

2Kings 23:1 ¶ And the king sent, and they gathered unto him all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem.

2Kings 23:2 And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the people, both small and great: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the LORD.

Continuing the narrative of the last chapter...

King Josiah sent for and gathered all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. He then led the men of Judah and the people of Jerusalem, including priests, prophets and all the people, to the temple. Once there he read (or caused to be read) aloud all the words of the book of the covenant that had been found in the house of the LORD.

2Kings 23:3 And the king stood by a pillar, 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 *their* heart and all *their* soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant.

The king stood at "his" designated place and made a covenant before the LORD on behalf of the people to follow Him in obedience to His commandments and laws with all their heart and soul. The people vowed to uphold and live (from the Hebrew for "perform") according to the words of the covenant in the book. All the people confirmed (from the Hebrew for "stood") the covenant.

2 Chronicles 34:31 "And the king stood in his place..."

Clarke provides this explanation: "He stood, על העמוד al haammud, "upon the stairs or pulpit." This is what is called the brazen scaffold or pulpit which Solomon made, and on which the kings were accustomed to stand when they addressed the people."

2 Chronicles 6:12–13 "And he stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands: For Solomon had made a brasen scaffold, of five cubits long, and five cubits broad, and three cubits high, and had set it in the midst of the court:"

2Kings 23:4 ¶ And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to 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 host of heaven: and he burned them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Bethel.

Josiah then ordered Hilkiah the high priest, the priests of the second order and the keepers of the door to bring out of the LORD's temple all the vessels that had

been made for Baal, for the grove and for the host of heaven. He then burned them outside the city in the fields of Kidron and carried their ashes to Bethel.

This was in accordance with keeping covenant they had just made in accordance with the law they had just heard.

Deuteronomy 7:25 "The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire: thou shalt not desire the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein: for it is an abomination to the LORD thy God."

2Kings 23:5 And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven.

The king got rid of the priests that had served before the idols of these false gods—Baal, the sun, the moon, the planets and the host of heaven—that the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places of the cities of Judah and around Jerusalem.

Guzik made a good observation: "Any thorough reformation can not only deal with sinful things; it must also deal with sinful people. If sinful people are not dealt with, they will quickly bring back the sinful things that were righteously removed."

2Kings 23:6 And he brought out the grove from the house of the LORD, without Jerusalem, unto the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and stamped it small to powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the children of the people.

The king brought out the Asherah pole (from the Hebrew for "grove") from the temple and took it outside the city to the brook Kidron and burned it until all that was left was powder. Then he cast the powder upon the graves of those that had sacrificed to the false gods (according to the Chronicler).

2 Chronicles 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."

2Kings 23:7 And he brake down the houses of the sodomites, that were by the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the grove.

The king destroyed the houses of the sodomites (male prostitutes that served in the worship of the false gods) adjacent to the temple where the women wove hangings or coverings for the Asherah pole.

Guzik provides insight from Dilday: "The word translated *hangings* likely refers to a fabric woven by idol worshippers for curtains behind which the ritual

obscenities were practiced.”

2Kings 23:8 And he brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beersheba, and brake down the high places of the gates that *were* in the entering in of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which *were* on a man’s left hand at the gate of the city.

2Kings 23:9 Nevertheless the priests of the high places came not up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, but they did eat of the unleavened bread among their brethren.

After reading several translations, I think the NLT gives a clearer understanding of these verses: *“Josiah brought back to Jerusalem all the priests of the LORD, who were living in other towns of Judah. He also defiled all the pagan shrines, where they had burned incense, from Geba to Beersheba. He destroyed the shrines at the entrance to the gate of Joshua, the governor of Jerusalem. This gate was located to the left of the city gate as one enters the city. The priests who had served at the pagan shrines were not allowed to serve at the LORD’s altar in Jerusalem, but they were allowed to eat unleavened bread with the other priests.”*

The high places referenced in these verses were those where the priests officiated in disobedience to God’s law.

“Geba to Beersheba” – from north to south or the whole land of Judah

2Kings 23:10 And he defiled Topheth, which *is* in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech.

Josiah then publicly pronounced as unclean (from the Hebrew for “defiled”) Topheth in the valley of Hinnom and commanded that no one could sacrifice their children to Molech.

Clarke again provides insight: *“The rabbins say that Topheth had its name from תוף toph, a drum, because instruments of this kind were used to drown the cries of the children that were put into the burning arms of Molech, to be scorched to death.”*

2Kings 23:11 And he took away the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entering in of the house of the LORD, by the chamber of Nathanmelech the chamberlain, which *was* in the suburbs, and burned the chariots of the sun with fire.

The king also got rid of the horses that were kept at the entrance to the house of the LORD by the chamber of Nathanmelech the chamberlain. The kings of Judah had dedicated these horses to the worship of the sun. He also destroyed the chariots dedicated to the sun by fire.

Gill offers this insight: "According to the Jewish commentators, these were horses provided for the worshippers of the sun to ride upon, and meet the sun in the morning at its rising, and pay their homage to it; but certain it is that the Heathen nations before mentioned slew the horses, and sacrificed them as burnt offerings to the sun, as is asserted by Herodotus, Xenophon, Strabo, Pausanias, Philostratus, and other writers...."

Some commentators conclude that the horses in reference were statues.

2Kings 23:12 And the altars that *were* on the top of 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, did the king beat down, and brake *them* down from thence, and cast the dust of them into the brook Kidron.

Josiah destroyed the altars that the kings of Judah had built on the roof of Ahaz's upper room; he also destroyed the altars that Manasseh had put up in the two courts of the temple. These altars were beat down to dust and the dust cast into the brook Kidron.

2Kings 23:13 And the high places that *were* before Jerusalem, which *were* on the right hand of the mount of corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had builded for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Zidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the children of Ammon, did the king defile.

2Kings 23:14 And he brake in pieces the images, and cut down the groves, and filled their places with the bones of men.

King Solomon had built high places to honor the false gods of his wives-- Ashtoreth, the abomination of the Zidonians, Chemosh of the Moabites and Milcom of Ammonites. King Josiah declared these areas to be unclean and proceeded to destroy the idols and groves and covered the sites with human bones, effectively marking the place as unclean.

JFB offers this helpful note: "The Mount of Olives is a hilly range on the east of Jerusalem. This range has three summits, of which the central one is the Mount of Corruption, so called from the idol temples built there, and of course the hill on the right hand denotes the southernmost peak."

2Kings 23:15 Moreover the altar that *was* at Bethel, *and* the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar *and* the high place he brake down, and burned the high place, *and* stamped it small to powder, and burned the grove.

The king also destroyed by fire the altar and high place that Jeroboam son of Nebat had established to lead the people of Israel to sin; both were reduced to powder. He also burned the grove.

2Kings 23:16 And as Josiah turned himself, he spied the sepulchres that *were* there in the mount, and sent, and took the bones out of the sepulchres, and

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. **2Kings 23:17** Then he said, What title is that that I see? And the men of the city told him, *It is the sepulchre of the man of God, which came from Judah, and proclaimed these things that thou hast done against the altar of Bethel.* **2Kings 23:18** And he said, Let him alone; let no man move his bones. So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet that came out of Samaria.

I liked the NLT wording for verse 16: *"Then as Josiah was looking around, he noticed several tombs in the side of the hill. He ordered that the bones be brought out, and he burned them on the altar at Bethel to desecrate it. This happened just as the LORD had promised through the man of God as Jeroboam stood beside the altar at the festival. Then Josiah turned and looked up at the tomb of the man of God who had predicted these things."*

The king then saw a rather conspicuous monument and asked what it was. He was told that it marked the grave of a man of God from Judah that had prophesied the very actions he had just taken against the altar in Bethel. So the king ordered that his bones not be touched; neither were the bones touched of the prophet from Samaria that was buried with him.

This is a reference to an event we studied in 1Kings. After making his prophecy, the man of God was deceived by an old prophet in Samaria and ended up disobeying God's command to leave immediately and not to eat or drink anything in the land. Because of his disobedience he died as he was leaving, and the old prophet buried him in his own grave. The old prophet told his children to bury him with the prophet, hoping that his remains would be spared.

1 Kings 13:2 "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."

1 Kings 13:31–32 "And it came to pass, after he had buried him, that he spake to his sons, saying, When I am dead, then bury me in the sepulchre wherein the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones: For the saying which he cried by the word of the LORD against the altar in Bethel, and against all the houses of the high places which are in the cities of Samaria, shall surely come to pass."

2Kings 23:19 And all the houses also of the high places that *were* in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke *the* LORD to anger, Josiah took away, and did to them according to all the acts that he had done in Bethel.

2Kings 23:20 And he slew all the priests of the high places that *were* there upon the altars, and burned men's bones upon them, and returned to Jerusalem.

King Josiah extended his reach by ordering the destruction of all the houses of the high places in the cities of Samaria that had been built by the kings of Israel.

He mirrored the actions he had taken in Bethel. Then he killed all the priests of the high places upon the altars and burned their bones upon them.

When all had been done, the king returned to Jerusalem.

2Kings 23:21 And the king commanded all the people, saying, Keep the passover unto the LORD your God, as *it is* written in the book of this covenant. 2Kings 23:22 Surely there was not holden such a passover from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah; 2Kings 23:23 But in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, *wherein* this passover was holden to the LORD in Jerusalem.

After ridding his kingdom of all things associated with the worship of false gods, the king commanded that the people keep the Passover in accordance with the instructions found in the book of the law. The historian notes that this Passover was the greatest that had been held since the times of the judges. This Passover was held in Jerusalem in the 18th year of Josiah's reign.

The Chronicler provides a lot more detail about this Passover in 2Chronicles 35.

2Kings 23:24 Moreover the *workers with familiar spirits, and the wizards, and the images, and the idols, and all the abominations that were spied in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, did Josiah put away, 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.*

It's like the historian is saying, "Oh, by the way." He adds that Josiah all got rid of all the mediums and conjurers, the household gods and any other idolatrous things that were in the land of Judah. He was determined to follow the whole of God's law as recorded in the book that Hilkiah had found when making repairs to the temple.

2Kings 23:25 ¶ And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there *any* like him.

The historian notes that there was no king before or after Josiah that served the LORD with all his heart, soul and might in accordance with the law of Moses.

This statement is a little confusing because it seems to contradict the statement the historian made about King Hezekiah.

2 Kings 18:1&5 "Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign....He trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him."

The NIV Commentary offers a good explanation: "As Hezekiah had been

unequaled in faith among the kings (18:5 – “He trusted”) so Josiah knew no rival in uncompromising adherence to the Law of Moses.”

2Kings 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.

2Kings 23:27 And the LORD said, I will remove Judah also out of 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.

Though Josiah implemented great spiritual reform in Judah, his actions did not appease God’s anger in light of all the evil deeds of Manasseh. The LORD was determined to judge Judah just as surely as He had judged Israel. Judah and the temple would both suffer destruction and the people taken captive to another land.

Gill expressed Judah’s removal from God’s sight this way: “Not from his all seeing eye, but from being the object of his special care and protection; the meaning is, that he would suffer them to be carried out of their land into captivity as Israel was.”

2Kings 23:28 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?*

2Kings 23:29 In his days Pharaohnechoh king of Egypt went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates: and king Josiah went against him; and he slew him at Megiddo, when he had seen him.

2Kings 23:30 And his servants carried him in a chariot dead from Megiddo, and brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own sepulchre. And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and anointed him, and made him king in his father’s stead.

The historian closes his account of Josiah by noting that more was recorded about him in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah. He then describes the event that led to Josiah’s death.

Pharaohnechoh, king of Egypt, went out to attack the king of Assyria at Carchemish by the Euphrates River. Babylon had conquered Assyria by this time, so the king of Babylon and king of Assyria referenced the same person, Nabopolassar.

2 Chronicles 35:20 “After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Carchemish by Euphrates: and Josiah went out against him.”

Wikipedia identifies the Egyptian foe as Nebuchadnezzar: “In 605 BC, Nabopolassar's son, crown prince Nebuchadnezzar fought Necho and the remnants of the Assyrian army at the Battle of Carchemish.”

The Chronicler goes on to tell us that Necho warned Josiah not to interfere

because God had commanded him to make this attack.

For some reason, Josiah persisted in opposing him at Megiddo. When the king of Egypt saw him, he killed him. Josiah's servants carried him back to Jerusalem by chariot and buried him in his own grave. The Chronicler records it a bit differently. He indicates that Josiah was fatally wounded and actually died in Jerusalem.

2 Chronicles 35:23–24 “And the archers shot at king Josiah; and the king said to his servants, Have me away; for I am sore wounded. His servants therefore took him out of that chariot, and put him in the second chariot that he had; and they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died, and was buried in one of the sepulchres of his fathers.”

Because he began his reign at age 8 and reigned for 31 years, we know Josiah died at the age of 39.

How sad to see such a good king's life end so unnecessarily. Even the most committed followers of God can make unwise choices. All of our choices have consequences. We can rest assured that the choices we, those who love God, make will be used for good.

Romans 8:28 “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

The people of the land then made Jehoahaz his son the next king of Judah.

The IVP Commentary provides this historical insight: “The Levant was an unstable area after the collapse of Assyria in 612–610 B.C. Egypt and Babylon now fought a furious war for supremacy in the area. Egypt apparently tried unsuccessfully to lift the siege of the last Assyrian center at Haran in 610–609 B.C. Four years later Josiah of Judah tried to block Egypt's invasion of Syria but was wounded at the battle of Megiddo and subsequently died. Because of the power vacuum in the area, Judah became an Egyptian protectorate (609–608 B.C.). The Egyptians, although delayed, now traveled north and battled the Chaldeans at Carchemish, suffering a tremendous defeat (605 B.C.). The Chaldeans followed by invading Egypt in 601–600 but suffered heavy casualties. At any rate, Judah was only temporarily under the leadership of Egypt.”

2Kings 23:31 ¶ Jehoahaz was twenty and three years old when he began to reign; and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.

2Kings 23:32 And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done.

Jehoahaz was 23 years old when he became king; his reign lasted only three months. His mother was Hamutal, daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah (not the prophet Jeremiah). He was an evil king that followed the ways of the evil kings that preceded him.

2Kings 23:33 And Pharaohnechoh put him in bands at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem; and put the land to a tribute of an hundred talents of silver, and a talent of gold.

2Kings 23:34 And Pharaohnechoh made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the room of Josiah his father, and turned his name to Jehoiakim, and took Jehoahaz away: and he came to Egypt, and died there.

2Kings 23:35 And Jehoiakim gave the silver and the gold to Pharaoh; but he taxed the land to give the money according to the commandment of Pharaoh: he exacted the silver and the gold of the people of the land, of every one according to his taxation, to give *it* unto Pharaohnechoh.

Pharaohnechoh made Jehoahaz his prisoner at Riblah in Hamath and did not allow him to reign in Jerusalem. He put the land to tribute at the sum of 100 talents of silver and a talent of gold. He then made Eliakim, another one of Josiah's son, the puppet king and changed his name to Jehoiakim. He took Jehoahaz to Egypt as his prisoner where he eventually died.

Jehoiakim paid the Pharaoh the required tribute with money that he raised by taxing the people.

2Kings 23:36 Jehoiakim *was* twenty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Zebudah, the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah.

2Kings 23:37 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done.

Jehoiakim was 25 years old when he was made king, and he reigned for 11 years in Jerusalem. His mother was Zebudah, daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah. This means that he was Jehoahaz's older half brother. (Jehoahaz was 23 years of age when he was made king 3 months earlier.) He was yet another in the line of evil kings of Judah.