

# Read the Whole Bible with Pastor

## **Monday (October 16) – 2 Chronicles 31, 32**

Under Hezekiah's direction the altars to the false gods are torn down. Hezekiah appoints priests, rededicates the temple, and restores the regular sacrifices at the temple. By the hands and mouths of the priests, God forgives the sins of His people and bestows on them His holiness. Hezekiah is a God-fearing king who uses the civil authority of his office to support and encourage true worship of God among his people. In Chapter 32 the Assyrian king, Sennacherib, invades Judah and tempts Hezekiah and his people to doubt their trust in the Lord their God. Hezekiah and his people have every reason to fear the Assyrians. They are the political superpower of the day. But Hezekiah directs his people to place their hope in the Lord God who will fight their battles, not in their preparations. In the end the people of Judah don't do anything. The Lord sends an angel to fight for them. The reign of Hezekiah was a brief reprieve in the decline of Judah.

## **Tuesday (October 17) – 2 Chronicles 33**

In 2 Kings we read of the utter wickedness of Manasseh. Here in 2 Chronicles, we find that Manasseh is brought to repentance later in life. He humbles himself before the Lord, who then allows him to return to Jerusalem and resume his reign. It is good that Manasseh restores the altar of the Lord and does away with all the false idols, but he falls short in restoring the right worship of God. Even though the people are directing their worship to the Lord, they are sinning gravely against him by doing it in their own way—on the high places, and not where and how God has prescribed. See Jeremiah 15:4-9 where the prophet Jeremiah proclaims God's hot anger toward this false worship permitted during the reign of Manasseh.

## **Wednesday (October 18) – 2 Chronicles 34**

Josiah purges the idol worship allowed by his father, Amon, and even goes further to purge the evil allowed by his grandfather, Manasseh, in allowing worship at the high places. During the work of repairing the Temple, Josiah learns that the book of the Law of Moses has been rediscovered. This is shocking. It seems that all this time, the priests had continued their service based on oral tradition but had not had the five books of Moses, the Law of the Lord as their reference. No wonder so much error and false worship kept surfacing. Josiah commands that this rediscovered Scripture be read before the people. In this Law the consequences for the people's rejection of the Lord is explicit. God tells Josiah that this wrath will come, but he shows mercy to Josiah by delaying that judgment for a time. God's word is a treasure. In the explanation to the third commandment in the Small Catechism, Luther describes how this commandment protects this precious gift. "We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it" (SC - Third Commandment).

## **Thursday (October 19) – 2 Chronicles 35**

Josiah leads the people in celebrating the Passover for the first time since the days of Samuel. The celebration of the Passover is outward evidence that God's people hear His word, are moved to repentance, and seek to receive his forgiveness. The fact that this hadn't happened in generations is evidence of just how far Judah has fallen away from their Lord. The chapter ends with Josiah being killed in battle. Despite all the good Josiah did for Judah, he did not always heed God's word. This is a difficult section. How could Josiah have known that the Words spoken by King Neco, a pagan, were the words of God? Martin Luther draws from this section a teaching about civil offices of authority. "All of them, even the greatest kings from the beginning of the world, have not governed their realms without great errors and injustices. This is intended to make you realize that it is impossible to govern an earthly commonwealth without sin" (AE 12:240).

## **Friday (October 20) – 2 Chronicles 36**

This final chapter of 2 Chronicles tells of the continued decline of Judah during the reign of weak kings and the persistent evil of the people. God compassionately sends prophets to His people to call them back to Him, but time and time again, they harden their hearts. Finally, God allows the Chaldeans, more often called the Babylonians, to destroy Jerusalem and to take away His people as slaves into exile. The Babylonian exile is described as a Sabbath. Even this terrible time of bloodshed and wrath is according to God's plan. He uses this as a purifying time of rest, repentance, and even hope for the future. God always preserves a faithful remnant. From this remnant, God will bring about the fulfillment of His promise to crush the head of the serpent by their offspring.

## **Saturday (October 21) – Ezra 1**

Ezra picks up right where 2 Chronicles left off. Notice God at work throughout this chapter. God stirs up the spirit of Cyrus (1:1) and the heads of the houses of Judah and Benjamin and the priests and the Levites to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple.

## **Sunday (October 22) – Ezra 2**

Note how small these numbers are compared to the lists we've encountered previously. Take the Levites as an example. In total there are 341 Levites who are listed with the returning exiles. When David assembled the Levites in 1 Chronicles 23:2, there were 38,000 Levites. The number of those who return from exile is miniscule. Now, even more than ever before, it is clear that they are not God's people because they are greater than other nations. They are not militarily or geographically significant. They are God's people because he has claimed them. By the time St. Matthew the Evangelist writes, Israel has been condensed down to one. The temple where God dwells with his people has been decreased down to the body of the infant Jesus. All this took place in accord with God's plan to accomplish the salvation of the world through the incarnation, crucifixion, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.