

The Reformation of King Josiah

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References: **2 Kings 22-23**, 2 Kings 22:1-20; 2 Kings 23:1-6; Jonah 4:11; Isaiah 45:2; Proverbs 3:6; Psalm 23:3; Genesis 32:28; Jeremiah 32:6-8; Hebrews 12:1

All right. So, again, welcome to everybody on Zoom. And here we're going to turn now to 2 Kings, Chapter 22, and the life of Josiah. Verse 1 says, Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign. Team, he reigned 31 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah, the daughter of Adiah of Muscat.

So, again, very young to become king. He reigned for 31 years after having become king when he was eight, which means he died when he was 39. Again, I just marvel that God places great responsibility on younger people. We basically train our youth to grow up when they're in their mid-20s and sort of do anything and everything—do whatever you want until you get a job. When you're in university, you can play. When you're in school, you play. You can play and play and play and play and play. And then automatically, as soon as you graduate from university and get a job, you're supposed to grow up. It doesn't work that way.

And God holds you responsible for what you do in your youth. Eight years old. Well, a lot of our youth don't really know very much to do when they're eight years old. Some of them have trouble crossing the street when they're eight years old. So the Lord says 39, that's a good life. Moses was 39 years old, 40 years old when he left Egypt, 80 years old when he was told to get to work. The Lord expects us to work in all phases of life: very young, when you're young and strong, when you grow up, and you keep going when you're old. And frankly, it's not easy at any one of those parts of life. We all say, "Okay, I thought it was going to be easier at this point," and it isn't.

The Character of a Young King

Good King Josiah. Verse two: he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left. And one wonders where all he got his knowledge. His mother's name was Jedidah. Solomon was given an extra name; he was called Jedidiah. And so his mother's name and Solomon's name are similar, Jedidah and Jedidiah, and they both basically mean beloved. Thank you. David means beloved, and the similar names mean beloved.

He probably had a good mother. We don't know. What we do know is that in youth, he decided to do what was right in the eyes of the Lord. He had his heroes. Often in life, we decide who our heroes are going to be, and we then follow the heroes. Who would you like to be like? And each person sort of says who we'd like to be like. Some individuals have a profound impact upon us. I was particularly fond of a man who's gone to heaven. Amen. And one of the reasons I was fond of him is that his grandmother, she was a big help to my mother. And my mother looked up to her and tried to pattern her heart, her life in many respects after her. Who's your hero? David was selected by Josiah as the hero that he was going to follow. Good for you, Josiah.

Repairing the House of the Lord

Verse 3:

[2 Kings 22:3-7 NKJV]

³ Now it came to pass, in the eighteenth year of King Josiah, that the king sent Shaphan the scribe, the son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, to the house of the LORD, saying: ⁴ "Go up to Hilkiah the high priest, that he may count the money which has been brought into the house of the LORD, which the doorkeepers have gathered from the people. ⁵ And let them deliver it into the hand of those doing the work, who are the overseers in the house of the LORD; let them give it to those who are in the house of the LORD doing the work, to repair the damages of the house-- ⁶ to carpenters and builders and masons--and to buy timber and hewn stone to repair the house. ⁷ However there need be no accounting made with them of the money delivered into their hand, because they deal faithfully."

So again, a strange sort of a passage. What all does it mean? Again, 2 Kings chapter 22, we read down to verse seven. Manasseh had destroyed much of the house of God, and he rebuilt it in part, then his son Amon, Amon the son of Amon, came along and he destroyed much. And so after reigning for a few years, when he was 18, he said to the high priest and the others, "Do some rebuilding. Take the monies that are coming in from the doorkeepers." I guess they had collections in those days. And they had a collection at the front door. That's not a bad idea. We usually don't have a collection until you get inside. But they had a collection at the front door. Do you think maybe there were some people who decided not to come in because you got to pay the collection at the front door? So we don't do that. We try not to have any collection apart from at the breaking of bread. But they had a collection at

the front door and they got a fair amount of silver. And so they said, "All right, we're going to build with it."

And so they gave it to the workmen. These weren't really—what's the word I want?—they weren't finished carpenters; they were general carpenters. There was a lot of basic work that had to be done. And so they did it. The interesting thing is that all the workers worked on the basis of faith in that they weren't even held responsible and accountable to fill out the price list and the wage list every night. They all dealt faithfully. That's a good thing. Okay. Okay. Okay. The work of God should be done faithfully by the workers.

Around 16th, we don't say, "Did you do something? Was that \$4.28 or \$4.38?" We say, "No." The work of God will carry on, and we're all going to dip into our pocket, and we're all going to be faithful with what we're given, and we're going to do what we can. So this is interesting. Josiah was a significant reformer, but a lot of good people were with him in that reformation. Terrible environment. The whole nation going to be carried off to Babylon very shortly. But Josiah was a good man, and many, the workers, the fellows who built the building, they were good people too.

And so one of the things that I kind of like is—I was surprised—the year, as I told you, when they built this building. And there were several people in the assembly who were carpenters and stonemasons and so on. And the assembly was built by people who just came and worked and went home again. Praise the Lord. How has the spiritual assembly been built ever since? Same way. People say, "I'm going to serve the Lord." And we don't keep attendance. Why don't we do that? Why don't we have a membership list and every time you come in, you tick yourself off? And we say, "No." We believe the saints are responsible before the Lord. They will be here when they can, as they can. They will do the work of God as they can. And He will keep a record of what they do; we won't. And they will deal faithfully. They'll probably not keep a record of what they do. "What did you do last week?" "Well, I did this for the Lord and that for the Lord." "Did you make a list of it? Write it all down?"

I went into a house as a real estate salesman several years ago. It was a scary kind of a house. It was nice and tidy. But everything in the house was either black or white. And I sort of shook my head. What's going on here? And then I realized that they were Jehovah Witnesses. And they had a sign either in the kitchen or near the kitchen. A great big whiteboard, I guess. And on it they had the number of hours and minutes that they stood on the street corner or the number of hours and minutes that they were going door knocking, and they kept a precise record of the work they did for the church. And I said, "If I were going to buy a house, this would not be the one that I would buy." These people worked for

God willingly and they were accountable to the Lord and they weren't accountable to others. Good for them. All right.

So strange, strange kind of a verse. I had trouble with those verses. I said, "What's it mean that the carpenters and the builders and the masons and the timber and so on, what's all that about?"

Finding the Hidden Word

Verse eight: and Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, "I have found a book of the law in the house of the Lord." And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan and he read it. Where do you think they found the book of the law in the house of the Lord? Well, I think they found it hidden in the wall. And the reason I say that is this, that Manasseh had been a wicked king for a long time. What do you think he did? Well, I think he did what a lot of other wicked kings have done. He said, "The first thing I've got to do is get rid of the book of the law. If these people are reading their Bibles every day, they're not going to follow me and all my wickedness. They're not going to pay me the money that I want. They're not going to justify me when I do all kinds of wicked things." So their idea—his idea—was, "Let's get rid of all the Bibles." And I think they got rid of all the Bibles because Josiah didn't have the Bible. We'll read that when we get a little farther down.

So what's he do? He says, "Let's rebuild, let's repair the house." And so as they were repairing it, they opened a wall here and out fell a Bible, probably put in there by somebody who said, "Manasseh can't take this Bible away if I hide it in the wall."

What do you do when they come to you, maybe 10 years from now, when Canada says, "No more Bibles," and they confiscate all the Bibles? Is that possible? Where did we get the underlying foundations for the Bible that you've got in your hands? Where did those original documents come from? Well, actually, they came from what geographers call the Piedmont. Came from the Piedmont mountainous regions in the mountains of Italy and probably east and north of that. How did they get there? Because in the Middle Ages, the nations took away the Bibles. And one country after another, they got rid of all the Bibles. They got rid of all the documents that the Bibles were based on. The Bibles were all in Greek or in Hebrew, Greek or Latin in those days, but they confiscated them. And the valuable documents were no longer in the major cities in Europe and the Middle East, but they were hidden away way up in the mountains of the Piedmont. And in the 14th, 15th century, they began to come out and the translation began for the King James Version. But the documents were taken.

I think that's what happened with Manasseh. I think he took away the Bibles out of the land. The Jews feared that. And there were many Jews who literally memorized the Old Testament.

They memorized the whole thing. Elie Nesim complained that there weren't very many around in his day who could still do it. But there were in the early days; many of those Jews memorized the entire Bible so that they couldn't take it out.

How many Bibles have you got in your house? Okay, I'm embarrassed. I've lost count. Bible after Bible. This is my father's Bible, my mother's Bible, my uncle's Bible, and my Bible here. My, my, my, my. But the day is coming, probably not terribly far from now, for those who are still on the earth, the Bibles will be taken away. You remember Voltaire, don't you? Voltaire was one of the French revolutionaries. And Voltaire, he rebelled against God and the Bible and the king and so on. He bragged, he said, "Within 50 years of my death, there won't be a Bible in France." Within 50 years of his death, the Christians had taken over his house and were using it either as a bookstore or a Bible printing press. Don't tell God what you're going to do about His book. He's going to defend it, even if it has to be hidden in the wall in the house of the Lord. So this is a big deal.

Back to verse eight:

[2 Kings 22:8-10 NKJV]

⁸ Then Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, "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 So Shaphan the scribe went to the king, bringing the king word, saying, "Your servants have gathered the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of those who do the work, who oversee the house of the LORD." ¹⁰ Then Shaphan the scribe showed the king, saying, "Hilkiah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read it before the king.

And we're not really sure what that book was. Many people think that that book was the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Some say no, it might only have been just Deuteronomy. We're not sure what it was. Certainly wasn't the New Testament—hadn't been written yet—but it was part of the Old Testament.

Josiah's Repentance

So verse 11: it came to pass when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes. And the king commanded Hilkiah the priest and Ahikam the son of Shaphan and Achbor the son of Michaiah and Shaphan the scribe and Asaiah, a servant of the king, saying:

[2 Kings 22:13 NKJV]

¹³ "Go, inquire of the LORD for me, 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 aroused against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us."

Is that a good response to reading the truth of God? Yeah, it's interesting. It was a believer who was reading the book of the law and had this great response. I wonder if some of us like me don't become too casual when they read the book of the law. And we see things there that we say we ought to do, and we say it's right, and we close the book and don't do what we know we ought to do.

Now, Josiah is a great man. And we're going to read about him in these next couple of chapters. What was great about him? Answer: he did what the book said. The book said, "Don't do these things." He said, "I'm going to get rid of them." And he went out of his way to get rid of them out of the land. He repented. His words here are delightful. Verse 11: he heard the words of the book of the law, he rent his clothes, and then he commanded his servants saying, "Go, inquire of the Lord for me and for this people, for all Judah concerning the words of this book that is found. For great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of the book."

So did he believe the warnings that were in the book? The answer is yes. Did he do anything about it? Yes. What did he do first? The first thing he did was he tore his clothes. And he let it be known to himself and to those around him that something was very wrong. And then he commanded his servants, these five men, five servants of the Lord, to inquire of the Lord. "What do we do now that we found that we're in error?" So he sent his five men. Go to the Lord. Find out what's going on. And so they decide that that's what they're going to do. Verse 14.

So Hilkiah the priest—oh, I better stop there and let some others have some comments. Any of you would like to comment on these introductory verses?

"Harold, I do have a question, and it goes back to verse 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 hand or to the left.' It's that last part, 'to the right hand and to the left.' I'm just confused as to what that might mean. In the book of Jonah, God ends by saying the Ninevites didn't know their left hand from their right hand."

[Jonah 4:11 NKJV]

"And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left--and much livestock?"

Is there a connection at all? No. That's interesting. I haven't thought of it. Let me tell you what I think right hand and left means. You read through the New Testament—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—what do you get? Well, you get the stories of Jesus. Book of Acts, what do you get? And you get the Acts of the Church. And then you get the Book of Romans. What's it all about? And it's a declaration of the great plan of God and the ways of God. And then you get Corinthians. And the Corinthians say, "Yes, but..." And so they go way off to the left hand. And they say, "But you don't need to do this, and you don't need to do that, and you don't need to do this, and don't get carried away. Romans is good, but don't worry about it too much."

And then you get to the Book of Galatians. And what's Galatians? Well, it says the Book of Romans is good, but you should really add a few other things, and we'd like you to put a few more pages in the back of your Bible because we got to keep this law and that law and the other law—we don't do this and this and this. So I've always assumed that that's the left and the right. Okay, that's one possibility. I think David—so I think Josiah was the same. I think Josiah said, "I'm not gonna defeat the law of God in my life by turning away from God, but I'm not gonna add to it either." Won't be on the right or the left.

Now what about the children of Nineveh who didn't know their right from their left? Could it mean in part that they didn't know the difference between what God was planning for them and whether they should be doing less or more? I think that's all part of the maybe the same package. Any other thoughts on that? On the other passages we've been studying?

"Well, that's—go ahead, Paul, go ahead."

"No, no, you go ahead, you first."

"We're happy with either one, actually we're happy with both, so come on."

"Okay, Sebastian, you're there, so you do it."

"All right, sorry, thank you. It's not all that profound. I was just struck by the exact same verse and the way that I was—what came to my mind was, 'but he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.' And the connection that came to my mind is how God makes our paths straight. Isaiah 45 verse 2, it says:"

[Isaiah 45:2 NKJV]

"I will go before you
And make the crooked places straight;
I will break in pieces the gates of bronze
And cut the bars of iron.

"Right? Proverbs—I forget that chapter—but it says:"

[Proverbs 3:6 NKJV]

In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct your paths.

"Right? God makes our path straight; not crooked, not winding, not to the left or to the right but straight because He is consistent, never changing, and faithful. And yeah, it says in Psalm 23, right? He leads us in paths of righteousness. Amen. Straight, straight paths. And it's all for His name's sake, to His glory."

[Psalm 23:3 NKJV]

He restores my soul;
He leads me in the paths of righteousness
For His name's sake.

"So that's the thoughts for that same verse, which was really good that it's on all of our minds. The other thing I had—and what's that same verse, verse 2—it says, 'And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the ways of his father David.' Josiah was Amon's son, but he did what was right in the sight of the Lord. The kings that did not follow the Lord, they're mentioned as sons of their earthly father. But both Josiah and Manasseh did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and it mentions both of them as the son of David. So I thought that was special."

"So—thank you, Paul, for your grace to me."

"Yeah, well, keep going. I think it's, well, he started at eight years old, and you already mentioned what could an eight-year-old—some of them can't even walk across the street. But

we don't really hear of anything of any of his exploits, which I don't know if there were many between eight and 18. Some places in this world, in this province, they can't vote until they're 18, and they don't think you're an adult until you're 18 or 19 or 20 or 21. And as a matter of fact, it says that until you get to the age of accountability, the Lord takes you to heaven. And I'm wondering if anybody in this world is accountable at 30 as we speak. It's not been very good. We don't see much accountability with anyone."

"But I look at this and he didn't do anything wrong between 8 and 18 because it said he did what was right in the sight of the Lord. So maybe Hilkiyah was a big influence there on him doing the right things and Shaphan and so on. He had people around him that were very good, I suppose; otherwise he would have been doing the wrong things because he would have been very influenced at eight years old. When I look at my grandkids and my kids at eight years old, they basically—oh, they were always that age, my kids and grandkids—because you know when they were at that age they really were impressionable. And then they got outside influences and some of them went haywire, some of them continued on, and that's good. But we see, you know, we look at legacy over circumstances. We see that his legacy, I mean, his dad wasn't so good. His grandfather started out rotten and went all the way through, but he ended up okay. He repented."

"And that's wonderful. I think it's wonderful when—I don't know who it was that said one day, he said, 'You know, it's better to end well than it is to start well.' Well, I want to add to that. I think it's better to start well and all the way through your life do well, as far as following the Lord, and end, as Joseph did, leaning on a staff and worshiping. Joseph was kind of a bit of a scoundrel throughout, but he sure ended up well too. And he was, and God loved him very much, and He changed his name to Israel."

[Genesis 32:28 NKJV]

And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed."

"And he did very, very well, but you see, he could have had an excuse to not be a good king because of the influence of his grandfather, if you read about what happened to him, and his father wasn't any good. And there were a lot that weren't any good, but he did seem to keep his eyes on what David did. And that's marvelous. And I think that point was good. I never thought of that, that, you know, he's a son of David. But the other ones, they gave their earthly fathers as the son they were. So he had a very bad upbringing when you get down to

it. But yet, in spite of all of that, he was a follower of God. He was a follower of God. He just kept going. How did that happen? I don't know."

"I look at my own ancestry. I look at my dad's dad; I didn't really know him. I can hardly remember him. But he did know the Lord, and his mom knew the Lord. My dad knew the Lord. I know the Lord. But a lot of my mom and dad's kids went haywire for a long time. But every single one of them in the end—except my brother Dan, at 82, he died. I can't tell you whether he was saved or not. I'd kind of rather think that he wasn't, but I hope he was. But I don't know that. So, you know, they all turned to the Lord. And I look at—you know, we can't blame our circumstances and our background, even if it's bad. Because Josiah turned all that around to say that sort of the people here that say, 'Well you know, I didn't have a good background like Harold—his mom and dad taught him how to pray when they knelt down at the bed with him and all of that; I don't have a good background like that, how do you expect me to carry on?' Well, look at Josiah. Don't look at Harold—Harold is a good example of how to keep going and everything, and it's great when you have a good spiritual background—but if you don't, it's absolutely no excuse to not follow the Lord. I think that we just, just, just need to follow Him, read the Word. And that's what's coming up next. They read the Word."

"I guess we did have some of that. They read the Word and he tore his clothes. He recognized—well he was about 18 at that time—he told us, he says, 'Wow!' What an impression the Word of God had upon him. Amen. I mean up until then, can you imagine from 8 to 18, he probably hadn't heard the Word of God? But yet when he heard the Word of God, he recognized right away his sin, that he was sinful. He recognized how sinful his dad was, his grandpa, and he recognized that he was a sinner. He could have just said, 'Well they were really bad, I'm much better than them, I don't have to worry about this,' but he didn't do that. He said—he tore his clothes and he repented, and he decided he needed to get right with the Lord. And then from the top down, he started setting the example and had it read everywhere."

"And of course, we'll go on to see how he did all that. But it's just remember: it's not—the legacy is good to have a good legacy. I had a pretty good legacy, I've got to say. I appreciate it, thankful for my good legacy. Harold did; many of us had a good legacy. I know, Sebastian, I heard your dad preach one time and I thought, 'Well, you know, he's got a good legacy there.' His dad preaches really well, he knows the Word, and he does well. But yet some of our kids, they don't do so well. So praise the Lord, we can do well no matter what."

"And I was thinking about this the other day—and maybe you can pray about this for me. I have a big family. In my mom's family there were 14 boys—I mean 13 boys—no, pardon me, I'll get it right yet: 14 in the family, seven boys, seven girls. Amazing thing is—this is a side

note—you know, I'm not sure if you've heard of it, but seven had blue eyes and seven had brown eyes. And so my mom always said, she said, 'You know, there's 10 in my family, there's 10 of us all together, and interestingly enough, five had brown eyes and five had blue eyes.' But so she thought if you have the right amount of kids, it's going to be that way. But, I mean, that was her thing. We all smiled about it and so did she. But she was sticking to that story just because she liked to."

"But she was a godly woman. She really set a good tone for our family. And, you know, I have been praying about it, and maybe you can help me pray about this. I've got such a big family, and I want to tell you something: 90% of them—and I mean there are, listen, when we have a family gathering, there can be 75 or 80 if they all came. And you know what? A lot of them I don't even know. And most of them don't know the Lord, have no idea of the background that they have. And I would like to start—amen—start to getting a hold of people. I haven't had very good results at family reunions; they see me come and they head the other way. But you know what? Maybe there will be one or two or three that will open up to listening to the gospel. So I'd appreciate your prayers. Maybe I could be a little like Josiah and do what I need to do. But first of all, I need to get in touch with them. You know what? I thought that was great what James Nicholson said the other day—I repeated it once before—but, you know, he said, 'Do what's in front of you.' Well, I've got a lot in front of me: my own relatives. And most of them aren't saved. So, appreciate your prayers for that. Thank you."

Choosing Your Father

All right, well, several other responses to this now. First of all, a theme that's been running through much of what has been said, and it goes like this: you get to choose your father. That sounds strange, but it's true. And so you're either of your father the devil—that's what the Lord said to the Pharisees—or you're the father of the Lord. Everybody gets to choose his father, which is a good deal, because if you've got a good father, you can say, "That's what I want." And if you don't have a good father, you say, "I'd rather get a better one." And so I had a good father, and when I learned this, I said, "I want a better one too," so I trusted the Lord. So I had two good fathers. Everybody gets to choose their father. Very important. Very significant.

Second point, I guess, is how big is a large family? And frankly, Paul forgets because his family is so big. But I was told—Paul, you tell me if I'm wrong—but I was told that when your mother died, there were just about 300 of her posterity who survived her. She had all kinds of children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren and in-laws, and I think it was 300. Is that number right, Paul?

"Oh, I'm not sure of the exact number, but that was pretty close. I know that, you know, I mean, she had a great—there was a lot of people that were relatives there, and there was a lot of friends and people, and she had a great influence on a lot of people. You were there at the funeral. You took the funeral, I believe. And I think the place was just about packed. I think there was 400 people there. But as far as all of the things, yeah, there was a big family. I don't know the exact number. I'm sorry."

Well, I was impressed with the number of people in the family until I realized that most—sorry—at the funeral, until I realized most of them were family. And so I thought, "Well, that's reasonable. Of course you'd be there if you're family." So anyway, all of that is not terribly as important as some of the other stuff. But your mother was a profound influence on many people, including you. Praise the Lord.

And the third thing I wanted to say I forget. So we'll get to that later, maybe. All right. So what does the king do when he finds the book? Oh, I know what I was going to say: he was a Christian before he found the book. His repentance was after he became a Christian and before he became a Christian. When does the Christian stop repenting? I guess when he gets to heaven, because the Lord does the final repenting for him. But the Christian is not one who can say, "I repented 25 years ago. Everything's fine. La dee da." The Christian is continually repenting in his life. And as he reads the book of the law, he says, "Oh, Harold, that's a big problem." But very, very easy to go on to the next verse and forget what it was you saw. And Josiah, by the grace of God, was not like that.

The Ministry of Huldah

So verse number 14 now. So Hilkiah the priest and Ahikam and Achbor and Shallum and Asaiah, they've been commanded by the Lord to seek the Lord. So they went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum, the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, the keeper of the wardrobe. Now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college and they communed with her.

That's strange. If you were going to go to seek the Lord, where would you go? And I'm not sure what they could have done. They probably could have gone to the tabernacle. They could have held a prayer meeting for an hour or a day or a week seeking the Lord. But they went to Huldah, the prophetess. They didn't go to one of the prophets; they went to Huldah the prophetess. All of which is a strange sort of a situation, and I'm not sure all it means.

Some have pointed out that there may have been a relationship between this woman, Huldah, the wife of Shallum, and Jeremiah. So turn in your Bible to the book of Jeremiah, chapter 32. Some of you will remember the story, Jeremiah 32. Jeremiah 32, and verse number 6:

[Jeremiah 32:6-8 NKJV]

⁶ And Jeremiah said, "The word of the LORD came to me, saying, ⁷ "Behold, Hanamel the son of Shallum your uncle will come to you, saying, "Buy my field which is in Anathoth, for the right of redemption is yours to buy it." ⁸ Then Hanamel my uncle's son came to me in the court of the prison according to the word of the LORD, and said to me, "Please buy my field that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin; for the right of inheritance is yours, and the redemption yours; buy it for yourself." Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD.

Some people have put together that verse and the verse about Shallum in chapter 22 of 2 Kings, saying probably the same Shallum. They lived about the same time, probably the same Shallum. If that was the case, then Huldah, the wife of Shallum, would have been Jeremiah's aunt. And it could be that they were a godly family in those days, and that there may not have been that many other godly families around, but Jeremiah's aunt, Huldah—thank you—became a wise woman of God, a wise counselor.

It's not usual for the Lord to elevate women to that position. Not usual that women take on that position. Is it wrong? Well, sir, I don't think it's wrong for Huldah. I think maybe it was wrong for some of the men. There's a lot of good women around. Have you ever noticed that? A lot of good women have got more knowledge than the men. And so what's the problem? And the problem is the men. Hallelujah for good women! What's the matter with the men who aren't good women? So often people say, "Well, the religious part of the family, that's all up to my wife." It was our next-door neighbor when we were children. The man said, "I'm not sure about heaven. I think if I get there, it'll be because of my wife's ticket." What? He was a good man. He was an accountant, drove a nice car. I liked him. But he wasn't interested in the things of God. He left that all to his wife. He did the important things, he thought. How tragic.

So when you read of women, don't always blame the women. But say, "What's the matter with you men? Stand up. Take your responsibility." Women, what do you do if the men don't stand up and take responsibility? What do you do? You carry on. And so Huldah did. Good for her.

The Message of Judgment and Mercy

Verse 15. She said to them:

[2 Kings 22:15-17 NKJV]

¹⁵ Then she said to them, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel, "Tell the man who sent you to Me, ¹⁶ "Thus says the LORD: "Behold, I will bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants--all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read--
¹⁷ because they have forsaken Me and burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands. Therefore My wrath shall be aroused against this place and shall not be quenched.

That's a pretty heavy statement. She wasn't one to hold back the truth. Very often, when questions are asked, the answerer says, "How can I explain this in words that are not offensive? How can I hold back the severity of it all?" Why did the king get afraid? Because he read the words of God, and he probably heard by a tradition a lot about those words. He just hadn't realized that they were as strong as they are. When you read Deuteronomy, you say, "Yikes!" A lot of this is heavy stuff. Why did God say it that way? Because He intended to say it that way, to fill us with fear so that we would listen to Him and obey Him. What did Josiah do? Josiah listened, and he said, "This is heavy." And he tore his clothes, and he went to Huldah. And he said, "Huldah, what do you think of this?" And she said, "You're right, it is heavy. And you did the right thing by tearing your clothes, because the wrath of God that's going to come is going to be very severe."

So, praise the Lord. Praise the Lord for Huldah. Praise the Lord for Josiah. Praise the Lord for the word of God that they listened to and feared. So that's the basics. But she has two aspects to her response. King says—Josiah says to her—"What do we do?" She said, "Number one, it's true. All that you've read is true. And the judgments of God are going to fall upon you in this kingdom and the work that's been going on."

Verse 18:

[2 Kings 22:18-20 NKJV]

¹⁸ But as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, in this manner you shall speak to him, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: "Concerning the words which you have heard-- ¹⁹ because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, that they would become a desolation and a curse, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you," says the LORD. ²⁰ Surely, therefore, 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 calamity which I will bring on this place.' So they brought back word to the king.

So what's the response? You read the Bible and you read all the judgments that are going to come. What's the answer? They're going to come and you repent, and what's the answer going to be? Either the judgment's going to be deferred or the Lord's going to be gracious to you. If you repent before the Lord in the light of the great judgments of God, what's going to happen? He is going to be gracious to you. That's pretty good stuff.

Why do we continue to preach the truth of God? We preach the judgments of God because they are severe and they must be severe. And we preach the blessings of repentance because everywhere you find it—even in the life of this man's grandfather Manasseh—everywhere you find that repentance, there's the blessing of God. The bad man, Manasseh, got blessings of repentance. The good man, Josiah, got the blessings of repentance. That's somewhat profound, isn't it? Some people blame God. They blame God for all kinds of things that they themselves have done and brought upon their own head.

But when you get right down to it, what do we know about God? He's a gracious God. And He responds to the repentance and the cries of His people. And so we keep on praying. We say, "Lord, I'm going to read the book. I'm going to try to follow the book. But if I do, I know that you are going to be gracious. If I'm repentant, you will be gracious. And the blessing of God will flow." So the judgments are going to come upon the nation, and Josiah is going to be blessed with his good things.

Public Reformation

So what's next? Maybe some comments on that before we get into chapter 23. So what do you do? Well, many people say, "I've just read about the blessings of God. They're marvelous. So I'm going to just go into a corner here and I'm going to rest up for heaven." That's a common thing. Many people say, "God's going to bless. I think I'll just go have a nap, and the Lord will look after everything. La-di-da-di-da." And Josiah says, "No." Josiah says, "There's a lot of things here that are wrong. I'm going to set them right."

That's chapter 23. Why? Why? Why would you set everything right if you know the Lord's going to bring judgment tomorrow? Trying to think of an illustration. You've got a house, and it's not the way it should be. And so the record comes along and says, "I'm going to tear this house down in six months." What are you going to do in the meantime? I said, "The house is going to be torn down. The house is going to be torn down. Let's forget it." Josiah, very soon,

the judgments that have been pronounced against this city, this country, this temple—it's all going to be torn down, Josiah. What are you going to do? And Josiah says, "Well, it's not going to be torn down for a while. I'm going to do the reformation that has to be done."

And I marvel. We're going to go into the detail, and we're going to see what he does. And you sit back and you say, "Why don't you just let the Babylonians come in? They can transform everything. They can get rid of all the bad gods and all the other stuff." Josiah said, "No, I'm going to get rid of everything so that when the Babylonians come in, they'll know that we got rid of that which was not of God, and so that when in Ezra's day and Nehemiah's day, they all come back to the land, they're going to know that was left in good shape, not in bad shape."

And so instead of sitting there, chapter 23, verse 1 says:

[2 Kings 23:1-6 NKJV]

¹ Now the king sent them to gather all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem to him. ² The king went up to the house of the LORD with all the men of Judah, and with him all the inhabitants of Jerusalem--the priests and the prophets and all the people, both small and great. 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. ³ Then the king stood by a pillar 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 this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people took a stand for the covenant. ⁴ And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, the priests of the second order, and the doorkeepers, to bring out of the temple of the LORD all the articles that were made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven; and he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried their ashes to Bethel. ⁵ Then he removed the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense on the high places in the cities of Judah and in the places all around Jerusalem, and those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun, to the moon, to the constellations, and to all the host of heaven. ⁶ And he brought out the wooden image from the house of the LORD, to the Brook Kidron outside Jerusalem, burned it at the Brook Kidron and ground it to ashes, and threw its ashes on the graves of the common people.

Was that wise? Yes, it's exactly what the book of Deuteronomy demanded: get all the people together and read this book. You do it every seven years. It had been a long time since they'd read it because they didn't even have it. But they got them all together and they read it. Who

was there? All the men of Judah. All the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The priests, the prophets, all the people, both small and great. That would be quite a congregation. Is it important to read the law? Yeah. Is it important to read the law for everybody?

Interesting, in the days of Joel, all the people got together to, or were told to get together to, pray. Here they're told to get together to listen to the law. Deuteronomy says get them all together every seven years to listen to the law. What's going on in the United States of America? Is it this week? I don't know. But there's something going on in the United States of America where the entire Bible is going to be read in ceremony, probably in Washington. I don't know all the details. My problem is when I hear the news, I hear headlines; I don't get detail. But it's going on now. Donald Trump along with hundreds of others are going to read the book of the law. They'll be reading it from Genesis chapter 1 to Revelation chapter 22. It'll probably take several days. And politicians will be reading, and religious leaders will be reading, and celebrities from Hollywood will be reading, but they're going to read the law audibly. And I think you can tune in and listen to it. Is that good or bad? That's probably not bad. I think it's good that they're even going to pay attention to it. Some will hear it. Some will say, "It's true, it's the Bible. We're supposed to live it." And that's what's happening in the United States of America this month. I'm not sure of the dates. Praise the Lord.

Well, Josiah said, "I'm going to get everybody together. I read the law, and I tore my clothes. We're going to read the law for the entire congregation, and we'll see what they will do." So, verse 3. And the king stood by a 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 their heart and with all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that is written in the book. And all the people stood to the covenant.

Did it have an impact? Yeah. Have you ever noticed—and especially I think it's true when you read the Pentateuch—that you read the first few words and you say, "That's interesting." And then you read the next few words and you say, "Well, that's pretty powerful." And then you read the next few words, and you read the next few words, and you read the next few words, and you say, "When is this going to end?" And you read the next verse, and you say, "Well, not going to end yet." And it keeps going and going and going and going and going. You'd almost think that God who wrote the Bible recognizes that we've got an attention deficit disorder. And He's got to read it, and He's got to speak it and speak it and speak it and speak it until it finally gets into our slow heads.

That's what happened here. Isn't it amazing? These people grew up under Manasseh. These people grew up under Amon. And the end of verse 3: All the people stood to the covenant. We say that could never happen. Can you imagine that happening in the city of Vancouver?

Why not? Well, we know the people in Vancouver; they don't pay attention to things like that. But it happened in Nineveh. And it happened here in Judah. It's marvelous. And so you can imagine Josiah going to bed that night and saying, "Lord, that's absolutely marvelous. We read the law and the people said, 'Yes, we will do it.'" Was there ever a day like that before? Yep. When was that? Well, that was the time when the Lord Himself spoke to the children of Israel. He spoke from Mount Sinai. He gave them the Ten Commandments and a lot of other things. And they said, "All that the Lord has said we will do." Did they do it? No. But at least they got to the point where they said they would do it. They didn't do it, but at least they said they would.

Ensuring the Change

So I've got a line in my Bible between verse number 3 and verse number 4. Now, verse number 3, what precedes it says, they said, or he said, "Don't do it." And they said, "Yes." But then after verse 4, Josiah goes on and he said, "Now they said they won't do it, so I am going to ensure that they can't do it." That make sense?

Mommy says, "Don't play with whatever it is." Johnny says, "I won't." Mommy walks out of the room. Johnny picks the thing up, throws it on the floor and smashes it. Mommy comes in and says, "You said you wouldn't do it." Oh, Johnny starts to cry. So what does mommy do next time? She says, "Johnny, don't do it." And then she picks it up, puts it in behind something else on the top shelf, way back in, so he can't do it. And Johnny says, "I'd like to do it, but I can't do it. Mommy, why can't I do it?" And she says, "Because I'm giving you two instructions. Number one: don't do it. Number two: I'm going to ensure you can't do it."

Now we're going to get to a lot of that in the verses that follow. But I'm going to give you the general principle first. You read your Bible and you say, "I shouldn't do it." What do you do next? You take the action to destroy whatever it is so that you can't do it. It's all very simple. Can't do it. Okay? And so that's the way it was around our house when we were kids. And the mummy said, "Don't do it." And then lo and behold, it wasn't there anymore, so we couldn't do it.

Now, Josiah says the same thing. And he was great because of this. Let's keep reading. We don't have much time, but verse 4: the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest and the priest of the second order and the keepers of the door to bring forth out of the temple of the Lord all the vessels that were made for Baal and for the grove and for all the hosts of heaven. And he burned them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron and carried the ashes of them unto Bethel.

What would you call that? Well, a lot of people would call it overkill. You say, "Don't do it." Okay. And then you bring them out of the temple, all the vessels that were made for Baal. And then what do you do? Well, you burn them. Okay. You've taken them out and you burn them. So you couldn't go get them and bring them back in again because they were all burned. And then he burned them in the fields of Kidron and he carried the ashes of them unto Bethel. Why to Bethel? Because Bethel was a center of idolatry. So he carried the ashes of them up there. He scattered them around Bethel to remind Bethel of the holiness of God. Did he do a thorough job of saying, "You can't do it because I'm not going to let you worship them anymore. They are gone. Even the ashes of them I've taken away."

Systematic Destruction of Evil

I wonder whether we go that far in our own relationship with the sin that does so easily beset us. So that's number one. Number two, verse five: and he put down the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah. And in the places round about Jerusalem, them also that burned incense to Baal, to the sun, to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the hosts of heaven.

So, yeah. He goes out and he gets rid of the priests. And he says to the priests, "Now listen, you can't institute—restitute—what you had done before." So he got rid of the idols and then he gets rid of the priests who are teaching them the idols. "I'm going to make it difficult," he said, "for idolatry to be resumed. I'm going to get rid of the priests."

What happened when Joshua entered the land of Canaan? What did he do with the idolatry that he found there? He burned them, chopped them down, burned them. All that fabulous artwork. What would happen if the archaeologists found it today? They'd say, "This is beautiful. This is wonderful. I wonder how people worshipped it." Joshua said, "You're not going to do that again." The Lord said, "You're not going to do that when you get into the land. You're going to take those idols and you're going to burn them." Don't be a student of bad art. Don't be a student of bad philosophy. Get rid of it. Don't be a student of anything that's wrong. Don't preserve it because it's brilliant.

All right. It says at the end: to the sun, to the moon, to the planets, and all the hosts of heaven. Sun, moon, planets. What does that remind you of? Astrology. You ever heard of astrology? Used to be in all the newspapers. We don't have newspapers anymore. But I'm sure you'll find it on the internet everywhere you turn if you want. Where did all that come from? The astrologers—did they invent it all yesterday afternoon? No. Where does it come from? A long way back. Certainly had it in the days of Josiah, and they had it long before that. Where does modern thinking come from? Answer: old religious lies. The psychologists

would say, "There's nothing new in psychology. It was all there in the ancient religions of India and other parts of the East." That's modern psychology. Who says that? The modern psychologists. The sociologists say the same thing. Where do our new philosophies come from? Same old regurgitated lies that the devil was using thousands of years ago.

Where did they learn to worship the sun and the moon and the stars? Well, it wasn't thought up by people who went to the moon the other day. It's been there for a long time. What did he do? He put down all the priests who were propagating that evil.

Verse 6: and he brought out the grove or the shrine from the house of the Lord without Jerusalem to the brook Kidron and burned it at the brook Kidron and stamped it small to powder and cast the powder upon the graves of the children of the people. So what do we know about the brook Kidron? Well, it's got an interesting name. What's the word Kidron mean? Black. And so what's the brook Kidron mean? It means Black Creek. That's kind of an ominous name. It's the kind of name that you would read in Zane Grey's stories of the Wild West: Black Creek. And that's where not only here but all through the Old Testament the brook Kidron was used as the place where they got rid of the idolatry.

What did they do when they got it down there? He took them to the brook Kidron and he burned it at the brook Kidron. So he took it to the place of getting rid of it, took it to the garbage dump, and then he burned it when they got there. Why would you burn it in the garbage dump? Because some people would go to the garbage dump and dig it up, that's why. So you burn it. So they couldn't go to the garbage dump and bring it up.

He stamped it to small powder. Apparently, it didn't burn completely. What would you do if you burned something that had some metal in it? Or something else, probably metal. Maybe even some silver or gold. So you burn it. And then what are you going to do with the silver and gold that's left over? And so Josiah said, "You're not going to get the silver and gold." He stamped it to powder and cast the powder upon the graves of the children of the people.

Was he thorough in his obliterating the land from the evil in the land? Yes, thorough. Are you thorough in getting rid of that which is evil? And I told you the story before, but I'll tell you again because it's a good example. Our grandfather, long before we knew him—we never did know him—but when he had children, he ran across a book that was bad. And so instead of taking it away, he took it out to the chopping block and he got his axe and he chopped the book in pieces and then he either threw them out or burned them. I thought, "Grandpa, that's pretty good. That's the way it should be done." He didn't just say, "We'll throw it over here. We'll give it to somebody else. We don't want it." He says, "It's bad stuff." Who knows what was in the book? I have no idea. All we know is that he got rid of it the right way. He chopped it up and then he burned it or threw it in the garbage. Can't be used again. Good.

Got rid of all these things. Good for him. So he took the powder, put it on the graves of the children of the people, and he says, "This is what we think of what it was you used to bring evil upon yourselves."

Conclusion: Laying Aside Every Weight

All right, that's our story up to that point. Next week, we'll carry on. There's a lot more in this book of 2 Kings 23. Basically says, bad things are bad. Get rid of them. Don't just get rid of part of them; get rid of all the bad things. That's Hebrews:

[Hebrews 12:1 NKJV]

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

Get rid of all the excess weights. You're going to run a race in the Olympics? Thank you. If you run a race in the Olympics and it's a rainy day, what do you do before the race? Well, you take off your raincoat. And then you take off your gumboots. And then you take off and you take off and you take off until you've got nothing on that weighs anything or that will hold you back because of wind resistance. Don't be the kind of person who does 25% of your repenting. Get in there. Do it all. Josiah did it all. Good for Josiah.

Lord, we thank you. Very strange chapter, Lord, because it's all going to be taken away in just a few years. And yet he was zealous in his repentance, even though the time was short. Lord, may we be zealous in our repentance. One thing to repent when you're 10 years old; another thing to repent when you're getting near the end. But Josiah is the example of repenting near the end. Help us to do that, we pray. So we give thanks now. Bless us. Bless those who would normally be with us. Again, Lord, bless Jan Lynn. We just don't know what's going on, Lord, but none of her family are here tonight. And so we pray that she will be speedily healed. And the same for Susanna. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.