

## **Made for More: Josiah**

**1 Kings 11:1-6; 2 Kings 21- 23; Proverbs 3:5-6; Isaiah 5:20-21, 9:6-7; Daniel 1:17; Matthew 6:31-33; John 10:10; Romans 12:1-2;**

God doesn't wait until someone is 'old enough' to use them. He looks at hearts, not physical attributes. Today we are looking at the story of Josiah. But before we get into it, I have a question for you to think about.

If someone excavated our culture 500 years from now, what would they conclude about what we worship? Not what we say we worship, but what the evidence they find would suggest. What do we trust? What do we sacrifice for? What do we build our lives around?

Ancient Judah had idols made of stone, but we have idols made of ideals.

### **History Lesson:**

Last week we talked about David. He was called a man after God's own heart. He was not perfect, yet when he was confronted with sin, he repented. Then came his son Solomon. His reign was the beginning of compromise.

Read 1 Kings 11:1-6. Instead of abandoning God, he simply added other gods. Compromise rarely starts with rejection. It starts with addition. Most people don't wake up deciding to reject God. They just slowly allow other things to compete for first place.

After Solomon, things just got worse. Israel divides into Northern and Southern kingdoms. There were mostly wicked kings. Then King Hezekiah brought a brief revival, but his son, Manasseh, undoes almost everything Hezekiah accomplished. Manasseh sacrificed his son to a foreign god, practiced witchcraft, consulted mediums, worshiped Baal, erected Asherah poles, and placed idols inside God's Temple.

Read 2 Kings 21:10-15. God isn't playing around. Spiritual compromise will always eventually become part of the culture. And when something becomes widely accepted, God is no longer the primary focus of worship. By the time that Josiah was born, God's people had forgotten God's Word.

### **King Josiah:**

Read 2 Kings 22:1-2. There are a few things that I want to point out in this. First, Josiah's mother's name (Jedidah) means "beloved" or "darling of Jehovah." She was from the lower part of the Southern Kingdom of Judea (Bozkath) where she would have been far removed from the idolatry that had plagued the northern territory. She would have been a primary influence in the reign of Josiah since he was only 8 when he took the throne after his father was killed.

Second, David is not Josiah's direct father. He is from the *line* of David; the son of Amon, David's direct descendant.

Third, "not turning aside to the right or to the left" is not a political statement but it is something to think about. We call the kid's lesson Target Practice because the definition of sin is 'missing the mark' (veering off to the right or left of the center target). We want to teach our kids to hit the target, to follow God's plan, to not get distracted from His purpose, and to not allow compromise to pull them away from their identity in Him.

Josiah was eight years old when he became king. At age 16, He sought God. At 20, he began removing idols. At 26, he began repair of the Temple, which had been neglected for a long time.

During this time of repair, Hilkiah (high priest) discovers the Book of the Law. It is surprising that the high priest at the Temple in Jerusalem did not know the Book of the Law existed which goes to show how far the nation of Israel had veered away from God.

Can you imagine Christians losing track of God's Word? Not just physically but spiritually? There is little difference between a lost Bible and an unread one. When God's Word is found, read, and applied it does not simply inform...it transforms.

### **Book of Law Found:**

Read 2 Kings 22:11-13. Let's break down this delegate.

- Hilkiah - discovered and recognized the significance of the Book of Law (Deuteronomy)
- Shaphan - scribe who read the scroll directly to Josiah
- Ahikam - Shaphan's son - protector with political influence - later saved the prophet Jeremiah
- Akbor - trusted advisor to Josiah
- Asaiah - personal aide to Josiah - his eyes and ears

Read 2 Kings 22:14. Let's talk about Huldah for a minute. Everyone probably expected the royal delegate to seek out the prophet Jeremiah. Instead they went to Huldah. We don't know much about her, but we do know her husband had a high position in the Temple, she lived in the New Quarter which was the upper class section of Jerusalem, and she was recognized as a prophet.

This is just me openly theorizing...there is no proof of this. Maybe they went to her because of her prominent social position thinking that maybe they would get a more favorable answer. Maybe she was less intimidating than the guy known as a spiritual wrecking ball (Jeremiah). Maybe she was just an absolute rockstar of faith and they knew she would hear from God and share His Word. Regardless of their reason for going to Huldah, the answer they got was powerful.

### **Huldah's Prophecy:**

Read 2 Kings 22:15-20. She tells Josiah that judgment is still coming but, because his heart responded to the Word of God in humility, God will show mercy and would delay His judgment. In other words, Josiah alone could not save Israel from being destroyed but his actions could save a generation.

After hearing this prophecy, Josiah went on a cleaning spree. He began purging all of Judah of symbols and idols of false gods. Read 2 Kings 23 to find out more about Josiah's actions to bring Israel back to God.

### **Idols:**

The idols look different in our culture today, but the same temptations still exist. Each idol represents a promise.

- Baal
  - Promise: "I'll provide prosperity"
  - People sacrificed crops, livestock, etc,...
  - Today that looks like:
    - Money, career, success, productivity

- Jesus said: *“So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”* (Matthew 6:31-33)
- Asherah & Ashtoreth
  - Promise: “I’ll satisfy every desire.”
  - Today:
    - Sexual identity, pornography, entertainment, pleasure, feelings becoming ‘my truth’
  - Paul wrote: *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God - this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is - his good, pleasing, and perfect will.* (Romans 12:1-2)
- Molech
  - Promise: “Sacrifice what’s most valuable to gain success and convenience”
  - Today:
    - Families are sacrificed for careers
    - Children’s safety is sacrificed for selfish appetite (addiction)
    - Infants are sacrificed for convenience
  - The lives of our children should never be up for debate
    - Yet - we attempt to redefine life in our own terms in order to justify making the choice to prioritize our life over the lives of our children
  - Nearly a century before Josiah, the prophet Isaiah wrote: *Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight.* (Isaiah 5: 20-21)
    - This warning has never stopped being relevant
    - We still live in a society that defines what is good and evil based on their own personal ‘truth,’ preferences, passions, and opinions
      - We still chose the DIY tree over the Tree of Life
  - But Jesus said: *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”* (John 10:10)
- Chemosh & Milcom
  - Promise: “Politics, Military power, and the Government will save you.”
  - Today:
    - We put more trust in the opinions, platforms, and policies of political leaders than we do to the Word of God
    - We live divided between the right and the left
      - But *the truth* - God’s Truth - is not found at either extreme of man-made political parties
  - *For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom,*

*establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this. (Isaiah 9:6-7)*

- Simply put - the Kingdom that God has established is greater than any government, nation, or society that humans can create
  - So why would we put our trust in them?
- Astrology, Mediums, Host of Heaven
  - Promise: “You can control your future, know tomorrow, and manipulate the outcomes”
  - Today:
    - Horoscopes, Fortune Telling, Witchcraft, Tarot Cards, ouija boards, crystals...
    - Looking to manipulate natural elements for your own benefit
      - The phrase ‘manifesting’ is dangerous
  - *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. (Proverbs 3:5-6)*

If you have any questions about any of that please come talk to us sometime.

Every idol promises something that God already provides: Identity, Purpose, Hope, Security, and Joy. All the false gods required sacrifices. The only sacrifice that God asks of us is to surrender our hearts.

Ask yourself: What competes with Jesus for first place in my heart?

### **Josiah’s Influence:**

Josiah started taking down idols and destroyed them down to dust. He renewed the covenant with God. He restored holy practices like Passover.

Josiah honored God...and God kept His promise. Josiah died and did not witness the eventual fall of Judah. Babylon invaded, conquered, and took many Israelites captive. It starts to look like Josiah’s return to God accomplished nothing beyond his generation.

But who were the children growing up during Josiah’s reign? There were four young men named Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. These boys watched the idols fall. They heard God’s Law and experienced Passover.

Years later, Babylon changed their language, education, culture, and names (Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego), language, education, and culture. However, Babylon could not change their faith because they had seen revival and were faithful to God. As a result, God blessed them. Read Daniel 1:17.

The fruit of Josiah’s revival wasn’t found in his sons. It was found in another generation that did not become visible until it looked like all hope was lost. God placed them in a position where Daniel became the chief Magi (or Wise Man) who passed down the prophecies of Isaiah for generations (600 years) to the men who studied the skies and followed the star to find a baby in a manger and recognize Him as the eternal King!

The story isn’t really about Josiah. It isn’t about his mother, the prophet Huldah, or even a group of young men living in exile. It’s about a God who refuses to give up on His people. God changed history though people willing to stand firm in their faith in the middle of cultural compromise...and He still does! The question is, are you willing to stand firm in your faith in the middle of cultural compromise?

**Reflection Questions:**

- What competes with Jesus for first place in my heart?
- In who or what do I place my trust?
- What spiritual compromises have I made?
- Where have I chosen 'my truth' over God's truth?
- Have I allowed society to define what is right and wrong in any area?