

## Josiah Celebrates Passover

Kendra bit down hard on her teeth, keeping her mouth closed. Rehearsal had run 45 minutes over! The church's air conditioning had stopped working. Emotions were frayed, and the music director was on a rant.

"Do we want to embarrass the pastor and ourselves?" asked Shakira, the director. "I want this song perfect!"

Part of the problem was that the person who should be leading the song, Angelo, wasn't leading. Shakira had given the lead to her nephew, Omari, who couldn't sing as well. There was dissension, moodiness, and irritability. How were they to lift a joyful noise unto the Lord?

Kendra had been biting her tongue throughout the rehearsal. She had also been fighting back a headache for the last hour. The atmosphere saddened her, and she knew it grieved God's heart.

"Sister Shakira, can we stop and pray?" asked Montrell, one of the tenors. "I don't know about everyone else, but I am getting irritable. This is not showtime at the Apollo. This is worship."

Shakira looked politely rebuffed, but asked Montrell to lead the choir and musicians in prayer.

"Father God, thank You for Your mercy, grace, and longsuffering," prayed Montrell. "We are grateful for Your Son, Jesus, and our salvation through Christ's blood. We ask that You forgive us of our sins and that You be glorified through our worship. In Jesus' name, amen."

- 1.** *What are some of the ways you like to worship God?*
- 2.** *Has there been a time you found yourself worshipping God spontaneously in public or private? If so, why do you think this happened?*
- 3.** *Why is it easy for us to worship God and not focus on why we are worshipping Him?*

## Serve the Lord Your God

*2 Chronicles 35:1–6 KJV*

1 Moreover Josiah kept a passover unto the LORD in Jerusalem: and they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month.

2 And he set the priests in their charges, and encouraged them to the service of the house of the LORD,

3 And said unto the Levites that taught all Israel, which were holy unto the LORD, Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David king of Israel did build; it shall not be a burden upon your shoulders: serve now the LORD your God, and his people Israel,

4 And prepare yourselves by the houses of your fathers, after your courses, according to the writing of David king of Israel, and according to the writing of Solomon his son.

5 And stand in the holy place according to the divisions of the families of the fathers of your brethren the people, and after the division of the families of the Levites.

6 So kill the passover, and sanctify yourselves, and prepare your brethren, that they may do according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

*2 Chronicles 35:1–6 NIV*

<sup>1</sup>Josiah celebrated the Passover to the LORD in Jerusalem, and the Passover lamb was slaughtered on the fourteenth day of the first month. <sup>2</sup>He appointed the priests to their duties and encouraged them in the service of the LORD's temple. <sup>3</sup>He said to the Levites, who instructed all Israel and who had been consecrated to the LORD: "Put the sacred ark in the temple that Solomon son of David king of Israel built. It is not to be carried about on your shoulders. Now serve the LORD your God and his people Israel. <sup>4</sup>Prepare yourselves by families in your divisions, according to the instructions written by David king of Israel and by his son Solomon.

<sup>5</sup>"Stand in the holy place with a group of Levites for each subdivision of the families of your fellow Israelites, the lay people. <sup>6</sup>Slaughter the Passover lambs, consecrate yourselves and prepare the lambs for your fellow Israelites, doing what the LORD commanded through Moses."

Second Chronicles 34–35 parallel 2 Kings 22–23. Both texts introduce the reign of King Josiah over Judah. Many of the kings of Judah and Israel did not follow God’s commands, including Josiah’s father, King Amon. He had encouraged worship at the “high places,” which were worship centers for false gods mentioned many times in Scripture. These were often located on mountains and hills (thought to be closer to heaven).

Josiah was only eight years old when he became king. Second Chronicles 34:3 says, “In the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David. In his twelfth year, he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of high places, Asherah poles, and idols.” In the eighteenth year of his reign, the “Book of the Law of the LORD” was found and read to Josiah. He was distressed that “those who have gone before us have not kept the word of the LORD; they have not acted in accordance with all that is written in this book” (v. 21).

King Josiah renewed the covenant and had the people pledge themselves to it. He worked to restore the proper worship of Yahweh in the land of Judah, including celebrating the Passover to the Lord.

Proper worship is integral to following the word of the Lord. Therefore, 2 Chronicles 35 says that among the many reforms King Josiah instituted was celebration of Passover. Passover is a festival to the Lord and was to be celebrated each year. It was to remember how the Lord passed over those Israelite homes with lamb’s blood on their doorframes, sparing them from the tenth plague brought on Egypt: the death of the firstborn. However, for many years, Passover had not been observed. King Josiah led Judah in keeping the Passover as prescribed by the Lord to Moses. It was celebrated in Jerusalem on the fourteenth day of the first month, just as required by the Lord.

Josiah was concerned for right worship; and so, prior to celebrating Passover, he ensured that the priests understood their duties and were prepared. He instructed the Levites to return the ark of the covenant to its proper place

in the temple. David had prescribed specific duties to divisions of the Levites by families, and Josiah instructed that they prepare themselves accordingly. All of this was to do what the Lord had commanded through Moses.

**4.** *What commands did Josiah give to the priests and Levites?*

**5.** *Why do you think Josiah ordered the ark to be put in the temple?*

## Not Since the Days of Samuel

*2 Chronicles 35:16–19 KJV*

16 So all the service of the LORD was prepared the same day, to keep the passover, and to offer burnt offerings upon the altar of the LORD, according to the commandment of king Josiah.

17 And the children of Israel that were present kept the passover at that time, and the feast of unleavened bread seven days.

18 And there was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept, and the priests, and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

19 In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah was this passover kept.

*2 Chronicles 35:16–19 NIV*

<sup>16</sup>So at that time the entire service of the LORD was carried out for the celebration of the Passover and the offering of burnt offerings on the altar of the LORD, as King Josiah had ordered. <sup>17</sup>The Israelites who were present celebrated the Passover at that time and observed the Festival of Unleavened Bread for seven days. <sup>18</sup>The Passover had not been observed like this in Israel since the days of the prophet Samuel; and none of the kings of Israel had ever celebrated such a Passover as did Josiah, with the priests, the Levites and all Judah and Israel who were there with the people of Jerusalem. <sup>19</sup>This Passover was celebrated in the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign.

As King Josiah ordered, everyone observed the requirements of Passover. Moreover, the required burnt offerings were made, and all that were present kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread. By the end of the Passover, at least 37,600 small animals were offered, plus 3,800 bulls. The people, the priests, and the Levites were all there. Even some from the northern kingdom who had not been taken into captivity joined in celebrating the Passover. Right worship was observed, not according to the designs of men, but according to what the Lord God had required. Including Rehoboam, Judah had had fifteen kings before Josiah, a period of almost three hundred years. Many of these kings did evil in the eyes of the Lord. But 2 Kings 23:25 says, "Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the LORD as he did—with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, in accordance with all the Law of Moses."



**6.** Verse 16 begins, "So at that time the entire service of the LORD was carried out." What time does this refer to?

**7.** Why was Josiah's Passover so different from any other?

*This box from the tomb of Pharaoh Tutankhamun was made to carry goods and could be similar to the ark of the covenant. Josiah instructed the priests and Levites to use long poles to carry the ark to its proper place in the temple (2 Chron. 35:3).*

*Photo: Bill Abbott*

## More than Liturgy

In my childhood, attending church was like breathing—something my family did without question. I believed in God, but enjoyed church as a time to play with my friends. During my teenage years, our family's church attendance reduced to a couple Sundays a month. My parents were too tired from their jobs to get us ready for church. But the ritual of going to church every Sunday had become a part of me. I would get myself up every Sunday morning and walk to the closest church.

My neighborhood church used liturgy in worship instead of spontaneous worship like our family church. But I enjoyed the Sunday school class before the worship service, so I attended the worship and repeated the liturgy like everyone else. At 15, I attended a youth camp and accepted Jesus as my Savior. The following Sunday, something was different as I read the Apostles' Creed. These words meant something to my life. I wasn't just repeating words; I was worshiping God through the liturgy.

I began to understand why we read the liturgies every Sunday. It was an acknowledgement of what God had done for us. For many Sundays afterward, tears ran down my face as I worshiped God through the words.

When I first started attending my neighborhood church, I remember thinking it was boring. I missed my family's church. Yet, once I knew Jesus personally and had the Holy Spirit living within me, I understood the "why" to repeating the liturgy every Sunday.

**8.** *How do you feel about the rituals or traditions of various churches?*

**9.** *What might church rituals mean to someone with faith in Jesus?*

**10.** *What is in your mind when you participate in communion, offering, altar prayer, etc.?*

## Giving Thanks

Routines can become robotic. We go to church and sing the same hymns every Sunday and never stop to think what the words mean or apply them to our lives. We are admonished in God's Word that whatever we do in worshiping, we should honor Jesus and as a form of giving thanks. "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Col. 3:17).

► *We all worship God in a particular way. This week, ask yourself the question "Why?" every time you worship God in your personal time, at church, or even at work.*

### KEY VERSE

Moreover Josiah kept a passover unto the LORD in Jerusalem: and they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month.

—2 Chronicles 35:1 KJV

Josiah celebrated the Passover to the LORD in Jerusalem, and the Passover lamb was slaughtered on the fourteenth day of the first month.

—2 Chronicles 35:1 NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

#### Week of September 23 through September 29

(See *The Quiet Hour and Cross devotionals on these passages.*)

**Mon.** Isaiah 42:13–17—God Goes Forth like a Warrior.

**Tues.** James 5:7–11—Be Patient, the Lord Is Coming.

**Wed.** 1 Peter 3:18–22—Saved through Water.

**Thu.** Exodus 14:21–31—Victory at the Sea.

**Fri.** Psalm 104:1–9—God Protects Creation.

**Sat.** Psalm 147:1–12—Our Worship Gives God Joy.

**Sun.** Exodus 15:1–13, 20–21—Sing of God's Glorious Triumph.