

Week Eleven – Judah’s most godly reformer King

2 Chronicles 34-35 [2 Kings 22-23.30]

Ex 18:21 Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.

To this point we have looked at:

- Rehoboam – The King who listened to bad **counsel**.
- Asa – The King who **almost** finished well.
- Jehoshaphat – The King who kept making terrible **alliances**.
- Ahaziah/Athalia – the **wimp** King and his **conniving** mother.
- Joash – The King who tried to borrow **Character** and **Conviction**
- Amaziah: The King of **Lost Opportunity**. Uzziah: The King of **Pride** and Arrogance
- Hezekiah: A really good king who let down his **guard**.
- Manasseh: The king called the **most** evil yet still **redeemable**.

Today: Josiah – the best King since King David.

Heritage

Josiah was the great Grandson of Hezekiah the best reformer king up until this time. There is no better example of someone who lives up to the qualification of Exodus 18.21 (above) like Josiah did. His is the best example of good leadership to be found in the list of Kings following David.

Situation

Secular history gives us a greater understanding of the background than we get by just reading the passage.

Momentous events were erupting around the biblical world in 638 BC when Josiah came to the throne in Jerusalem. As the powerful influence of Assyria was waning, the savage invasion of the Scythians (Nomadic Persians – ‘Iranians’) and lasted until about 624 BC. In 612 BC the capital of Assyria (Nineveh) fell before a combined army of Scythians, Medes and Babylonians. That paved the way for the ominous rise to world power of

Babylon, whose “innocent” envoys had visited the court of Josiah’s great-grandfather Hezekiah (2 Kings 20.12). In 627 BC the articulate voice of Jeremiah, reinforced by the preaching of Zephaniah and Nahum, began to be heard in Judah. While not one of these events is mentioned in this historical account of Josiah’s reign, they must have had an enormous impact on the kings, both during his informative years and during the active years of his national reforms.¹

So there you have a little of what was happening on the world scene during Josiah’s time.

So how did it all happen? How did Josiah turn the kingdom around to become a bastion of holiness during his reign? What does it take to awake a nation to God and his will?

- I. A Personal **Commitment**. Chapter (34.1-3a). As in the case of his great grandfather, the Spiritual awakening in Judah (and later all of Israel began with **one person**. Several factors contributed to Josiah’s deep commitment.
 - a. A godly **parent** can greatly influence a leader. 2 Kings 22.1
 - b. Godly **counsellors** can influence a leader.
 - c. A commitment to personal **purity**.
- II. The Purpose to **Purge** (34.3b-7). Josiah’s personal spirituality developed him into a person of great character and integrity.
 - a. He took personal **responsibility** for: destroying altars of Baal; chopped down elevated incense altars; cut down asherim poles and carved images; ground the metal images to powder and desecrated graves of their worshippers [did they also kill the worshippers?] (v.3-4).
 - b. He burned the **bones** of the priests of Baal on their own altars obviously burning the altars too (v.5).
 - c. He carried this campaign beyond Jerusalem into Judah and Israel (v.6-7).

¹ Russel Dilday. *1,2 Kings*, pp 468-469.

- d. Why did he do all of this? Well in addition to the command given Moses and Joshua as they invaded the land to destroy all gods and idols we have this...
- i. Pr 11:11 By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted, But it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.*
 - ii. Pr 14:34 Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people.*
 - iii. Pr 25:5 Take away the wicked from before the king, And his throne will be established in righteousness.*
 - iv. Ho 10:12 Sow for yourselves righteousness; Reap in mercy; Break up your fallow ground, For it is time to seek the LORD, Till He comes and rains righteousness on you.*
- e. Sadly many Christians would like to change (purge) the culture as a whole but they stop short of personal **change** and a personal commitment to **holiness**. It will not work.
- III. The priority of **Worship** (34-.8-13). READ FIRST. Note that cleaning out the false religion was not enough. Initiating true worship is required. There is a New Testament parallel for this. *Mt 12:43- 45* Observe...
- a. As a young man he was dedicated to leading the nation to **worship** the true God and to worship him in the right way.
 - b. As a young man he demonstrated **administrative** skills.
 - c. As a young man he valued financial **accountability**.
 - d. As a young man he **valued** the gifts and abilities of others and relied on them.
- IV. The **Primacy** of God's Word (34.14-33). We need to read this section. Imagine that! In the house of God the Word of God had been lost or misplaced. God's Word is the supreme authority for life and practice in the Christian religion. Diminish the Bible and you diminish God's presence. Close the Bible and you close God's mouth. Change the Bible and you run the risk of eternal damnation. (Deuteronomy 4.2; Deuteronomy 12.32; Re 22:18-19) Notice:
- a. They knew where their **money** was but they had lost God's word (v.14).

- b. When Josiah heard the reading of the Law he took it **personally** – he repented – he tore his clothing (v.19).
 - c. When Josiah heard the reading of the Law he applied it **corporately** (v.20-28).
 - d. Josiah did not practice an **elite** faith. He did not keep the Law of God from the common people to use as a tool to control them rather he had it read publically and perpetually.
 - e. Josiah practiced religion from the **heart**. It was not an outward show and the people knew it (v.31-33). That made all the difference.
- V. The Passover was observed (35.1-9). I won't read all of this passage but I want you to look at v.18-19.
- VI. Josiah's untimely death (35.20-27). Who really knows why Josiah decided to go out to fight Pharaoh Neco. Josiah only lived to be 39 years of age yet he did more with the time he had than anyone before him.

To Remember:

- God uses people wholly **dedicated** to him. *2 Ch 16:9 For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars.* Josiah was totally dedicated to God all of his days.
- The good ole days do not all have to be **behind us**. Who would have thought that after the evil reigns of Manasseh and Amon that Judah could see such a revival that none previous could compare with it.
- The power of **influence** is incredible for both good and evil.
- Repentance precedes **Revival**; revival precedes reform; reform precedes **change**.

God give us a leader like Josiah. There was never anyone in Israel like him.