

NO King Like Josiah
(How To Purify Yourself)
2 Kings 23:25

Throughout this year, we have devoted a number of lessons studies from the Old Testament. We have examined characters, events and prophecies (Ahab, At Ease in Zion, Naaman, Floating Iron (Elisha), Lessons from a Widow (Elijah), Jericho, in addition to our ongoing study of Ecclesiastes). My hopes in these studies is to spark an interest in studying the Old Testament as the word of God. Tonight, I want to examine another lesson from the Old Testament.

Tonight, we want to address King Josiah, one of the most godly kings in Judah's history. His life and reign are recorded in 2 Kings 22-23 and 2 Chronicles 34-35. We want to focus on an event recorded in 2 Kings 23:1-25, as he restores true service to God.

I. Background of Josiah

- a. Josiah, was a direct descendant of David (as were all the kings of Judah), and great-grandson of righteous Hezekiah. Between Hezekiah and Josiah, there were 2 generations – Manasseh (55 years) and Amon (2 years) – both were very wicked kings.
- b. Josiah was only 8 years old when he became king (2 Kings 22:1). He would reign 31 years in Jerusalem and would be the last good king of Judah. Israel is already long gone, and Judah is the only remaining tribe of Israel still in the land. His reign was approximately 640-609 BC.

NOTE: This says something about serving God while young. You can do it! Ecclesiastes 11:9-12:1.

- c. 2 Kings 22:2 says, *And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.*
- d. 2 Chronicles 34:3 tells us that in the eighth year of his reign, while still young, he began to seek the God of David. In the 12th year of his reign he began to purge Judah of its high places and idolatry. Then in the 18th year of his reign, he seeks to restore true worship and repairing the temple. This is where we read about Hilkiah the high priest finding the book of the Law of the LORD (2 Kings 22:8). This is brought to Josiah, who when he reads it he tore his clothes and mourned realizing the fate of Judah because of what they had done.

However the LORD through a prophetess declares the fate of Judah is sealed, but because of Josiah's faithfulness, he would see it – the LORD would wait until his reign was over. (2 Kings 22:20)

II. Restoring True Worship (23:1-25)

- a. Quite often in our studies we emphasize the importance of holiness. As Christians, we need to be holy (1 Peter 1:15-16). Holiness means we are set apart for God. But how does one become holy? It begins with purifying your life. You HAVE to take steps to make yourself pure before God.

In our home, we have been studying a lesson book entitled, Lifelong Zeal (Philip Shumake), a lesson book designed to spark a lasting zeal for God. A part of the process of developing proper zeal (instead of a momentary flare up) is making yourself holy before God. One of

the lessons addresses purifying your environment (lesson 5). Josiah is used as an example of how to purify your environment. That is the text for this lesson.

b. The text of 2 Kings 23

i. **Begins with learning what you need to do.** 2 Kings 23:2 – it began with the reading of “the book of the Covenant” – the word of God is where we will find how to live our lives in a way that is pleasing to God.

ii. **We must also make a covenant with God** – (23:3) a covenant is a serious and lifelong commitment. When we obey the gospel, we are making a covenant with God and Jesus to live for Him the rest of our lives – cf. Romans 6:1-4ff.

iii. **A cleansing must take place** – (23:4, 6) – the articles in the temple that were devoted to foreign gods were ordered to be removed and burned outside of Jerusalem.

When we obey the gospel (or renew our covenant), we may need to do some housecleaning.

Remove whatever objects stand in our way of serving God. WHAT are we willing to give up to follow Him. ARE there things that will weigh us down?

Consider the rich, young ruler was called to give up his wealth. It stood in his way (Matthew 19:21-22). Sadly, he did not comply.

Don’t let the cares of this world choke out the word of God. Are there movies you should not be watching? Books you should not be reading? Music you should not be listening to? Games you should not be playing?

IF anything is an IDOL to you, you need to get rid of it.

NOTE: Josiah ordered them removed and BURNED. He didn’t store them somewhere else or donate them to someone else. If there are things you are getting rid of because they are bad, DON’T give them to anyone else!!!!!!

iv. **Are there relationships you need to sever?** (23:5) – Josiah removed the idolatrous priests who were worshipping Baal and other gods and things.

In worshipping God there is no question they had to go. They were part of the defilement.

If we want to be holy, we might have to sever some relationships. There are people in your life who will drag you down spiritually. 1 Corinthians 15:33 warns us of this.

1 Corinthians 5:6 – a little leaven leavens the whole lump

The warning of 2 John 9-11 would also fit into this.

You cannot continue to hang around with those who want you to do ungodly things, talk in ungodly ways and go to ungodly places.

And realize this is not always easy – in fact, they may not appreciate it. 1 Peter 4:3-5.

NOTE: This is not to say you do not try to teach and influence others for good – you clearly should, BUT if their habits and ways are draining you spiritually, you have to make the change.

v. **Are there places you need to remove?** (23:7-10).

There were places that were identified with sin. The places mentioned here were associated with idolatrous practices. The “high places” were places with shrines for their idolatrous worship. Josiah destroyed them and even defiled them to ensure

he could not go back there, NOR would be an accomplice in others going back there. Consider defiling something – it means to take steps to make it absolutely unusable Vs. 10 speaks of Topheth, the Valley of the Son of Hinnom. This is the valley Jesus referenced when He was speaking of hell (Gehenna) – a defiled valley outside of Jerusalem that was the garbage dump at that time. This was the valley where kings and others would worship Molech and other gods, even offering their sons on the altar (Jeremiah 7:31-32, 2 Chronicles 33:5-6 – Manasseh did this).

Friends, if we want to live a holy life, there may be places we need to stop going – places where we are tempted to engage in sinful habits.

An alcoholic does not need to be going to bars.

If you struggle with gossip, you may need to quit going to that gathering where the gossip starts.

Does the movie theater bring out sinful thoughts? What about the movies and tv shows you watch in your home? Do they build you up and promote holiness? Etc.

vi. ***Are we willing to change those things that have material benefit?*** (23:11)

Vs. 11 speaks of horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun (again idolatry). Josiah removed them.

An observation made about this verse is to consider how Josiah could have simply repurposed the horses – after all, horses serve a good purpose. Chariots were useful weapons in battle (they were as beneficial as tanks and jets are today). The army that had these had a great advantage.

BUT, before Israel even inherited Canaan the LORD told them to not put their trust in horses (and chariots) – Deuteronomy 17:16, cf. Joshua 11:4-6 – the LORD instructed Joshua to hamstring the enemies horses and burn their chariots. Why? Because the LORD wanted Israel to trust in Him – not in weapons of war or wealth, etc.

There are things in this life not wrong within themselves, that could easily become a hindrance in our service to God.

Examples might be credit cards: While I do not believe it is wrong to have or use a credit card, the Bible is clear about the foolishness and dangers of debt. Will we allow debt to enslave us?

Do video games, maybe even on our phones consume our time and maybe even other resources? Again, a little recreation is not bad, but do they become an addiction or distraction?

What about social media? What are your habits and reactions to social media? Are you addicted? Are you driven by how many “likes” you get? Is it a source of prideful boasting?

1 Corinthians 10:23 – all things are lawful, but not all things edify.

1 Corinthians 6:12 – but I will not be brought under the power of any.

vii. 2 Kings 23:12-20 – the idolatrous things he pulverized and threw them away. These verses describe in greater detail the zeal of Josiah for the LORD.

He even went to Bethel and Samaria and destroyed their altars – a demonstration of taking steps to make your environment AND the environment of those over whom you have influence better – Philippians 2:15, Ephesians 5:11, etc.

Friends, there are some bridges we DO need to burn so that we can never return there again.

OF note: Vs. 16 speaks of Josiah seeing tombs in the mountains of Bethel (and Samaria) and taking their bones and burning them on the altars of the false gods. Why? It was according to the word of the LORD spoken by the man of God to Jeroboam some 300 years earlier (see 1 Kings 13:1-3 where Josiah is named as the one who would do this). This shows the hand of God at work throughout the history of Israel.

viii. **What will we replace what we remove with?** (23:21-23)

These verses record Josiah commanding the people to keep the Passover, "as it is written in the Book of the Covenant."

We know that what he did was EXACTLY what God asked, both in deed and in heart. Consider the description in vs. 22 - *Such a Passover surely had never been held since the days of the judges who judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah.* NOTE how long it had been since such a Passover took place – NONE of the kings of Israel and Judah – including David, the man after God's own heart, had observed a Passover like this – a David did some pretty impressive things in keeping the Lord's commands. This went back to the period of the judges which began after the death of Joshua and the generation that possessed the Promised Land.

LESSON: If we want to be holy, we must not only purify our lives, but we need to be DOING what God tells us to do, and understand that HOW He tells us to do that is important. That is why our worship to God (both public and private) MUST follow His pattern. That is why we do not use instrumental music. That is why we partake of the Lord's Supper each Sunday. It is about worshipping Him, not satisfying ourselves.

As the Lord's church, and even as individual Christians, we need to continually be seeking to RESTORE New Testament faith and duty. That is also where true unity is found.

Holiness is where our lives in God have to begin. Until you get yourself right, you will not be useful with others. Josiah shows us what true holiness is about. So what can you learn from his example? Think about it!