2 Chronicles 35:20 (G.S. Byford) 71253

Bible Treasury: Volume N6, After All This (35:20)

“So all the service of Jehovah was prepared the same day, to keep the passover, and to offer burnt offerings upon the altar of king Josiah. And the children of Israel that were found kept the passover at that time, and the feast of unleavened bread, seven days. And there was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did any of 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. In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah was this passover kept. After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho, king of Egypt, came up to fight against Charemish by Euphrates; and Josiah went out against him.” (2 Chron 35:16-20)

There was an interval of thirteen years, between the passover which Josiah kept and this closing incident of his life, passed over in absolute silence in the divine record of his life and service for God; yet the two events are brought together and set in moral contrast by the words, “after all this” we may well inquire the reason. The great reforming work which he was born to accomplish (see 1 Kings 13:2) and which reached its highest point of success in the eighteenth year of his reign, seems to have been overshadowed, if not counteracted, by the disaster which closed his life, an, still worse, lead to gentile interference with the kingdom of Judah. God had nothing but unqualified approbation for the one who, while he was yet a child, began to seek after the Lord God of his father David, and who yielded himself to do all that was required of him in his position as leader of God's people. But it is evident that his attack upon the king of Egypt was far from meeting with the divine approval. His previous history had been marked by simple unhesitating obedience to the written word of God—not only to the law of Moses, but also to him of equal authority as being sanctioned by God in connection with the building and consecration of the temple now in place of the tabernacle in the Wilderness.; with the result that the observance of the passover associated with Josiah's name was a more complete recovery for the nation than any previously recorded.

The passover which, ninety years before, Hezekiah king of Judah had been able to keep (2 Chron. 30) as the result of the gracious invitations sent out to all that remained of the larger kingdom of Israel after the Assyrian captivity, did indeed recall for such as responded, the blessing and joy of the days of “Solomon the son of David.” But here the recovery was more complete still, and those who were gathered together at Jerusalem on the fourteenth day of the first month (not as in the former case in the second month, as graciously, in need, allowed of God for His people when they were pilgrims liable to failure and defilement—see Num. 9:11,) were made to realize for the moment the blessing of the times of Samuel the prophet when, the priestly government having broken down and been judged—the kingdom not yet introduced—they found Jehovah when sought to be still, as ever, a Savior God (1 Sam. 12).

The work of reformation under Josiah had been steady and progressive (2 Chron. 34:3, 8) in contrast to Hezekiah's good work which was done suddenly (chap. 29:36). The king of Judah must have been greatly strengthened in heart and encouraged by the discovery that God had spoken of him by name 350 years before and had ordained him to carry out that particular work with which he was occupied (2 Kings 23:17). His soul was thereby established in the confidence that he was God's servant with his work planned out for him; and he may well have taken it as a message from God saying to him, “Let thine eyes look right on.” When the book of the law was found in the temple Josiah was more deeply affected than any man in the kingdom, for he rightly judged himself to be responsible before God for the moral condition of the nation at the time. He wept and chastened his soul and sought the Lord afresh as at the beginning. God had respect unto the man who trembled at His word (2 Chronicles 34:23, Isa. 66:2, 5). But no amount of personal piety and devotedness even in the king could turn away the fierce wrath of God from the guilty nation fast hastening to its doom.

The great value of the feast of the passover was that it brought the people to the city of solemnities, in the acknowledgment of the truth of their relationship to God on the basis of redemption when God was passing through the land of Egypt as judge. The blood of the lamb provided a shelter from judgment and this should have been sufficient. The recovery of such a truth brought with it no guarantee or encouragement as to recovery of territory lost to Israel through the People's sin. The ark had been restored to its proper dwelling place from whence it had been so unaccountably removed (probably by Manasseh); the mercy seat had been re-established in Israel, but God was not going to lead them in triumph through the land as in the time of Joshua. Yet was there everything to encourage, the king of Judah to go on quietly in faith and dependence upon God. No doubt Pharaoh Necho was invading territory which should have been in Israel's occupation according to the original gift of Jehovah (Josh. 1:4); but from the very beginning they had failed in energy of appropriation, and that which had been in unbelief and cowardice surrendered to the enemy could never be regained by pride and presumption.

Genuine faith is based upon the knowledge of God Himself and His word, and acts on its authority; it may not travel beyond. Josiah might have thought he was but following the example of David and Solomon, but times had changed, though God had not. Surely he had forgotten the solemn warning of Huldah the prophetess; he had departed from the path of faith and was inspired by the pride and haughtiness of spirit which precedes a fall. Even though his natives were pure and unselfish, that was not enough. True obedience is set in motion by the commandment; in the absence of that, faith must wait upon God: had Josiah done this he would have been preserved from destruction, and for the blessing of his people. No doubt it was a specious snare of the enemy and he fell into it (Lam. 4:20).

It is worthy of notice that the man of God win came from Judah to Bethel (1 Kings 13) exposed himself to the judgment of God even unto death, by an exactly similar departure from simple obedience; and, we may remark in closing, as “whatsoever things were written aforetime,” are also “for our admonition unto whom the ends of the ages have reached,” so we should do well to consider how far we have really profited by the great recovery of truth made by the Holy Ghost to the saints, and in what spirit we are using it and maintaining a testimony for the Lord in these days of ruin and declension. The Lord Jesus looks to us to keep His word and not deny His name, although it be in weakness. “Thou hast little strength.” But “him that overcometh will I make a pillar” (Rev. 3:8, 12). G.S.B.