

Lessons From Characters In Old Testament
Amon and Josiah
Lesson 47

AMON:

- A. A wicked king who reigned in Judah for 2 years. (**2 Kings 21:19-26; 2 Chronicles 33:21-25**)
- B. Amon was twenty-two years old when he succeeded his father Manasseh.
- C. He was very wicked and quickly turned to the worshipping of idols.
 - 1. The Bible says he was just like his father except he did not humble himself before the Lord as Manasseh had.
- D. The servants of Amon planned against him and killed him in his own house.
 - 1. He was buried in a sepulchre in the garden of Uzza.
 - 2. The people executed the assassins and put Amon's son Josiah upon the throne.
- E. It is sometimes hard to imagine one king could be as faithful as Hezekiah and his son could be as wicked as Manasseh.
 - 1. Or a man like Manasseh could try to reform the evil he introduced into the land and yet his own son would follow and immediately lead his people right back into idolatry.
 - 2. How could such things happen?
- F. There are no doubt many reasons but none would justify such actions or behavior.

JOSIAH - Intro:

- A. A good king who reigned in Judah for 31 years. (**2 Kings 22:1-23:30; 2 Chron. 34:1-35:27**)
 - B. He was only eight years old when he began to reign and was truly an outstanding king.
- I. Josiah Begins to Purge the Land of Idolatry: (2 Chron. 34:1-7):**
- A. In the eighth year of his rule, when he was only sixteen years old, he began to seek the God of David and throughout his life he never wandered from the ways of his father David.
 - B. In the twelfth year of his reign, when he was twenty, he began to purge the country and Jerusalem of idolatry.
 - 1. The wooden images and altars of the Baals had multiplied.
 - 2. Josiah destroyed them plus all the graven and molten images he could find.
 - 3. These images were broken up, ground to powder, and sprinkled on the graves of those who had sacrificed to them.
 - 4. Josiah went far from Judah destroying altars and images even in the land of Manasseh, Ephraim, Simeon, and even into Naphtali and, when he finished, he returned to Jerusalem.
- II. Josiah Commands that the Temple be Repaired: (2 Kings 22:3-7; 2 Chron. 34:8-13):**
- A. In the eighteenth year of his reign (26 years old), having cleansed the land and the temple of anything pertaining to idolatry, Josiah sent Shaphan the son of

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Azaliah, Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the recorder to repair the house of the Lord.

- B. They went to Hilkiah the high priest and took the money which had been collected and delivered it to the workmen.
1. This money had been collected from those even of Manasseh, Ephraim, and all the remnant of Israel as well as from Judah.
 2. This was the money brought into the house of God which had been taken up by the Levites, the keepers of the door.
 3. Therefore, some people from the north (the very poor Israelites left, plus the mixed race living in the territory) were coming to the temple.

(NOTE: This is one of the passages that lets us know that Josiah must have exercised a great deal of control over old Israel now that Assyria was losing the power and influence she once had. Josiah had virtually the rule over the whole land of Israel by this time.)

4. The workers repaired and restored the temple, purchasing hewn stone, timber for beams, and floor for the buildings.
 - a. All this was needed because the previous kings of Judah had allowed the temple to fall into ruin. The workers did their work faithfully.

III. The Book Of The Law Found: (2 Kings 22:8-13; 2 Chron. 34:14-21):

- A. Hilkiah found and gave to Shaphan, the scribe, "*the book of the law of the Lord*".
(NOTE: The "book of the law" would be the portion we call the Pentateuch - that is, Genesis through Deuteronomy.)
- B. Shaphan took the book with him when he went to the king to report about the work being done on the temple.
- C. After reporting about the work, he said, "*Hilkiah the priest has given me a book*" and he read it to the king.
- D. When Josiah heard the words of the law, he tore his clothes.
1. It almost goes without saying that Joaiah was terrified!
- E. He gave the command: **(22:13)**
- F. Josiah's men went to Huldah, a prophetess and spoke to her.
- G. Her reply was: **(22:16-20)**
- H. The messengers returned and gave Josiah the news.

IV. The Covenant Is Renewed With The Lord: (2 Kings 23:1-3; 2 Chron. 34:29-32)

- A. Josiah commanded the elders of Judah to come together.
- B. Then he and all the leaders and the people, small and great, went up to the temple and renewed their covenant with God.
- C. This was the fourth time the covenant had been renewed since the kingdom divided.
1. It was done in the days of Asa **(2 Chron. 15:12)**;
 2. in the days of Jehoiada when the child Joash was made king **(2 Kings 11:17)**;
 3. in the days of Hezekiah **(2 Chron. 29:10)**;
 4. and now in Josiah's day.

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- D. Josiah read the book of the law before all the people and renewed the covenant with God and promised (**2 Chron. 34:31**)
- E. The people joined with him in renewing their covenant also.

V. Further Description of Josiah's Fight Against Idolatry: (2 Kings 23:4-20; 23:24-25; 2 Chron. 34:33):

- A. There had already been effort on Josiah's part to rid the land of Judah of all the objects of idolatry.
- B. He now goes back over the land to complete the job.
- C. The account in 2 Kings 23 summarizes all the things Josiah did, including things done before the cleansing and repair of the temple, as well as things done afterward.
- D. The various vessels of Baal and the wooden images were burned in the fields of the Kidron.
- E. The ashes of the vessels were then taken to Bethel where Jeroboam set up the golden calves to worship many years earlier.
- F. Josiah removed the priests who had offered incense in the high places and those who had offered incense to Baal, to the sun, to the moon, to the constellations, and to all the host of heaven.
- G. He brought the wooden image out of the house of the Lord, burned it, ground it to ashes, and scattered the ashes over the graves of those who had worshiped it.
- H. Josiah destroyed "*ritual booths of the perverted persons that were in the house of the Lord*". (**V. 7**)
 - 1. "These were the mutilated males who served as "priests" to those who came to practice the licentious worship of the wooden idol. The women wove hangings which partitioned off areas where the ritual fornication was practiced. How outrageous that such things were being done in the house where God had chosen to put His name!" (Bob Waldron)
- I. Josiah defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense so that it would no longer be used in such worship as well as Topheth so that no man might make his son or daughter pass through the fire to Molech.
- J. Josiah took away the horses dedicated to the sun and burned the chariots of the sun with fire.
- K. The idolatrous altars made by Ahaz and Manasseh were destroyed; even the high places Solomon had built for his wives - for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Phoenicians, for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Milcom the abomination of the children of Ammon - Josiah defiled.
- L. Josiah went to Bethel where Jeroboam had set up the golden calves.
 - 1. He broke down the altar and the high place and burned the wooden images.
 - 2. As the king turned, he saw the tombs which were on the mountain.
 - a. He had the bones taken out of the tombs and burned upon the altar.
 - b. Then the king said, "*What gravestone is this I see?*" (**v. 17**)
 - c. The men of the city told him, (**v. 17**)
 - d. Josiah said, "*Let him alone; let no one move his bones.*" (**V 18**)

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e. So they left his bones and the bones of the prophet of Samaria.

(NOTE: Let us realize that in his zeal for the Lord, Josiah fulfilled a prophecy about himself that had been made 350 years earlier (see **1 Kings 13**.)

M. Even among the cities of Samaria Josiah carried out his reforms, destroying altars and high places and killing priests.

N. He also saw to it that the mediums and spiritists were all put away.

VI. Josiah Keeps the Passover: (2 Kings 23:21-23; 2 Chron. 35:1-19):

A. In the same year the temple was repaired, Josiah commanded the Passover be kept.

B. (**2 Kings 23:22; 2 Chron. 35:18**)

C. The Passover lamb was killed on the 14th day of the first month as the law required (**Exodus 12:3,6**).

D. By now the land and the house of God had been purged of idols; the law had been found; the people had renewed their covenant with the Lord; and the house of God had been repaired.

1. Josiah appointed the priests to their proper duties and encouraged them in their work.

2. Then Josiah told the Levites, (**2 Chron. 35:3**)

(NOTE: At this point we may be wondering why the ark was not already in the temple or where it had been. We have no way of knowing. It could have been that some faithful Levites may have hidden it for safe-keeping or it may have been removed at some time to make way for all the idolatrous items that were put in the temple. However, the ark was still in existence at this point in time. This is the last time the ark of the covenant will be mentioned. Most likely it will be taken when the Babylonians destroy the temple and take everything in it to Babylon. There is no way to know what happens to it there and there is no use to speculate about it simply because the Scriptures do not tell us.)

E. Josiah himself gave 30,000 lambs and young goats and 3,000 cattle to be used in the Passover celebration.

F. His leaders gave 2,600 from the flock and 300 cattle.

G. The chiefs of the Levites gave 5,000 from the flock and 500 cattle.

H. The feast was kept in strict obedience to the law.

I. There was even a number of people from old Israel who attended.

J. This Passover is the last thing told about Josiah before the story of his death, although he lived a few more years.

A little bit of history:

A. Nabopolassar establishes his reign in Babylon.

B. He invaded the Assyrian empire but was unable, at first, to defeat Assyria.

C. Assyria received help from Egypt who hated the Assyrians, but they saw Babylon becoming a world power and they greatly feared Babylon.

D. Egypt wanted Assyria to remain to serve as a buffer between them and Babylon, so they decided to help Assyria fight against Babylonians.

E. Meanwhile, the Medes joined the Babylonians and took Nineveh away from the Assyrians.

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- F. The Assyrians, in alliance with Egypt, moved west to Haran and there they were defeated.
- G. The Assyrian king wanted to recapture Haran with the help of the new king who had come to the throne in Egypt, Pharaoh Necho.
- H. On his way, Necho needed to pass through Josiah's kingdom, Judah.
- I. Josiah didn't want Egypt to help Assyria, so he went out to fight against the Egyptians and was slain in the attempt.

VII. Josiah's Death: (2 Kings 23:29-30; 2 Chron. 35:20-27)

- A. When Pharaoh Necho's army approached Josiah's kingdom, Necho sent messengers saying, (2 Chron. 35:21)
- B. Josiah paid no heed.
 - 1. He disguised himself and went out to battle at the valley of Megiddo.
 - 2. He *"did not heed the words of Necho from the mouth of God"*. (2 Chron. 35:22)
- C. The Egyptian archers shot Josiah.
 - 1. Josiah was severely wounded and he died.
 - 2. He was buried in the tombs of his fathers and all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for him.
- D. Jeremiah made a special lamentation for him.
- E. The very highest praise is given to Josiah. (2 Kings 23:25).

Some more history:

- A. Necho failed in his attempt to help the Assyrians regain Haran.
- B. Instead, he sought to establish the boundary of Egypt at Carchemish.
- C. He established an influence which reached the Euphrates River.
- D. That way, he temporarily stopped any further advancement of Babylon to the west.
- E. Since Necho had control all the way from Egypt to the Euphrates River, he had enough control to be able to interfere in Judah's affairs.
- F. He was already angry with Judah and with the family of Josiah.
- G. Judah did not have a military strong enough to resist Necho's (and, of course, God was no longer with Judah).
- H. This will bring us up to the reigns of Jehoahaz and then Jehoiakim in Judah.

VIII. Lessons From Josiah:

- A. God can use young people to achieve His purposes.
 - 1. While experience and wisdom are valuable for God's leaders, God does not need to only use older Christians to do his work.
- B. No matter how dark and evil the days, God is able to turn things around – at least for a period.
 - 1. What God accomplished through Josiah was one of the greatest reforms we can read about in the Scriptures.
 - 2. Josiah's example teaches us to do our best in the worst times.
 - a. Even though his repentance and reforms could not save the nation, his life and service to God still brought honor and glory to God.

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- b. So often today it seems like trying to be the “*salt*” of the earth and the “*light*” of the world is almost a lost cause.
 - c. No matter how dark or hopeless things seem, we must continue to do what’s right, and leave the rest up to God.
 - d. This may be the most important lesson of all to be learned from Josiah.
- C. True reform must always to be based on the Word of God.
- 1. When Josiah rediscovered the book of the law, it brought about immediate changes: he repents of his sins and leads the people in repenting of their sin and then begins the work of bring about the necessary changes.
- D. When God deals with His wayward people, only a true and from the heart response will do.
- 1. This means not just returning to the Lord in deep and remorseful repentance, but boldly and throughly dealing with all idolatry and sin.
 - 2. Josiah proceeded to remove all traces of apostasy from Jerusalem and Judah.
- E. A person’s parents need not determine one’s course in life.
- 1. Josiah had an evil father and a very evil grandfather.
 - 2. Yet, he ended up resembling his great-grandfather, Hezekiah, who also brought about reforms (although Josiah’s reforms were even greater than his).
 - 3. So let us not be bound by our upbringing or our lineage if our upbringing was not what it should have been.
- F. God’s mercy can and does come to an end.
- 1. He is not always going to strive with man.
 - 2. He will not always extend hope and mercy.
 - 3. Sometimes His only recourse is judgment.
 - 4. His longsuffering and patience with us can and will come to an end, also.
 - 5. Let one of the lessons we are learning from our study of Old Testament characters be that there is a limit to God’s mercy.
 - 6. There is a limit to His grace, and He will not pour out His mercy on people forever who will not repent.

LESSON 48

Zephaniah

(Book of Zephaniah)

Jeremiah

(Book of Jeremiah)