

JOSIAH'S REFORMATION

Sunday, October 20, 2023 – Reformation series – Pastor Ruben Hernandez

2 KINGS 23:1-3

English Standard Version

¹ 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. ³ And 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."

REVIEW – The History of the Reformation

- 1) Cultural/Political Christianity led to disaster.
- 2) The Reformers sought reclamation of what had been lost.
- 3) Christians today, like the Reformers, must constantly seek to reform back to the one true Gospel 'which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven.' (Col 1:23)

Question: Is there an example of Reformation in the Bible?

Challenge: Look for the Five Solas throughout the story of Josiah

I. Judah's Problem.

Judah had been under ungodly leadership for 57 years.

King Manasseh, Josiah's grandfather, had led the people of Judah to do more evil than they had ever done, surpassing that of Israel's enemies (2 Kings 21:9,15).

- He went out of his way to reverse all the godly policies his father, Hezekiah, had put into place by rebuilding the altars Hezekiah has destroyed.
- He brought about Baal worship, Asherah worship, worshipping the heavenly hosts
- He made altars to these false Gods within the temple grounds.
- He engaged in demonic practices: fortune telling, mediums, necromancers
- He even sacrificed one of his own sons as a burnt offering.
- Traditionally, it is said that Manasseh is responsible for the killing of the prophet Isaiah.
- How was Israel's sin worse than their enemies? They had known the Lord, the one true God, and chose to continue in sin anyway.

King Amon, Josiah's father, in his short reign also had abandoned the Lord (2 Kings 21:22).

Ask yourself: Is the state of many modern churches much different from Judah? Do we see these practices around us? Are people who claim the name of Christ engaging in the same things?

II. Josiah's Response.

2 Kings 22:1-2

¹ Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. ² And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and walked in all the way of David his father, and he did not turn aside to the right or to the left."

Spiritual backbone is not exclusive to adults or to those from church families. Here was a boy who broke with the pattern that he witnessed in his father and grandfather and chose to follow God instead.

- Too often, people excuse their sin or lack of obedience as the result of not having a godly example to follow.
- Others refuse to take a stand and go along with what everyone else is doing because they feel that they cannot make a difference among their peers.

In the 8th year of his reign (16 years old) he began to seek God, and in the 12th year of his reign (20 years old) he began to purge pagan practices from Judah. However, the most significant accomplishment in Josiah's reign took place in the 18th year of his reign when the Book of the Law was discovered. (Cf. 2 Chronicles 23:3)

2 Kings 22:8-13

⁸ And Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the secretary, "I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD." And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. ⁹ And Shaphan the secretary came to the king, and reported to the king, "Your servants have emptied out the money that was found in the house and delivered it into the hand of the workmen who have the oversight of the house of the LORD." ³⁴ Then Shaphan the secretary told the king, "Hilkiah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read it before the king."

¹¹ When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes. 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."

Key points to notice:

"Book of the Law" – referring to the Torah (first five books of the Old Testament) or Deuteronomy.

- The circumstance in which it was found, and the surprise of those who found it indicates that God's Word seemed to have been lost for some time.
- In Deuteronomy there are decreed blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. (Deuteronomy chapters 28 – 30)
 - Josiah was rightly evaluating the conduct of Judah and what outcome they could expect.

Key points to notice continued...

Josiah “tore his clothes” – an outward, visible expression of the grief felt within; a sign of mourning.

- Why? Their sin was far greater than he could imagine, and they faced God’s wrath against sin. Josiah was brokenhearted over the judgment the people faced.

Josiah “inquired of the LORD” – he sent for a known prophet of God to hear from God.

- When presented with the truth of God’s Word there are various ways that we might respond
 - We can ignore it in disbelief or rebellion.
 - We can try to ease the guilt of our consciences with more effort of our own.
 - We can run to Him for mercy
- His response was the correct one

III. Josiah’s Reform

The Prophetess Huldah’s Response (2 Kings 22:16-20)

⁸“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.”

God’s wrath against sin is real, and Josiah’s actions would not atone for sin, only Christ’s would.

- Ignoring God’s wrath because you don’t like to hear it is like closing your eyes in the face of danger.
- Trying to ease your conscience by religious action and effort is like trying to bail out your sinking boat with a teaspoon: you’ll exhaust yourself and still sink.
- The only righteous king who was able to be the perfect representative for humanity is King Jesus, and mercy and grace are only found in Him.
 - Josiah’s repentance and faith in the LORD resulted in him being spared the ultimate judgment against Israel’s sin

This was true in Josiah’s day, it was true in Luther’s day, and it is still true today.

2 Kings 23:1-3

¹ 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. ³ And 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."

Upon seeing God's grace extended toward him, Josiah led the way to a recommitment toward God's Word and their holiness.

- This was not to earn the grace he had already received; he could never do that!
- Receiving grace did not lead him to sit back and live however he wanted since he had already been declared free from the judgment to come.

Josiah's actions

- Removed and destroyed all altars to false gods from the temple grounds and in Judah
- Defiled pagan worship sites, so that they would never be used for worship again
- Removed false priests
- He even ventured into Samaria, the ruins of the Northern Kingdom, and destroyed the pagan altars and graves of the false priests.
- He removed the mediums, necromancers, idols in the land in faithfulness to God's commands
- He commanded that the Passover be kept by all the people
 - No leaven could be found in any of the houses during Passover
 - Leaven was a symbol of sin
 - Commemorating how the judgment of God passed over his people because of a sacrifice in their place (Remembering the Gospel)
 - No Passover had been kept like this since the time of the Judges

Why did Josiah do all this if it wouldn't change the outcome? For God's glory.

Did you see the Five Solas throughout the story of King Josiah?

The Reformation should not be thought of as just an event that happened in the past; for the people of God it is and should be continuous.