

Reform and Revival

2 Kings 22:1-23:25

July 18, 2010

At this point in history, the northern kingdom of Israel had been destroyed by Assyria. They had been taken captive and removed to other places. Judah in the south survived Assyria's attack because of the miraculous intervention of God to save them through King Hezekiah.

After Hezekiah died Manasseh ruled as king of Judah and he was without question the worst king that Judah had in their entire history. Not only did he rebuild the altars for Baal and Astoreth as Ahab king of Israel had done, he built altars to foreign gods even in the house of the Lord! Can you imagine? In the very temple of the living God, Manasseh built altars to the gods of permissiveness.

He practiced witchcraft and used divination and dealt with mediums and spiritists and even made his son pass through the fire of Molech. God responded through the prophets and said that Jerusalem would be destroyed and even said, "I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down."

After Manasseh, his son Amon reigned as king in Jerusalem and he was also an evil king. However, he only reigned two years because his own servants conspired against him and killed him.

That brings us to Josiah. He was only eight years old when he became king, but he did right in the sight of the Lord and walked in the ways of his father David. But Josiah not only walked before the Lord himself, he decided to bring great spiritual reform to the kingdom of Judah.

And with that our lesson begins. The reforms that Josiah brought to Judah challenge us to bring reform in our lives as well. But there is a difference between reform and revival.

Reform is changing the way a person lives, but revival is something different, something beyond reform, something greater, and something that God desires to see in each one of us as well. Revival is when a person turns to the Lord with all their heart.

I. Revival brings Reform

- One of the first things that is worth noting about Josiah is that although he had an evil father, he did not follow after his father's footsteps.
- We do not have to walk in the sins of our fathers either. Each one of us has a choice and we can choose to be different. We can choose to walk as a man or woman after God.
- When Josiah was 26 years old he had been raising funds to repair the damages of the house of the Lord. In other words, the Temple had fallen into disrepair and it was on his heart to repair the damage.
- In the process, the high priest found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. He gave it to the scribe who in turn brought it to Josiah and read it in the presence of the king.
- And here we gain a great insight into the heart of King Josiah, because when he heard the words of the book of the law, he tore his clothes and began to weep. His heart was broken because of what he heard.

A. Revival begins with a broken heart

- When Josiah heard the words of the law, he knew that the nation had fallen far away from God and that God's wrath would burn against them.
- He knew that their only hope was to turn their nation around and come back under the hand of the Lord.
- In verse 19, we see Josiah's heart and God's response. His heart was tender and humble before the Lord and his weeping showed his heart was broken.
- Because of this, declared the Lord, "I have truly heard you." The word, "truly" is there to emphasize the depth of how much God heard Josiah's heart.

Psalm 51:17, The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

- What we are seeing in Josiah is revival, and it begins in the heart. If we seek revival, then we need to understand what it is.
- Revival is when a person or a people turns to God sincerely, genuinely, authentically, from the heart. And this was most certainly true of Josiah.
- **Notice in verse 23:1-3, Josiah made a covenant before the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul.**

- We see those words repeated about Josiah in 23:25...

2 Kings 23:25, And before him there was no king like him who 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;

Deuteronomy 6:4-5, "Hear, or Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart."

B. A heart that is right with God desires reform

- Revival is what happens in the heart when there is an authentic and sincere following after God.
- Reform then, is when a person's life is formed or shaped by the Word of God.
- When a person's heart finds revival and there is an authentic love for God in the heart, then that person wants to change the way they live. Revival brings reform.

Illus – We have a ministry to young adults called *Inside Out* based on that very idea. God wants revival in the heart and then comes the life that is formed because of it.

Illus – The Jesus Movement of the sixties was also based on that very idea as well. The hippies lived and acted in such a way as to send a message of rebellion to the world. But Chuck Smith and others sought to change their hearts first, knowing that the outside would follow. How? by the Word of God.

Romans 12:2, And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 10:17, So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

- After Josiah's heart was broken, he then called the people into a covenant with the Lord; and then he pursued reform. He wanted to change the way the nation was living.
- The degree of Josiah's reforms has become famous throughout history. But the degree of his reforms is also a reflection of just how far the nation had fallen. He took the nation from its greatest depths to its greatest heights.

Reforms of Josiah –

- **Verse 4;** He brought *out of the temple* of the Lord all the vessels that were made for Baal, for Asherah, and for the host of heaven.
- **Verse 5;** He did away with the idolatrous priests who burned incense in the high places and to Baal, as well as to the sun, moon, and stars.
- **Verse 7;** He broke down the houses of the male cult prostitutes -- which were in the house of the Lord!!
- **Verse 8;** He brought all the priests from the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense from the north to the south.

- **Verse 10;** He defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, so that no man might make his son or daughter pass through the fire for Molech.
- **Verse 15;** There was a golden calf at Bethel which Jeroboam had set up so that people would not go to Jerusalem to worship God. This also was destroyed by Josiah, but first, he burned the bones of those in the graves before that altar.
- As an interesting note of prophecy; several hundred years before this time, society was mentioned by name as the great reformer who would destroy that very altar in Bethel.

1 Kings 13:2 O altar, O altar.... Josiah shall destroy you.

Illus - If you go to Israel today, you can go to the far north and see the place where Jeroboam set up a golden calf. But the one in Bethel you cannot see, because Josiah destroyed it.

II. Reform may or may not bring Revival

- Josiah was a man of authentic revival. He truly honored God with his heart and with his soul and with his mind.
- And because of that, he wanted to bring great reform to the nation of Israel. In other words, revival brought reform.
- But the question before us now is this, does it work the other way? Does reform bring revival?
- In other words, if you change the way you live, will it change your heart?

- I suggest that the answer is -- maybe. It's still up to each person as to whether they respond to God from the heart and soul and with their mind.
- Reform without revival can even be dangerous because a person, having only the form of religion, may therefore believe that he is good with God, when in fact, God may not be pleased at all.

A. Beware of reform without revival

- It's important to say again that reform is a good thing, especially when we understand that reform may lead to revival.

Deuteronomy 6:7, “You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.”

Illus - It's good for families to create a set of rules for how their home will function. If those rules are based on godly principles, then the form or shape of the family is godly.

For example, if you insist that you approve of your children's friends; that is godly form, based on godly principles.

1 Corinthians 15:33, Do not be deceived: “Bad company corrupts good morals.”

- If your children kick against those guidelines, then there is reform without revival.

Illus - We've all heard of the child who did something naughty and was told to sit in the corner, to which he responded, “I may be sitting on the outside, but I'm standing on the inside.”

- Having only the form of godliness can even be dangerous when a person believes that they are approved by God because of their outward adherence to godly rules. (legalism)

Isaiah 29:13, Then the Lord said, “Because this people draw near with their words and honor me with their lip service, but they removed their hearts far from Me, and their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote...”

2 Timothy 3:1-5 Holding to a form of godliness only...

- The Pharisees were masters of the outward form and Jesus' confrontation with them is exceptionally instructive for all of us today.

Matthew 23:24-27 Jesus confronts the Pharisees.

B. Let God write His Word on your heart

- Let me ask a basic question. Do you steal? Why not? Because it's the law? Because we don't like it when someone steals from us?

Illus – When I was a waiter I had a large corner table of 8 people in an expensive restaurant. They left a \$50 tip, but their son hung back as they left...

- Do we choose to not steal because it's the law or because it's on our heart to honor God?

Psalms 40:8, “I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart.”

- Josiah's reforms included bringing back the Passover; the largest Passover since the time of the Judges. Jesus celebrated the Passover with the disciples and taught that it to remember a new covenant.
- Jeremiah 31:33 – and I will write on their hearts.