

2Chronicles 34:1 ¶ Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem one and thirty years.

2Chronicles 34:2 And he did *that which was right* in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the ways of David his father, and declined *neither* to the right hand, nor to the left.

Once again Judah has a child king, 8-year-old Josiah, and he ruled from Jerusalem for 31 years. The writer of Kings identifies his mother.

2 Kings 22:1 "Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty and one years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Jedidah, the daughter of Adaiah of Boscath."

Josiah did that which was right before the LORD in accordance with the character of King David, his father of old. He committed to staying obedient to the LORD. I liked Clarke's observation: "He never swerved from God and truth; he never omitted what he knew to be his duty to God and his kingdom; he carried on his reformation with a steady hand; timidity did not prevent him from going far enough; and zeal did not lead him beyond due bounds. He walked in the golden mean, and his moderation was known unto all men. He went neither to the right nor to the left, he looked inward, looked forward, and looked upward."

JFB provided an interesting historical note: "...the kings of Judah were considered minors till they had completed their thirteenth year...."

2Chronicles 34:3 For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father: and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images.

2Chronicles 34:4 And they brake down the altars of Baalim in his presence; and the images, that *were* on high above them, he cut down; and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images, he brake in pieces, and made dust of *them*, and strowed *it* upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them.

2Chronicles 34:5 And he burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars, and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem.

2Chronicles 34:6 And *so did he* in the cities of Manasseh, and Ephraim, and Simeon, even unto Naphtali, with their mattocks round about.

2Chronicles 34:7 And when he had broken down the altars and the groves, and had beaten the graven images into powder, and cut down all the idols throughout all the land of Israel, he returned to Jerusalem.

In the eighth year of his reign, when he was 16, he made a personal commitment to seek to do God's will. When he was 20, he began to get rid of the high places, groves and idols that were dedicated to the worship of false gods out of Judah and Jerusalem. He personally saw to it that the altars and idols to Baal were destroyed, as well as the groves and the idols in them. He ground them into dust and spread it over the graves of those that had sacrificed to them. He burned the

bones of the priests on their altars as he determined to cleanse and purify Judah and Jerusalem of their evil. (One can find greater detail in the record of 2Kings 23.)

Josiah's actions fulfilled a prophecy made about what he would do over 300 years previously, during the reign of Jeroboam in the Northern Kingdom.

*1 Kings 13:1–2 “And, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the LORD unto Bethel: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. And he cried against the altar in the word of the LORD, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the LORD; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, **Josiah by name**; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee.”*

The king then proceeded to do the same in the cities of the Northern Kingdom—Manasseh, Ephraim, Simeon and Naphtali and the ruins surrounding them. When he had completed his task, he returned to Jerusalem.

Once again JFB adds insight: “...after the destruction of Samaria by Shalmaneser, the remnant that continued on the mountains of Israel maintained a close intercourse with Judah, and looked to the sovereigns of that kingdom as their natural protectors.”

Historical note: Jeremiah began his ministry when Josiah was 21 years of age. It seems he was the son of Hilkiah, the high priest under Josiah.

Jeremiah 1:1–2 “The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin: To whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.”

2Chronicles 34:8 ¶ 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 the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of the LORD his God.

2Chronicles 34:9 And when they came to Hilkiah the high priest, they delivered the money that was brought into the house of God, which the Levites that kept the doors had gathered of the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, and of all the remnant of Israel, and of all Judah and Benjamin; and they returned to Jerusalem.

At age 26, after clearing the land of all things related to the worship of false gods, Josiah turned his attention to repairing the temple, the house of the LORD “his” God. He sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, Maaseiah the governor of Jerusalem and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder (historian) to deliver the money that the Levites had collected from the people throughout the land to Hilkiah the high priest so that he could get the repairs started.

2Chronicles 34:10 And they put *it* in the hand of the workmen that had the oversight of the house of the LORD, and they gave it to the workmen that

wrought in the house of the LORD, to repair and amend the house:
2Chronicles 34:11 Even to the artificers and builders gave they *it*, to buy hewn stone, and timber for couplings, and to floor the houses which the kings of Judah had destroyed.

2Chronicles 34:12 And the men did the work faithfully: and the overseers of them *were* Jahath and Obadiah, the Levites, of the sons of Merari; and Zechariah and Meshullam, of the sons of the Kohathites, to set *it* forward; and *other* of the Levites, all that could skill of instruments of musick.

2Chronicles 34:13 Also *they were* over the bearers of burdens, and *were* overseers of all that wrought the work in any manner of service: and of the Levites *there were* scribes, and officers, and porters.

The money was then given to those that were appointed to oversee the work of repairing the temple. They used it to hire the workmen and purchase the supplies they needed—e.g., cut stones and timber. All the workmen proved trustworthy and faithful in their work. Those overseeing the work were Levites: Jahath and Obadiah, sons of Merari, and Zechariah and Meshullam, sons of Kohath. Levite musicians were appointed to oversee particular jobs required by the repairs, while other Levites kept a record of accounts and kept guard at the gates.

2Chronicles 34:14 ¶ And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the LORD, Hilkiyah the priest found a book of the law of the LORD *given* by Moses.

2Chronicles 34:15 And Hilkiyah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiyah delivered the book to Shaphan.

2Chronicles 34:16 And Shaphan carried the book to the king, and brought the king word back again, saying, All that was committed to thy servants, they do *it*.

2Chronicles 34:17 And they have gathered together the money that was found in the house of the LORD, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and to the hand of the workmen.

In the process of making an accounting of the money, the high priest found a book of the law of the LORD as written by Moses. Hilkiyah took the book to Shaphan, the king's scribe; and he took the book to the king. He reported to Josiah that the work on the temple was being done in accordance with his command and that the money was being used appropriately.

2Chronicles 34:18 Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiyah the priest hath given me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king.

2Chronicles 34:19 And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes.

2Chronicles 34:20 And the king commanded Hilkiyah, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king's, saying,

2Chronicles 34:21 Go, enquire of the LORD for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found: for

great is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do after all that is written in this book.

After updating the king on the work being done, Shaphan told Josiah that Hilkiah the high priest had found a book; and he proceeded to read it to the king. When the king heard God's word, he tore his clothes in distress. He commanded his top officials and the high priest to seek out a prophet to enquire of the LORD for him in light of the words of the book of the law. Josiah realized that the LORD had to be angry with His people because they had been so disobedient to His law.

2Chronicles 34:22 And Hilkiah, and *they* that the king *had appointed*, went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvath, the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college:) and they spake to her to that *effect*.

2Chronicles 34:23 And she answered them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Tell ye the man that sent you to me,

2Chronicles 34:24 Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, *even* all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah:

2Chronicles 34:25 Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place, and shall not be quenched.

The king's delegation went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum, the keeper of the Temple wardrobe (the garments for the priests). They gave her the king's message, and she was ready with an answer. She told them to deliver this message from the LORD to the king (my paraphrase): I am going to judge this land and its people according to the curses written in the book they read to the king of Judah. They have made me angry because they have rejected Me and followed after other gods. Because they did this they will suffer My judgment.

The record in Kings makes a direct connection between the judgment to come and the actions of Josiah's grandfather, Manasseh.

2 Kings 23:26 "Notwithstanding the LORD turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal."

The reference to the "curses that are written in the book" makes me think that it was the book of Deuteronomy. There is a special section in that book that details the blessings of obedience to God vs. the cursings of disobedience.

2Chronicles 34:26 And as for the king of Judah, who sent you to enquire of the LORD, so shall ye say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel *concerning* the words which thou hast heard;

2Chronicles 34:27 Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and

against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard *thee* also, saith the LORD.

2Chronicles 34:28 Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same. So they brought the king word again.

The prophetess continued: However, because the king of Judah responded to My word with a tender heart and humbled himself before Me in tears, I have heard his prayers. Josiah, you will eventually go to your grave in peace (not during my judgment), and you will not have to see the evil to come.

The delegation returned to King Josiah and delivered the message from the LORD declared by the prophetess.

I got to wondering why they would choose to go to Huldah when we know that Jeremiah was on the scene at that time. I think that maybe because his father was part of the delegation, they chose not to go to his son to seek God's will. That would have been a bit awkward for Hilkiah, the high priest.

2Chronicles 34:29 ¶ Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem.

2Chronicles 34:30 And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, great and small: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the LORD.

2Chronicles 34:31 And 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 which are written in this book.

2Chronicles 34:32 And he caused all that were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand *to it*. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers.

The king then sent for and gathered together all the leaders in Judah and Jerusalem. He then went to the temple with all these leaders and the people of Jerusalem and proceeded to read aloud from the book of the covenant that had been found in the temple. Afterwards, King Josiah made a covenant before the LORD to follow Him and obey His commandments and laws as recorded in the book with his whole being. He also urged all those present to commit themselves to do the same, and they did.

2Chronicles 34:33 And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that *pertained* to the children of Israel, and made all that were present in Israel to serve, *even* to serve the LORD their God. *And* all his days they departed not from following the LORD, the God of their fathers.

King Josiah removed all the disgusting things related to idol worship and urged all the people of Israel to serve the LORD “their” God. It is noted that the people stayed obedient to the LORD, the God of their fathers, during Josiah’s lifetime.

Guzik adds an interesting example from history that reinforces the power of the word of God in effecting change in the lives of the people that hear it. “Another example of this in history is the story of Peter Waldo and his followers, sometimes known as Waldenses. Waldo was a rich merchant who gave up his business to radically follow Jesus. He hired two priests to translate the New Testament into the common language and using this, he began to teach others. He taught in the streets or wherever he could find someone to listen. Many common people came to hear him and started to radically follow Jesus Christ. He taught them the text of the New Testament in the common language and was rebuked by church officials for doing so. He ignored the rebuke and continued to teach, eventually sending his followers out two by two into villages and market places, to teach and explain the scriptures. The scriptures were memorized by the Waldenses, and it was not unusual for their ministers to memorize the entire New Testament and large sections of the Old Testament. The word of God - when found, read, believed, and spread - has this kind of transforming power.”