

Josiah's Reformation and the Purging of Idolatry

April 26, 2026

16th Avenue Gospel Chapel

References: 2 Kings 23, 2 Kings 23:1-13; 2 Kings 23:15-16; Acts 2:42; Deuteronomy 6:5; 1 Kings 13:1-2

The Covenant of Josiah

So back now to 2 Kings chapter 23. And we've been studying about this very good man, Josiah. He was, was it eight years old when he came to the kingdom? I've just got to look back here to find out. Yes, eight years old when he came to the kingdom, 18 years old when he began a thorough cleansing of the kingdom from idolatrous and evil departure from the Lord. And we talked a little bit about this last week.

I'm going to take us back to review slightly what we considered last week. Chapter 23, verse 1 says,

[2 Kings 23:1-2 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.

That's the kind of thing I think we should do more often. And so, praise the Lord, it happened. You'll remember at the beginning of verse 3, the king made a covenant before the Lord to walk after the Lord.

[2 Kings 23:3 NKJV]

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.

So there was a national response. And together, this vast multitude—who knows how many there were—but they listened to the book of the law. Probably, at the least, the entire reading of the book of Deuteronomy. Probably took an hour or two to read it. And then they all agreed to it. Well, I guess we'd get pretty excited with that, wouldn't we? And we'd see a response.

What would happen if at **16th Avenue Gospel Chapel** we had a big meeting one day and 50 people said, "I want to become a Christian. I'm going to trust in the Lord"? And we'd be overwhelmed. And all the congregations say, "We want to follow the Lord." We'd say, "Hallelujah!" What comes next? And you go to the book of Acts chapter 2, and you read that they continued steadfast in the apostles' doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers, and you say, "Hallelujah!"

[Acts 2:42 NKJV]

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Response B, though, of the responsible brethren—what would they do? Josiah saw this and he said, "All right, what I've got to do now is remove from the kingdom those things that would cause departure from the Lord." One thing to say, "I am going to turn from evil"; it's another thing to **turn** from evil. One thing to say it, it's another thing to take action, to do something about it. And I just don't know of any other portion of scripture which has such a lengthy list of the things that Josiah did to keep the people from going back on their word.

Repentance is a multi-activity. There's a lot of things to repent from. Okay, you meet a man, he gets saved, and you say to him, "Well, what do you repent?" He says, "I'm not going to break into banks anymore. I am not going to be a bank robber anymore." And you say, "Well, that's really wonderful, mister." And you say, "What else are you going to repent of?" He says, "Well, that's pretty big. That's really all I need to do. I'm just going to stop robbing banks." What about little old ladies? "Well, yeah, I know, I'll rob a few little old ladies, but I'm not going to rob banks anymore." You say, "Hang on. If you're going to trust the Lord, you don't rob banks or little old ladies, and there's a lot of other things you don't do."

And so I tried to count the number of things that Josiah did to purge the land from those idolatrous things that would lead them into sin. And frankly, I can't count that. There might be a dozen, there might be 15, there might be 20, I guess. It depends how you count. But there was a lot. And I said to myself, "Harold, in your own life, repentance, how many

different things do you repent of? Is there anything, even now that you're an old man, that you didn't repent of and that you should have?" And you look back 25 years and you say, "You know, I don't think I should have done that." And then you look and you say, "Oh, I don't think I should have done that either." Josiah says, "I've looked around the kingdom. There's a lot of things that should be set right." I think that's what I will do. And so he did them.

The Purging of the Temple

And so in this chapter, we have a longer list of things that Josiah set right than I think we've had for anybody else. Verse 4 says,

[2 Kings 23:4 NKJV]

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.

So there's the high priest, and then there's the other priests in the family, the lesser priests, and then there's the Levites who keep the door. And he said to them all, 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. That's pretty thorough. He didn't just do it, but he got three levels of assistants to help him. And they brought them out, and they burned them in the fields of Kidron, and then he carried the ashes of them unto **Bethel**. Why would he take them to Bethel? Because the sins that they had committed were really—they originated in Bethel, they came from Bethel. So he took the ashes back to Bethel and said, in effect, "This is where they came from, this is what you guys get. We have burned your vessels." Good for him.

Verse 5 says,

[2 Kings 23:5 NKJV]

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.

He didn't just deal with the idols, he dealt with the people. He dealt with the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah. So how many people did he round up in this particular purge? And the answer is quite a few. A lot of people said, "I'm losing my job because of this man." And lots of distress. We're not told precisely what is meant in verse 5 at the beginning, that he "put down" the idolatrous priests. Does that mean that he slew them? We don't know. But certainly they were no longer employed.

Verse 6:

[2 Kings 23:6 NKJV]

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.

Why would he do that? Well, because a lot of the people were involved in that evil. And so he cast the powder of it onto their graves so that they would know that they were guilty.

Verse number 7:

[2 Kings 23:7 NKJV]

⁷ Then he tore down the ritual booths of the perverted persons that were in the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the wooden image.

He didn't stop. He said, "We've got to get rid of this." And he went. And then he did more. And then he did more. And then he did more. Have you noticed that the great men of God that you read about in the Bible—and the great men of God that you read as you read missionary biography and so on—they pursued the Lord at a level far beyond the common level of the common people. They take it **seriously**.

I've told you before that my mother became a Christian when she was probably 10 or 12 years old. And she didn't know very much. The family all became Christians about the same time. So it was all new to them. And they needed to learn. And so as a teenager, by the grace of God, the assembly brought W.J. McClure to town every year. And he would hold meetings for two weeks, three weeks, four weeks, five weeks, six weeks. And as a teenager, my mother went along every night. And so when we were growing up, we would hear often the phrase,

"Well, McClure said..." And we said, "Well, what did he say?" And she remembered what he said. And she remembered that it was applicable in this particular situation.

And so frankly, I thank the Lord for W.J. McClure. He was a good man. He taught my mother. He was from Ireland. He was only in town for a few weeks every year, but he had a profound impact upon Norma and me because she went to hear him. She went diligently to hear him. Now you hear the great people of God. There was a good man here in **Vancouver** years ago when Eric and I were younger, and he had a positive impact on both of us. His name was John Wilson. When I was a boy, I used to hear about him. And sometimes we would hear that he would preach five times in a day. I thought, "Five times in a day? Wow." And you hear these great big preachers, they preach twice a week. And John Wilson would preach five times a day. Then you hear about John Wesley, and he would preach five times before breakfast. Josiah said, "I'm going to do something about this." And he did. Praise the Lord.

Contemporary Compromise

So, verse 7 again. He broke down the houses of the **Sodomites** that were by the house of the Lord. We don't read terribly much about Sodomites in the Bible. We read enough about them to know that they were bad. Today we would simply call them homosexuals. What does God say? He says, "Remember Sodom and Gomorrah." That was their great sin. God sent fire and brimstone from heaven one day, and that was the end of them.

Where did these people live? Where did they practice? Well, it says they were **by the house of the Lord**. What a strange thing. You would think people who did that would run away to the far side of the wilderness, wouldn't they? No. They didn't do that. They moved in beside the house of the Lord. Why would they do that? Well, they would do that to state that God really was on their side. "I was made this way, you know. This is natural." And they had all kinds of arguments. And they said, "What we want is we want to be able to say God recognizes that this is not bad."

And we've got exactly the same thing in our world today. And there are many church organizations which are dividing down the middle. And one group says homosexuality is wrong, and the other group says, "God understands and will accept homosexuals into our congregations." And they did that. These sodomites moved right next door to the temple so they could say, "We're friends of God, too. You know, we're slightly different. Everything's fine. We're a good group."

I marvel how contemporary the Bible is. And there are those today who say that what God calls sin isn't really that bad, you know. And we're free. You trust the Lord Jesus as your savior, you're forgiven, so you can do pretty much anything you want. God says you can't.

And Josiah said, we're not going to stop just because we took things out of the temple. We're going to stop these people who were practicing evil right by the house of the Lord.

Verse 8:

[2 Kings 23:8-9 NKJV]

⁸ And he brought all the priests from the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beersheba; also he broke down the high places at the gates which were at the entrance of the Gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which were to the left of the city gate. ⁹ Nevertheless the priests of the high places did not come up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, but they ate unleavened bread among their brethren.

What do you do with the priests of the Lord who had defected from the Lord and had moved out of the temple and had gone to various cities in order to be the officiating priests of the evil that was practiced in the land? Josiah didn't kill all those priests. But what he did was he brought them out of their place of evil practice. And he brought them back to **Jerusalem**.

What do you do with these people? And I guess he could have killed them all, but he didn't. But they were priests. They couldn't have ordinary jobs. They couldn't go back farming because they didn't have any land. And so they came and they were a separate group of priests, not a group of serving priests, but at least they had food. They ate of the unleavened bread that their brethren were given. Very strange. I don't understand it. I must confess there's a lot of things as I go through scripture that I don't understand. But they were treated differently just because they were children of Aaron. They were granted a certain grace from the Lord. They were fed, but they weren't allowed to serve.

The Valley of Judgment

Verse 10:

[2 Kings 23:10 NKJV]

¹⁰ And he defiled Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire to Molech.

So they said they wouldn't do it. And then Josiah said, "Well, we're going to make sure." And so somehow he defiled this place, Tophet, so that they couldn't do it. Now, I don't know how he did that. All I know is that he took action to ensure that people couldn't offer their children in sacrificial service to **Moloch** anymore. I've mentioned many times that this has a parallel in abortion in our day. And it would be good, wouldn't it, if the government took action so that they couldn't do it anymore. We should do that.

Verse 11:

[2 Kings 23:11 NKJV]

¹¹ Then he removed the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun, at the entrance to the house of the LORD, by the chamber of Nathan-Melech, the officer who was in the court; and he burned the chariots of the sun with fire.

Had you ever heard of that before? I never heard of that before. What do we know about it? Pretty bad stuff. Part of astrology as we understand it. Part of the whole business of assuming that the planets are important. In our day, they ask you sometimes the question, "What sign were you born under?" It's all astrology. And so Josiah says, well, these people, they even gave their horses to be part of this. So what's he do? He takes away the horses and he burns the chariots of the sun with fire. There were special horses and special chariots, probably putting together a parade that would honor the sun and the moon and the stars. And so Josiah says, "Well, there's not going to be any parade next year because, you see, I'm putting away the horses and I'm going to burn the chariots."

And they didn't build them up again. What was he doing? He was continually putting things out of the life and the circumstances of the people so that they couldn't do those sins anymore. And so you and I, as individuals, we would like the government to do it, but we can't in many respects. But we say, "At least I can get rid of some of the stuff in my house." So sometimes you go through and clean out the house. What do you throw out? Do you ever throw out something that could lead you or somebody else to do something wrong or to think something wrong? You say, "I think I better get rid of that."

Mary Campa isn't here tonight, because if she was, she'd smile at this story. But there was a dear woman who got fed up with her television set. And so we were in Mary Campa's basement one night, a little Bible study, and we talked a little bit about television. And she said, "I'll tell you what I did. I got a pair of shears, and I went up to that cable, and I went like that!" And she said sparks were flying everywhere. She's a terrible woman. But anyway,

she cut off the cable, because she knew that some of the things that were there were not good for her and not good for her son. What happened? Well, I don't know. She didn't die because she cut the cable. But I do know that her son ultimately trusted the Lord and became a mighty man of God.

Anyway, that's the story. Mary would remember that story. All right. So he's basically saying, "We're going to shut down this worship of the sun and the moon and the stars, and we'll get rid of the horses and we will burn the chariots."

Verse 12:

[2 Kings 23:12 NKJV]

¹² The altars that were on the roof, the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the LORD, the king broke down and pulverized there, and threw their dust into the Brook Kidron.

Wherever he found evil, he fought against it. And you say, "Good for you, Josiah." Bold. Do you think he left a few messes behind him? No. They probably cleaned up the mess that he tore down. But after he'd gone through certain places, they didn't look the same. He changed them.

And again, we've got this **Brook Kidron**. And we were reminded again this morning of the Brook Kidron. And maybe just to tell you a little bit about the geography. The city of Jerusalem is built on some hills. The temple hill is at Mount Moriah. That's where the temple is. And to the south of that is Mount Zion; that's where the city of David was. And to the end of that long hill is the **Valley of the Son of Hinnom**. And that is the phrase from which we get the word **Gehenna**, which is the New Testament word for hell.

So here you've got the city of Mount Moriah here in the temple and Zion and down here, a valley of hell. And then on the east of the city is the Brook Kidron. And it flows past the temple on the east side and it goes down into the valley and ends up in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom. So in **Jerusalem**, the valley of Hinnom is on the south and the Brook Kidron is on the east. And the Brook Kidron, which is where all the judgments fell, flows into Gehenna. And you see, that's a pretty powerful picture. That's what it was in the days of Josiah. That's what it was in the days of the Lord Jesus.

So I was in Jerusalem—I don't know, probably 1990, more or less. I thought to myself, "I want to go on the southwest of the city, down into the Valley of Hinnom." Really, what I

wanted to see was a little parcel of land on that road, relatively near the bottom, which is where **Judas** gave the money for the purchase of the land, what was called the potter's field. I thought, I'd like to go down there and see that potter's field. So I was staying in a hotel, and I had a little free time. So I went to the taxi driver. I said, "I'd like you to take me to such and such, please." So he said, "Sure, hop in." So we went along and we got to the top of this valley and he stopped. And I said, "No, I don't want you to stop. I want you to keep going. I want to see this plot of land that Judas bought." He said, "I can't go down there." I said, "Well, why can't you go down there?" He said, "Because if I were to go down there, my taxi would be stoned. The people down there would stone my taxi." He said, "They're bad people down there, you know." I said, "Well, can't you even...?" He said, "If you want to go down, you walk. I'm not taking you down there." I thought, "Well, if you're not going down there, I'm not going down there either." So I never did go down there.

What's down there? What's a picture of hell? Several other things that are somewhat interesting if you read the Bible in detail. 2,000 years later, from the days of Judah. From the days of Josiah, 2,600 years later. Wow. God's pictures often stand around for a long time. So what do we know about the brook Kidron? "Black Creek," that's what the name means. And it's Black Creek, and it was a terrible place, and that's where they burned things. The refuse from the temple was burned there, and it flows down into the Valley of Hinnom. The warnings flowing into the judgments. So, Kidron appears often in this story, and the reason is because it is a place of warning that is going to be heading down to the place of eternal judgment.

The Mount of Corruption

Verse 13:

[2 Kings 23:13 NKJV]

¹³ Then the king defiled the high places that were east of Jerusalem, which were on the south of the Mount of Corruption, which Solomon king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Sidonians, for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the people of Ammon.

Pretty heavy stuff. So what do we know? Well, to the southwest of the city of Jerusalem is this place called the **Mount of Corruption**. In other places referred to as the "Hill of Offense." And it's just outside the city of Jerusalem, just on the other side of the Valley of Hinnom. And it's a reasonably nice place today. And this is where Solomon, the king of Israel,

he built a house there, a palace there, for **Ashtoreth**, the abomination of the Zidonians. Why did he do that? Well, he married several wives who were Zidonians, and they served Ashtoreth. And Solomon, in his wisdom, said, "They can't come down to the temple of God. These women that I married, they've got their own gods." And he couldn't get rid of his wife, so he said, "Oh, all right, what I'll do is I'll make you a palace over there, give you a really nice house, and you can have a temple next door, and you can worship your false gods over there."

How many wives did he have? Quite a few. How many false temples did he build? Well, he built one for the Zidonians, and then for **Chemosh**, the abomination of the Moabites, so he had a lot of Moabite wives. And for Milcom, the abomination of Ammon. How did it all start? Well, he married the daughter of Pharaoh. And he didn't want her in the city of Jerusalem, in the temple. So he built this place for her. And then when he got more wives, he kept shipping them off to the hill, building more houses, building more temples.

Why did the Lord say, "Don't marry them"? Because He said if you do marry them, you're going to find out that they think like they think. Most of you have been married. Did you find out when you got married that your spouse didn't always agree with everything you said? Yeah, you found that out. As a matter of fact, you probably found out that there were more things that she disagreed with or he disagreed with than I ever anticipated. And so what's the common word for a divorce? "Irreconcilable differences," whatever that means. And Solomon found the same thing. So he built the hill of offense.

So Rehoboam was his son. Where did Rehoboam grow up? On the hill of offense. Where did Solomon grow up? He grew up right beside the temple with David, his father, and Nathan, who had rebuked his father—probably his best friend because David named his son after Nathan, the prophet. He was right in the middle of godliness. And Rehoboam grew up on the hill of offense. What do you think Rehoboam was like? He was like his mother and like the sinners who went to school with him on the hill of offense. That's not terribly profound, you know. You get to be like those you spend a lot of time with. Spend a lot of time with the Bible. Spend a lot of time with the Christians. You know what will happen? You'll get to be like Jesus. Because they'll get to be like Jesus too. You'll learn from them. They'll learn from you. Marvelous.

What did Josiah do?

[2 Kings 23:14 NKJV]

¹⁴ And he broke in pieces the images, cut down the groves, and filled their places with the bones of men.

Well, good for him. What else did he do?

[2 Kings 23:15 NKJV]

¹⁵ Moreover the altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he broke down; and he burned the high place and crushed it to powder, and burned the wooden image.

Okay, now, I don't know about you. I've never really figured out what high places are. How can you break down a high place? I don't know. All I know is this: that **Jeroboam** said, "I've got to invent a new religion or all my people are going to go back to Jerusalem." So he built a new religion, headquartered it in Bethel, and he inaugurated high places. The high places apparently were a religion instituted by Jeroboam.

Personal Covenant and the "Canaanites"

[At this point, a second speaker begins to contribute to the discussion.]

First of all, he read all the words of the book of the covenant in verse 2. It was found in the house of the Lord. Then the king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the Lord. He just didn't read it; he made a covenant for **himself**. Amen. And I think that's very important that we would covenant with the Lord for ourselves, not for you or not for the other neighbor or not for the other person at the other assembly, but we make a covenant before ourselves.

Just like that lady decided to cut the cable, she did that for herself. She didn't come to your house to cut your cable. She did it for herself. And, you know, I think we would have a lot of trouble if we went to all the houses of the people of the assemblies and cut their cable. Now, I would say that that would be the number one best thing that we could do. I would have to start with mine. I'm having a hard time doing that. Now, does that mean I should do it or shouldn't do it? Probably means I should do it. But it's something that we think, "Oh, well, we can just watch this and this and that." But you know what? We are so human and so sinful

and we are so fleshly that sometimes you get tired and you want to just put a little news on, and then you go to something else and you think, "Oh, well, I just want to do something mindless for a half an hour, an hour." And you start doing something mindless and you find, "Aye, aye, aye, aye, aye!" You have to shut it off. But the damage is done. You've already seen it. You can't undo what you saw.

So that's one of the things that we need to do. We need to make a covenant before the Lord to follow the Lord and to keep His commandments.

[Deuteronomy 6:5 NKJV]

You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

And he did that with all his heart and his soul, and you might as well say his might because he certainly did it with all his might. That's Deuteronomy 6, isn't it? He says we need to love the Lord our God and we need to serve Him with all our heart and our soul and our might. And I think he's one of the only kings—if not the only king—that he actually served the Lord that way. It doesn't say he was the "best" king. I mean, David served the Lord with all his heart. I mean, he was a man after God's own heart and God really approved of David. We know that. But this man here, he made a covenant with the Lord and he served Him with all his soul and to perform the words of this covenant that were written in the book, and all the people took a stand for the covenant.

You see, it had to come from the **top down**. It rarely comes from the bottom up; it comes from the top down. We see this in churches, we see this in assemblies. If there's a good set of men running the assembly, the assembly runs quite well. And people take that example and they keep going and they keep following the Lord. The thing that I want to say, I think if I remember correctly, he was 18 at the time that this all happened. 18 years old. He started out at 8 years old. I look at some of our grandkids—we got a grandson that's 13 and another that's 14. And we sometimes discount the young people because they're young. And we need to pray that the Lord would raise them up.

And that's why we do pray for the young people at the assembly Friday night to get together and have a Bible study and have some fun and so on. And young people need to have some fun. But the Lord needs to raise up some young people. It could be at eight years old. Amen. We see somebody in the Sunday school that we see the Lord has His hand on them. And boy, oh boy, we should be there like that dirty shirt helping them every time we get a chance. And

you say, "Help that eight-year-old? He's not even understanding anything." We should be praying for him and making a point. We see some potential there that the Lord has got His hand on that person.

I'm reminded of what I've heard different stories about this where somebody would drive all over **Vancouver** and pick that person up and keep picking them up for Sunday school. And then you get a person like **Ron Edgecomb** come out of the woodwork. Amen. Because somebody kept—that's what I heard, anyway—they kept picking them up for Sunday school. We saw something in that man and praise the Lord it totally paid off. So we need to make that covenant before the Lord for ourselves. It needs to be a **personal covenant**; it can't be for someone else.

And, you know, you often wonder, the Lord put this in the Bible—all the different things that he had to go and snap out and take all the sin and get it out of Jerusalem there and out of the temple. And, I mean, everything was in the temple. It's in the temple today. You spoke of the homosexuals and so on. Jan and I were in **Vancouver**. We often go to English Bay, and there's this old Silvio Hotel, and they got a nice little restaurant there. It's a marvelous little place. We just like to go there and have a cup of tea or have a little bite to eat. We haven't been there for a long time.

Now, just get this: this is 20 years ago. Jan and I were there, and we were just sitting about six feet from another table where there was about 10 or 12 people there, one woman and all men, and they were having a church board meeting. They opened in prayer. It was marvelous. They opened in prayer, I would think, for all intents and purposes, and all of a sudden, after about an hour went by, we all of a sudden realized something came up—that this was a church full of homosexuals. And they praised the Lord, and they prayed to Him as good as anybody here could pray. Let me tell you. We went out of there. We left immediately, and we left, and we felt a little defiled. Somehow I wish I hadn't seen that because I was going to go over there and start talking to them about the Lord and say, "Where do you attend?" and "I'm brother so-and-so." I'm sure glad I didn't say that now.

But you know, we get into this so much like the Israelites did. Did this happen overnight? No, this didn't happen overnight; it happened over a long period of time. You see when one sin comes into a church or an assembly, and it's a pretty simple little thing, it's "not that bad," so we can leave that. You leave that one and then all of a sudden—you fast forward that to 50 or 100 years down the road, if the Lord doesn't come, then what happens? All of a sudden, God forbid, but we could be worshipping astrological signs in our meetings thinking it's okay. It's **not** okay to do that.

But you see, he's showing us here that the progression over time, over many kings—yes, we had a king that was the worst guy in the world, his grandpa, **Manasseh**. He was the worst king in that whole time. But at the end, he repented. Does it mean everything he did before that was right? He was still the worst king. But God is a God of grace and mercy and love. It doesn't matter how you've been all your life. You can repent and the Lord will forgive you and you can be saved. Praise the Lord.

But what happens is these little things keep going a little further and a little further. Can you imagine thinking it's a great thing after you've served the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and then you actually went to the point where you could actually take your kids and burn them on the altar of **Moloch**? How does that happen? It just happens. It erodes over time. And like you said, Harold, they say, "Well, you know, this isn't very good. I lost my job." The priests that were serving the Lord in the temple all of a sudden were serving the people of the grove and the high place. They kind of had that bent to them already of serving as priests, so they served as priests for Satan.

That's what so easily can happen to all of us. I know in my own life, it's incredible how we can slip and slide down into a slippery place where we thought something was absolutely wrong before and, "Well, you know what? It's not so bad now because guess what? There's a benefit in it for me." Yeah, it was wrong totally wrong six months ago, but now all of a sudden they've offered me way more money than I was getting in the temple, and I can have a much better lifestyle. So all of a sudden, well, it's not so bad; it's just deviating a bit, but I'm still "serving as a priest." And that seems to be what's happening today. People are serving as pastors. If they're serving as a pastor, it's okay. Everything the pastor does is okay, or everything that the elder does is okay, but it's not okay. It's **not**.

And so we look at that, and it's so easy to go down that slippery slope. And you know what? What did they do with all this stuff? They took it and they burned it and they took it down to the Kidron Valley. They took it down there, the Black Brook, and that went down to hell. And I'm so glad that our Savior, as I mentioned this morning, He went across that brook. The very God of heaven went across that brook. And it's almost in symbol to say, "You know what? The gates of hell will not prevail." Amen. All of the sins of everything that the Hebrews did, He went over that with His disciples, prayed in the garden, and then He went to the cross. He took care of every single thing with the very last drop of His blood. So there is **hope**.

But how come Josiah ended up doing the right things? He **read the Bible**. Amen. He read the Bible. I'm not so sure, Harold—I don't know if we can figure this out—but I really think that everybody that comes to **16th Avenue** or any other assembly should be made to read the Bible once a year aside from their other things. Just a suggestion, but would that

suggestion hurt anybody if they were made to read the Bible through every year? No, I don't think it would. I know Jan and I—you think it's bragging and I am bragging—we read it every year. Amen. Okay, I am bragging and it's wrong to brag, but I'm bragging in the right way because it helps us so much. Because guess what? We see in the Bible, when we read the Bible, what is it like? It's a **mirror** that we look into and we can see what is wrong, what is right, what we should do, and we gain something from it every single day that we read it.

I wish I could make it an order and I could police it. Well, okay—just a minute. We were just bragging about Josiah. He made an order and he policed it, didn't he? Boy, did he ever get all the sin out of there. He didn't care what anybody said. Now we're bragging about him, but man, God forbid that any one of the people in our assembly should get after somebody for sinning too badly and say, "You should be reading your Bible every day. I'll tell you what, you better just do this for hours every day." He wouldn't be promoted like Josiah, maybe. We might not brag upon him like that because he's too hard-nosed. But you know what? Maybe we need to be a little more **hard-nosed** with ourselves. All the things I'm saying, I'm not saying about anybody within the shot of my voice; I am saying this about myself. If it fits anybody to whom I'm speaking, then take it to heart and do something about it.

But we sure have a king here that served the Lord. What does the Lord require of us? He wants us to serve Him like Deuteronomy 6. He wants us to serve Him, serve Him, serve Him. And what do servants do? They **obey**. We trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey. If you're not trusting—and I know what you all are—you need to obey. You say, "I am obeying. Man, I go to the services on Zoom, I do this and I do that." But He wants some things required of us that He wants to tell us about.

So we have to go back to Josiah, and he starts reading the Bible. How many people have you seen lately that have been reading the Bible and tore all their clothes because they got so convicted? But Josiah did, because he hadn't read the word of God. It slipped down a slippery slope. For how long did they not read the Bible? It was all in the walls or under the rubble. It wasn't even available to find. They finally found it because they were cleaning up. So praise the Lord God Almighty, what an example for us.

Harold, I remember 36, 37 years ago, I was going through a divorce and I met you at a mission Thursday night at a Bible study. I went there; you weren't my favorite person after that session right away. But I know I was bawling my eyes out because I bawled my eyes out to everyone that would listen. Literally, I bawled my eyes out. And I said, "Harold, my wife left. I can't see my kids." And you said—oh, you didn't say much else—you said, "Well, I've got one bit of advice for you." And I thought you could have at least cuddled me and hugged me and been very kind to me. But you were. But you said, "Paul, **get rid of the Canaanites**

in your life. Now's the time to get rid of the Canaanites because, you see, you'll never get rid of the Canaanites. You can't do it now. You'll never get rid of the Canaanites."

Well, I remember that. And I went home and I thought, "Harold..." Okay, everybody says this about you, Harold; we've all said that behind your back: "Well, he's never been married, so how can he give me any advice about this stuff anyway?" Right? Wrong. But that's what... you might as well know it. But you see, the word of God is still the word of God.

So I remember going home that night and I said, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" And it was just like the Lord was sitting right beside me in the car. And my tears were flowing because I was in such a sad state. I could hardly see driving down the road and I just about had to pull over. And the Lord said to me, "Paul, get rid of the Canaanites. Get rid of the Canaanites." I said, "Well, how am I going to do that, Lord?" He said, "Well, listen, start praying and ask Me what the Canaanites are." Do you realize that I said, "Lord, if my wife's going to come back, I want to be a much better husband. If the kids are back, I want to be a much better father," because I wasn't perfect.

And I said, "I want to be better. So, Lord, could you just tell me some of what the Canaanites are?" Do you realize, Harold, I went for one week, and every day, every minute of the day—I didn't even go to work for a couple weeks—the Lord brought to my attention every single thing I did wrong as a husband, as a father. Some of them were very, very, I thought, minute. But when the Lord brought it to my mind, I said, "Oh, Lord, I am so sorry." I asked Him to forgive me. After a week, I said, "Lord, I can't handle this any longer. I've had a week of Canaanites. I can't stand the Canaanites any longer. Could you give me a break for a day or two because I can't even hardly live? I need to get into the office to see if my business is still there."

So He said, "How long do you want?" I said, "Well, just give me a couple days." So I went to work for a couple days. And I started again. And then He gave me another week of telling me what the Canaanites were in my life. And, you know, that was the roughest time but the very best time that I've ever had in my life. Because I said, "Lord, when my wife comes back, I want to have the best marriage that I could ever have." Well, she never came back. But, you know, the Lord doesn't make anybody do anything they don't want to do. They can still control their lives if they want to. But thank the Lord He did give me a good wife for 36 years now. And I'm thankful for that. I do not say to anybody here, "Yeah, dump your first wife or dump your husband because maybe you'll get as good of one as I've got." No, I don't recommend that whatsoever.

But you know what? The Lord, it's only in His mercy and His grace and love that He has been so good to us. Take Harold's advice, whatever you're going through. **Get into the word of**

God. And if you want to know what the Canaanites are in your life, go before the Lord sincerely. And I know why Harold said, "If you don't do it now, you'll never do it." You see, when things are going good, guess what? You don't do it. And when things are going good, you don't do it sincerely from the bottom of your heart. Because if I hadn't done it that time, I probably would have never done it. So Harold, I appreciate that advice as much as I hated it at the time. But it did me some good. Praise the Lord God Almighty.

Prophecy Fulfilled

[Harold Summers resumes leadership.]

I guess that's really what Josiah is doing, isn't he? He's getting rid of the Canaanites in the city, in the country. And so good for Josiah. You said, should we have a law that says you have to read through the Bible every year? And that reminded me of the story of some good men. I believe they were all full-time servants of the Lord who were sitting down at breakfast one morning. And somebody said to the man beside him, "What did you read in the Bible before you came to breakfast today?" And he told them. And they went to the next man, "What did you read?" And he told them. And they all had read something in the Bible before they came to breakfast that morning.

Harry Ironside was one of those who was there. And so they turned to him and they said, "Harry, what did you read in the Bible before you came to breakfast this morning?" And Harry sort of hesitated a bit and he said, "Well, I read Isaiah." And they said, "How much of Isaiah did you read, Harry?" And he said, "Well, I read the whole book." Sixty-six chapters. Okay, now there's some people, if they read a chapter a day, they'd read through the book of Isaiah in two months. He read it before breakfast. Now it's true, he could read faster than many of you could read. But he didn't say, "I read five chapters." He said, "I read all the book of Isaiah before I came to breakfast this morning."

So, yes, we need to read the word of God as Josiah did. Completely and with great sincerity and with the response that says, "I'm going to do something about it. I'm going to kick the Canaanites out and I'm going to start right now."

All right, back to verse 16. As Josiah turned himself—because he was at Bethel—he spied the sepulchers that were there in the mount and sent and took the bones out of the sepulchers, burned them upon the altar, and polluted it according to the word of the Lord, which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words.

So he goes to Bethel, and he deals with the high places, and then he sees some of the priests—the priests or prophets or whatever they call themselves, the servants of Jeroboam, who

had established that religion. And if you go back into 1 Kings chapter 13, you'll find that a prophet of the Lord came down and said, "There's going to be a man who's going to come and he's going to burn your bones on this altar."

[1 Kings 13:1-2 NKJV]

¹ And behold, a man of God went from Judah to Bethel by the word of the LORD, and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. ² Then he cried out against the altar by the word of the LORD, and said, "O altar, altar! Thus says the LORD: 'Behold, a child, Josiah by name, shall be born to the house of David; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and men's bones shall be burned on you.'"

And that was 350 years before. But he actually called him **Josiah**. Here we are in the year 624. That's 350 years later. And Josiah comes. And he gets to that place and he realizes what the Lord had said about him. And so he does exactly the thing: he exhumes the priests' bodies and burns their bones on the altar that they built in defiance of the God of heaven. Does God have a good memory? Yes. Are His prophecies certain? And the answer is certainly. God is going to fulfill it. You say, "God said He would do it and, you know, He hasn't done it. He said that three weeks ago. He still hasn't done it." Hang on. And maybe He'll fulfill that prophecy in the life of that sinner you're talking to 350 years from now.

Who observed the fact that those bones were burned? Probably the man whose bones were burned. I don't think that hell is a place of total ignorance. The rich man was able to speak to Abraham and Lazarus. Do you think it's possible that the Lord could show people in hell what's going on? I think it would be selective. But I think He could selectively show what's happening. Those men who mock God, they saw fulfilled what God had promised.

Hell's going to last for a long time. Heaven's going to last for a long time. We're going to relive a great deal of these stories. This morning, talking to **Rob Brennan**, we concluded that we don't know very much about the Bible. But we're going to keep learning. And the things we don't know today, we might learn them 500 or 5,000 years from now. We're going to learn more and more about this book. This book is an everlasting book. Josiah not only did what he did, he **fulfilled Scripture** in doing it.