

THE FIRST FRUITS HARVEST

2 Chron. 34:1-2

The setting of our opening text describes a great radical shift for the nation of Israel. More than a hundred years before, God had already abolished the kingdom of Israel, when the ten tribes were led away into captivity. Now we are reading in 2 Chronicles chapter 34 a story of the last days of Judah as an independent kingdom. This time is closing quickly. This is the context of our opening scriptures.

The people of Judah feel spiritually secured. Yet they do not even realize the spiritual condition they are in. Despite all God's merciful dealings with them and all the judgments and warnings which he had sent to their fathers, Judah was becoming worse and worse and now for their great idolatries the destruction of the kingdom of Judah is close at hand. This sounds all too like the environment of our great nation America.

During this period of apostasy of decline and decay Josiah came to the throne to restore and save his nation.

In 641B.C. Josiah becomes King in the snow flake generation and when he became a millennial at 16 years old did what was right in the sight of the Lord.

He did this when one third of millennials do not attend church weekly the American church's according to a pew research report.

Josiah did this when roughly 51 percent of Americans say they go to church or another worship service somewhere between once a month and multiple times per week, while 49 percent said they go rarely or never. Josiah did right in the sight of the Lord during these times. He turned aside neither to the left nor the right. This is the attitude of first fruits.

Josiah sought to seek after God during a time where American college students ages 18-24 years old spend an average of 4 hours and 5 minutes on their mobile devices using snap Chet, twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Instagram. Read vs. 3

Josiah began to seek after God with a yearning with the spirit of prayer in a time of almost universal godlessness and corruption. It is almost impossible for us to conceive the depth of degradation to which the nation had sunk. Two wicked kings in succession had undone all the reforms of good King Hezekiah. The first of these was Hezekiah's own son, Manasseh, the second was Manasseh's son, Amon. Manasseh worshipped all the host of heaven, and built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord. He set up the worship of Moloch, which is almost too terrible to describe (see above on 2 Kings 16:1-20). He made his own son to pass through the fire to Moloch. He introduced not only the horrid cruelty of heathenism, but also its most filthy lusts.

So, when the Bible says Josiah did what right and walked in the ways of the Lord this was no small thing for a young millennial.

1. This is the prayer aspect of the first fruits harvest. Where there is a call to prayer to yearn after the true living God. But seeking after the God of David.

It says in vs. 3 Josiah sought after God and YEARNED FOR THE GOD OF DAVID HIS FATHER. In other words, Josiah was not charismatic and sloppy with grace and believe whatever you want to believe. He sought the ancestors and forefathers of the apostolic faith system for himself.

Josiah sought after apostolic holiness, doctrine and Nazarite vow living for himself in a negative and depressing time period.

Josiah was the son of a godless and wicked father. All the influences which surrounded him seem to have been unfavorable to the growth of true religion and the fear of God.

But Josiah determined that, as for him, he would not bow down to idols, that he would serve the Lord only in vs. 4-5. And God gave him strength to serve him, and crowned his subsequent efforts with blessing and success. He is our example of not making excuses for being raised a certain way or living in the wrong neighborhood and not having opportunities. You and I are responsible to God for your own actions and for our own conduct, no matter how bad our environment may be. Therefore, God is requiring the first fruits harvest from this local church. It may cost us many a hard struggle to resist the temptations that surround us on every side; but it his anointing for making vows for the first fruits will empower us

Vs. 4 thru 7 is showing Josiah making Nazarite VOWS. He is creating a distinction in his lifestyle with the fashions of that day in a bold way. Read the verses. This is the second part of our 4 first fruits harvest.

2. Seeking God for your own Nazarite vow for the month of January. We need everyone to take ownership with this. This is a very powerful thing when you honor God. Especially when it is done for intimacy purposes. God increase his voice and presence in your life. Some of us need to look at our personal holiness standards during this period and make a Nazarite vow to god in this area.

In vs. 8 Josiah purges the land at 26 years of age. WOW! He is fighting and cutting away cultural and traditional customs that have become a part of his people's faith system. This also means confronting generational patterns when you see the phrase, "burned the bones of the idolatrous priest. There is a change going on in the processing of intimate prayer here.

Josiah clearly is confronting through the first fruits attitude hidden addictions, slothful behavior in these verses. He is taking a stance against subtle compromises of worldliness in verses 4 thru 8.

Most of us would have stopped seeking God after verse 8 but Josiah goes even further. Read vs. 9-11

3. They do a first fruits financial pledge to grow and restore the house of God.

All of this started simply by seeking and yearning after the God of David and his forefathers in a very wicked time.

They went through out all the land to collect monies with a first fruits attitude. They knew the times were wicked. They knew they needed to get God's attention by repositioning their passions. The Lord has spoken to me about giving in first fruits (give example)

Vs. 12 says even the music team came to the forefront with making sacrifices both financially and with their time ministering in the temple during the first fruits month.

Vs. 13 shows this kind of burden going through out all its leadership concerning the first fruits harvest. The gate keepers here are the men of the church who take a lead in this process.

The end results of the first fruits harvest are found in vs. 14-19

God so prospered Josiah in this work that the people brought large sums of money for the repairing of the temple. It was when this was being done that Hilkiah the priest found in the temple the Word of god that was being neglected and the people never knew it.

What a powerful discovery that came from the first fruits harvest. The precious Word was probably all covered with dust, like the unused Bible in many of our homes that rarely is consulted daily.

When the book of the Law was read to the king, he tore his clothes, in repentance, sorrow and in shame. Vs. 19. This is increasing the fear of the Lord in my life by the Word. This is the highest level of wealth.

Josiah thought of how the Law of God had been broken and neglected and the people were just living to survive not even knowing the seriousness of the hour.

First fruits harvest brought the results of a heightened sense and urgency that God's Word needed more attention in the local church and its families.

Josiah then read in their ears all the words of the Law. He made a covenant that they would serve the Lord and keep his commandments, and all the people agreed to it. After this was done, he appointed a solemn Passover to be kept by all the people. Can you see this mentality of first fruits in these actions?

He found the land full of idolatry and corruption. So, he begins a first fruits harvest. He pulls down the altars, and burned the idols, and swept away the dens and besetting sins.

He found the house of God lacking spiritual fervor, zeal and passion. It was neglected, and in decay.

He had already repaired it and restored the worship of the true God. He found the Law of God forgotten, forsaken, and unknown - the temple copy of it hidden away out of sight. He had already restored it to its proper place as the ruling principle of his government and of the nation's life.

The incredible fact about this story is what happens in vs. 20-23

God could not find a man during these times and uses a woman named Huldah. Her name means weasel or one that bores holes.

The first fruits harvest raised up women that were not being used. This woman was trusted by Josiah at a time they needed to hear the voice of God desperately.

She gives them a strong word in vs. 24-28. All of this from first fruits harvest.

Look at the final progression of first fruits harvest in vs. 29-33

God spares judgment on this nation.

God restores true worship in the house of God where He manifests His glory and miracles and deliverance all over again. Where their worship had a transformative effect on them when they left the house of the Lord.

The fear of God returned to this people.

The first fruits harvest is to provoke us in our giving, in our consecration, and in our pulling down idols from making a Nazarite vow. Working our own salvation with fear and trembling.

God wants to promote this local assembly. But you can see the progression and the process he wants us to go through. By taking vows we make very serious during the month of January.

So, when we disciple people they will remain in the church. That we really care about people who go to Hell and are hurting.

God gives grace to a people who sought him for intimacy and love!

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