



**Sunday School Lesson Summary for November 12, 2006**  
**Released on Wednesday, November 8, 2006**

**"Josiah Brought Reform"**

**LESSON TEXT:** 2 Kings 22:8–10; 23:1–3, 21–23.

**READ:** 2 Kings 22, 23.

**PRINTED TEXT:** 2 Kings 22:1–23.

**DEVOTIONAL READING:** Psalm 103:1–18.

**TIME:** 622 B.C.

**PLACE:** Jerusalem

**GOLDEN TEXT:** "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" (2 Kings 23:3 NKJV).

**HOW TO SAY IT**

AMON. *Ay-mun.*

HILKIAH. *Hill-kye-uh.*

HULDAH. *Hul-duh.*

JOSIAH. *Jo-sigh-uh.*

MANASSEH. *Muh-nass-uh.*

SHAPHAN. *Shay-fan.*

**LESSON TEXT: 2 Kings 22-23**

**2 Kings 22**

**Josiah Reigns in Judah**

1 Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. 2 And he did *what was* right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.

**Hilkiah Finds the Book of the Law**

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." 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. 11 Now it happened, when the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, that he tore his clothes. 12 Then the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Achbor<sup>[a]</sup> the son of Michaiah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king, saying, 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." 14 So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. (She dwelt in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter.) And they spoke with her. 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.'" 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.

## 2 Kings 23

### Josiah Restores True Worship

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,<sup>[a]</sup> and for all the host of heaven;<sup>[a]</sup> 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<sup>[a]</sup> 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. 7 Then he tore down the *ritual* booths of the perverted persons<sup>[a]</sup> that *were* in the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the wooden image. 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.

10 And he defiled Topheth, which *is* in the Valley of the Son<sup>[a]</sup> of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire to Molech. 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. 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. 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. 14 And he broke in pieces the *sacred* pillars and cut down the wooden images, and filled their places with the bones of men.

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. 16 As Josiah turned, he saw the tombs that *were* there on the mountain. And he sent and took the bones out of the tombs and burned *them* on the altar, and defiled it according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words. 17 Then he said, "What gravestone *is* this that I see?"

So the men of the city told him, "It *is* the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and proclaimed these things which you have done against the altar of Bethel."

18 And he said, "Let him alone; let no one move his bones." So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet who came from Samaria.

19 Now Josiah also took away all the shrines of the high places that *were* in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke the LORD<sup>[a]</sup> to anger; and he did to them according to all the deeds he had done in Bethel. 20 He executed all the priests of the high places who *were* there, on the altars, and burned men's bones on them; and he returned to Jerusalem.

21 Then the king commanded all the people, saying, "Keep the Passover to the LORD your God, as *it is* written in this Book of the Covenant." 22 Such a Passover surely had never been held since the days of the judges who judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah. 23 But in the eighteenth year of King Josiah this Passover was held before the LORD in Jerusalem. 24 Moreover Josiah put away those who consulted mediums and spiritists, the household gods and idols, all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD. 25 Now before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him did *any* arise like him.

### Impending Judgment on Judah

26 Nevertheless the LORD did not turn from the fierceness of His great wrath, with which His anger was aroused against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked Him. 27 And the LORD said, "I will also remove Judah from My sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, 'My name shall be there.'"<sup>[a]</sup>

### Josiah Dies in Battle

28 Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 29 In his days Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt went to the aid of the king of Assyria, to the River Euphrates; and King Josiah went against him. And *Pharaoh Necho* killed him at Megiddo when he confronted him. 30 Then his servants moved his body in a chariot from Megiddo, brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own tomb. And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, anointed him, and made him king in his father's place.

### The Reign and Captivity of Jehoahaz

31 Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he became king, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. 32 And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done. 33 Now Pharaoh Necho put him in prison at Riblah in the land of Hamath,

that he might not reign in Jerusalem; and he imposed on the land a tribute of one hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. 34 Then Pharaoh Necho made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in place of his father Josiah, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. And *Pharaoh* took Jehoahaz and went to Egypt, and he<sup>1</sup> died there.

### Jehoiakim Reigns in Judah

35 So Jehoiakim gave the silver and gold to Pharaoh; but he taxed the land to give money according to the command of Pharaoh; he exacted the silver and gold from the people of the land, from every one according to his assessment, to give it to Pharaoh Necho. 36 Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zebudah the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah. 37 And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done.

### Footnotes:

- a. [2 Kings 22:12](#) *Abdon the son of Micah* in 2 Chronicles 34:20
- b. [2 Kings 23:4](#) A Canaanite goddess
- c. [2 Kings 23:4](#) The gods of the Assyrians
- d. [2 Kings 23:6](#) Hebrew *Asherah*, a Canaanite goddess
- e. [2 Kings 23:7](#) Hebrew *qedeshim*, that is, those practicing sodomy and prostitution in religious rituals
- f. [2 Kings 23:10](#) Kethib reads *Sons*.
- g. [2 Kings 23:19](#) Following Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate; Masoretic Text and Targum omit *the Lord*.
- h. [2 Kings 23:27](#) 1 Kings 8:29
- i. [2 Kings 23:34](#) That is, Jehoahaz

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### LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each student will be able to:

1. Study how Josiah brought the law of God back into focus in the life of God's people.
2. Show that one man's commitment to God can turn the tide of evil for a nation.
3. Demonstrate that when we as Christians focus on the laws of God, we will find God's blessing.

### LESSON OUTLINE

- I. DISCOVERY—2 Kings 22:8—10
- II. DETERMINATION—2 Kings 23:1—3
- III. DEVOTION—2 Kings 23:21—23

### INTRODUCTION

Have you ever wondered where the downhill trend of discarding God from our society will ultimately end? How will it change our society? What effect will it have on our children and their generation? The fundamental question is: Will our children be able to worship the God of our fathers without being persecuted? It is time we gave some thought to these very serious issues in our time.

We also need to ask ourselves whether it is too late to turn things back to where they should be. This week's lesson shows us how a teenage king named Josiah with a heart for God brought the law of God back into the center of his nation's attention. We have an example to follow.

### LESSON BACKGROUND

Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king in Jerusalem, and he reigned for fifty-five years (see 2 Kings 21:1). He was very evil and profaned the holy land with idolatry and bloodletting (vss. 2—18). His son, Amon, was no better (vss. 19—23). When he was assassinated, "the people of the land made his son Josiah king in his place" (v. 24).

Things now took a turn for the better. Josiah was only eight years old when he began to reign. He "did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left" (22:2).

It is amazing that despite his wicked predecessors and the fact that the Law of Moses had been lost, this young king put himself on the road to righteousness.

After God's law was found in the temple, it was read to Josiah. He sent a delegation to Huldah the prophetess, and she sent God's message back to Josiah that he would live in peace (vss. 8—20). Josiah then brought about many reforms in the nation (23:1—24). Indeed, the Bible declares, "Now before him there was no king like him, who turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses, nor after him did any arise like him" (vs. 25). What a legacy to speak of!

### QUESTIONS

#### I. DISCOVERY—2 Kings 22:8—10

##### 1. Who found the books of the law of God in the temple? (2 Kings 22:3—10)

King Josiah, in his 18th year of reign over Jerusalem, sent Shaphan the scribe to the Lord's house (another name for the temple) to tell Hilkiah the high priest to determine the sum of silver contributions made by collectors at the door of the temple. This money was to be used to repair the house of God and pay carpenters and masons for their work (vss. 3—7).

It was during this recovery work that Hilkiah found the book (more accurately described as a scroll) of the Law of Moses in the temple.

God expected His people to live by the law given to them at Mount Sinai through Moses. The fact that it was ignored and misplaced shows how great the spiritual decline was under Kings Manasseh and Amon.

## **2. How was King Josiah notified of the law scroll's discovery? (2 Kings 22:9–10)**

After its discovery, Hilkiah gave the scroll to Shaphan to read. Recognize that Shaphan—being the scribe that he was—was an educated man and the king's personal and greatly-valued secretary and aide. Shaphan must have been immediately aware of the importance of this lost document because after reading it he took and showed it to King Josiah. He reported to the king that not only had the money been found and gathered from the temple by the servants and had been given to the proper tradesmen to complete the temple's renovation, but Hilkiah the priest had also located and given Shaphan "the Book of the Law" of Moses (vs. 10).

King Josiah was spiritually shaken and physically distraught (he tore his clothing as a sign of genuine remorse) to hear the Law of God read to him for it was immediately clear that his nation was guilty of breaking God's covenant and that the violation of that covenant would bring God's promised judgment.

## **3. Why did Josiah send a delegation to Huldah the prophetess? (2 Kings 22:12–20)**

The King commanded Hilkiah the high priest and others to go visit Huldah the prophetess to see what the Lord had to say about this discovery. Josiah wanted to know if there was a way to avert God's divine judgment. Huldah confirmed Josiah's suspicions in that God would bring judgment on Judah for its long-standing and wayward sins, but that the tenderhearted and sincere Josiah would not see this judgment. King Josiah would be allowed to finish his reign in peace (vss. 11–20).

A side note shows that Josiah's reign did end abruptly in 609 B.C. when he sided with the Assyrians against the Egyptians and was killed in battle at Megiddo (see 23:28–30). He did die in peace, however, knowing that he had followed the Lord and had sought to lead his people to do the same.

## **II. DETERMINATION—2 Kings 23:1–3**

### **4. Why did Josiah summon the elders of Israel to Jerusalem? (2 Kings 23:1–3)**

The time of spiritual resurgence began with a great convocation being ordered by Josiah. He sent messengers throughout Judah and Jerusalem to tell the nation's elders or leaders to gather before him in the capital of Jerusalem. The setting for this assembly was the temple. The king went to the temple, along with the elders from outlying areas and there they were joined by the inhabitants of the city, priests, prophets, and anyone else who wanted to attend and listen to King Josiah read God's Word.

### **5. What kinds of people joined Josiah and the elders at the temple? (2 Kings 23:2)**

As described above, this show of such a variety of people must have made quite an impressive parade of notables and common people alike. They all probably had to gather inside the temple's courtyard in order to hear King Josiah's speech.

### **6. What took place at the temple that day? (2 Kings 23:3)**

There were two parts to this verse that describe what happened after Josiah finished reading God's law to the crowd. The first has to do with the king himself as he spoke about what he intended to do. The second has to do with the people giving assent or agreement to what he said.

Josiah stood by a pillar of the temple and made a solemn covenant with the Lord, promising to walk in His way and keep His "commandments," "testimonies," and "statutes." All three of these terms refer to God's laws. The king said that he would keep this covenant with all his heart and soul. He was also speaking on behalf of the people in attendance.

## **III. DEVOTION—2 Kings 23:21–23**

### **7. How did the congregation show their assent to the decision made by Josiah? (2 Kings 23:3b)**

The intention of the congregation that day was to go along with Josiah in his determination to keep God's covenant. They all stood up to show that they agreed with Josiah's stand against sin and idol worship, and to show that they also had the same desire to keep the covenant.

Christians have often been told not to become involved in politics. However, that opinion has seemingly undergone a gradual change. Decent, God-fearing, Bible-believing, churchgoing people can make a difference in national life. Josiah did not shy away from using his position and influence to call his people to the path of righteousness.

### **8. What type of reforms did Josiah make following his commitment to the covenant? (2 Kings 23:21–23)**

Josiah did not suggest that the following religious festivals be reinstated, he "commanded" that the following be celebrated: Passover—which commemorated God's deliverance of Israel from bondage in the land of Egypt, and which included the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:5–60); the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost; and the Feast of Tabernacles—which required a pilgrimage for all healthy and ceremoniously clean Jewish males (Deu. 16:16).

We cannot command that people attend Christian celebrations such as Josiah did with his Jewish subjects, but we can promote these occasions and use them to show the hand of God at work among His people in the world.

### **9. Why was reinstatement of the Passover important? (2 Kings 23:22–23)**

The Passover that was held in Josiah's time was superior to any that had been held since the time of the judges and during all the days that the kings of Israel and Judah reigned. It was noted as the Passover held in the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign.

It would certainly appear that the Lord approved of Josiah's outstanding celebration of Passover as the king reinstated this festival in Judah. The Lord also must have been very pleased when Josiah put away (or banished) all the workers with familiar spirits (mediums) and wizards (spiritists), as well as the household idols found in Judah and Jerusalem (vs. 24).

### **10. What kind of legacy did Josiah leave behind him? (2 Kings 23:25)**

In this verse we see a very favorable evaluation of Josiah's reign and religious reform. This young man was declared to be a better king than any before or after him—the comparison probably being to all the kings of Judah and Israel. He was best when it came to devotion to the law of God that was given to Israel at Mount Sinai.

We should do well to leave a similar legacy behind us. We are often concerned about the material things our children will inherit from us when we pass off this earthly scene. Sometimes we are equally concerned about how to pass on our reputation, position, or power.

The greatest gift we can leave behind, though, is that of a life devoted to God and His kingdom. Conferring such a legacy actually begins when our children are born. The same might be said about our initial contacts with other family members and friends.

**CONCLUSION**

From the very beginning of his reign, King Josiah wanted to follow what was right in God's eyes. He had a tender heart for God. We must not get the idea that he had an easy time, however. He probably faced opposition from some people, but we see that he stood firm to the end and was known to be one of the righteous kings of Judah. God blessed everything he did. On a side note, and as spiritual leaders ourselves, would not it be indescribably wonderful for God to bless everything that we put our hands to do?

King Josiah also led his people down the pathway of righteousness as they sought to live by the book of the law that they had found. This applies even today. We are called to live by the Bible and therefore stay close to God's laws. We can never go wrong when we do this, for it is God's truth for us today.

**PRACTICAL POINTS**

1. God's Word is not something that should have to be found (2 Kings 22:8)!
2. If the Bible has been missing from our lives, we would do well to begin reading it immediately (vss. 9—10).
3. If we have neglected our walk with God, a public commitment of renewed (loyalty) is a good way to get back on track (23:1—3).
4. A leader who encourages faithfulness to the Lord is a blessing to any nation (vs. 21).
5. Even if we have neglected our obligations for a long time, it is worthwhile to begin observing them again (vss. 22—23).

**THOUGHT TO REMEMBER**

When spiritual leaders obey God, the people of God are blessed.

**PRAYER**

Heavenly Father, thank You for today's lesson about a spiritual leader/king who was sincere in his worship of You. Please allow us to experience true remorse when we learn that we have strayed from Your Word and Your truth, and help us to quickly return to You by repenting and sinning no more. We thank You so much for forgiveness from sin and our reconciliation to You through Jesus Christ's sin offering. We are forever indebted to You, amen.

**ANTICIPATING NEXT WEEK'S LESSON**

The November 19th lesson explores how "The People" of God "Went into Exile." We will seek to understand what living in a pagan culture does to one's faith in God, and how our avoidance of God's call will always lead Him to chastise us. In preparation, read 2 Chronicles 36:15—21 and Psalm 137:1—9. (The "Golden Text" is Psalm 137:1.)

**LESSON SUMMARIZED BY**

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