

Week 31----- A King Experiences Revival

2 Chronicles 34-35

August 3/4

Summary & Goal:

We are nearing the end of the Divided Kingdom Era and Josiah is one of the few good kings Judah has known. Josiah's "goodness" came as a result of a desire to know God at a young age and by hearing the Word of God. There is power in the Word of God that should be embraced and not ignored. One life committed to God can change a family, a neighborhood, a city and even a nation.

Main Passages:

2 Chronicles 34-35

Session Outline:

1. REALIZING THE RESPONSIBILITY-- (2 CHRONICLES 34: 1-3A)
2. REMOVING THE EVIL-- (2 CHRONICLES 34: 3B- 4)
3. REDISCOVERING THE TRUTH-- (2 CHRONICLES 34: 8-21)
4. REVIVING THE PEOPLE-- (2 CHRONICLES 34: 29- 35:18)

Session in a Sentence:

Your past does not define your future. God's Word is life-changing if you take the time to read, listen and apply the truth that is revealed.

Kingdom Connection:

The Word of God is life-changing. The Word became flesh in Jesus Christ. It is He who changes lives.

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INTRODUCTION:

When I was eight years old, I was in the 3rd grade and had a speech impediment and asthma. I went to an elementary school in my neighborhood, had friends, played little league baseball, took piano lessons and rode my bike every day after school pretending it was a motorcycle.

The only real responsibility I had as an eight-year-old was making my bed, taking the trash out on certain days and doing my homework. Beyond those minor things, life as an eight-year-old was not too challenging.

Today we are going to look at an eight-year-old boy that had many more responsibilities than doing homework, taking out the trash, or playing outside. His name is Josiah.

Josiah became King of Judah at eight years old. He was not elected to be King, he was merely born into the bloodline of David, the bloodline of the Kingdom.

Israel had become a monarchy like all the other nations with the first three kings being Saul, David, and Solomon. Israel was united under these three kings, though with the death of Solomon, everything changed. The kingdom that was once united, became divided into the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom.

The northern kingdom retained the name Israel. The southern kingdom was called Judah. The northern kingdom had ten tribes while the southern kingdom only had two tribes. The capital of the northern kingdom was Samaria and the capital of the southern kingdom was Jerusalem.

Josiah was the King of Judah (the southern kingdom) at the age of eight years old. Judah (the southern kingdom) had 20 different rulers, only eight of which were considered to be “good”. Josiah was the last of the eight “good” kings.

In looking at the summary of his life we see that Josiah was not just good, he was very special.

2 Chronicles 34:1 Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. ² And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. (Chronological Bible, pg. 960, July 29th)

If you think about an eight-year-old boy becoming king and being known for doing “what was right in the sight of the Lord,” you might guess that he came from a great family background. That is not the case at all.

Surprisingly, Josiah’s father and grandfather were some of the worst kings Judah had. Both were involved in child sacrifice as well as turning God’s people against God. His grandfather Manasseh who served as king for 55 years, did have a change of heart, but as it pertained to his influence as a king; it was too little, too late. His father, Amon served only two years before he was killed and never did have a change of heart.

2 Chronicles 33:23 And he (Amon) did not humble himself before the LORD, as his father Manasseh had humbled himself; but Amon trespassed more and more. ²⁴ Then his servants conspired against him and killed him in his own house. (Chronological Bible, pg. 959-960, July 29th)

There was nothing about the leadership of Josiah's father or grandfather that would have prepared him to be a "good" king. Neither his father or grandfather were obedient to God; neither were humble in their role as king; neither embraced the Word and truth of God; neither led the people in worship or prayer towards God. Both were described as "evil in the sight of the Lord" in Scripture. And yet, Josiah somehow broke the cycle, even as a young boy king.

1. REALIZING THE RESPONSIBILITY

The story of Josiah is a story of hope for people of all ages. Even at a young age, Josiah realized the responsibility of being king. There was an opportunity to be different from those who had gone before him. Even an 8-year-old boy knows the difference between right and wrong.

There are those in this room that could give testimony of what it is like to be brought up in a family that is not good, healthy or happy. There are those in this room that did not grow up in a Christ-centered family or home. Most in this room, even well beyond the age of eight, made choices that were not in line with God's Word and truth.

The hope of this story today is that your past does not define who you are in the present or who you will be in the future. If Josiah had let his past define him, he would have followed in the footsteps of his father and grandfather. If Josiah had let his past define him, he would have continued the sad tradition of leading God's people away from God. If Josiah had let his past define him, he would have settled for sad tradition rather than realizing the responsibility of change.

But, Josiah realized the responsibility of being king. He wanted to be different from past generations. Though we don't know much about his first several years of being king, we do know that at the age of 16 there was a radical change of direction.

2 Chronicles 34: 3 For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David; and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images. (Chronological Bible, pg. 960, July 29th)

The first part of verse 3 tells us that he was 16 years old (*became king at the age of eight and in his eighth year of his reign*) when he did something that his father and grandfather never did. *Josiah began to seek the God of his father David.* Of course, David was his great, great, great, multiple generations past grandfather. But Josiah knew two things about David. One, that David was a blood relative; two, David sought Yahweh, the one true God. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The God of the Covenant.

Josiah realized the responsibility as a descendant of David; the responsibility that he had as King of Judah and he broke the cycle of rebellion against God on a personal level. As a teenager, he sought God and began the process, as evidenced in the phrasing, “began to seek the God of his father David.”

Breaking the cycle did not happen overnight. Remember even though he was young, there was a stronghold in his family of radical rebellion against God to the point of sacrificing children and actively building altars to idols. Josiah wanted something different; he obviously had heard stories about David as King. But more importantly, he had heard stories about David’s relationship with God.

Josiah wanted a personal relationship with God, and it started with him choosing to seek God. We do not know exactly how long that discovery process lasted or what he did in the process. More than likely the time was spent in prayer, seeking counsel from priests and from prophets of the day. We do know that four years later his relationship with God was so strong he acted very differently from his father and grandfather. He made choices as King that the people had not seen for generations.

2. REMOVING THE EVIL

2 Chronicles 34: 3b “....and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images. (Chronological Bible, pg. 960, July 29th)

At the age of 20, Josiah had been king for 12 years and his relationship with God was so strong and personal that he could no longer accept the false idols that his father and grandfather had built. He wanted to remove that which led the people away from God.

Purging Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images are the first acts recorded of his kingship. Obviously, over a 12-year period, there were other things as well, but what is significant is that his desire to seek God at the age of 16 and the relationship that ensued led to this first true act as king. This was no easy task. The following verses go on to tell us he traveled as far north as Naphtali (North of Galilee) and as far south as Simeon and everywhere in between.

2 Chronicles 34: 6-7 And so he did in the cities of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, as far as Naphtali and all around, with axes. ⁷ When he had broken down the altars and the wooden images, had beaten the carved images into powder, and cut down all the incense altars throughout all the land of Israel, he returned to Jerusalem. (Chronological Bible, pg. 960, July 29th)

Removing the evil of his heritage was not easy, fast or popular. If you just take the leadership of his father and grandfather, you are looking at 57 years of evil in the sight of the Lord. 57 years of God’s people being led astray. Josiah felt so strongly about his relationship with God that he was willing to do whatever it took to “clean house”.

We are told that this process was intense and purposeful, going step by step to destroy each and every kind of altar regardless of what it was made of or how it was crafted.

2 Chronicles 34: 4b "...he broke in pieces, and made dust of them and scattered it on the graves of those who had sacrificed to them."

He broke them down to powder, making it completely impossible for anyone to put them back together. Josiah did not want to compromise at all. In modern-day terms, we would say he was "all in" with his relationship with God.

Josiah was not concerned about popularity as king, rather he was first and foremost concerned with his personal relationship with God and doing what would bring honor and glory to God. For Josiah that meant removing all evil from the land which God had entrusted to him.

Destroying the altars to the point of powder dust was a visual way of cleaning house and not leaving any sort of visual temptation to go back to the false gods and compromised leadership of his father and grandfather. Josiah broke the chains of his past to set forth hope for his future and for the future of Israel.

His journey led him to rediscover the truth.

3. REDISCOVERING THE TRUTH

Look at verse 8.

2 Chronicles 34: 8 In the eighteenth year of his reign (Josiah was 26 years old), when he had purged the land and the temple, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of the LORD his God. (Chronological Bible pg. 976, July 31st)

It had been 57 years since God's people had been led by a godly leader. King Hezekiah was the last good King the southern kingdom of Judah had. The house of the Lord was in shambles. The feasts and festivals were ignored. The offerings and sacrifices were neglected. Josiah knew that it wasn't enough to just remove the evil of the land, he knew that he had the responsibility to direct people to the Lord. And that began with rediscovering the truth.

In the process of repairing the house of the Lord, they discovered the Book of the Law written by Moses.

2 Chronicles 34: 15 Then Hilkiyah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, "I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD." And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan. (Chronological Bible pg. 977, July 31st)

This more than likely is what we know as the Pentateuch/Torah; the first five books of the Bible. This discovery of God's Word was, in fact, the discovery of life-changing truth. The "book" had been completely and utterly buried beneath that which was intended to be a place of worship.

This discovery not only changed Josiah on a personal level, but it also changed a nation.

Notice what happened when Josiah heard the Word of God:

2 Chronicles 34: 18 *Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, “Hilkiah the priest has given me a book.” And Shaphan read it before the king. ¹⁹ Thus it happened, when the king heard the words of the Law, that he tore his clothes. (Chronological Bible pg. 977, July 31st)*

The Word of God has always been a revelation of God. When King Josiah at the age of 26 heard the words of “the Book” he tore his clothes. In that culture tearing your clothes was a sign of humility and grieving. The King of a nation was tearing his clothes showing the ultimate humility when he had all the power at his fingertips.

Josiah realized what he had been missing. Josiah realized what the people of the nation had been missing. Josiah realized that in finding “the Book”, he rediscovered the truth.

Josiah realized that God was not only a God of mercy but also a God of justice.

2 Chronicles 34: 21 *“Go, inquire of the LORD for me, and for those who are left in Israel and Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found; for great is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out on us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do according to all that is written in this book.” (Chronological Bible pg. 977, July 31st)*

God’s Word brings comfort but also conviction because there are consequences to choices.

Josiah realized how far the nation had been led away from God’s Word. He was in a position to change what had been handed down to him. He had already broken the chains on a personal level, now it was time to break the chains of a nation, and it all began when he heard the Word of God.

Hebrews 4: 12 *For the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

The Word of God is the truth that penetrates the heart, even the heart of a king. Josiah would never be the same. This is a reminder of why we, as a church, have been challenged this year to read through the Bible chronologically; to rediscover the truth.

In no other time in history has the Word of God, “the Book”, been more accessible than today and yet in so many ways we have buried it in the busyness of life and activities. The reading of God’s Word humbled Josiah to the point of repentance and revival. This discovery of “the Book” changed Josiah on a personal level, but it also changed a nation.

4. REVIVING THE PEOPLE

Josiah did not want to keep the truth of God’s Word to himself. He had a responsibility as King to share this truth with the nation.

2 Chronicles 34: 29 Then the king sent and gathered all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. ³⁰ The king went up to the house of the LORD, with all the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem—the priests and the Levites, and all the people, great and small. And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant which had been found in the house of the LORD. ³¹ Then the king stood in his place and made a covenant before the LORD, to follow 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 the covenant that were written in this book. ³² And he made all who were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin take a stand. So the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. ³³ Thus Josiah removed all the abominations from all the country that belonged to the children of Israel and made all who were present in Israel diligently serve the LORD their God. All his days they did not depart from following the LORD God of their fathers. (Chronological Bible pg. 980, August 1st)

Josiah led by example. Notice they were not merely following the words of an earthly king. They were to follow the Word of God. They were not ultimately following an earthly king. They were to “diligently serve” the LORD their God.

This revival both personally for Josiah and for the nation was not going to “just happen.” There had to be intentionality and determination. There was going to have to be sacrifices made both literally and figuratively. When Josiah became King, it had been 57 years since anyone had been challenged and led to observe a feast such as the Passover. It had been 57 years since the Word of God had been read aloud. It had been 57 years since the people worshiped God publicly.

One man changed all of that. Josiah had been revived in his spirit by the reading of God’s Word to the point of action. In Chapter 35 we are told of Josiah leading the nation to observe the Passover beyond what the people had ever experienced before.

2 Chronicles 35:18 There had been no Passover kept in Israel like that since the days of Samuel the prophet; and none of the kings of Israel had kept such a Passover as Josiah kept, with the priests and the Levites, all Judah and Israel who were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ¹⁹ In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah this Passover was kept. (Chronological Bible pg. 981, August 1st)

The Passover was to be kept each year by each generation. In the Book of the Law that Josiah had read, it says:

Exodus 12:14 'So this day shall be to you a memorial, and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance.

The Passover had been neglected as had the Word of God, as had the temple, as had worship, prayer, offerings, and sacrifices. But Josiah reinstated all of these things in accordance with Scripture.

Josiah led the nation of Israel into revival, starting with the reading of Scripture and continuing with putting into action what they had read, diligently serving the LORD God.

It all started when an eight-year-old boy became King. You never know how God is going to work in someone's life.

This summer our church has seen young people make decisions to follow Christ at Beach Retreats, Children's Camp, and Vacation Bible School. The benchmarks of Josiah's life happened when he was 8 years old, 16 years old, 20 years old and 26 years old.

The benchmarks in the life of Moses and Abraham happened when they were 80 years old, 90 years old and 100 years old.

You are never too young or too old to trust in God, follow God, make a difference for God and lead others in doing the same.

Because of the leadership of Josiah, a nation was challenged to put God first without compromise. A nation was challenged to worship God unapologetically. A nation was challenged to diligently serve God regardless of circumstances.

Will we do the same?

- GOD SPEAKS through the written Word and communicates His character, man's sin and the message of redemption and judgment.
- GOD ACTS to preserve the Word of God so that it is found by those who seek Him.
- GOD REVEALS the power of His Word to revive His People.

References:

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