

The Reform of King Josiah

2 Kings 22-23 (2 Chronicles 34-35)

Review

- Hezekiah – “best king ever” (2 Kgs 18:5 – “there was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him”) – attacked idolatry, even destroying the bronze serpent
- Manasseh – “worst king ever” (2 Kgs 21:11 – “he has done more evil than the Amorites who preceded him. . .” 2 Kgs 24:3-4 – “[all this judgment happened] because of the sins of Manasseh . . . including the shedding of innocent blood because he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the LORD was not willing to forgive.”) While Manasseh repented and was restored, the covenant people suffered the consequences of generations of rebellion
- Amon – two years; evil; assassinated

Geo-political Developments

Relatively sudden waning of Assyria’s power during the last part of Ashurbanipal’s reign and those of his successors; Babylon conquered Nineveh in 612 BC, the Assyrian capital moved to Harran, Carchemish would be a critical battleground.

Josiah’s Early Years as King [2 Kings 22:1-2; expanded in 2 Chr 34:1-7)

- Became king when he was eight years old (general turmoil in kingdom after father’s assassination)
 - Began to seek the Lord when he was 16 (2 Chr 34:3)
 - When he was 20 [12th year of his reign], he began to remove high places, Asherah poles, and other false images. He went into northern kingdom as far as Naphtali (2 Chr 34:3-7) -MAP
 - Aside: Jeremiah began to prophesy in the 13th year of Josiah’s reign
- When he was 26 [18th year of reign], he began to purify the Temple (2 Kgs 22:3; 2 Chr 34:8). This was fifth year after Jeremiah (son of Hilkiah) started to prophesy.

Temple Repairs

- Preparing to clean up and repair the Temple – **Hilkiah** the high priest
- Money collected from Manasseh, Ephraim, remnant of Israel, people of Judah and Benjamin, and Jerusalem (2 Chr 34:9) –this was a monumental effort
- **Hilkiah** found the book of the Law – Shaphan came to the king, offered the “temple update,” then mentioned the Torah, and read it
- What was the significance of Josiah’s response of tearing his robes?

Torah Interpretation

- Torah made it clear that judgment was coming against God’s people for breaking the covenant, but Josiah asked for interpretation for his time
- **Huldah** – wife of Shallum, in the line of the keeper of the wardrobe, lived in Second Quarter [MAP of Jerusalem] – apparently a known Torah authority
- Huldah’s response – disaster is coming because of idolatry; because Josiah’s heart was humbled, he would not experience the destruction – but note “you will be buried in peace” (2 Kgs 22:20)

Covenant Renewal, Purge, and Celebration of Passover – All in the 18th year of Josiah

- Read all the words of the covenant to gathered people –pledged obedience
- 2 Kgs 23:4-20, 24 – purging the land of utter pollution – **We need to read this!**
 - Hilkiah ordered to remove trappings for Baal and Asherah from the Temple—even an Asherah pole in the temple, and male prostitutes
 - Burned in Kidron Valley and took ashes to Bethel [note the geography here]
 - Got rid of pagan priests who were offering incense to idols all around Jerusalem
 - Desecrated high places from Geba to Beersheva [MAP]
 - What does 23:9 imply?
 - Desecrated Topheth in Valley of Hinnom so could no longer sacrifice children to Molech
 - Destroyed horses and chariot (dedicated to sun) at entrance to Temple
 - Destroyed altars of Ahaz and Manasseh
 - Destroyed altars Solomon had built for Ashtoreth, Chemosh, and Molech
 - Destroyed altar and high place Jereboam son of Nebat built at Bethel; burned bones on altar to defile it; spared bones of the prophet from Judah
 - Slaughtered priests of high places
 - Got rid of mediums and spiritists
 - **Whew! What are we to make of this?**
- Celebrated the Passover [more details in 2 Chr 35:1-19]
- Instructions regarding the ark –to be kept in Temple and not carried about [had it been removed?]
- Josiah provided large numbers of sacrificial animals
- Involvement of Levites and Aaronic priests in slaughter and sprinkling of blood; emphasis on doing it according to the Law of Moses
- *Note traditional music – “prescribed by David” [300+ years before]*
- Passover had not been celebrated like this since the days of Samuel (2 Chr 35:18)
- 2 Kgs 23:25 – “Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his strength, according to the Law of Moses”
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- But God had already determined to destroy Judah and Jerusalem because of Manasseh’s sin

Death of Josiah – at Megiddo in battle with Pharaoh Neco (2 Kgs 23:29-30; 2 Chr 35:20-25)

- Neco was headed north to help a weakened Assyria against Babylon at Carchemish (609 BC) – Assyria lost to Babylon whose forces were led by Nebuchadnezzar
- What are we to make of Neco’s reference to God’s message – “God has told me to hurry; so stop opposing God, who is with me, or he will destroy you” (2 Chr 35:21)?
- To battle in disguise [a repeat theme from Ahab]
- Lament composed by Jeremiah

Lessons