

2 Kings 22-23 - King Josiah

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Open your Bibles, if you would please, to 2 Kings. I got to thinking about, this is our third time through 1 and 2 Kings as a church. I remember the first time I went through or taught through these two books, we sat our chairs in a circle over in the other, of course, that's all there was, was a small sanctuary over there, and there was probably a dozen of us or so. I don't know, maybe that's, generous.

But I remember actually even coming to this place in 2 Kings. And I remember that at the time Sue was pregnant with our last child. And I was so impressed with the reign of the man that we're going to be talking about here tonight, who is king Josiah, that I decided to give that as a middle name to our last born son, Timothy so his name is, Timothy Josiah.

But largely because as we were going through 2 Kings, I was just so blown away by the heart of this man and what God did in his life. And how from such a very early age, he began to display a changed life, and not just a changed life, but a changed life in the midst of such difficult surroundings.

Have you ever wondered how it's even possible to be a Christian living in the culture and the world that we live in today? I mean, we're just surrounded by so much corruption. So much spiritual corruption, physical corruption. I mean, it's just it's, I mean, do you find it hard to be a believer? I frankly do.

But I think about the world that Josiah was raised in. He's the great grandson of Hezekiah, but he wasn't around to see his great grandfather rule and reign in Judah. That was long since gone. His grandfather Manasseh reigned for like something like 55 years and he was horrible up until the very end, and then he started to make some changes.

And then Josiah's father reigned just for a very, very brief time and he was a wicked king. And then along comes Josiah. John can you bring me up just a hair, Johnny, just a hair. Thank you very much.

But look at here what it says in verse 1. This is, it says, "*Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, ...*" (ESV) Can you imagine having an eight year old on the throne of a kingdom? But he was "*eight years old..., and he* (ended

up reigning) ...*thirty-one years in Jerusalem.*” Obviously, that's not hard to do the math on that. He died at pretty young, at just age 39. But we'll get to that here just a little bit.

But we're told that *“His mother's name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. ² And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and walked in all the way of David his father, ...”* And when it says *“David, his father,”* of course, that's generation. Generation after generation. He was of the lineage of David is what that means.

“...and (it says) he did not turn aside to the right or to the left.” And that is of course, a way of saying he stayed on course. So this is, it's just incredible. How does somebody come to the place of really beginning to walk with the Lord when all around you is just absolute corruption?

Well, we're told in verse 3, and we skip a lot of years. But it says, *“In the eighteenth year of King Josiah, (in other words, that would be the 18th year of his reign, which would make him 26 years old, okay? It says) the king sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, son of Meshullam, the secretary, to the house of the LORD, saying, ⁴ “Go up to Hilkiah the high priest, that he may count the money that has been brought into the house of the LORD, which the keepers of the threshold have collected from the people. ⁵ And let it be given into the hand of the workmen who have the oversight of the house of the LORD, and let them give it to the workmen who are at the house of the LORD, repairing the house ⁶ (that is, to the carpenters, and to the builders, and to the masons), and let them use it for buying timber and quarried stone to repair the house. ⁷ But no accounting shall be asked from them for the money that is delivered into their hand, for they deal honestly.”*

Now stop there for just a moment. He's been on the throne for 18 years now and there's some things that we don't know yet about what's going on behind the scenes here a little bit. But one of the things that Josiah felt led to do in these early years of his reign was to repair the temple. And so he's still a very young man, but he's doing his best because the temple has fallen into disrepair.

Now, there's many other things about the temple you haven't been told yet. You haven't been told that there are all kinds of other altars in the temple. Not to the Lord God, but to Baal, to all kinds of other pagan gods. They're there in the temple, and Josiah has not been moved up to this point to remove them, even though he is a godly man and wants to do right. He really hasn't been instructed about what, these sorts of things. He's just going off, well, just what he knows, and what he knows isn't that much.

Except he knows enough to say, YAHWEH is God. He is the Lord of heaven and earth, the creator of heaven and earth, and we're going to worship Him. And he's diligent about making sure that the temple gets repaired. You got to understand that when they go in to repair the temple, there's probably a lot of junk that they got to move aside and move things. And oh, let's lift that up and get that out of here and move it. They're likely to find some things, don't you suppose, in the temple.

Let's keep reading. It says, *“⁸ And Hilkiyah the high priest said to Shaphan the secretary, (look at this) “I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD.” And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it.”*

Now guys, the Book of the Law is essentially the Hebrew Scriptures and probably are limited to what you and I would call the first five books of the Old Testament. We refer to it as the Pentateuch. And they found it, which suggests it had been lost. There was no Scripture.

This brings us into a greater understanding of this man, Josiah, who from his earliest days had a desire, was moved to walk with the Lord, but he did it without a Bible. Can you imagine? Can you imagine being a Christian without a Bible? Can you imagine knowing what to do, how to walk, what things to think about as it relates to just simply being who you are in Christ? We would be lost.

But this man has been, he's now 26 years old, and he's telling them to go and repair the temple. And in the midst of all these repairs, they're like, hey, there's a, what's this? I don't know. Pull this thing out of there, blow the thing off. I assume it was probably a scroll. I don't know. And they start looking through it and it like, hey, this is the Book of the Law that Moses gave, God gave to Moses, rather. And that Moses read and wrote down for the people of Israel. Here's the Book of the Law. You're kidding me. This is just, this is crazy. It says that Shaphan read it.

And in verse 9, it says, *“And Shaphan the secretary came to the king, and reported to the king, (first of all) “Your servants have emptied out the money that was found in the house and have delivered it into the hand of the workmen who have the oversight of the house of the LORD.”* So just wanted you to know what you asked us to do, we have done.

And *“¹⁰ Then Shaphan the secretary told the king, (oh by the way) “Hilkiyah the priest has given me a book.” And (it says) Shaphan read it before the king.”* Look at verse 11. This is very important. *“When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes.”*

And that was something they did back in those days to show grief and sorrow. And it was, they would literally take hold of their clothes and rip them, and just, just pulling it. And again, to have someone's clothes torn, you would say, you would know instantly that person had just experienced something very, very traumatic.

“¹² And the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Micaiah, and Shaphan the secretary, and Asaiah the king's servant, saying, ¹³ “Go, inquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found. For great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us.””

Because you see, when Shaphan read the book to the king, he would have read all about the blessings and the curses that God told Israel to declare when they first came into the land. In fact, He told Joshua, He said, I want you to get up on this hillside and I want you up there, you're going to declare the blessings to the nation of Israel. If they will walk in the covenant that God has established for them, these are all the things that God will do. However, if they choose to reject that covenant, and disobey the Lord, their God, here are the curses that will come upon them.

And of course what God said through Moses was, if they reject Me, if they begin to worship the gods of the people of Canaan, if they reject the ways of the Lord, if they do not keep the law, these are the curses that are going to come. Josiah is an old, he's old enough now to realize, this is us. We have rejected the way of the Lord. We have...

He knows what's in the temple. He knows all these altars to these pagan gods exist within even the temple courts. Listen, people, there were prostitutes, male cult prostitutes that stayed in the temple area and did their service. All this stuff was going on during this time when Josiah was king in his early years and Josiah didn't stop it, because he was really uninstructed.

But now he reads the Word of God, and or has it read to him for the very first time in his life and he is horrified. And he says, listen, we need to consult God. We need to go to the Lord, and we need to find out what the Lord would have us to do.

Look at verse 14. *“So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the*

son of Tikvah, son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe (and it says) (now she lived in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter), and they talked with her. ¹⁵ And she said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: 'Tell the man who sent you to me, ¹⁶ Thus says the LORD, Behold, I will bring disaster upon this place and upon its inhabitants, all the words of the book that the king of Judah has read. ¹⁷ Because they have forsaken me and have made offerings to other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the work of their hands, therefore my wrath will be kindled against this place, and it will not be quenched. ¹⁸ But to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, thus shall you say to him, Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Regarding the words that you have heard, ¹⁹ because your heart was penitent, and you humbled yourself before the LORD, when you heard how I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and you have torn your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you, declares the LORD. ²⁰ Therefore, behold, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, and your eyes shall not see all the disaster that I will bring upon this place.'" And they brought back word to the king."

That is a fascinating response. First of all, the important thing to see here is that regardless of the fact that Josiah was a godly king, and regardless of the fact that we're going to see in the next chapter, he is going to bring incredible reforms into the land because of his belief in the Word of God and so forth, God is still going to bring the judgment that He promised because this has been going on for hundreds of years. And He knows that it's not going to stop. He knows that it's not going to end.

And so God is saying, yeah, this is what's coming. I gave My word and this is what's coming. I promised that if they rejected Me and worship the gods of the Canaanites, that I would bring all of the curses that are laid out in this book and I will be true to My word. And that's one thing you can always depend on. God will be true to His word.

But I want you also to see something else here and that is how God responded to Josiah. And did you notice, he said, because he heard Me, I have heard him. Isn't that a great phraseology? And it's so beautiful because it embodies that idea of, draw near to the Lord and He will draw near to you.

Because Josiah heard Me, God said, I have heard him. When he tore his clothes as an expression of grief, and God knew that it wasn't simply an act, an outward act, because it was genuine. And because he wept before Me, and because he was genuinely sorrowful at the revelation of these things, which he has now

learned and understood. I have heard him, and he will not experience My wrath. This man will not experience My wrath.

Now, I don't know what you would do if you were the king of Judah and you had just heard from the Lord after reading all of these things in the Scriptures. And you had just heard from the Lord that this judgment is coming down and it's, there's nothing that's going to stop it. And that's basically what God said.

How would you respond? How, what kind of a life would you live for the rest of your life? What would you do? Would you just keep, maybe keep it to yourself, but just keep, just worshiping the Lord? And would you think about the people all around you? These people are a lost cause. God's been speaking to them through prophets and stuff, and their hearts have never been drawn to the things of the Lord. You know what? Why don't we just let them go and let's just... Maybe if we just hunker down, it'll, I mean, it's coming anyway. It might as well, it might as well come.

The reason I asked the question is because I think that there's an interesting sort of a correlation between the environment that Josiah finds himself in and frankly, much of what you and I find ourselves living in, in the midst of the United States of America. The fact is judgment is coming to the United, and not just the United States, but certainly coming here. Judgment is coming to the world.

Judgment is coming. The Bible tells us very clearly that judgment is coming. The wrath of God is coming. And you can be as sure of that as Josiah was as sure of what was read to him in the Old Testament. And I'm not just saying that to get your attention or to become, be dramatic. I'm just saying, hey, the Bible says judgment is coming.

In fact, there's going to be a specific and focused time of judgment that will come upon all of the earth, which we refer to as the Great Tribulation. And during that time, God is going to pour out His wrath upon the earth.

Now, the Bible also says that there are other things that are going to happen in relationship to the Tribulation, one of which is the catching away of the church. Paul talks about it in Thessalonians. He talks about the fact that we are going to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. We call that the rapture basically based off a Latin word, essentially for caught up. But we know that's going to happen. There are people who debate the timing of when that's going to happen.

Some people, myself included, believe that it's going to happen prior to the tribulation. But there are others who believe that it's going to happen midway through the tribulation. There are even some who believe that the rapture will take place simultaneously with the coming of the Lord, at the very end of the tribulation period and that believers will experience the entire seven year period of tribulation. I don't happen to agree but that's your right to have whatever position you have.

The bottom line is it doesn't matter when the timing of the rapture will be, the fact of the matter is, judgment is coming. And again, not to be overly dramatic, but it's coming. So how should we live in light of the fact that God has spoken, and God has said, this is coming, and we have reason to believe that it's not going to be long now before this all begins to unfold.

We're seeing prophetic fulfillments of various things in our culture. It's like the stage is being set for this thing to take place. And frankly, I think it could begin just about any time again.

But again, we come back to the question, how should we live as believers? And I think that we can learn something here from Josiah because we're going to see how he decided to live his life in the shadow of judgment. Knowing that judgment was coming.

How did Josiah choose to live? 2 Kings chapter 23. Here we go. *“Then the king sent, and all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem were gathered to him. ² And the king went up to the house of the LORD, and with him all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the priests and the prophets, all the people, both small and great. And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant that had been found in the house of the LORD.”*

It was previously called the Book of the Law, now it's called the Book of the Covenant. And so what is the first thing that Josiah does? Now remember he's the king, and I know you're not a king, but every one of us has influence over a certain place in this world. It might be over our family or we may, you mothers over children, or whatever the case might be. We all have a realm of influence.

And Josiah decided to begin to use the realm of influence that God had given him to begin to pass along the word of the Lord. And so it says, he gathered these people and he began to read to them of the Book of the Covenant.

“And (it says in verse 3) the king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD and to keep his commandments and

his testimonies and his statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people joined in the covenant.”

People, I think that's interesting. Here's a man who just got the word, God made a promise that if they rejected His word, judgment would come. He has been told now prophetically that this judgment is in fact coming and cannot be stopped. And what does Josiah choose to do? To follow the Lord with all of his heart and to begin to influence that sphere in his life that he can influence.

Again, we all have some sphere of influence and in the midst of the difficult condition of the world in which we live, maybe you can't affect somebody else's sphere, but you can affect your own. I mean, I want to challenge you fathers who are here tonight, you have a sphere of influence in your home. Affect that sphere of influence. Those of you who are unmarried, maybe you have a sphere of influence God has given you through friends. Some of you, your children may be grown and out of the house, like in my situation now, but and at that point, parenting begins to take a very different sort of a turn. You begin to parent on your knees when you reach my station of life, but that's still a sphere of influence. You can still pray, right?

And so whatever God has given you to do it, whatever your sphere of influence may be. Josiah didn't just sit back and say, well, I guess we better just build some bomb shelters because this thing is going down, and we'll just sit back, and watch some fun movies, and live out the rest of my days because, whoopee, God said it wasn't going to happen in my lifetime. Praise the Lord, but Josiah got busy instead. It says, “... *all the people joined in... (this) covenant.*”

Now, before we get into the next several verses, I want you to know what we're going to be reading here, because what follows in these next verses goes way beyond Josiah simply gathering a bunch of people and saying, here's what the Bible says.

What you're going to read in the coming verses, and we'll read it all, so don't read ahead, is that he is going to begin to make changes, knowing that God's judgment is coming. He's going to change it anyway. Within his sphere of influence, and again, as a king, he's got a pretty good, he's got a pretty big sphere. But still, he begins and you're going to see this list of things. It's amazing. All right, here we go.

Verse 4. “*And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest and the priests of the second order and the keepers of the threshold to bring out of the temple of*

the LORD all the vessels made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven. He burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron (and that refers to the Kidron valley which is just outside of the walls of the temple, and between that, and Mount of Olives. And it says,) and carried their ashes to Bethel.”

Alright, stop there please just for a moment. What's the first thing that Josiah does? The very first thing? He takes care of the temple. He deals with the temple. I mean, there's stuff all over the place. There's literally pagan junk all over. But he begins with the temple.

Now, what is the temple a picture of, in a New Testament sort of a concept. It's you, isn't it? Isn't that what the Bible says in the New Testament? You are a temple of the Holy Spirit. And the reason is that you have received the Holy Spirit to live within you and God's name dwelled within His temple in Jerusalem. That is where he said He put His name and His presence. And that was a foreshadowing of a time to come when God would send His Spirit to dwell within men.

Do you know that up until this time, the Holy Spirit did not dwell within people's hearts? In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit did not come in to dwell. The Holy Spirit only came upon. And you may say, well, that sounds like a really small difference. Believe me, it's huge.

The Spirit now, when we believe, comes in. But in the Old Testament, He simply came upon to enable for service and that sort of thing. So the picture of the temple is the picture of you and I.

And so before Josiah begins to bring reforms out here, he's begins them in here. (Pastor Paul points to his heart). And I think there's an important picture for you and I to see.

When we come to the Lord, when we first make a determination, when we come into covenant relationship with the Lord our God, and of course, we're not under the Mosaic Covenant, right? We're under the covenant that Jesus inaugurated at the Last Supper. This is my body. This is my blood. Take and eat.

We receive Jesus Christ as Savior and the terms of our covenant are believe and you will be saved. I like our covenant a lot. Their covenant was obey and I will bless you in the land.

But when we come to the Lord, when we embrace the covenant of God, and we receive Christ as our Savior, God begins to speak to us as we get into His Word about things in our life that need to be changed, that need to be changed.

How do we respond when the Holy Spirit begins to speak to you and I about things in here that need to be changed? Oh, it's fun fixing things out here. We'd like to get to that. Thank you very much. I want to go fix those things. Oh, isn't that a problem? Well, let's just get right over there then and we'll get that fixed.

And God says let's begin with the temple, let's begin with you. Let's begin with the heart and the things that need to be addressed there. Here's the problem. Here's the problem. You remember when Jesus told the parable of the sower and He said, there was this man who went out and sowed seed and he sowed it upon all different kinds of soil. And one was the hard path and the birds just came and ate it away. And that represents a hard heart.

But then there were some other soil sort of situations where the seed also fell. One was very shallow soil that had very little dirt and there was just rock beneath it. And so it sprouted, but the root had nowhere to go, and so it was withered. And that was a picture of somebody who dies quickly in the face of persecution.

But then there was this other soil type that was full of thorns, thistles, the seeds at least of weeds, and that sort of thing. And that seed went into that soil and it sprouted and it grew, but the weeds choked it out. You remember that?

Do you remember what Jesus explained to His disciples? He said that seed represents those who hear the Word of God. They receive it with joy and they begin to grow, but the things of this world, the pleasures of this life, money, stuff like that begin to choke out the Word of God.

So what Jesus was explaining is that there are people who actually respond to the Word of God, but then when the Word begins to speak to them about things in their own life that need to change, it's like they come up against a wall. They just go, boom. And they hit it and it's like they didn't even see it coming. They just walk right into it and they, and it knocks them back a little bit because it is telling them there's things in their heart that need to change, and they don't want to. Very few of us ever really want to because it's painful to make those changes.

Here's the question, are we going to be like Josiah and are we going to cleanse the temple? Are we going to let God cleanse the temple, or are we going to say,

no, I don't think so. I'm not going to let you get in there. I'm not going to let you work on that thing. That's a little too personal. God, you're getting a little too personal now with me.

And those people who make that determination, they'll come to church for a while, they'll read their Bible for a while, and then what happens is, they read about something that offends them. Something that, where, the Word of God.

Do you understand people that the Word of God is meant to sit in judgment on us? It's meant to judge us. In fact, it says, doesn't it say in the Bible, it judges the thoughts and the attitudes of the heart, right? Well, that's its job, but do you know what we do when we don't like it? We judge it.

We read something in the Bible and we go, yeah, but I don't believe that. And I give myself permission to judge the Word rather than letting the Word judge me. I say, well, I believe most of what it says in the Bible, but I don't believe that particular thing right there. And it might seem like a very small thing. And in fact, even some of the people that are talking to you at the time, if you happen to voice that in front of them, they might say, well, that's really not that big of a deal. Let's go on.

But the problem is, you've set a precedent in your life of giving yourself permission to say, I choose not to believe that one thing right there. And it could be something that's very personal to you, or it could be something that the Word of God says about someone that you love. Or it could talk about something you're engaged in at the time, or something, you name it. But whatever it is, it's hard.

And you come up against it and you say, but I'm not going to do that. And you are the seed sown among thorns. You are the seed sown among weeds. And the things of this world and the things that you are unwilling to let go of, choke out the Word of God. And so what happens in your life? You stop going to church because it makes you uncomfortable. You stop reading your Bible because it makes you uncomfortable.

And then what happens? Well, then you get miserable again. Pretty soon you find yourself literally miserable, which is what it ought to feel like when we're not walking with the Lord the way we should. And then, and you forget about the things that offended you when you went to church the last time and you're thinking to yourself, you know what? I need to get back to church. And so you go back to church, and you start here, and you're all good for a while.

And you're like, whoa, this is great. I'm back in church and we're in, yeah... Oh, I remember. This is the good, this is the good stuff. And oh, I'm enjoying this. And guess what? But it's going to happen again. My brothers and sisters, you are going to see it again.

You're going to come up against something in the Bible that is going to judge you and it's supposed to. And you're not going to let it. And you're going to judge it instead. Until you probably hopefully, hopefully, you stop rejecting the Word of God. You stop judging it, and you let the Word of God judge you.

Listen, we read the Word of God on our knees in the sense that it is the authoritative, written Word of God. And we allow that Word to judge our lives, even when it hurts, even when it's, even when it's a challenge. And believe me, it strikes right at the heart of pride for me to listen to the Word of God and to acquiesce to it when I don't want to. It has to deal with my pride.

The Word of God has to bring me under its submission. And that's not a fun thing. In fact, that's a very, very challenging, very difficult thing to allow to happen in my life. Very, and in your life too. Some of you may be able, you may know what exactly what I'm talking about.

Some of you Josiahs. Some of you have the heart of Josiah, and you came to church for the very first time, and you heard the Word of God, and your heart broke, just like Josiah's. And maybe you didn't tear your clothes, but you tore your heart. And you responded in that, in the way that Josiah responded. You responded with openness, and you said, oh God, You're so right. And I accept the judgment of Your Word upon my life. And you just took off like a shot in your spiritual growth.

But there are other people who have started and stopped. And started and stopped. And started and stopped. And we're praying that they just keep going. But they have given themselves that permission to say, I don't think I'm going to accept that part of it. Let's keep going.

Verse 5, look what else Josiah did. *“And he deposed the priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained (because they weren't real priests anyway) to make offerings in the high places at the cities of Judah and around Jerusalem; those also who burned incense to Baal, to the sun and the moon and the constellations and all the host of the heavens.”*

Now remember, Josiah is doing what is within his realm of influence, right? What's the second thing that he does after he deals with the temple, which is the

heart? He deals with the priests. He deals with the priests who are telling, who are leading the people along a bad path.

People, there's an interesting correlation between the priests who were leading the people in their worship, their religious practices, their pagan practices, and the things that you and I come up against in this world that are being perpetrated and led by the people of this world.

And sometimes Christians, when we come to the Lord, when we make Jesus Lord of our lives, and He begins to do that work of housekeeping in our hearts, part of that work is then to then go beyond ourselves and begin to ask myself, wait a minute, who's leading this? who within the realm of my influence and in the realm of my life, is speaking into my life, the things of the world. And you have to cut off those relationships. And some of you can give testimony of that.

When you came to the Lord, maybe you had some wonderful, close, precious friends. But after you came to Jesus and God began to do that work of cleaning in your heart, you realize something very troubling. And that is, that those people we're leading you down a wrong path.

They were like priests if you will, but they were leading in religious practices that were harmful to you. And maybe they had nothing to do with religion per se. When I say religious practices, I mean the things that people worship. Don't think that worship only goes on in churches. Worship goes on in bars. Worship goes on in theaters. It goes on in all kinds, whatever people give themselves to, that their....

Worship goes on in gymnasiums and places where people are building up their muscles and getting in shape. They are worshiping no less than you and I worship the Lord God of the universe. They just happen to be worshiping the created rather than the creator.

So you and I, when we come to know Christ, He begins to make us aware of those priests who are speaking into our lives. And we have to cut ties with that because that input is going to have a very negative impact in our lives. And Josiah knew that if he let these priests keep doing what they're doing, the people are never going to change. The people around him are never going to begin to change their lives because these priests are still leading them in these pagan worship practices. Now remember sphere of influence.

I remember after coming to the Lord, and I was in my twenties. I was in my mid-twenties. And I remember that there were several things that I had to get rid

of when God was doing house cleaning in my own life. And I'm not suggesting that house cleaning is completely finished. I'm just saying that in those early days, there were things that I had to cut out of my life. Places I used to go. People I used to listen to who spoke into my life. The things of the world, not the things of the Lord.

And when I suddenly realized that it makes a difference what you let into your heart, suddenly the movies you go to, the individuals you allow to speak into your life. Entertainment and a lot of those things can have such a huge impact on your walk with the Lord. These are the priests, the purveyors of these various sorts of things that we need to say, enough!

Verse 6 says, *“And he brought out the Asherah from the house of the LORD, outside Jerusalem, to the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron and beat it to dust and cast the dust of it upon the graves of the common people. ⁷ And he broke down the houses of the male cult prostitutes (look at this) who were in the house of the Lord, where the women wove hangings for the Asherah.”*

Do you get that? During this time, during the first several years of Josiah's reign, here's a godly man, there were cult prostitutes in the temple. In the temple of the Lord. And he had to get rid of them. It's just crazy.

Verse 8, *“And he brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had made offerings, from Geba to Beersheba. And he broke down the high places of the gates that were at the entrance of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which were on one's left at the gate of the city. ⁹ However, the priests of the high places did not come up to the altar of the Lord in Jerusalem, but they ate unleavened bread among their brothers.”*

And what that means is, Josiah went to those high places where priests were burning incense and doing sacrifices to the Lord and he said to them, you were wrong to do this. And so I'm not going to let you come down into the temple to work any longer, but you will be able to eat of the food that is set aside for the priest to eat. So he wasn't going to starve them to death, but he did cut off their ability to serve in the temple because they'd been involved out of disobedience in these high places where they were worshiping the Lord there. And God had forbade that in the books of the law.

Verse 10 says, *“And he defiled Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, that no one might burn his son or his daughter as an offering to Molech.”* By the way the, when it says he defiled these places, usually what that

means, and we're going to read this actually later on. But whenever human bones were burned on an altar or on a site, that would defile something. And when something was defiled, it was unusable. So what Josiah was doing, was he was making these worship sites completely unusable forever. They were now defiled.

And so this is a very smart man. He's not just going in there telling people, hey, get out of here. He's wrecking the place. He's making sure they can't get back there and the people can't get back there easily. I think there's some interesting correlations in our walk with the Lord as well.

Let me ask you a question. You know, those areas that you used to worship before you worshiped God. How easy is it for you to get back there? How easy is it to go back and to do the worshiping that you used to do before you worshiped, began worshiping the creator God? And whatever you worship, whether it was sex, or drink, or drugs, or money, or pleasure, entertainment.

Whatever it is, whatever alter you bowed down to. Beauty, youth, whatever alter that was. How easy is it to get back there? Josiah took steps to make sure they couldn't get back there. And that's an important thing to remember.

It's a, I think we need to be careful as believers to put, try at least to put sin beyond our reach as much as we have it in our ability to do that. It's getting harder and harder, obviously, in the world in which we live. Things are quickly at our beck and call. We can lay hold of just about anything at a moment's notice. But there are still ways to thwart your ability to easily go there. And I would encourage you to do that.

Verse 11 says, *“And he removed the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun, (meaning the sun god. And that is an Egyptian god. You might know his name was Ra, the god of the sun. And the Israelites began to worship this and they dedicated these horses to Ra) at the entrance to the house of the LORD, by the chamber of Nathan-melech the chamberlain, which was in the precincts. And he burned the chariots (Ra, or) of the sun with fire. ¹² And the altars on the roof of the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars that Manasseh (his grandfather) had made in the two courts of the house of the LORD, he pulled down and broke in pieces and cast the dust of them into the brook Kidron.”*

Now it says here that Manasseh had made, we know that Manasseh, who was his grandfather, was a very wicked king. In fact, was the most wicked king of all Israel and Judah. But you'll remember he repented at the very end of his life

and many of these pagan altars he himself tore down. But in the very short time after he died, they got rebuilt and so Josiah is now having to go in and tear these things down, once again. They probably got built in the very short time that his father Ammon reigned.

Verse 13 says, *“And the king defiled the high places that were east of Jerusalem, to the south of the mount of corruption, ...”* The Mount of Corruption, by the way, your Bible may say, the *“hill of corruption,”* is one of the three peaks that make up the Mount of Olives.

And it was referred to as the mount of corruption because Solomon, in the end of his life, built altars for pagan gods because of his wives, who were pagans out of his love for them. And he did them on one of the peaks of the Mount of Olives. And so they began to refer to that as the mount of corruption.

And so he went up there and began to tear those things down. And it even says here *“...the mount of corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Sidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.”* Again, he defiled those places, meaning he desecrated them so they wouldn't be used again.

“¹⁴ And he broke in pieces the pillars and cut down the Asherim and filled their places with the bones of men.” Which is how he would, in fact, defile them.

Now, look what it says in verse 15. *“Moreover, the altar at Bethel, the high place erected by Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, that altar with the high place he pulled down and burned, reducing it to dust. He also burned the Asherah.”*

Do you understand where Josiah is going now? He's going outside his own kingdom. Remember the northern kingdom of Israel has fallen. The Assyrians came, conquered them, took them away. They've repatriated people there in the land who are not Jews but these places still exist. And Josiah in his confidence and zeal, marches right up into the northern kingdom of Israel, and starts tearing down the altars that had been erected way back during the time of Jeroboam the first, when the kingdom of Israel and Judah split. That's been hundreds of years. Hundreds of years. But yet Josiah is going even into the land of Israel.

“And as Josiah...” Wait a minute, I got to see what I'm reading here. Yeah. Okay. Verse 16. *“And as Josiah turned, he saw the tombs there on the mount. And he sent and took the bones out of the tombs and burned them on the altar*

and defiled it, according to the word of the LORD that the man of God proclaimed, who had predicted these things.”

All right, what it's saying here is. Josiah did this as a response to prophecy that said he would do it. Guess when that prophecy came up? 300 years before Josiah was born, God prophesied and said that this man would come, and He called him by name. And he would come and do this. 300 years. Let me show you. It's in 1 Kings.

1 Kings 13:1-2 (ESV)

And behold, a man of God came out of Judah by the word of the LORD to Bethel. Jeroboam was standing by the altar to make offerings. And the man cried against the altar by the word of the LORD and said, “O altar, altar, thus says the LORD: ‘Behold, a son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name, and he shall sacrifice on you the priests of the high places who make offerings on you, and human bones shall be burned on you.’”

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And again, that's that picture of defilement, to burn human bones. Isn't that interesting? 300 years before Josiah was born. By the way, you might be interested to know that Josiah is one of just a very few men who was mentioned by name in the scripture prior to his birth. And God said that this man would come and do this.

Verse 17 says, “Then he said, “What is that monument that I see?” And the men of the city told him, “It is the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and predicted these things that you have done against the altar at Bethel.”

In other words, he's now looking at the tomb of the man who spoke that prophecy you just saw up on the screen from 1 Kings. Josiah is now 300 years later seeing this tomb, alright?

“¹⁸ And he said, “Let him be; let no man move his bones.” So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet who came out of Samaria. ¹⁹ And Josiah removed all the shrines also of the high places that were in the cities of

Samaria, (that's the northern kingdom) which kings of Israel had made, provoking the LORD to anger. He did to them according to all that he had done at Bethel. ²⁰ And he sacrificed all the priests of the high places who were there, on the altars, and burned human bones on them. Then he returned to Jerusalem.

²¹ And the king commanded all the people, "Keep the Passover to the LORD your God, as it is written in this Book of the Covenant." ²² For no such Passover had been kept since the days of the judges who judged Israel, or during all the days of the kings of Israel or of the kings of Judah. ²³ But in the eighteenth year of King Josiah this Passover was kept to the LORD in Jerusalem."

You might be interested also to know that Scripture only makes reference to three Passovers during the years of the kings which God felt were noteworthy celebrations. And they were under king Solomon, king Hezekiah, and king Josiah. The only three celebrations of Passover that God said were worthy enough or noteworthy enough to recall.

Can I just remind you of what Passover is a reminder to us of? Passover is a reminder of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Remember that the very first Passover that they celebrated was actually in Egypt.

The night before they were released from the land and God, through Moses, told the Israelites to go into their homes, to sacrifice a year old lamb, and to take some of the blood of that lamb, and paint it with a hyssop branch over the doorposts of their home. Because that very night the angel of death would go through the city and wherever he saw the blood of the lamb, he would pass over those homes without bringing death. Otherwise, if the blood was not seen, he would slay the first born male in every home. But wherever people were sheltering under the blood of the lamb, death would pass them by.

It's a pretty amazing picture of what the lamb of God has done for us and every one of us here who has made our peace with God through faith in Jesus Christ, are today sheltering under the blood of the lamb, just like those ancient Israelites.

So you see Passover is a beautiful picture of the sacrifice of Jesus and the fact that through the blood of the lamb, we escape that eternal death and have instead eternal life.

I want you to notice here that Josiah, knowing that judgment was coming, knowing that the land was corrupt, not only changed things beginning at home,

he reached out in his sphere of influence and changed things, and then he gathered the people to celebrate. Sheltering under the blood of the lamb.

And that is such an important picture of what we do really in our churches across the, around the world when we celebrate communion. We're doing that same celebration, that same remembrance. We're remembering the body and the blood of Jesus Christ and how we're sheltering under the blood, and trusting in Him to deliver us from the from death. It is just beautiful. It really is. It's a beautiful picture.

Verse 24, "Moreover, Josiah put away the mediums and the necromancers and the household gods and the idols and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might establish the words of the law that were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD."

Isn't that amazing? Josiah wanted to establish the Word of God in his own sphere of influence.

"²⁵ Before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses, nor did any like him arise after him.

²⁶ Still the LORD did not turn from the burning of his great wrath, by which his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked him. ²⁷ And the LORD said, "I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and I will cast off this city that I have chosen, Jerusalem, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there."

²⁸ Now the rest of the acts of Josiah and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? ²⁹ In his days Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt went up to the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates."

Stop, please, just for a moment. Let me explain what's going on. In those days, Babylon was beginning to rise as a world power. Assyria had been The world power in the world. Babylon was now beginning to rise up and flex its muscle and Assyria was getting nervous. Assyria, you remember is the country that decimated the Northern kingdom of Israel.

The king of Assyria decided he was going to align himself with the king of Egypt and together they would provide a strong force with which they could repel the king of Babylon. Now we know that wasn't going to work because

Babylon was the next power to come into power. And eventually Babylon will be the country that will destroy Judah.

But for now, the king of Assyria and the king of Egypt are coming together in an alliance. And the king Pharaoh Neco is marching across the Mediterranean coast and Josiah hears of it. Pharaoh Neco is moving northward toward Assyria, and so Josiah rides out to meet him in battle. This is going to turn out to be a very bad move on his part.

It says in the end of verse 29, *“King Josiah went to meet him, and Pharaoh Neco killed him at Megiddo, as soon as he saw him.”* And so unfortunately Josiah died in battle at age 39.

“³⁰ And his servants carried him dead in a chariot from Megiddo and brought him to Jerusalem and buried him in his own tomb. And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and anointed him, and made him king in his father's place.”