

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS
LESSON 13B
THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS
CHAPTER 23**

INTRODUCTION

Josiah reformed an entire nation. He was the godliest of all the kings of Judah. What he did in his short life was to reverse the sin of idolatry and the fruits of the sin of idolatry which are wickedness and fornication. He was successful in what he did but it was too little too late. The judgement of God upon Judah that was passed before was irreversible.

There are judgements in the Bible which are “reversible” in that when the sinners repent, the judgement of God can be stayed. An example of such type of judgement from God was the judgement of God on Nineveh in the days of Jonah, the rebellious prophet. The Ninevites repented of their sins and the judgement that Jonah preached would fall on that evil city was stayed.

On the other hand, there are judgements in the Bible that will take place and will not be changed. The judgement of God upon Judah is such an example. The judgement upon the

world in the last days is another example. Therefore, the believer is not to pray against such judgements. It would be praying against the revealed will of God. God will not hear such prayers.

It is not true that those who obey the LORD will live long on the earth. Josiah died young in order that he will not live to see the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem and the Temple of Solomon. Godly life is not measured by length (quantity) but rather measured in terms of faithfulness (quality).

Chapter 23 concerns Josiah’s implementing nation-wide religious reforms, his death and his sons who succeeded him.

OUTLINE

1. Josiah’s nation-wide religious reforms (vv.1-25);
2. The LORD’S judgement on Judah and the death of Josiah (vv.26-30);
3. The Reign of Josiah’s sons (v.31-37).

COMMENTARY

**Josiah’s Nation-Wide Religious
Reforms — 23:1-20**

Josiah was convicted of his sins and that of his people too. He followed his conviction with definitive action. He gathered the leaders of the nation together at the Temple in Jerusalem

including the priests and the prophets, and the people, both great and small. King Josiah led the meeting reading aloud the re-discovered Book of the Law to the people. Then on behalf of the people, he “cut” a covenant before the LORD. The king together with people pledged to walk after the LORD, to keep His commandments, His testimonies and His statutes with all their hearts and souls and to do all according to the Book of the Law (vv.1-3). This is the meaning of being in a covenant relationship with God. It means to obey God’s Word with all our heart and soul. Josiah, as king, and the leaders would set the example and the people would respond accordingly.

This revival must be a public act. It must begin from top down. It cannot be done secretly because it involved the whole nation. Likewise, the reformation must begin with the leaders and be done publicly where the whole church is involved.

Having renewed the covenant with the LORD, Josiah began to carry out the promises. First he purged the nation of all its idolatrous worship and practices. The high priest must take the lead. He must begin the reform from the most holy place, the Temple. He began by removing and destroying the images of Baal, and Asherah, and all the utensils which were used for their worship. He burned them in the valley of Kidron which was situated on the south side of Jerusalem. Revival cannot begin without first removing sin and idolatry

from the midst of God’s place of worship.

Secondly he dismissed (“Sabbath” -- rested) the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had appointed to conduct the religious ceremonies for Baal. Note the use of the plural for “kings”. This means that these false priests have been ministering there for some time. He also destroyed the “houses of the sodomites” that were by the Temple. These houses contained male temple prostitutes (Hebrew word is masculine gender) who were homosexuals, a religious practice of the Baal cult (vv.4-7). He destroyed Topheth, the place of fire where human sacrifices were offered to the Molech, the god of Ammonites and the Phoenicians (23:10).

Josiah’s reforms were not restricted to Jerusalem (23:8-14). He even destroyed the altar in Bethel and all the high places throughout Samaria the northern kingdom (23:15-20). The gods of the Ammonites, Moabites and Sidonians were worshipped in Judah at this time. The sins of Ahaz that the kings of Judah had copied and brought back to Jerusalem and the idolatrous courts made by Manasseh were totally destroyed by Josiah. The altars from as far back as the beginning of the divided kingdom which Jeroboam committed were destroyed here. The bones of the prophet with no name whom God sent to speak against Jeroboam were not to be touched. Josiah broke down and cleansed the length and breadth of

Israel and Judah of all forms of idolatry so much so that even the slightest semblance of idol worship was erased. For the first time since the split after the reign of Solomon Josiah treated the northern kingdom as part of the south—one land, one people. The Assyrians who made the northern kingdom a vassal state were declining as a world power. At the same time, the Babylonians who had visited Judah were a rising power. Hence, Josiah could extend his reforms to include all the cities of Samaria. He slew all the priests of the high places in these cities that were outside Jerusalem.

The Celebration of the Passover – 23:21-25

One of the significant reforms Josiah made was the re-institution of the Passover Feast which included the feast of the unleavened bread which the people were to eat for one week. The Passover Feast had not been kept for a long time. This annual feast was required of the LORD in Deuteronomy 16:1-8. It was a feast wherein the people remembered God's deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, long before they had a king. It was a reminder to the Israelites that their covenant relationship was and still is essentially with God and not the king. The LORD God in truth is their King!

Josiah ensures that “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” were burnt

and destroyed. The Passover was meaningless if these were not destroyed.

Josiah's reforms were thorough and the divine writer gave him full marks for there was “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” (v.25).

The LORD'S Judgement on Judah and the Death of Josiah – 23:26-30

Nevertheless, the LORD'S judgement upon the nation remained unchanged. The reason was because the judgement sentence by the LORD against Judah in the reign of Manasseh, Josiah's grandfather, could not be reversed. The centuries of sins committed by God's people brought about God's judgement. The Israelites must be punished for their generations of sins. It just so happened that the last straw came in the reign of Manasseh. Jeremiah and Ezekiel who were prophets that time, provided much light on the last days of Judah's existence (see the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel). The people's change through Josiah's reforms was short lived. The day Josiah died and was succeeded by his sons, the people returned to their evil and wicked ways (2 Chronicles 36:14-16). The influence of kings (leaders) can never be overstated. When Israel had a godly king, the people were godly. But when the king

was evil, the people became idolatrous and wicked.

Josiah died in battle against Pharaoh-Nechoh, King of Egypt. The Egyptian armies marched along the western border of Judah. Josiah intercepted the Egyptian armies. This was an unwise move for he had no word from the LORD to do so. In the battle that took place in the valley of Jezreel, which is about 90 kilometres northwest of Jerusalem, Josiah was at Megiddo, a fortified city in the valley. His servant then carried his body in a chariot to Jerusalem where he was buried in his own tomb.

The Reign of Josiah's Sons– 23:31-37

Upon Josiah's death, the people made Jehoahaz, Josiah's 23-year-old son, King. He reigned only 3 months. Pharaoh-Nechoh, who controlled Judah after his victory over Josiah, deposed and exiled Jehoahaz to Riblah in Hamath, so that he could not reign in Jerusalem. In place of him, Pharaoh-Nechoh appointed Eliakim, Jehoahaz's brother, to be his puppet king. Pharaoh-Nechoh changed his name to Jehoiakim. Jehoiakim taxed the people heavily in order to meet the demand of Pharaoh-Nehcoh for tribute (v.35). Jehoiakim reigned 11 years. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD.

PRACTICAL VALUE

Josiah's religious reforms were difficult to achieve. The people for many years had been worshipping and

practising idolatry and they were comfortable with it. Josiah's reforms were costly and hurtful to many and brought a lot of pain and anger to some. But he did it without compromising. This is what Pastors and Elders of the church should emulate. When policies and practices in the church do not conform to the Word of God, and even when some influential people threaten to leave the church, church leaders should be like Josiah. Put God first and obey Him. Trust in God to deal with the consequences.

Josiah gathered all the priests and elders and the people together before God to make a covenant with Him. There are times in the church when it is a good thing to corporately renew our dedication to the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the right thing to do for it is pleasing in the sight of God. AMEN

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: 2 Kings 23:1-20; Deuteronomy 5:2-3; Jeremiah 11:1-13.

TUESDAY: 2 Kings 23:21-28; Ezekiel 18:1-32.

WEDNESDAY: 2 Kings 23:29-37; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17

THURSDAY: 2 Kings 23:1-37

FRIDAY: 2 Kings 23:1-37

Discussion Questions

1. Why must the reform begin from the top? Can it work if it begins from the bottom within the church?

2. Are there idols in Pandan that must be removed?

3. What personality trait of Jehoiakim should Christians not possess?

4. Contrast how Josiah and the Judeans are described in 2 Kings 23:25-27; what does it teach us?

5. What two-steps did Josiah take to ensure that the people departed from their sinful ways? How can these steps be applied in Pandan?

6. The Holy Spirit is constantly purifying our life to conform to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. What worldly

habits and patterns of thoughts is He leading you to strip away?
