

Josiah's Heart For Truth

Introduction. It's marvelous that we have so many good ways to establish comfort or encouragement in the Bible (Romans 15:4). To me, this is one of the greatest reasons why people keep coming back to it time and time again. I get encouragement from the people who lived before me. If they can live righteously, then it helps me to know that I can too.

Josiah was king of Judah from 641 to 609 B.C. Of the twenty kings who ruled Judah over a period of 345 years, he was the last good king of seven in total. He ascended to the throne at the tender age of 8 and reigned for 31 years. The three decades of Josiah's reign were characterized by peace, prosperity, and reform — they were among the happiest years experienced by Judah. We are going to see how Josiah can be a great example for us now.

I. Three Stages Of Reform

- A. At age 16, Josiah began to seek the Lord.
 - 1. He apparently was blessed with God-fearing advisors who resisted the idolatrous influence of his father (2 Chronicles 34:3a).
 - 2. They would have taught him that the times of greatest national prosperity had been those of faithful and earnest allegiance to God and His service.
- B. At age 20, Josiah began to cleanse Jerusalem.
 - 1. His reform was even more extensive than his predecessor, Hezekiah (cp. 2 Kings 18:4; 2 Chronicles 29:3-36).
 - 2. Josiah extended the destruction of the altars of the Baals and the wooden, carved, and molded images as far north as the cities of Naphtali — at the time Israel was nominally controlled by Assyria (2 Chronicles 34:3b-7).
 - 3. The Mount of Olives had been a “mount of corruption” because of the high places erected by Solomon, but Josiah restored it (2 Kings 23:13-14).
 - 4. Josiah also uncovered the altar of wicked Jeroboam as well as the tomb of the prophet who had warned him, thereby fulfilling the prophecy of 1 Kings 13:1-5 (2 Kings 23:15-18).
 - 5. His efforts were aided by the death of the great Assyrian king, Ashurbanipal, which brought about a serious decline in Assyria's power and allowed Josiah freedom to pursue his reforms.
- C. At age 26, Josiah ordered the temple repairs.
 - 1. A copy of the book of the Law was discovered (2 Chronicles 34:14-15). When it was read to Josiah, he was horrified to learn how far Judah had departed from the Law.
 - 2. This discovery provided a new momentum for the reformation that was already in progress (2 Kings 23:4-20).
 - 3. He celebrated the Passover, hoping this would remind the people of their obligation to God (2 Kings 23:21-23; 2 Chronicles 35:1-19).
- D. In 609 B.C., Josiah attempted to block Pharaoh Necho II of Egypt as he marched north to assist Assyria in her fight with Babylon.

1. Despite the Pharaoh's assurance to the contrary, Josiah saw Necho's northern campaign as a threat to Judah's security.
 - a) Necho wanted Assyria as a buffer state between Egypt and Babylon. Had Necho's plan been successful, Israel couldn't have survived.
 - b) Josiah engaged him at Megiddo, and Necho was forced to lose valuable time besieging the city.
2. The archers shot at Josiah and seriously wounded him. He was returned to Jerusalem where he died at about the age of 40. His death was followed by widespread mourning (2 Chronicles 35:20-27; Jeremiah 22:10-12).

II. Three Points To Consider

- A. Josiah was faithful in an evil environment.
 1. His righteousness didn't come from the influence of his family.
 - a) His grandfather was Manasseh (2 Kings 21:1-9, 16).
 - b) His father was Amon (2 Kings 21:19-22).
 2. His righteousness didn't come from the influence of society.
 - a) His people were worse than the nations God destroyed (2 Kings 21:9).
 - b) Jerusalem was filled "from one end to another" with blood (2 Kings 21:16).
 - c) His people were totally given over to idolatry (2 Kings 21:2-7, 21).
- B. Josiah demonstrated his faithfulness.
 1. He instituted great changes in Israel.
 - a) The repair of the temple was the most outstanding example of Josiah's godly fidelity. However, he knew that he would have to destroy the old sins of idolatry before he could establish new obedience to God.
 - b) In the 18th year of his reign he began repairs on the house of the Lord in Jerusalem (2 Kings 22:3-7).
 - (1) This event, in 622 B.C., marks one of the most important episodes of Old Testament history.
 - (2) Judah had been indifferent to God and His house and allowed it to fall into disrepair. Josiah wanted to restore it to its former glory.
 - (a) Nearly two and a half centuries had passed since the former restoration by Joash (2 Kings 12:4-16).
 - (b) The sacred building must have greatly suffered under the idolatrous kings, especially during Manasseh and Amon.
 2. He reacted wonderfully to the Law of the Lord.
 - a) While working on the temple Hilkiah the high priest found the book of the law (2 Kings 22:8).
 - (1) It's incredible that the word of God could get lost in the temple, but it wouldn't be surprising today because some churches make room in their buildings for parties and plays.
 - (2) The attitude of Judah was similar to that of Israel in the time of Hosea (Hosea 4:1-6). The Law had long since been discarded by the idolatrous nation.

- b) Josiah recognized the value of the book (2 Kings 22:11-13). The king's reaction at the reading of the law was one of immediate grief for two reasons: Judah's guilt and her coming judgment.
 - c) God's mercy was extended to Josiah — the evil of Judah would be punished, but Josiah would be spared (2 Kings 22:18-20).
- C. Josiah gave us great examples to follow.
1. He tender-heartedly accepted the will of God and humbled himself (Colossians 1:4-6; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; James 1:21).
 2. He was filled with godly sorrow over sin and cleansed his life of evil and all its impurities (Matthew 5:6; 2 Corinthians 7:9-10; 1 Peter 2:1-2).
 3. He wanted to know as much of the will of God as he could (Nehemiah 8:3; Acts 10:33; 17:11).
 4. He walked in the way of God, not turning aside to the right or the left, by humbly obeying the commands of God (Hebrews 5:8-9; Revelation 22:14).
 5. Knowing the value of the Law, he shared it with others (Matthew 9:37; Acts 8:4; 20:20; 1 Thessalonians 1:8).

Conclusion. Josiah was the last good king in Judah, sad to say; but he was also in some respects their greatest (2 Chronicles 34:2). Regrettably, Josiah's revival never did penetrate the people's hearts. However, his righteousness is an example to all who look for God's favor (2 Kings 23:25). Do you have a tender heart for the truth? You must if you desire remission of your sins and the hope of eternal life. Be as Josiah and you'll find favor with God.