and Lebanon,  
Neco had to pass through the valley of Jezreel –

and the plain of Megiddo.  
This is the bottle neck of northern Israel.  
The heights of Mt Carmel rise up to the west,  
blocking the coastal route and forcing the army to march inland.  
The hill country of Ephraim gives way to an opening  
leading eastward from the coastal plain into the valley of Jezreel,  
which turns north up towards Syria,  
(OR southeast towards the Jordan River and Jerusalem!)  
If you control the plain of Megiddo and the valley of Jezreel,  
then you control the military and economic destiny of the region.

The city of Megiddo rises out of the plain at this point,  
perhaps providing a place for Josiah to ambush the Egyptians,  
as they approached the valley of Jezreel.

Josiah plainly thinks that his liturgical reforms have guaranteed his military success.  
He looks back at David and Solomon – Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah –  
and says, hey, good kings who worshiped the LORD and restored the temple  
wound up winning great battles.  
What is more, Huldah the prophetess had said,  
“you shall be gathered to your grave in peace,  
and your eyes shall not see all the disaster that I will bring  
upon this place and its inhabitants.” (34:28)

Josiah may have taken Huldah’s prophecy as a blank check.  
“You shall be gathered to your grave in peace” needs to be understood in context.  
First – the reason: “because you have humbled yourself before me”  
if you cease to be humble,  
then you will bring some other judgment upon yourself!  
Second – the promise itself is of narrow scope:  
Josiah will be spared the “disaster” – the exile  
and catastrophic judgment that God has planned for Jerusalem.  
There is nothing in Huldah’s prophecy that gives Josiah a blank check  
to do whatever he wants.

And Neco warns him:  
“I am not coming against you this day...  
And God has commanded me to hurry.  
Cease opposing God, who is with me, lest he destroy you.”

Of course, Hezekiah had heard similar words from the Assyrians –  
so why should Josiah have listened to Pharaoh?  
Well, how does going to battle against Egypt demonstrate love for God?  
Sure, it’s true that from a political standpoint,  
Josiah thinks that a Babylonian empire would be more desirable  
than an Assyrian empire.



But the problem is that the Son of David in Jerusalem should not be throwing his weight behind the empires of the world.

Josiah is forgetting that in the end  
it doesn't matter whether Assyria or Babylon is in control –  
he needs to worship and serve the LORD,  
and trust that God will exalt him.

Habakkuk prophesied during these days–  
the last days of the Assyrian empire and the rise of the neo-Babylonian empire.  
Perhaps he was thinking of the death of Josiah when he said,  
*So the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth.  
For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted.* (1:4)

Josiah goes forth in a perverted attempt to wield the authority of the Son of God.

#### **b. Josiah's Death (v23-24)**

<sup>23</sup> *And the archers shot King Josiah. And the king said to his servants, "Take me away, for I am badly wounded."* <sup>24</sup> *So his servants took him out of the chariot and carried him in his second chariot and brought him to Jerusalem. And he died and was buried in the tombs of his fathers. All Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah.*

Kings says that his servants carried him "dead" in his chariot to Jerusalem from Megiddo. Chronicles makes it sound like he was only badly wounded –  
and that he was still alive when he reached Jerusalem.

Either way, he was killed by the Egyptians and buried in Jerusalem.

The Chronicler highlights the amount of mourning and lamenting over Josiah –  
no doubt because (in retrospect) he sees that Josiah was the last good king.

#### **c. The Lamentation Over Josiah (v25-27)**

<sup>25</sup> *Jeremiah also uttered a lament for Josiah; and all the singing men and singing women have spoken of Josiah in their laments to this day. They made these a rule in Israel; behold, they are written in the Laments.* <sup>26</sup> *Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and his good deeds according to what is written in the Law of the LORD,* <sup>27</sup> *and his acts, first and last, behold, they are written in the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah.*

Verse 25 tells us that Jeremiah uttered a lament for Josiah.

This is true – though it is a bit ironic.

Jeremiah 22 may well be the "lament" that the Chronicler mentions.

In Jeremiah 22:10, the prophet declares,

"Weep not for him who is dead, nor grieve for him,  
but weep bitterly for him who goes away,  
for he shall return no more to see his native land."

The prophet goes on to explain:

“For thus says the LORD concerning Shallum the son of Josiah, king of Judah,  
who reigned instead of Josiah his father,  
and who went away from this place: ‘He shall return here no more...’  
Do you think you are a king because you compete in cedar?  
Did not your father eat and drink and do justice and righteousness?  
Then it was well with him.  
He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well.  
Is not this to know me? declares the LORD.  
But you have eyes and heart only for your dishonest gain,  
for shedding innocent blood, and for practicing oppression and violence.”

Jeremiah’s lament had more to do with Josiah’s sons, than with Josiah himself!

Later Jeremiah will remember the “new covenant” that Josiah made  
and will long for the day when *God* will make a new covenant –  
one that will actually change the hearts of the people,  
so that they will walk wholeheartedly in the law of the LORD.

Or, to say it another way,

*For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do.  
By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin,  
he condemned sin in the flesh,  
in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us,  
who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

And since the great King is now enthroned at the right hand of the Father,  
he feeds us and provides for us –  
he “eats and drinks and does justice and righteousness” in all the earth.