

Hello everyone,

PERCENT OF BIBLE COMPLETED: 54.4%

Weekly Readings will cover:

Sunday: Jeremiah 3

Monday: Jeremiah 4

Tuesday: Jeremiah 5

Wednesday: Jeremiah 6

Thursday: 2 Kings 22:3-20 & 2 Chronicles 34:8-28

Friday: 2 Kings 23:1 – 20 & 2 Chronicles 34:29 – 33

Saturday: 2 Kings 23:21 – 25 & 2 Chronicles 35:1 – 19

Current # of email addresses in the group: 624

This week we will continue a bit more of the book of Jeremiah, before pivoting again into Kings & Chronicles. Have a great study week!

The audio archive information is available on our UCG Bay Area YouTube page here:

https://youtube.com/@ucgbayarea5792?si=EA_tacLBfv1XR3jH

You may actually prefer accessing it directly from this Playlist tab:

<https://www.youtube.com/@ucgbayarea5792/playlists>

3-YEAR CHRONOLOGICAL STUDY: Week 84

Read the following passages & the Daily Deep Dive on the daily reading.

Day 561 – SUNDAY: January 5th

Jeremiah 3

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “The law stated in [Deuteronomy 24:1-4](#) that, after a divorce where one spouse then marries another, and the second marriage is terminated by divorce or death, remarriage to the original spouse is forbidden. This is comparable to Israel's situation— but not exactly the same since Israel did not actually marry other gods (indeed, the false gods Israel has pursued don't really exist). While God looked upon the idolatry of Israel and Judah as "play[ing] the harlot with many lovers," He says He will yet take her back if she will but repent ([Jeremiah 3:1](#)).

But that is not immediately forthcoming. God remarks, "You have had a harlot's forehead [never blushing]; you refuse to be ashamed" (verse 3; compare 6:15). Continually acting against one's conscience leads to a *seared* conscience (see [1 Timothy 4:2](#))—repeated immorality leads to amorality. Logically, one would think that Judah would have learned some fear of God when she saw God punish the house of Israel with divorce, destruction, and captivity. But no, "treacherous Judah" sank lower than Israel! Any appearance of returning to God was done "in pretense" ([Jeremiah 3:8-11](#)).

It is interesting to note that though God says He issued a certificate of divorce to Israel (verse 8), He still claims to be married to the Israelites in verse 14. This is because, though God put away Israel as a whole, He maintained His covenant relationship with a *remnant* of Israel—in Jeremiah's day meaning the faithful of Judah. Yet God would also consider *individuals* of the house of Israel as part of this remnant if they would repent and return to Him (same verse). In verse 12 Jeremiah is told to proclaim the message to the north. This may well have been directed to those Israelites (the Scythians) who came back into the land of the northern kingdom at this time. They are said to be "more righteous" than Judah—which makes sense when we realize that many of these Israelites (perhaps humbled from their captivity) were soon going to help Josiah purge the land of idolatry and observe his great Passover.

Yet, as explained in the highlights for chapter 2, the message was meant for *all* the families of Israel—meaning this call to repentance is likely intended primarily for the end time. In the last days, much of end-time Israel is still to be found mainly to the north of Judea—northwest that is—prior to and during their final captivity (request or download our free booklet [The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy](#) to learn more). For those physical Israelites who repent, God will take them as individuals and join them to the faithful remnant of

Israel—the remnant according to grace, meaning the Church of God (see [Romans 11:5](#)). Yet also intended here is the return from captivity of those of the physical remnant of Israel to God at the time of Christ's return—when, according to this and many other prophecies, they too collectively repent and become spiritual Israelites according to grace.

Israel and Judah will finally and truly return to God "in those days," at which time the two houses will be rejoined (verse 18). Notice that Israel and Judah will "come *together* out of the land of the north" (same verse). This never happened in ancient times following the Assyrian captivity of Israel or the Babylonian captivity of Judah. It is clearly a prophecy of the end time.

Then the actual presence of Jesus Christ and the throne of the Lord will make the glory of Israel's history—when the Ark of the Covenant was merely a type of that throne—unimportant and unmemorable by comparison (verses 16-17). Incidentally, some have speculated that the fact of the ark not being mentioned anymore after Christ's return is an indication that it will have had prominent mention *just prior* to His return—that it may yet be found and play some part in end-time events if it was not destroyed in ancient times (see highlights on [Isaiah 17-18](#)). Of course, even an event as stunning and incredible as finding the Ark of the Covenant would be paled into utter insignificance by the return of Jesus Christ in power and glory to rule all nations.

At last, Israel and the world will have "shepherds according to My heart," who will "feed the Israelites with knowledge and understanding" (verse 15). This likely had a forerunner in Jeremiah's day—meaning Jeremiah, Zephaniah, other contemporary prophets, faithful priests and the faithful king Josiah. They provided spiritual leadership to the Israelites returning back then. Today the shepherds are God's faithful ministers. And in the coming reign of Christ, which is apparently the predominant reference, the shepherds will be Christ, the glorified saints and righteous human leaders.

All Israel will then submit to God and revere Him as Father, no longer turning away from Him (verse 19). The nation will no longer respond in a mere pretense of repentance—for the return to God will be genuine (verses 22-25).” [END]

Day 562 – MONDAY: January 6th

Jeremiah 4

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “[Jeremiah 4](#), which continues on from the end of chapter 3, begins with a play on words. God tells Israel, "If you will return [from captivity to their homeland]...return to Me [that is, in a spiritual sense—meaning repentance]" ([Jeremiah 4:1](#)). In verse 3, the message is directed to the people of Judah—perhaps both to those of Jeremiah's day and to people far in the future. As for God's instruction to break up the fallow ground and not sowing among thorns, it should be noted that the reference is to "unused soil, not a regularly plowed field. Israel [including Judah] needed a new field in which to sow its seed of faithfulness, a radical departure from its ways of sin and idolatry" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verse 3).

In verse 4, we see that the main purpose of circumcision is to illustrate the need for mankind to remove any hardness of heart and all barriers separating us from God. This repeats what God told the Israelites just before He first brought them in to the Promised Land (see [Deuteronomy 10:16](#)). If the people refuse to heed, the consequences will be severe.

"The Sound of the Trumpet"

Verse 5 of chapter 4 begins a prophecy that continues to the end of chapter 6. It is addressed here at the outset to Judah and Jerusalem. This undoubtedly referred to the Jews of Jeremiah's day, but could also refer to future inhabitants of the land. Moreover, reference is later made to the recipients of the message being the "house of Israel" or

"house of Jacob" *as well as* Judah (see [Jeremiah 5:15, 19](#)). Israel had been taken into captivity long before Jeremiah wrote, so that at least would seem to look to the future.

Still, the message was clearly intended for Jeremiah's fellow countrymen. Tragically, the people do not yet heed God's call to repentance (see [Jeremiah 4:4](#)). They are therefore instructed to "blow the trumpet" (verse 5), the *shofar* or ram's horn, an "alarm of war" (verse 19)—a symbol repeated throughout Scripture. For God will bring "disaster from the north." As explained in the highlights for chapter 1, this was the course of invasion followed by *ancient* Babylon and that will yet be followed by *end-time* Babylon.

The warning is to be raised from Dan to Ephraim (verse 15). These areas were in the northernmost and southernmost parts of the ancient northern kingdom and would have seen a northern threat coming against Judah.

God warns of "watchers" (verse 16), which could indicate advanced scouts of a coming army. However, the term may also be translated "besiegers" (*Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary*, note on verse 16).

All this was rather unsettling to Jeremiah. He was "overwhelmed at what God was about to bring upon Jerusalem. This passage indicates the deep inner struggle Jeremiah faced in his proclamation of the divine message. Jeremiah challenged God's dealings with His people, claiming that God had *deceived* the people with a message of peace" (note on [Jeremiah 4:10](#)). Remember that in chapter 3 God had just told Jeremiah to convey a message of Israel's repentance and return under the reign of the Messiah. *Now* here he was delivering an ominous message of *doom*—to people he deeply cared about. God well understood Jeremiah's compassion—and was no doubt merciful to him in his anguished remarks.

Verse 18 declares that the people have brought this on themselves. Just as in today's world, God said the people are "experts at doing what is evil, but failures at doing what is good" (verse 22, Today's English Version).

The prophet then sees in vision a destroyed land—employing the same language used in Scripture of the chaotic, desolate planet Earth before man's creation (verse 23; see [Genesis 1:2](#)). It is now the result of the destruction God will bring because of the people's sins (see verse 26). But thankfully, the land will not be *utterly* destroyed and not everyone will die (verse 27; 5:18). Yet the consequences will be severe—and, as the people are set in their sinful ways, the punishment is now inevitable ([Jeremiah 4:28](#)).

If Zion tries to appease, distract and seduce her enemies—like a harlot with seductive clothes and makeup, offering favors—it won't work (verse 30). Instead, she will soon experience unavoidable pain, as a woman in labor with her first child. And in the end, her lovers will become her murderers (verse 31).” [END]

Day 563 – TUESDAY: January 7th

Jeremiah 5

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “Jeremiah 5 continues on from chapter 4. See, God says to the prophet, if you can find *anyone* in Jerusalem "who seeks the truth, and I will pardon her" (5:1). Shockingly, the context implies that no one could be found.

Jeremiah considers that many people are poor and uneducated (verse 4), so maybe he will have success if he goes "to the great men and speak to them, for they have known the way of the LORD"—having had access to the Scriptures and history, being literate people (verse 5). "But these have altogether broken the yoke"—they have rejected God's authority and cast off any restraint (same verse). Therefore the wild

animals (the gentiles) will slay them and take over their cities because "their backslidings have increased" (verse 6). "How shall I pardon you for this?," God asks in verse 7. "Therefore you are inexcusable, O man.... In accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath" ([Romans 2:1-6](#)).

The Israelites have a long history of lusting for and engaging in all the pagan philosophies and practices of Satan's world, when God has not only given them the *best* religion, but the *only true* religion on earth. God pictures them as being led strictly by sensual impulse rather than any intelligence (verses 7-8). "'Shall I not punish them for these things?' says the LORD. 'And shall I not avenge myself on such a nation as this?' (verse 9). After relating more of their sins, He repeats the question (verse 29)—and again a few chapters later ([Jeremiah 9:9](#)).

The imagery of God breaking off sinful "branches" of Israel ([Jeremiah 5:10](#)) is later used by the apostle Paul (see [Romans 11](#)). God is especially angry with false ministers who claim to be His spokesmen, and yet mislead the people with lies and false security ([Jeremiah 5:12-13](#)).

God proclaims: "I will bring a nation against you from afar.... a nation whose language you do not know.... They are all mighty men [well-armed and brutal]" (verses 15-17). This is dual, relating to Jeremiah's day and the end time, for verse 18 says, "Nevertheless *in those days* [indicating the *last days*]...I will not make a complete end of you." God says, "Declare this *in the house of Jacob* and proclaim it in Judah."

The recalcitrance of the people is largely explained by the fact that they are spiritually blind and deaf (verses 20-21). Yet all creation is a proof of God. And if people don't understand anything else, they ought at least to realize that they must obey their Maker (verse 24). Again, it is the people's sins that deprive them of blessings and happiness (verse 25).

"For among My people are found wicked men," God declares—extremely evil people who will do anything to anybody for personal gain, usually for money (verses 26-29). But the root cause of the evils is false religion. It is a "horrible thing" to God that "prophets prophesy [preach or teach] falsely, and the priests rule by their own power [not by God's Spirit]; *and My people love to have it so*" (verses 30-31). What a sad indictment! People would rather listen to lies than the truth. We especially see it today in the name of tolerance. Anyone who would label the behavior of others as wrong is looked upon as a bigot and hatemonger. And when criticism is silenced, there is soon no fear of consequences, as in verses 12-13.

The last verse asks the critical question, "But what will you do in the end [that is, when the hammer of judgment falls]?" The apostle Peter later asked a similar question: "Therefore, since all these things [the physical world around us] will be dissolved, *what manner of persons ought you to be* in holy conduct and godliness..." ([2 Peter 3:11](#)). We should all be asking *ourselves* such questions." [END]

Day 564 – WEDNESDAY: January 8th

Jeremiah 6

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "The prophecy of the previous chapters continues and concludes in [Jeremiah 6](#)."

Jerusalem was situated in the former borderlands between Benjamin and Judah—and the tribe of Benjamin had remained part of the southern kingdom of Judah. So the "children of Benjamin" in verse 1 would represent the inhabitants dwelling on the north side of the city. Tekoa and Beth Hacerem were a few miles *south* of Jerusalem. Thus, the city and its outlying areas are all under immediate threat. Again, as in chapters 1 and 4, the people are warned that "disaster appears out of the north" ([Jeremiah 6:1, 22](#))—from ancient and end-time Babylon.

In verse 2, Judah is likened to a vulnerable and helpless woman. She sees her enemies surrounding her, but she is unprepared—for their attack is coming that night (verses 3-5). In verses 6-8, God directs Judah's enemies to make ready for their attack of Jerusalem. The only hope for Zion's inhabitants is to "be instructed" by God, but "their ear is uncircumcised [covered]" (verse 10)—they won't listen. God's Word is actually offensive to them (verse 10, NIV). "It's one thing for a modern society to be pluralistic and permit differences in belief and values. It's another thing for a society to become increasingly hostile to Christian beliefs and biblical values. Where the Word of the Lord offends, judgment will surely fall" (Lawrence Richards, *The Bible Reader's Companion*, 1991, note on verse 10).

Therefore God warns that He is about to unleash His fury on all the people, "because from the least of them even to the greatest of them, *everyone is given to covetousness*; and from the prophet even to the priest, *everyone deals falsely*" (verses 8-13). "Healing the hurt of My people slightly" (see verse 14) refers to easing any discomfort concerning possible consequences by speaking reassuring words of promised "peace." This was the mantra even as conditions worsened—just as it often is today. Appeals to conscience did no good because the people "were not at all ashamed" (verse 15)—another example of people "having their own conscience seared with a hot iron" ([1 Timothy 4:2](#)). The words of this section of Jeremiah, it should be noted, are repeated later in the book (see [Jeremiah 8:10-12](#)).

God reminds the people of the "old paths" and "good way"—the laws He revealed long ago that expressed His way of life ([Jeremiah 6:16](#)). The Jewish Tanakh renders it this way: "Stand by the roads and consider, inquire about ancient paths: Which is the road to happiness? Travel, it, and find tranquillity for yourselves." But they refuse to walk that way (same verse). God sent watchmen who trumpeted warnings, but they

wouldn't listen (verse 17). So He says, "I will certainly bring calamity" (verse 19).

Offerings and sacrifices without obedience are worthless (verses 18-20). Or, put another way, "Religion without righteousness reeks" (*Bible Reader's Companion*, note on verse 20). God and His inexorable laws are stumbling blocks to those who want to walk contrary to them (verse 21; compare [Isaiah 8:14](#)). Also, just as God has many ways to give success to the righteous, He has many ways to cause failure to those who live in defiance of Him.

God uses Jeremiah as an assayer of metals to analyze the people for purity, but instead of silver (truth and righteousness), he finds only other metals of little value (verses 27-28). "In ancient times lead and silver were put in a crucible together and heated. The lead oxidized and carried off the alloys of baser metals, leaving the silver pure. The image of the refiner's fire is found several times in the O[ld] T[estament] and suggests a test for moral quality. Here, however, God's attempt to purify His people is futile. The ore is so impure that no silver can be found, and the whole batch is dumped out" (note on verses 27-30)."
[END]

Day 565 – THURSDAY: January 9th

2 Kings 22:3 - 20 & 2 Chronicles 34:8 - 28

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "Around 622 B.C., six years after commencing his purge of paganism from the land, King Josiah began his restoration of the temple, putting the final seal on his plan to restore the true worship of the true God. The writer of Chronicles mentions two men who made up the king's commission who are not mentioned in Kings: Maaseiah, the city governor, and Joah, the son of Joahaz, the recorder. "Josiah's choice of Shaphan to head the royal commission was a wise one; for his godly influence was to be felt not only in his own

time but in that of his sons Ahikam ([Jeremiah 26:24](#)), Elasah ([Jeremiah 29:3](#)), and Gemariah ([Jeremiah 36:10, 25](#)), and his grandson Gedaliah ([Jeremiah 39:14](#))" (*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, footnote on [2 Kings 22:4](#)).

The people were asked to contribute to the restoration and, as had happened under the rule of Joash ([2 Kings 12:15](#)), no audit was required. Josiah's appointments proved their loyalty in carrying out God's work.

In the process of restoring the temple, the high priest Hilkiah found the "Book of the Law." Various ideas have been put forward about what the "book" was and why it was lost. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* notes: "It is later called the 'Book of the Covenant' (v. 30) which suggests [Exodus 19-24](#) (cf. 24:7). Yet the curses that the book contained (v. 24) suggests [Leviticus 26](#) and [Deuteronomy 28](#); and the ensuing stress on the central sanctuary ([2 Kings 23:8-9](#)) implies [Deuteronomy 12](#), etc. 'The Book' thus was at least the Book of Deuteronomy [that is, according to this source]. It is called 'the covenant' in [Deut 29:1](#), for example. It contains the curses ([Deut 28](#)) and it alone calls for a central sanctuary and was stored at the temple usually by the side of the ark ([Deut 31:25-26](#))" (note on [2 Chronicles 34:14](#)). Some, however, believe the Book of the Law to refer to the entire Law or Pentateuch—that is, the five books of Moses. Oddly enough, Joshua is said to have written about the Israelites' recommitment to God late in his life "in the Book of the Law of God" ([Joshua 24:26](#)), well after Moses had written the Pentateuch. So it is not entirely certain what all is meant.

Continuing in *Expositor's*: 'The Book,' however seems to have become misplaced during the apostate administrations of the previous kings, Manasseh and Amon, under whom the ark had been moved about ([2 Chronicles 35:3](#))" (same note).

In his book *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel*, Eugene Merrill comments: "It is not possible to enter into the debate about the precise contents of the scroll found by Hilkiah. It clearly consisted of at least Deuteronomy and likely the entire Pentateuch, for some of the policies which Josiah proceeded to implement presuppose the teachings of Moses. A more baffling question is, How could the Torah have been lost for decades, not to be recovered until 622 and even then only by accident? Liberal scholarship argues that the document in question was the Book of Deuteronomy and that it had never been lost at all. It was, rather, a piece composed [recently] by a prophetic circle interested in bringing about reform. In order to give it canonical authority it was attributed to Moses. It may, in fact, have drawn upon authentic Mosaic tradition. In any case, it was not a product of the hand of Moses but of anonymous scribes of the seventh century. Perhaps, it is proposed, it was drafted by an underground movement in the days of Manasseh and placed in the temple in the hope that it might be found and might inspire Manasseh to seek after Yahweh. It was not discovered in his day, however, and only by chance finally surfaced in 622.

"This reconstruction disregards universal Jewish tradition about the authorship of Deuteronomy and also fails to explain how it is possible that no one in Josiah's time, including the priests and scribes, questioned the alleged Mosaic authorship of a document about which there was, supposedly, not one shred of tradition. Moreover, those aspects of Josiah's reformation which appear to be based uniquely on the teaching of Deuteronomy are attested to in Israel's religious life long before Josiah. The critic must concede that the major prescriptions of Deuteronomy were known long before the discovery of the scroll in the temple. This being so, is it really incredible that Deuteronomy had long existed and had simply been suppressed until its providential discovery by Hilkiah?

"In the era of the printing press and the dissemination of the printed page in multiplied millions of copies it is difficult to appreciate the scarcity of written texts in the ancient world. But even some of the most important works composed on durable clay tablets are known only in single copies despite the recovery of some of the great libraries of the ancient past. What, then, must be said of those Old Testament writings which were penned on fragile and perishable materials such as papyrus, leather, and parchment? Furthermore, it is most unlikely that the Scriptures at any time in Old Testament Israel existed in more than a few dozen copies at the very most. Unless scrupulous care were taken to preserve them, they would be subject to the ravages of war and natural disaster or simply disintegrate with time. There is no reason, then, why a diabolical, despotic ruler such as Manasseh could not have seized virtually all the copies of the Torah and destroyed them in order to advance his own apostate ends. Somehow in the providence of God a pious priest or scribe managed to safeguard a copy in a hiding place in the temple and prayed that it might not perish until it could once more take its position as the bedrock of Israel's life. This undoubtedly is what happened" (1987, pp. 444-445).

Realizing the newfound book was very likely of God—and that His instructions had been flouted by the nation—Josiah was grief-stricken. The tearing of clothes was an expression of extreme grief during biblical times (compare [Genesis 37:29](#); [Genesis 44:13](#); [1 Samuel 4:12](#); [2 Samuel 15:32](#); [Matthew 26:65](#)). But God requires more than just an outward show of grief. He wants the same tender heart that Josiah had (see [Joel 2:12-14](#)).

Josiah set up a delegation to seek God's will. The delegation, headed by Hilkiah, went to Huldah the prophetess, a common practice in the Old Testament (see [1 Kings 22:5-12](#); [1 Samuel 23:2](#)). There have been a number of prophetesses in the Bible, including Miriam ([Exodus 15:20](#)), Isaiah's wife ([Isaiah 8:1-4, 18](#)), Deborah ([Judges 4-5](#)) and Anna ([Luke](#)

[2:36-38](#)). "There were also false women prophets, such as Noadiah in [Nehemiah 6:14](#) and those prophetesses in [Ezekiel 13:17](#), but they were rebuked not because they were women or because they prophesied; instead, they were rebuked because what they said was false and not a revelation from God. Women were not chattel to be ordered about and used as men pleased in the Old Testament, ranking slightly above a man's ox or donkey! They were fellow heirs of the image of God, charged with tasks that exhibited the originality, independence, and management ability of the 'woman of valor' in [Proverbs 31](#) and were called to enter holistically into sharing all of the joys and labours of life" (Walter Kaiser Jr., *Toward Old Testament Ethics*, 1983, p. 207). It should, though, be pointed out that the New Testament makes it clear that women are not to be ordained as elders or preach during worship services.

The Second Quarter of Jerusalem ([2 Kings 22:14](#)) most likely refers to one of two districts referred to in [Nehemiah 3:9-12](#) and [Zephaniah 1:10](#). Although the location isn't certain, it was most likely in the commercial area and indicates that Huldah and her husband lived in poor circumstances.

A puzzling question to some is why Josiah's delegation went to a prophetess rather than the more well-known prophets of the time, such as Jeremiah and Zephaniah. It could simply be that they weren't so well known at the time—or perhaps they were then preaching in another part of Judah. In any event, they were not needed for the task. Huldah was truly a prophetess of God. She sent two messages back, one to the man who sent them to her and the other to Josiah—a message of condemnation for Judah but of peace for the king.

Some have wondered why Josiah soon died in battle when God had promised him peace. We will take up this question when we read later of the king's death." [END]

Day 566 – FRIDAY: January 10th

2 Kings 23:1 – 20 & 2 Chronicles 34:29 – 33

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “Josiah's humble, obedient response to the book was and remains a model of how all people should respond to God's revealed Word. Josiah listened to Scripture, allowed its words of truth to judge him, and humbly confessed that he had neglected God's commands ([2 Chronicles 34:18, 19](#)). After learning more about its truths ([2 Chronicles 34:21](#)), he shared the Scripture with others and led them in following it. He had the book read before the entire nation and led the Israelites in recommitting their lives to the Lord ([2 Chronicles 34:29-31](#))” (“INDepth: The Book of the Law of the Lord,” *Nelson Study Bible*, sidebar on [2 Chronicles 34](#)).

In [2 Kings 23:3](#) Josiah makes his covenant standing by a pillar—or *on* a pillar, as it could also be translated. This is referred to as *his place* in [2 Chronicles 34:31](#). It appears to be the coronation pillar stone mentioned in the crowning of Joash (see [2 Kings 11:14](#)).

Josiah then essentially imposed God's law on the people. Imposition may seem harsh, but we read in these passages that 18 years after Josiah came to the throne, there were still plenty of pagan traditions and idolatrous practices throughout Judah ([2 Kings 23:4-20](#)). This chapter highlights again how far the nation had sunk.

According to *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, although the Hebrew word translated "perverted persons" in verse 7 "denotes the 'male shrine prostitutes,' probably the term is used generically for prostitutes of both sexes who were employed in the heinous Canaanite fertility rites" (footnote on verse 7). Even though God forbade the practice ([Deuteronomy 23:17](#)) and reforming kings abolished it, it always came back.

The references in [2 Kings 23:8](#) to Geba (northern Judah) and Beersheba (southern Judah) show that high places (a generic term for worship places, not necessarily elevated) had to be rooted out everywhere. Josiah then takes steps to root out the most heinous remains of pagan worship, defiling Tophet, the place of child sacrifice in the Valley of Hinnom, and removing the idolatrous objects from God's temple: "Apparently, the references in [[2 Kings 23:11-12](#)] are to various ceremonies involved in the worship of the sun, moon, and stars. Chariots and horses played a big part in the worship of the sun, probably because of the idea that the sun god drives across the sky in his chariot. In the literature of other nations, the sun god is pictured riding a winged chariot. Here, the horses and chariots mentioned were probably large statues, though they may have been miniature figurines used in astral worship. Rooftop shrines like those described in verse 12 were also related to this same pagan cult, which was introduced by King Ahaz" (Russell Dilday, *Mastering the Old Testament*, 1987, Vol. 9, p. 484). Indeed, in excavations "small horses with solar disks on their foreheads have been found both at Jerusalem and Hazor" (*Nelson Study Bible* note on verse 11).

Josiah started his reforms by defiling the cult places of worship and filling them with human bones (verses 14-15). Then he carried out what he had been prophesied to do by name long before in burning human bones on the pagan altar at Bethel, defiling it forever (verses 16-18; see [1 Kings 13:1-3](#)). And he did likewise with the pagan altars throughout the land. It should be noted that this was done throughout even Samaria ([2 Kings 23:19](#)), the territory of the northern kingdom, which was recently occupied—starting about two years before the current major purge—by a major contingent of Scythians, that is, Israelites." [END]

Day 567 – SATURDAY: January 11th

2 Kings 23:21 – 25 & 2 Chronicles 35:1 – 19

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “osiah wasn't just content to remove all the paganism. He purged spiritual "leaven" from the land in preparation of the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread. For his next reform was to reintroduce God's sacred festivals. These begin with the Passover on the 14th day of the first month of the Hebrew calendar (March-April on the modern Western calendar).

Josiah showed his love for his people by his generosity, providing animals for the sacrifices and offerings from his own herds and flocks. This was a magnificent celebration. Some commentators have called the numbers a gross exaggeration, yet when we consider the scope of the celebration, that there had never been a Passover like it in Israel or Judah, the number is realistic. Even so, it was still far short of the number of animals used by Solomon at the dedication of the temple (see [1 Kings 8:63](#)). The sheep and goats were used for the Passover lambs. The cattle would have been used for peace offerings and most likely for general use through the Feast of Unleavened Bread that followed the Passover for a further seven days.

Again it is made clear that the Passover was kept by "all Judah and Israel who were present." The northern kingdom had been taken captive a century prior. But this makes sense when we realize that a sizable group of Israelites reoccupied the northern territories at this time, known to history as the Scythians. Perhaps many of them responded to the preaching of Jeremiah in [Jeremiah 3](#)—wherein God instructed them to return—and to the tremendous leadership and example of King Josiah.” [END]