

JULY 3

2 Kings 22:3-23:30

Today we will read about the godliest king of either kingdom - my take on Josiah. It will be said in 2 Kings 23:25 that there was no king *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 arise after him. Josiah will have no black mark against him. The circumstance of his death, I think, was just God getting him out of the way. He had accomplished his purpose. In all of this, there is the wonder of what happened to Manasseh at the end of his life. There is the wonder of how Josiah could be the best king of all, as the grandson of the most evil king and the son of an evil king. And finally you have to wonder what the point of Josiah's reform was, since after his death Judah totally reverted back to idolatry and apostasy. You can wonder now, but when we get down the road and talk about this again, you'll see how God used his life and you might be filled with wonder. It teaches you never to give up and to keep following whether it makes sense or not. Honoring God always makes sense.

2 Kings 22:3-20

Vs. 1-7 So, how old is Josiah? That he had been following the Lord to this point is pretty amazing, considering what is about to happen. According to what we'll read in 2 Chronicles 34, Josiah also had red letter years in the 8th and 12th years of his reign. This, however, would be the most important year in Josiah's life; and since he would reign for 31 years, the next 13 years would also be pretty intense.

I think Josiah's interest wasn't in rebuilding the temple for looks, as much as I think he might have been sensing the need to worship God as God had prescribed. We read in 2 Chronicles 34:3 that when Josiah was 16, "still a child," he began to seek the Lord. I think he wanted to worship in the temple. If that was the case, God would help him with a little present.

Vs. 8-10 As they were rummaging around, they found a copy of *the Book of the Law*, the Bible. Now think for a minute and imagine what this means. It means that up until now, they did not have a copy of the first five books of the Bible. Josiah had never heard the law before. Considering what Josiah had already done as recorded in 2 Chronicles 34, that is pretty amazing. Manasseh must have died believing he had destroyed the last existing copy of the books of Moses. Apparently he had made a point of getting rid of the law. Imagine the guilty conscience he must have had as he died, especially if you realize he had changed. I wonder who the hero was who hid the scrolls.

Vs. 11-13 So, was this for show or was it real? We'll find out in a couple verses that Josiah did more than tear his clothes. I wish we had this kind of reaction as we work in the harvest, knowing the offer God is making and knowing the storm that is approaching for every person on this planet.

Vs. 14-20 At this time there were other prophets, but I think there was a sense of urgency here and this prophetess lived in the city. Notice that along with the urgency, Josiah sent five of the leaders of Judah.

V. 17 Notice the end of this verse. The sins of Manasseh brought irrevocable judgment against Judah. So, what would be the point of anything, if you knew that regardless of what you did, judgment was coming? Regardless of the reforms Josiah made, everything was promised to end in ruin. That sort of sounds like the harvest we're working in as disciples of Jesus. Josiah is such a cool guy in this respect and a model disciple maker. He had no idea how God would use him.

Vs. 18-19 I've got to admit that it is a privilege to read these verses with you. I can't remember what year it was when I first read them, reading my one-year Bible, but I have printed these as a

plaque on my wall and they have been a constant encouragement to me to work hard in the harvest, regardless of how disappointing and dark it gets. God only asks for our love, faith and obedience in following. The results are totally His.

We know the Word of God against this place in which we live today. Does it move us to grief and tears? It moved our Lord to give all that He was for our salvation. This is the heart we need as disciples following our Lord in the harvest, making disciples, who make disciples, who make disciples until our time is up and until He returns. We need to leave it all in the harvest, following and imitating our Savior.

V. 20 So, Josiah could have kicked back and relaxed because he would have peace. This is what Hezekiah thought. But this is why Josiah was so much better. Because of his love for God and for God's people, Josiah went "nuts" in a good spiritual way. Fighting an impossible fight, he would work like no other and appear to lose, but God used Josiah to save Israel.

2 Kings 23:1-30

Vs. 1-3 One thing you can be sure of, Josiah completely obeyed everything. This also would have meant that he wrote his own copy of the law and read it daily. I'm sure, with only one copy in existence, he also had the Levites making several copies. It seems that all of this is Josiah. He called the meeting; he read the book, and he made the covenant.

Vs. 4-14 There were no more offerings on the high places. Josiah not only stopped all of this, but he desecrated the spots to make sure they were "unholy" and would never be used again. As I read this I wonder why they hadn't removed some of this stuff earlier. It must have been that everyone just grew up with it and assumed it was for the worship of God. Manasseh was king for 54 years. That would be a lifetime for many people. They saw stuff and may have just thought it belonged there. As Joshua and the priests and Levites went through the temple and the city, they must have questioned every statue and memorial for its meaning.

V. 13 Notice who made these altars: the wisest man in the world, the same king who built and dedicated the temple. With his skill as a builder, I'll bet they looked pretty. And in all of these years since his death, none of the kings (not even Hezekiah) destroyed them. Note that Chemosh and Milcom were gods to which you offered babies. Ashtoreth was the girlfriend of Baal and this was sexual worship. Probably the unwanted babies from that worship were offered to these other gods.

It should be noted that all of these reforms and cleansings took time. The area around Jerusalem had to have happened in the 18th year, otherwise Josiah would not have held the Passover. The other reforms, like the ones in Samaria, could have taken place over the next 12 years.

Vs. 15-20 If you remember back to 1 Kings 13, this had been foretold by the "man of God."

Vs. 17-18 This is why the lying prophet wanted to be buried with the man of God, so that his bones wouldn't be taken up and burned.

Vs. 21-23 Imagine the honor given to Josiah here. None of the kings before him celebrated a Passover like this one, and that includes David and Solomon. This doesn't mean that the other Passovers Josiah celebrated weren't good, but that this Passover established a sense of devotion to God that had been lost in Israel for hundreds of years and through all of the kings of Israel.

Now, we haven't read this yet, but Hezekiah also celebrated a Passover that was renown, in that no Passover like it had been celebrated since Solomon. When you read what Hezekiah did, it will impress you and it was a truly godly event and effect. The fact that Josiah's Passover goes back to a godly man like Samuel speaks for its deeper devotion. Josiah didn't have the resources Hezekiah had. Josiah had just found the Bible and was still trying to rebuild Judah after decades of his grandfather's evil influence. Also, Hezekiah didn't have priests who were consecrated to lead the people in worship. Somehow, Josiah had everyone ready.

V. 25 I have to believe this is saying that Josiah was the godliest king Israel ever had. When Jesus was challenged regarding the first commandment of all, Jesus cited Deuteronomy 6:4-5. Josiah is the only king this is said of. Yet, his effort will look "wasted," but it wasn't.

Vs. 26-27 Judgment was coming, no matter what.

Vs. 28-30 We'll have to read the account of this in 2 Chronicles 35. It is the only instance of "foolishness" on Josiah's part, but honestly, vs. 26 and 27 tell you the clock was already ticking and this battle was just a way for God to take Josiah out of the equation. God retired Josiah. His work was done. Now the judgment would roll.

Acts 21:37-22:16

It is unfortunate that this speech by Paul is carried into tomorrow. As you read this, it seems like everyone was really listening to him. Think of everything Paul is saying here. There are no objections. Isn't that incredible? But tomorrow he'll say the "G" word and the dust (and stones) will fly. Good thing the Romans wore helmets.

Acts 21:37-40

Vs. 37-39 Apparently there was an Egyptian guy who had come to Jerusalem before this with 4000 men, stood on the Mount of Olives and declared that at his word the city would fall. All that happened was that a bunch of guys ran up the hill after them wearing shiny suits and holding shiny pointy things. The Romans had no sense of humor. The Egyptian got away, but on his "wanted" poster it mentioned that he couldn't speak Greek. The tribune thought Paul was this guy until he heard Paul speak Greek. (The Bible Knowledge Commentary-NT, p. 417)

V. 40 When the crowd heard Paul speak in Hebrew or Aramaic they went silent.

Acts 22:1-16

V. 1 Apparently this is how Stephen also addressed the crowd before he died. Maybe Paul remembered this.

V. 2 A hush fell over the crowd. I tend to think that Paul was speaking high Hebrew.

Vs. 3-5 This describes Paul's upbringing and pedigree as a very zealous Jew. Verse 4 describes Paul as being very hard and violent in his anger against Christianity. He put men and women in prison. He'll say more the next couple of times he gives his testimony in Acts.

Vs. 6-11 It is interesting that there is no uproar here from the Jews. The Pharisees believed this kind of event was possible; in fact, tomorrow the Pharisees will say this and defend Paul.

Vs. 12-16 It is still amazing that they are listening to Paul.

Psalm 1

It is difficult to emotionally "agree" with spiritual truth when your life circumstances seem unsettled. But that is why God gives us His truth, to make us see beyond the physical and beyond our needs. When you read this psalm, change the words *man* and *righteous* and the pronouns to "follower of Christ," or "disciple."

Vs. 1-2 The blessed person both delights himself in the Lord and meditates on His Word *day and night*. That makes sense, but for most people it doesn't happen. You've heard me say that we are spiritually bi-polar and that we need our "meds" every day. We assent to our need for the Word, but we really don't believe it. God says we need to both delight in Him and to be in His Word daily.

On the other hand, do any of us really walk in the *counsel of the wicked* or stand in the *way of sinners* or sit in the *seat of scoffers*? The media definitely helps us do that. We watch stuff on TV that is insane. The thoughts of our own hearts as we face people, situations and fears qualifies us

as sinners and scoffers. And many of us listen to our own hearts and react. The point is that we need to be totally immersed in the Lord's love and the Lord's Word.

Vs. 3-4 The contrast is interesting. Two people standing next to each other are experiencing the same trials of life. God makes all the difference. For us as disciples the thought of fruit is important and is promised if we are planted in the Lord.

Vs. 5-6 The wicked cannot stand before the Lord or avoid judgment because they don't know the way. By grace, we know the Lord and the Lord directs us on His way.

These are such simple verses, but they determine the most profound differences in the hearts and attitudes of people walking through this life, even among those who say they know the Lord.

Proverbs 18:11-12

Like Paul said, *When I am weak (and humble), then I am strong*. Paul was glad to admit his humility in Christ. As disciples, sometimes, it takes a long time to learn this. We do ministry in unseen arrogance until the Lord finally gets our attention and we see that it is His harvest, His power, His grace, and we are just unworthy servants who have done only what was required of us. All those things we depend upon, our youth, our health, our intelligence, our money, etc., sometimes get in the way of humility and finding ourselves in Christ, as His servants in the harvest.