

INTRODUCTION:

Today, I would like us to take a look at a man who took God's word very seriously.

- When this man learned what God's will was for him, he took immediate action.
- As the Bible says, he *“made a covenant before the Lord to walk after the Lord, and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all his heart and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant written in this book.”*
- This man also convinced many others to stand with him.
- Thousands of people were shown the importance of serving the Lord because of his actions.

The man I would like for us to study, was the 16th king of Judah after it split from the kingdom of Israel.

- Let us consider some interesting facts about his reign...
- He began his reign at an extremely early age—8 years old.
- Imagine for a second... Cole or Shelbi being the leader of a country...
- Even as a teenager he began diligently seeking God and as a young adult he began making some major changes from the way his father and grandfather had managed the kingdom.
- He conducted a purge of idolatry that involved not only his own kingdom, but the old Northern Kingdom as well.
- He effectively changed the way that all of his kingdom worshipped God.
- They returned to a worship that was pleasing to God.
- His life and reign as King of Judah constituted the last "blaze of glory" for this doomed nation.
- Only three years after he died, Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah and took them into captivity in Babylon for 70 years.

The king that I have been referring to is King Josiah!

- This morning, we will be studying from **2 Chronicles 33-34**...
- Josiah is not one of the kings that we hear a lot about.
- Most people do not know many details about the significance of Josiah's life.
- And yet I was surprised to learn that King Josiah is mentioned *by name* in 7 different books of the Bible and **by name** in 22 different chapters of God's word.

Why was he recorded in the inspired word of God so many times?

- The last mention of Josiah in the Bible is in **Matthew 1:11** when we see that Josiah was one of the Descendants of David in the lineage of Christ.
- And when **Matthew 1:17** speaks about the divisions every fourteen generations, one of those divisions is at the time of *“...the deportation to Babylon”*—and it is referring to the Babylonian captivity that happened just after Josiah's death
- His reign apparently had a great deal of historical significance!

Above and beyond his historical significance, I would like us to take a closer look at some of his background and some of his achievements.

I would like to begin by sharing a couple things with you regarding his family.

His Grandfather and his father were not the best examples for him...

- In **2 Chronicles 33:1-2**, we learn about his grandfather... *“Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. He did evil in the sight of the LORD according to the abominations of the nations...”*
- So we find that he did evil in the sight of the Lord.

As we read on, we find that Manasseh didn't make any attempt to please God, until he was captured by the Assyrians in **Verse 11**

- He didn't make any attempt to turn to God until he was at a point of desperation in his life.
- In **verses 22**, we can learn about Josiah's father, Amon... *“He did evil in the sight of the LORD as Manasseh his father had done, and Amon sacrificed to all the carved images which his father Manasseh had made, and he served them.”*
- Likewise, we find that he did evil in the sight of the Lord.

Both men were idol worshippers, who did much evil in the sight of the Lord.

- They did not have hearts that longed to serve God.
- When things were going well for them, they completely disregarded God and His will.
- They did not fear God or His wrath upon their doomed nation of Judah.

Josiah came from a background of men who only worshipped when it was convenient for them.

- They felt the need to have physical objects, idols, which they used as religious figures to burn incense to.
- These men made sacrifices and encouraged their kingdom to make sacrifices to these molten and carved images.
- They didn't have faith in God.
- They felt like they needed these ornately designed sculptures to make their religion seem real.
- They felt like they needed to create all of these traditions of man to make their religion interesting.
- They felt like they needed to participate in other disgusting acts, which were practiced in the house of the Lord to try to make their religion seem exciting.
- Their lives were not focused on pleasing God, they thought only about themselves.
- These two men, represent the kind of background that Josiah came from.

With these thoughts in mind, we wonder why did Josiah turn out to be such a good king?

- I would like to suggest that it was because of the influence of his mother!
- Scripture doesn't tell us much about his mother.
- As a matter of fact, about all that we know about her but we know her name was Jedidah.
- However, we can learn more about her by looking at the translation of her name—“Beloved of the Lord” or “God's darling”.

Based on the facts we know about Josiah from the Bible, we can speculate that Jedidah was the biggest influence in his life.

- His grandfather Manasseh died when he was about 6 years old
- His father, Amon, died when he was only 8 years old.
- We can assume that his mother raised him and taught him how he should live his life.

Unfortunately, we don't have enough information on her for us to know if she is the reason he decided to serve God.

- I would love to use her as an example of a great mother on this Mother's day.

- I wish that I could stand before you, and tell you what a wonderful Godly woman she was and how all mothers should be such an excellent example for their children.
- But, we simply don't know.
- What we do know, is that a mother always seems to know how to nurture a child and to guide a child.
- Moms always have the right things to say at the right time.
- I am sure that I speak on behalf of all of the men in the room, when I say... **WE REALLY APPRECIATE YOU!**

I believe that "God's Darling" was probably the strongest influence on Josiah.

- Let's take a look at the way he chose to live his life!
- Let's read **2 Chronicles 34:1-3**...

1 Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem.

2 He did right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the ways of his father David and did not turn aside to the right or to the left.

3 For in the eighth year of his reign while he was still a youth, he began to seek the God of his father David; and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the Asherim, the carved images and the molten images.

Our text says that when Josiah was 16 years old, he began seeking God.

- He is compared to David who is such a strong symbol of righteousness in the Old Testament!
- Josiah longed to do things that were pleasing in the sight of God
- When he kept his sights on God, he walked the straight and narrow path and did not turn to the right or the left.
- By the age of 20 he began removing idols and cleaning up some of the false practices that were taking place in the name of God.
- Josiah made a concerted and consistent effort to do the Lord's will.

The next four verses continue on to tell us that he took extensive action to clean up these places where idol worship was taking place.

- He chopped down alters, where people had offered up incense to Baal.
- He removed carved images and molten images and ground them into powder
- He burned the bones of the priests on their alters.
- He did these things not just in Judah, but also throughout the land of Israel.

In **verses 8-9** we learn that he didn't just tear down and destroy these evil places, but he also took steps to rebuild the holy places.

- To re-establish places that were conducive for worshipping God
- Let's read about that in **verses 8-9**... *"Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land and the house, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, and Maaseiah an official of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of the LORD his God. They came to Hilkiah the high priest and delivered the money that was brought into the house of God, which the Levites, the doorkeepers, had collected from Manasseh and Ephraim, and from all the remnant of Israel, and from all Judah and Benjamin and the inhabitants of Jerusalem."*

We see that this is Josiah's 18th year of his reign, when he was 26 years old, he ordered that the house of the Lord be repaired.

- The previous kings for many generations had allowed the temple to go to ruin.
- So they took up a collection and they gathered together the resources necessary to rebuild the temple.
- Josiah made every effort he could to purge his country of its impurities.
- And to convince his kingdom that worshipping the God of creation was the right thing to do.

On a side note... I should mention that there have been a number of archaeological artifacts that can help convince us that the Bible is authentic and accurate.

- In **verse 8** we see that Josiah sent a man named Shaphan to repair the house of the Lord...
- This artifact says "Gemariah the son of Shaphan."



- It just so happens that that is the exact wording used three times in three consecutive verses of **Jeremiah 36. (10, 11, 12)**
- In addition to this the High priest that Shaphan visited in order to seek out money for the rebuilding of the temple was Hilkiah.
- This artifact makes reference to Azariah son of Hilkiah.



- And again, it just so happens that this is the wording used in **1 Chronicles 9:11** and in **Ezra 7:1**.

As we continue in our text we see that Hilkiah also was able to dig up some historical evidence of his own. Let's take a look at **verses 14-18**...

14 When they were bringing out the money which had been brought into the house of the LORD, Hilkiah the priest found the book of the law of the LORD given by Moses.

15 Hilkiah responded and 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.

16 Then Shaphan brought the book to the king and reported further word to the king, saying, "Everything that was entrusted to your servants they are doing.

17 "They have also emptied out the money which was found in the house of the LORD, and have delivered it into the hands of the supervisors and the workmen."

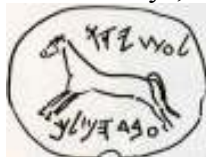
18 Moreover, Shaphan the scribe told the king saying, "Hilkiah the priest gave me a book." And Shaphan read from it in the presence of the king.

Hilkiah found a book of God's law given by Moses—It was most likely a copy of Deuteronomy that he had found.

- He gave it to Shaphan, who reported to the king, who then read it to king Josiah.
- Now, keep in mind... Israel had not practiced God's law for many generations.
- They had all forgotten the commands of the Lord and they did not know God's expectations from them.

In **verses 19-21**, we see how Josiah responded to Shaphan's reading of the words of the law—he tore his clothes, and then he commanded Shaphan, one of his sons, and one of his servants named Asaiah to go find out more information about this book

- Again, we have archaeological evidence of Josiah's servant.
- This is an artist's depiction of Asaiah's seal that says, "*Belonging to Asaiah, servant of the king.*"



- Based on this artifact, we can surmise that Asaiah was ALSO a servant to Josiah's father or grandfather.
- The reason I believe this is that Josiah banned horses as a symbol during his religious reform.
- **2 Kings 23:11** says, "*He did away with the horses which the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entrance of the house of the LORD...*"
- Apparently horses were a symbol of worship and at one point in the past, even Asaiah, Josiah's servant, had been involved in it.

Coming back to our story, we know that these men were sent to "**inquire of the Lord**" regarding the words of the book and they went to a prophetess, Huldah.

- She gave the men both good news and bad news.
- The BAD NEWS was that God said He would be bringing all of the curses that were written in that book upon the people of Judah, because they had forsaken Him and put other gods before him.
- The GOOD NEWS is found in **verse 27**... "*Because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words against this place and against its inhabitants, and because you humbled yourself before Me, tore your clothes and wept before Me, I truly have heard you," declares the LORD.*"

God acknowledged that because, Josiah had a tender heart, and he humbled himself, God heard him and would spare Judah until after Josiah's death.

- When he received word that God would spare him, he went to all of the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and he read to them all the words of the book that was found in the house of the Lord. Josiah, therefore, took further action... **verse 31-33**...

31 Then the king stood in his place and made a covenant before the LORD to walk after the LORD, and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all his heart and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant written in this book.

32 Moreover, he made all who were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand with him. So the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers.

33 Josiah removed all the abominations from all the lands belonging to the sons of Israel, and made all who were present in Israel to serve the LORD their God. Throughout his lifetime they did not turn from following the LORD God of their fathers.

We find that Josiah immediately took action when he realized what the Lord's will was for him.

- He had already been removing the idolatrous influences for 6 years.
- He had already made efforts to rebuild a country, which was doing all sorts of evil acts.

- But, when Shaphan read to him the words from the law, Josiah tore his clothes, he humbled himself, he wept before the Lord knowing the fate of his country and he expressed a tender heart before the Lord.
- In the same way that God had mercy on Josiah, He also has mercy on our souls when we humble ourselves and submit to His will with a tender heart.

If we were to read on in **chapter 35**, we would find that Josiah went on to celebrate a Passover to the Lord in Jerusalem, which was comparable to no other Passover since the time of Samuel.

- This Cleansing of his country and the rebuilding of the Lord's temple and this discovery of the lost Book of the Law and this amazing Passover all took place when Josiah was between the ages of 20 and 26 years old.

We can learn a number of things from the example of Josiah:

First of all, we see that it is possible for us to break the chain of evil.

- Josiah could have lived a life like his father or his grandfather, but he chose to serve God.
- Even from a very young age of 16 years, he was seeking God.
- Within the next 10 years, he accomplished more than any of the previous 15 Kings of Judah.
- He cleaned up his country and convinced the people to follow God throughout the remainder of his lifetime.

Second, we recognize that each of us needs to clean up the impurities in our lives.

- **Matthew 18:9** says, ***“If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell.”***
- These words of Jesus, remind us to keep bad influences out of our lives.
- Perhaps there a sin that you struggle with that keeps you from having a tender heart for the Lord and his work?
- May be you have taken on an activity or you have gotten involved with an organization, which is taking up a lot of your time and it isn't allowing you to spend much time with God in prayer or reading or worship
- Are you busying yourselves with activities which can take you farther away from the Lord?
- We all need to evaluate our use of time and try to maximize our spiritual lives.
- Once we have removed this “junk” out of our lives, we need to rebuild our temples in place of the removed problems.
- We need to get more involved in the Lord's work and we need to make a covenant before the Lord to walk after the Lord, and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all of our heart and with all of our soul, to perform the words of the covenant written in this book.

Third, we need to make sure our focus is on God.

- We need to strive to stay on the straight and narrow. To not veer to the right or the left.
- When we keep that focus on God, our hearts will long to serve God
- Our worship will please God
- We will not disregard God's word and let it get dusty or lost.

And finally, we need to put our faith and our complete trust in God.

- We do not need religious figurines to make our religion real.
- We don't need the fancy religious ceremonies and traditions of men to make our worship interesting.

What we need is a tender heart which causes us to seek God as Josiah did...

- We need God's word to let us know his will.
- Once we know his word, we need to take action.
- We need to clean up the problems that exist in our lives.
- And replace those problems with Good influences and a desire to serve.

Invitation:

The question that you now need to ask yourself is this... "Are you ready?"