

Significant Lessons From The Seemingly Insignificant

#16 Josiah: Restoring True Worship

Scripture Passage: II Kings 22-23; II Chron. 34-35

II Kings 23:25 Now before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him did any arise like him.

Josiah's Predecessors:

- Josiah's great-great grandfather, Ahaz [16 years] sacrificed his son to heathen gods.
- Josiah's great grandfather, Hezekiah [29 years] did good in the sight of the Lord by cleansing and reopening the Temple; celebrated Passover & Feast Of Unleavened Bread
- Josiah's grandfather, Manasseh [55 years] rebuilt all the heathen shrines, sacrificed one of his own sons, practiced black magic, set up an idol in the Temple, and murdered many of his own people. Later in life, during his Assyrian captivity, he repented and began to undo some of his evil works.
- Josiah's father, Amon [2 years] did evil in the sight of the Lord, reversing the trend started by his father, Manassah.

These 5 generations of men ruled over a span of about 100 years. Many who lived during much of this 100 years must have felt like they were living on a roller coaster!

By the time we get to Josiah [31 years] things are very evil and corrupt.

When Josiah came to the throne, the land and the people were steeped in wickedness and the word of the LORD was silent; there was no open vision.

A Call to Repentance: Jer. 3:6-10 - Jeremiah is the prophet to Judah during Josiah's reign.

⁶ The LORD said also to me in the days of Josiah the king: "Have you seen what backsliding Israel has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there played the harlot. ⁷ And I said, after she had done all these things, 'Return to Me.' But she did not return. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it.

⁸ Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear but went and played the harlot also. ⁹ So it came to pass, through her casual harlotry, that she defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and trees.

¹⁰ And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah has not turned to Me with her whole heart, but in pretense [deception]," says the LORD.

Jer. 16:10-13 "And it shall be, when you show this people all these words, and they say to you, 'Why has the LORD pronounced all this great disaster against us? Or what is our iniquity? Or what is our sin that we have committed against the LORD our God?' ¹¹ then you shall say to them, 'Because your fathers have forsaken Me,' says the LORD; 'they have walked after other gods and have served them and worshiped them and have forsaken Me and not kept My law.

And you have done worse than your fathers, for behold, each one follows the dictates of his own evil heart, so that no one listens to Me. ¹³ Therefore I will cast you out of this land into a land that you do not know, neither you nor your fathers; and there you shall serve other gods day and night, where I will not show you favor.'

Josiah's life glorified God: *Seek The Lord, Purge Evil, Restore, Build Good, Walk In It*
II Kings 22:1a-2; II Chron. 34:1-2 Josiah was 8 years old when he began to reign, and he reigned 31 years in Jerusalem. ² And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD and walked in all the way of David his father and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left.

I. Josiah Seeks The LORD

II Chron. 34:3-7 For in the 8th year of his reign, while he was yet young [16 yrs. old], he Began to seek after the God of David his father: [sought the LORD for 4 years!] King David is considered one of the greatest military geniuses of all time. When foreign armies rose up against Israel, the Scriptures record that David "Inquired Of The Lord".

App: The Bible repeatedly calls us to "Seek The Lord... Seek His Presence Continually."

1. Seek God by putting love for God at the center of your relationship with Him.

Ps. 63:3,8 Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips shall praise You.

My soul follows hard after You; Your right hand upholds me.

2. Seek Him Continually

I Chron. 22:19a Set your heart and your soul to seek the LORD your God.

Col. 3:1-2 If then you have been raised with Christ, SEEK the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

SET YOUR MINDS on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

- The setting of the mind is the opposite of mental coasting. It is a conscious choice to direct the heart toward God. Paul prays for the church:

II Thess. 3:5 "May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ." It is a conscious effort on our part. But that effort to seek God is a gift from God.

Isa. 55:6 Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near.

3. Seek Him In Humility

The great obstacle to seeking the Lord is pride. Humility is ESSENTIAL to seeking Lord.

Ps. 10:4 The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts.

Promise: I Chron. 28:9 "If you seek Him, He will be found by you."

Duet. 4:29 "But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find Him if you look for Him with all your heart and with all your soul."

Heb. 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

God Himself is my greatest reward. When I have Him, I have everything!

4. Seeking the Lord is a lifelong process. Note: Josiah BEGAN to seek...

The renewing of our minds through Scripture isn't a quick fix.

We must run with *endurance* the race set before us.

II. Josiah Purges Evil

In the 12th year [20 yrs. old] He Began To Purge & Utterly Destroy all that did not belong in Judah And Jerusalem.

1. They broke down the altars of Baal in his presence; and
2. the images, that were on high above them, he cut down; and
3. the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images, he broke in pieces, and made dust of them, and scattered it upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them.
4. He burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars, and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem.
5. And so did he in the cities of Manasseh, and Ephraim, and Simeon, even unto Naphtali, with their axes round about.
6. When he had broken down the altars and the groves, and had beaten the graven images into powder, and cut down all the idols throughout all the land of Israel, he returned to Jerusalem.

What doesn't belong in your life? What needs to be purged and destroyed?

He transformed us out of the kingdom of darkness and into the Kingdom of Light.

But we still brought much excess baggage that the writer of Hebrews tells us to cast off.

Sanctification, a process to cleanse our temple so we can be used of God, is ongoing in our lives.

We must not allow it to stop.

II Tim. 2:20-21 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. ²¹ Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.

III. Josiah Begins To Restore The Temple - II Kings 22:3-8; II Chron. 34:8-15

The Temple, although purged, needs repairs and the people are willing to contribute money.

⁸ In the 18th year [26 yrs old] of his reign, when he had purged the land and the temple,

- he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of the LORD his God.
- Go to Hilkiah the high priest, that he may count the money which has been brought into the house of the LORD, which the doorkeepers have gathered from the people.
- When they came to Hilkiah the high priest, they delivered the money that was brought into the house of God, which the Levites who kept the doors had gathered from the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, from all the remnant of Israel, from all Judah and Benjamin, and *which* they had brought back to Jerusalem.
- Money is distributed for workers and materials. ¹² And the men did the work faithfully.

Note: Josiah's reform had a positive effect on the people who repaired the Temple.

II Kings 22:7 Howbeit there was no reckoning made with them of the money that was delivered into their hand, because they dealt faithfully.

- While the repairs were being made, Hilkiyah the priest found the Book of the Law of the LORD given by Moses.
- Then Hilkiyah said to Shaphan the scribe, "I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD." Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it.

IV. Josiah Learns Of The Law Of The LORD: II Kings 22:9-11; II Chron. 34:16-19

- Shaphan the scribe came to the king and gave an update on the progress of the repairs.
- ¹⁰ And Shaphan the scribe showed the king, saying, Hilkiyah the priest hath delivered me a book. Shaphan the words of God's Law to King Josiah.
- ¹¹ It came to pass, when the king had heard the words of God's Law, He Rent His Clothes.
- You don't need to tear your clothes, but sometimes the Word ought to rend your heart.

V. Josiah Inquires Of the LORD: II Kings 22:12-13; II Chron. 34:20-21

And the king commanded Hilkiyah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Michaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asahiah a servant of the king's, saying,

- Go ye, inquire of the LORD for me, and those who are left in Israel and Judah
- concerning the words of this book that is found:
- for great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us,
- because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that is written in this book.

True reform is more than superficial changes like smashing idols, renovating a building or any other external changes. He understood the final consequences of their sins.

Go inquire of Hulda & God how to avoid Judah's destruction.

Huldah, The Prophetess, Sends Words to Josiah: II Kings 22:15-20; II Chron. 34:23-28

"Thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'Tell the man who sent you to Me, "Thus says the LORD:

- 'Behold, I will bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants, all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read
- because they have forsaken Me and burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands.
- Therefore My wrath will be poured out on this place, and not be quenched.'"
- But as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, ...
- 'Thus says the LORD God of Israel: "Concerning the words which you have heard—
- because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words against this place and against its inhabitants, that they would become a desolation and a curse,

- you humbled yourself before Me, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you," says the LORD.
- "Surely I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; and your eyes shall not see all the calamity which I will bring on this place and its inhabitants." So they brought back word to the king.

Consider: God's Word Was Lost In God's House

1. Ignorance brings destruction

Hosea 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: Because Thou Hast Rejected Knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

2. Unconcern and indifference brings ignorance and compromise.

II Tim. 4:2-4 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. ³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables.

There is an epidemic of Biblical illiteracy.

Sad Statistics reveal most Christians don't read God's Word. A survey by the United Kingdom Bible society reveals the effects. Many British children could not identify common Bible stories. When given a list of stories, almost 1 in 3 didn't choose the Nativity as part of the Bible and over half (59%) didn't know Jonah swallowed by the great fish is in the Bible.

British parents didn't do much better. Around 30% don't know Adam and Eve, David and Goliath, or the Good Samaritan are in the Bible. To make matters worse, 27% think Superman is or might be a biblical story. More than 1 in 3 believes the same about Harry Potter.

More than half (54%) believe The Hunger Games is or might be a story from the Bible.

Our lack of Biblical literacy has led to a Lack Of Biblical Doctrine. LifeWay Research found while 67% of Americans believe heaven is a real place, 45% believe there are many ways to get there—including 1 in 5 evangelical Christians. 59% believe the Holy Spirit is a force and not a personal being and part of the Trinity. As a whole, Americans, including many Christians, hold unbiblical views on hell, sin, salvation, Jesus, humanity, and the Bible itself.

There is little excuse to not know or read the Bible. Nine out of ten American homes have at least one Bible. The average American—Christian or not—owns at least three Bibles.

Technology has put Bibles at our fingertips wherever we are—you can download the Bible for free on your smartphone.

Most Christians say they desire to mature as a follower of Christ. 90% of churchgoers say they "desire to please and honor Jesus in all I do." It's striking that while most of us desire to please Jesus, few take the time to develop a relationship. Clearly, there's a disconnect.

Knowledge of TRUTH is essential for true worship and acceptable service.

Proper respect for TRUTH brings hearing, repentance and reform.

VI. Josiah Restores True Worship: II Kings 23:1-15, 19-20; II Chron. 34:29-33

God said Judah was going to be inevitably destroyed. Why would Josiah continue with the revival and restoration? Help all who would repent and accept salvation before the destruction.

1. Josiah gathered all the elders of Judah & Jerusalem.
2. He went to the house of the LORD, with ALL the men of Judah & the inhabitants of Jerusalem - the priests, Levites and all the people.
3. He read ALL the words of the Book of the Covenant which had been found so they heard.
4. King Josiah stood by a pillar and made a covenant before the LORD.
 - To Follow the LORD
 - To Keep His commandments, His Testimonies, & His Statues with all his heart & soul
 - To Perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book
 - ALL the people took a stand for the covenant.

Result: The inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God.

Josiah removed ALL the abominations from the country that belonged to the children of Israel.

1. Josiah commanded Hilkiah the high priest, the priests of the 2nd order and the doorkeepers: Bring out of the temple of the LORD all the articles that were made for Baal, for Asherah and for all the host of heaven.
2. Josiah burned them outside Jerusalem in the Kidron and carried their ashes to Bethel.
3. He removed the idolatrous priests from the high places.
4. He brought the Asherah image out from the Temple, to the Kidron Brook. He burned it and ground it to ashes and threw the ashes on the graves of the common people.
5. He tore down the ritual booths in the Temple.
6. He defiled the high places and broke down the altars at the city gates.
7. He defiled Topheth so no one could sacrifice his child to Molech.
8. He removed the carts and horses made to worship the sun.
9. He broke down the pagan altars in the Temple. [Ahaz & Manasseh]
10. Josiah removed and destroyed the high places that were east of Jerusalem, on the southern slope of the Mount of Corruption [Mt. Of Olives] where Solomon had built special altars for his heathen wives where they could worship their gods.
11. When Josiah came to Bethel, he unearthed the bones of the idolatrous priest, and burned them on Jeroboam's altar. Then he destroyed the altar. [II Kings 23:15-16]
He fulfilled a prophecy spoken 300 years earlier, during Jeroboam's reign.

I Kings 13:1-3 And behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the Lord to Bethel. Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. ² The man cried against the altar by the word of the Lord, O altar, altar, thus says the Lord: Behold, a son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name; and on you shall he offer the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and men's bones shall be burned on you. And he gave a sign the same day, saying, This is the sign which the Lord has spoken: Behold, the altar shall be split and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out. [Fulfilled in II Kings 23:15, 16]

12. He put away those who consulted mediums and spiritists.
13. He executed all the pagan priests. Then he returned to Jerusalem.

When you get into God's Word it exposes things in your life that are displeasing to God. You need to take strong action against such things: chop them down, break them in pieces, grind them to powder, burn it and scatter the ashes, etc. (see 34:4-5). We need to respond to God's Word by dealing radically with our sin.

Principle in Scripture - Tear Down, Must Build Up. Empty> Must Fill.

Mat.t 12:43-45 "Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places, seeking rest, and does not find it. "Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came; and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept, and put in order. "Then it goes and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first.

Keyword = unoccupied. The house was emptied of the evil, but not filled with the good.

What good would it have done Josiah to cleanse the land of Judah, and not rebuild the house of the Lord his God? We must fill our lives with Godly things.

God's Word is absolutely essential in our lives. But what is our attitude toward it?

I Thess. 2:13 And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.

Ps. 119:105 Thy word is a lamp to my feet, And a light to my path.

John 17:17 "Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth.

Ps. 119:11 Thy word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against Thee.

How many of us would go out in the blackness of night without a light?

Yet how many of us try to walk on the narrow road without the light of God's Word.

II Chron. 34:32-33 And he made all who were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin take a stand. So the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. ³³ Thus Josiah removed all the abominations from all the country that *belonged* to the children of Israel and made all who were present in Israel diligently serve the LORD their God. All his days they did not depart from following the LORD God of their fathers.

Josiah Keeps Passover: II Kings 23:21-23; II Chron. 35:1-19

Josiah was determined that Passover should serve to strengthen the bonds between Israel and God and commemorate the people's return to their Heavenly Father.

18th year [26 yrs. old] of King Josiah this Passover was held before the LORD in Jerusalem.

II Chron. 35:6 Consecrate yourselves and make preparations to carry out the word of the LORD

1. They slaughtered the Passover *lambs* on the 14th day of the first month. [Nisan]
2. Then Josiah gave the lay people lambs and young goats from the flock, all for Passover offerings for all who were present, to the number of 30,000, as well as 3,000 cattle; these were from the king's possessions.

II Chron. 34:18b This Passover was kept with the priests and the Levites, all Judah and Israel who were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They also kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread for 7 days.

Hezekiah's Passover lasted 2 weeks but at Josiah's Passover, the people offered almost twice as many sacrifices. At least 37,600 small animals were offered plus 3800 bulls.

II Kings 23:25 Now before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him did any arise like him.

Josiah, The Boy King: Used by God To Restore True Worship

8 years = Became King

12 Years = Began to seek the God of David

20 Years = Began to purge Judah, Jerusalem & parts of Israel

26 Years = Sent Shaphan and others to repair the Temple -

- The lost Word of the LORD is discovered.
- Josiah goes up and down the land, breaking down images, grinding them to pieces and scattering their dust, defiling the sacred places of the idolatrous religions, turning out their priests, demolishing buildings, desecrating their sacred symbols and smashing their works of art until NOTHING was left of paganism in all the land from Bethel to Beer-Sheba. The land was cleansed.
- Consecrate yourselves to celebrate the LORD'S Passover
- He Brought Light To A People in Darkness

Matt. 5:14-16 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

¹⁵ Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

At age 12 Robert Louis Stevenson was looking out into the dark from his upstairs window, watching a man light the street lanterns. His governess came into the room and asked what he was doing. He replied, "I am watching a man cut holes in the darkness." Though we live in a dark day, we can be used of God to cut holes in the darkness, if we will seek Him and obey His Word.