

A LESSON FROM THE LIFE OF JOSIAH

1. Who was Josiah?

16th King of Judah - one of the few good kings Judah had.

43 Kings - 6 very good - David, Solomon, Asa, Jehosaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah

The problem with most of the rest was that they led the nation into idolotry.

From Josiah's life we can see a process that was used to glorify God, that I believe we can apply to our lives as well.

Process: seek the Lord, purge evil, build good, walk in it

This process applies to individuals, families, church bodies, or nations.

2. State of Judah when Josiah became King

Josiah's great-great grandfather, Ahaz (16 years) sacrificed his son to heathen gods. Josiah's great grandfather, Hezekiah (29 years) did good in the sight of the Lord by cleansing and reopening the Temple. Josiah's grandfather, Manasseh (55 years) rebuilt all the heathen shrines, sacrificed one of his own sons, practiced black magic, set up an idol in the Temple, and murdered many of his own people. Later in life, during his Assyrian captivity, he repented and began to undo some of his evil works. Josiah's father, Amon (2 years) did evil in the sight of the Lord, reversing the trend started by his father, Manassah. These 5 generations of men ruled over a span of about 100 years, and if you lived for any long period of time during that time, it must have been like living on a roller coaster! By the time we get to Josiah (31 years) things are very evil and corrupt.

JER 3:6-10 Then the Lord said to me in the days of Josiah the king, "Have you seen what faithless Israel did? She went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and she was a harlot there. "And I thought, 'After she has done all these things, she will return to Me'; but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it. "And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also. "And it came about because of the lightness of her harlotry, that she polluted the land and committed adultery with stones and trees. "And yet in spite of all this her treacherous sister Judah did not return to Me with all her heart, but rather in deception," declares the Lord.

JER 16:11 "Then you are to say to them, 'It is because your forefathers have forsaken Me,' declares the Lord, 'and have followed other gods and served them and bowed down to them; but Me they have forsaken and have not kept My law.

The nation was given over to idolotry.

3. Application to Our Lives

3.1. *Seek the Lord (4 years)*

*2CH 34:1-3a Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. And he did right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the ways of his father David and did not turn aside to the right or to the left. For in the eighth year of his reign while he was still a youth, he began to **seek** the God of his father David;*

Considering what we've said about the state of affairs at the time, there was much to seek the Lord about! At age 16, Josiah sought the Lord for 4 years. That means he began to analyze the situation and look at it from God's perspective. Again, this can apply to an individual, a family, a church body, or a nation. During this time I believe God gave Josiah direction for the work He knew had to be done. The problems did not occur overnight, so they would not go away overnight.

King David is considered one of the greatest military geniuses of all time. In fact, when our high school class toured West Point Military Academy in the mid 70s, the guide told us that there was a section in their curriculum about the military strategies of King David. Why was David so good at that? If you study at his life, you'll find that in most cases, when foreign armies rose up against Israel, the Scriptures record that David "inquired of the Lord". That is why David was very successful in military matters. In contrast, the Scriptures do not record a single time that David in quired the Lord concerning his family life - and that was a shambles. What areas are a mess in our lives this morning? Perhaps it's time to seek the Lord.

And, from the life of Daniel:

DAN 8:15 And it came about when I, Daniel, had seen the vision, that I sought to understand it; and behold, standing before me was one who looked like a man.

*DAN 9:1-3 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans-- in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years. **So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.***

2CH 7:14 and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

3.2. Purge (6 years)

*2CH 34:3b-7 and in the twelfth year he began to **purge** Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the Asherim, the carved images, and the molten images. And they tore down the altars of the Baals in his presence, and the incense altars that were high above them he chopped down; also the Asherim, the carved images, and the molten images he broke in pieces and ground to powder and scattered it on the graves of those who had sacrificed to them. Then he burned the bones of the priests on their altars, and purged Judah and Jerusalem. And in the cities of Manasseh, Ephraim, Simeon, even as far as Naphtali, in their surrounding ruins, he also tore down the altars and beat the Asherim and the carved images into powder, and chopped down all the incense altars throughout the land of Israel. Then he returned to Jerusalem.*

After spending 4 years seeking God, the first thing Josiah goes after is the spiritual. The idols. The things God hates most. This must have been #1 on God's list. He didn't go after the economy, or the environment, or what was happening across his borders. He went after the spiritual. He began to tear down and utterly destroy all of that which did not belong in Judah.

What doesn't belong in your life this morning? What is it in our lives that God wants to go after? He transformed us out of the kingdom of darkness and into the Kingdom of Light. But in doing so we still brought with us a lot of excess baggage that the writer of Hebrews tells us to cast off. The process of sanctification is ongoing in our lives. We must not allow it to stop. It is a process of cleansing this temple, this house so that it can be used of God.

*2TI 2:20-21 Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. **Therefore, if a man cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.***

*2PE 3:10-13 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, **what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness**, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.*

Good to physically tear down idols - also spiritually tear down idols. Spiritual warfare.

3.3. Build (less than 1 year)

2CH 34:8 Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land and the house, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, and Maaseiah an official of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to **repair the house of the Lord his God.**

Principle in Scripture - tear down, must build up. Empty, must fill.

MAT 12:43-45 "Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places, seeking rest, and does not find it. "Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came'; and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept, and put in order. "Then it goes, and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. That is the way it will also be with this evil generation."

The keyword here is unoccupied. The house was emptied of the evil, but not filled with the good. Some of us may have succeeded, by the grace of God and the power of His Holy Spirit, to cast off the sin that so easily besets us, or to cast out the demons that held us in bondage; but we fail to go the next step of filling our lives with godly things.

What good would it have done Josiah to cleanse the land of Judah, and not rebuild the house of the Lord his God. It would be like abandoning the job halfway through, kind of like clearing a piece of land, pouring the foundation, but never building the house! God has given us everything we need to build the house.

EPH 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

2PE 1:3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

EZE 36:26-27 "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. "And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

Let us be careful not to quench the work of the Spirit.

MAT 16:18 "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.

ACT 20:32 "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

EPH 4:11-12 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

1TH 5:11 Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

JUD 1:20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith; praying in the Holy Spirit;

1CO 3:10-15 According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But let each man be careful how he builds upon it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.

PSA 127:1 (A Song of Ascents, of Solomon.) Unless the Lord builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the Lord guards the city, The watchman keeps awake in vain.

One thing that proved to be a great asset in the work that he was doing was God's Word.

2CH 34:18:33 Moreover, Shaphan the scribe told the king saying, "Hilkiah the priest gave me a book. "And Shaphan read from it in the presence of the king. And it came about when the king heard the words of the law that he tore his clothes. Then the king commanded Hilkiah, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Abdon the son of Micah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the king's servant, saying, "Go, inquire of the Lord for me and for those who are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book which has been found; for great is the wrath of the Lord which is poured out on us because our fathers have not observed the word of the Lord, to do according to all that is written in this book." "Behold, I will gather you to your fathers and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, so your eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring on this place and on its inhabitants." "And they brought back word to the king. Then the king sent and gathered all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. And the king went up to the house of the Lord and all the men of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests, the Levites, and all the people, from the greatest to the least; and he read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the Lord. Then the king stood in his place 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 with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant written in this book. Moreover, he made all who were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand with him. So the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. And Josiah removed all the abominations from all the lands belonging to the sons of Israel, and made all who were present in Israel to serve the Lord their God. Throughout his lifetime they did not turn from following the Lord God of their fathers.

Josiah sought the Lord again. Two things I notice about successful people in the Bible. First, they're always seeking the Lord, and second, they're always doing what he tells them to do!

2CH 34:27 *"Because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before God, when you heard His words against this place and against its inhabitants, and because you humbled yourself before Me, tore your clothes, and wept before Me, I truly have heard you," declares the Lord.*

God's Word is absolutely essential in our lives. But what is our attitude toward it?

1TH 2:13 And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.

PSA 119:105 Thy word is a lamp to my feet, And a light to my path.

JOH 17:17 "Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth.

PSA 119:11 Thy word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against Thee.

How many of us would go out in the blackness of night without a light, and yet how many of us try to walk on the narrow road without the light of God's Word.

3.4. Walk

2CH 35:6-7 *"Now slaughter the Passover animals, sanctify yourselves, and prepare for your brethren to do according to the word of the Lord by Moses." And Josiah contributed to the lay people, to all who were present, flocks of lambs and kids, all for the Passover offerings, numbering 30,000 plus 3,000 bulls; these were from the king's possessions.*

Josiah was a good example.

2CH 35:16-20a *So all the service of the Lord was prepared on that day to celebrate the Passover, and to offer burnt offerings on the altar of the Lord according to the command of King Josiah. Thus the sons of Israel who were present celebrated the Passover at that time, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days. And there had not been celebrated a Passover like it in Israel since the days of Samuel the prophet; nor had any of the kings of Israel celebrated such a Passover as Josiah did with the priests, the Levites, all Judah and Israel who were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. In the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign this Passover was celebrated. After all this, when Josiah had set the temple in order, Neco king of Egypt came up to make war at Carchemish on the Euphrates, and Josiah went out to engage him.*

2CH 35:26-27 *Now the rest of the acts of Josiah and his deeds of devotion as written in the law of the Lord, and his acts, first to last, behold, they are written in the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah.*

Keep walking in the light or knowledge that you have, while continuing to build and grow. They knew that God's Word said to have a Passover, so they celebrated the Passover. If you know God's Word teaches you to live a certain way, that's the way you need to live!

*ROM 6:4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might **walk** in newness of life.*

*GAL 5:16 But I say, **walk** by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.*

*EPH 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should **walk** in them.*

*EPH 5:2 and **walk** in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.*

*EPH 5:8 for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; **walk** as children of light*

*COL 1:10 so that you may **walk** in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;*

*1TH 4:1 Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to **walk** and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you may excel still more.*

*2JO 1:6 And this is love, that we **walk** according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it.*

4. God's Commentary on Josiah

2KI 23:25 And 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.

JER 22:11,15-17 For thus says the Lord in regard to Shallum the son of Josiah, king of Judah, who became king in the place of Josiah his father, who went forth from this place, . . . "Did not your father (Josiah) eat and drink, And do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him. "He (Josiah) pled the cause of the afflicted and needy; Then it was well. Is not that what it means to know Me? "Declares the Lord. "But your eyes and your heart Are intent only upon your own dishonest gain, And on shedding innocent blood And on practicing oppression and extortion."

Josiah had a deep relationship with God. How would you describe your relationship with God? Are you deeply humbled by God's Word, realizing that great gap between your life and the kind of life God expects, realizing your deep need to be cleansed and renewed by Him? Humble

obedience pleases God. Good intentions, even reforms, are not enough. We must allow God's Word to truly humble and change our lives.

5. Summary

As we go through life, remember the example of Josiah:

Seek

Purge

Build

Walk

PSA 139:23-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts;
And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way.