

KING JOSIAH

2 Kings 22:1 - 23:27

STRUCTURE

Key-person: King Josiah

Key-location: Jerusalem in Judah (Southern Kingdom)

Key-repetitions:

- Josiah's actions to restore worship of the Lord: he did right and copied David's ways (2 Kin 22:2); he ordered the high priest to repair the temple (2 Kin 22:3-7); he heard the reading of the Book of Law and tore his clothes in distress (2 Kin 22:11); he ordered priests to consult the Lord about the Book of Law (2 Kin 22:13); he read to Judah's leaders the Book of Law and renewed the covenant to follow the Lord (2 Kin 23:2-3).
- Josiah's actions to combat worship of other gods: he ordered priests to remove everything from the temple made for other gods (2 Kin 23:4); he tore down quarters of homosexual male shrine prostitutes inside the temple (2 Kin 23:7); he made impure the local religious shrines (2 Kin 23:10-12); he made impure Solomon's sex-and-religious shrines (2 Kin 23:13-14); he demolished Jeroboam's altar at Bethel and made it impure (2 Kin 23:15); he destroyed and made impure all shrines the kings of Israel had built in Samaria (2 Kin 23:19).
- God was angry with Judah: Josiah read the Book of Law and realized that the Lord was angry with Judah (2 Kin 22:11-13); Prophetess Huldah confirmed the Lord's anger would never be extinguished (2 Kin 22:14-20); the Lord's anger continued to burn against Judah because of Manasseh's sins (2 Kin 23:26).

Key-attitudes:

- Positive attitude for Josiah.
- Josiah's distress when he heard the reading of the Book of Law.
- Huldah's confidence when she proclaimed the Lord's message.
- Josiah's commitment to serve the Lord.
- The Lord's anger against Judah because of Manasseh's sins.

Initial-situation:

King Manasseh was guilty of causing the people of Judah to sin and disobey the Lord. He forced the people to worship idols. He put the image of the prostitute goddess Asherah into the temple of the Lord God. Manasseh consulted astrologists and worshiped the stars. He practiced black magic, asked fortune-tellers for advice, and held seances to consult spirits from the underworld. He sacrificed his own son in the fire. Manasseh killed many innocent people. King Manasseh of Judah did evil and provoked the Lord to anger.

Initial-problem:

When King Josiah was twenty-six years old and in his eighteenth year as king, he ordered the high priest to repair the temple.

Final-situation:

Josiah obeyed the Lord with all his heart, soul and strength. Nevertheless, the Lord's fierce anger burned against Judah because of all that Manasseh had done.

BIBLE STORY

King Josiah was Manasseh's grandson. Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he ruled thirty-one years in Jerusalem. Josiah did what was right in the Lord's eyes and he copied the ways of his ancestor David (2 Kin 22:1-2).

When King Josiah was twenty-six years old, and in his eighteenth year as king, he ordered the high priest to repair the temple. The high priest found the Book of the Law in the temple and a scribe read the book to the king (2 Kin 22:3-10; 2 Chr 34:1-18).

King Josiah heard the reading of the Book of Law and tore his clothes in distress. Josiah ordered priests to consult the Lord about the words in the book. Josiah said, "The Lord's anger is directed towards us because our ancestors didn't obey this book."

The priests went to Prophetess Huldah. Prophetess Huldah said, "The Lord says, 'I'll bring disaster on this place and on the people living here according to everything written in the book read by Judah's king. I'll bring disaster because they abandoned me and sacrificed to other gods. My burning anger against this place will never be extinguished.

"However, because Judah's king tore his clothes in distress and cried in front of me, I'll listen to him. I'll bring him to his grave in peace and his eyes won't see the disaster I'll bring on this place'" (2 Kin 22:11-20; 2 Chr 34:9-28).

King Josiah assembled Judah's leaders to the temple of the Lord and read to them all the words of the Book of the Law. Josiah renewed the covenant to follow the Lord and keep his commands with all his heart and all his soul. All the people pledged themselves to the covenant (2 Kin 23:1-3).

King Josiah ordered the priests to remove and burn everything made for other gods that was in the temple. Josiah did away with pagan priests. Josiah tore down living quarters of homosexual male shrine prostitutes inside the Lord's temple. Josiah made impure the local sex-and-religious shrines where the priests had burned incense. Josiah made impure the sex-and-religious shrines that King Solomon had built (2 Kin 23:4-14).

Josiah invaded Israel and demolished the altar at Bethel, the religious shrine made by Jeroboam, who had caused Israel to sin. Josiah cremated human bones on the altar to make it impure. These things happened as the Lord had prophesied to Jeroboam years before. Josiah removed, destroyed, and made impure all sex-and-religious shrines that the kings of Israel had built in the towns of Samaria. Then Josiah returned to Jerusalem (2 Kin 23:15-20).

There was no king like Josiah before or after him. Josiah obeyed the Lord with all his heart, soul and strength. Nevertheless, the Lord's fierce anger continued to burn against Judah because of all that Manasseh had done to provoke him to anger (2 Kin 23:24-27).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What kind of man was Josiah?
2. What happened when the priest found the Book of the Law in the temple?
3. What is significant that God's message was given by the Prophetess Huldah instead of the high priest, or another priest of the temple?
4. What message did Prophetess Huldah send to Josiah?
5. What are some of the things Josiah did that showed his love for God?
6. What are some of the things that Josiah had to combat because of his love for God?
7. How can we show our love for God by both what we stand for and by what we stand against?
8. Why did God promise to bring disaster on Judah?
9. What right does God have to punish people?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **It is important to begin well and to end well.** Josiah was the best of all the Jewish kings. Josiah began well, continued well, and ended well (2 Kin 22:1-2). Josiah was superior morally to David. He was exemplary in his own conduct, and zealous in the work of God. David was more famous, but was morally inferior to Josiah. Josiah was one of the few biblical men who was never accused of wrong doing. Others were Joseph, Ezra, and Daniel.
2. **Sin moves the person away from the Bible, or the Bible moves the person away from sin.** During the reign of the idolatrous and wicked Manasseh, the Law of Moses was lost. During the reign of Josiah, who served the Lord, the Law was found (2 Kin 22:8-10). The reading of the Law resulted in repentance, and the king and the people worshiped the Lord again (2 Kin 23:1-3; 2 Chr 34:29-33).

3. **Women can be spiritual leaders who have messages from the Lord.** Huldah, a woman, was a prophetess (2 Kin 22:11-20). Other prophetesses mentioned in the Old Testament are Miriam (Ex 15:20), Deborah (Jdg 4:4), and Noadiah (Neh 6:14).
4. **A common person who serves the Lord may have more spiritual knowledge than those who officially explain biblical teachings.** Huldah, a prophetess, of whom we know nothing but by this incident, was consulted on the meaning of the Book of the Law. The secret of the Lord was neither with Hilkiyah the high priest, nor Shaphan the scribe, nor any other of the ministers of the temple (2 Kin 22:11-20).
5. **The person who pleases God must both promote good and combat evil.**
 - (1) Josiah's actions to restore worship of the Lord: he did right and copied David's ways (2 Kin 22:2); he ordered the high priest to repair the temple (2 Kin 22:3-7); he heard the reading of the Book of Law and tore his clothes in distress (2 Kin 22:11); he ordered priests to consult the Lord about the Book of Law (2 Kin 22:13); he read the Book of Law to Judah's leaders and renewed the covenant to follow the Lord (2 Kin 23:2-3).
 - (2) Josiah fought evil: he ordered priests to remove from the temple everything made for other gods (2 Kin 23:4); he tore down quarters of homosexual male shrine prostitutes inside the temple (2 Kin 23:7); he made impure local sex-and-religious shrines (2 Kin 23:10-12); he made impure Solomon's sex-and-religious shrines (2 Kin 23:13-14); he demolished Jeroboam's altar at Bethel and made it impure (2 Kin 23:15); he destroyed and made impure all shrines the kings of Israel had built in Samaria (2 Kin 23:19).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Twitter Prayers (short, concise prayers):

Invite listeners to pray about the story in "twitter" length prayers. Tell God:

- How they feel about the story.
- Occasions when they need to be like Josiah and stand for what is right.
- Occasions when they need to be like Josiah and combat what is wrong.
- Decisions they need to make as a result of hearing the story.
- How the story helps them face personal life-issues.
- How the story helps them to know God better.