

**Introduction:**

- At the Gold City Gem Mine in Franklin, North Carolina customers pay a small fee for a "bucket of dirt" out of the mine, the dirt contains rocks, usually worthless. The joy of treasure hunting is occasionally a real gemstone comes out of the mine. In July of 1995, a third-grader name Griffin McCurry, paid for just such a bucket of dirt. As you might expect it didn't look as if there was any hidden treasure, but there was a rock in it that the boy kept just because he liked the shape. People magazine reported that it was a saleswoman from the Jewelry store at the mine who noticed the rock and gave it a closer inspection. As it turned out the 1104 carat sapphire had a value of approximately \$45,000.
- A rock in one man's pocket is a lifetime treasure in the pocket of one who knows what he has.
- America is a nation that still boasts of its claim to Christianity. But the reality is America is filled with people who have Christianity as a rock in their pocket instead of Christ as a treasure in their heart.
- 2 Kings 22:1-20. 2 Chron 34 and 35. Lessons from the life of Josiah, King of Judah.

**I. Josiah Was Born In A "Messed Up" Time**

## A. Josiah's world

1. He became king when he was 8 years old.
2. His grandfather Manasseh reigned 55 years over Judah. Let's look at Manasseh.
  - a) He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.
  - b) He followed detestable practices of pagans
  - c) He rebuilt the pagan shrines that his father Hezekiah had torn down.
  - d) He set up pagan altars.
  - e) He built pagan altars in the temple of the Lord.
  - f) He built altars for the powers of the heavens 2 Chron 33:5 in both courtyards of the Temple.
  - g) He sacrificed his own sons in the fires to Molech in the Hinnom Valley.
  - h) He shed blood: *"Moreover, Manasseh shed very much innocent blood, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another, besides the sin that he made Judah to sin so that they did what was evil in the sight of the Lord."* (2 Kings 21:16, ESV)
  - i) He ignored the voice of the Lord! 2 Chron 33:10. Therefore, the Assyrian army captured him, put a ring in his nose and took him to Babylon.
  - j) More wicked than Gentile, Amorites. *"King Manasseh of Judah has done many detestable things. He is even more wicked than the Amorites, who lived in this land before Israel. He has caused the people of Judah to sin with his idols."* (2 Kings 21:11, NLT)
  - k) In Babylon, he had a 'come to Jesus' moment when he realized that the Lord alone is God. 2 Chro 33:13.
  - l) The sad part of his legacy. *He also encouraged the people of Judah to worship the Lord, the God of Israel. <sup>17</sup> However, the people still sacrificed at the pagan shrines,*

- though only to the Lord their God.* (2 Ch 33:16-17). He brought reform but not transformation! He modified behavior but did not change hearts.
3. Josiah's father reigned two years and was just as evil as his grandfather had been.
    - a) He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.
    - b) Amon did not humble himself like his father, Manasseh, but sinned all the more. 33:23.
    - c) His own officials conspired and assassinated him.
- B. God was set to destroy the nation. 22:15-17.
1. Because of the sins of the nation of Judah, from Rehoboam to Amon—God was ready to destroy Judah.
  2. Huldah the Prophet declared: *"She said to them, "The Lord, the God of Israel, has spoken! Go back and tell the man who sent you, 'This is what the Lord says: I am going to bring disaster on this city and its people. All the words written in the scroll that the king of Judah has read will come true. For my people have abandoned me and offered sacrifices to pagan gods, and I am very angry with them for everything they have done. My anger will burn against this place, and it will not be quenched.'"* (2 Kings 22:15-17, NLT)
  3. Note to self: "Do not make God angry!"
- C. It was a 'messed up time' and a 'messed up family' that Josiah was born into!
1. Do not think that you can't shine for Jesus though you were born in a 'messed up time' and into a 'messed up' family.
  2. Don't let family history be an excuse! Don't let yourself get into the 'blame game"
  3. Josiah was marked by God!
    - a) 1 Kings 13:1-ff. An unknown prophet from Judah goes to Jeroboam a wicked king. And prophesies Josiahs birth. 300 years before hand.
    - b) Josiahs name means: Jehovah heals, Jehovah supports, Jehovah supports in time of despair.

## II. Josiah Made Wise Choices In "A Messed Up" Nation

- A. Wise choices begin in the heart.
1. Living to please God is a wise choice and it can be learned at an early age. *"He did what was pleasing in the Lord's sight and followed the example of his ancestor David. He did not turn away from doing what was right."* (2 Kings 22:2, NLT)
  2. You can't love God half heartedly and still be pleasing to Him. *"Never before had there been a king like Josiah, who turned to the Lord with all his heart and soul and strength, obeying all the laws of Moses. And there has never been a king like him since."* (2 Kings 23:25, NLT) A tender heart sets you up to receive the word.
- B. Wises choices begin with humility. *"And when the king heard the words of the Law, he tore his clothes."* (2 Chronicles 34:19, ESV)
1. The tearing of his clothes was an expression of his heart...humbled, broken, torn over how 'messed up' his nation and family.
  2. Wisdom is found in humility! Fools in their pride reject wisdom. IE. That is what Proverbs is all about—fools in pride vs. wisdom to the humble.

- C. Josiah Learned to make wise choices in the midst of other people's messes. Both at a national and family level.
1. Josiah was able to choose wisely from a young age.
    - a) Josiah's father was a sinful mess. Amon learned well from his father Manasseh while he was arrogantly proud. I am sure there were some soul wounds as he watched his father be dragged away to Babylon.
    - b) Josiah's father, Amon, was murdered and Josiah started his reign at age 8. At age 6 his father became king, a very sinful king.
  2. But here is something interesting they may account for Josiah's wisdom. From birth to age 6, I am sure his grandfather Manasseh talked often with him.
    - a) He would share the day he was humbled by God.
    - b) He would share how he prayed and the Lord heard him.
    - c) He would share how the Lord brought him back to Judah
    - d) He would share how he removed the foreign gods from the temple.
    - e) He would share how he was encouraging the people of Judah to worship the Lord.
  3. In those formative years he began to reject the ungodly legacy of his grandfather and of his father Amon. Dad's, don't think for a moment you are not influencing your children. Grandparents, don't think for a moment you are powerless to influence.
- D. Learning to make wise choices begins by listening to the right voices. There were three major 'voice' sources that Josiah had access to and received from.
1. A righteous grandfather, Manasseh. The early years of Josiah were influence by the later years of Manasseh. We have touched on that.
  2. The prophets.
    - a) Zephaniah - *The Lord gave this message to Zephaniah when Josiah son of Amon was king of Judah.* Zeph 1:1. *"Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land, who do his just commands; seek righteousness; seek humility; perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of the Lord."* (Zephaniah 2:3, ESV)
    - b) Jeremiah - *"The words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, one of the priests who 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."* (Jeremiah 1:1-2, ESV)
    - c) Huldah - *"So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe (now she lived in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter), and they talked with her."* (2 Kings 22:14, ESV)
    - d) 1 Kings 13:1-2, the unknown prophet, 300 years earlier, who prophesied Josiah the King. He was named Jehovah Heals, or Jehovah supports in times of despair by the will of God. Not by mistake! His life is the prophetic intention of God of God.
  3. The Voice of the Word of God. The Torah spoke to Josiah.
    - a) The Spirit bearing witness with Josiah's spirit. He was following his heart as he followed God.

- b) The prophets declared the voice of God.
- c) When the scroll was read, Josiah's heart was moved.
- 4. These voices in Josiah's life helped to establish him in his God given identity!
  - a) As King of Judah.
  - b) As a servant of God.
  - c) And as the voice of God to a nation.
- E. Wisdom allowed Josiah to reform wisely. Josiah became king at 8 years of age but it was not until he was 16 that incredible changes took place in his life. You see, for over 16 years, solid principles for accurate living were deposited into his heart. These principles caused him to begin to think about the condition of his nation and at age 20 he began to purge his nation of the evils that held it. By age 26, he was actively engaged in rebuilding his nation. It was the principles of character that he learned while young that prepared him for the destiny to change a nation/postpone the wrath of God. Maybe God will delay judgment.

### III. Josiah's Reforms Never Became Revival

- A. An entire chapter is given to Josiah's reforms...2 Kings 23; Two chapter in the Book of Chronicles, 2 Chron 34, 35.
  - 1. He crushed pagan altar, shrines, temples.
  - 2. He put to death pagan priest.
  - 3. He restored the Temple of God.
  - 4. He did all of this across his entire Kingdom before returning to Jerusalem to restore the Temple.
- B. *"The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God."* (Psalm 51:17, NLT) *"So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your souls."* (James 1:21, NLT) A tender heart resolves to be a humble heart.
- C. The real tragedy that Josiah did not learn from his grandfather Manasseh: The lesson that Josiah did not learn. *But the people didn't take him seriously—they used the name "God" but kept on going to the old pagan neighborhood shrines and doing the same old things.* (2 Ch 33:17) Message The reform reached behavior but not the heart.
  - 1. For example: Peter in Acts, when he preached touched the heart. *"Therefore let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah."* *When they heard this, they were pierced to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles: "Brothers, what should we do?"* Acts 2:36-37 Repent and be saved.
  - 2. Under Josiah's leadership there is great reform, but there is no revival, because reform is never enough. This is why the Lord did not change his mind about bringing an end to the nation. The people's hearts were unchanged, and therefore God's heart was unchanged. The reforms Josiah brought were widespread, but the revival was very limited in its scope.
- D. What Josiah needed more of:

1. **Spiritual awakening comes when there is: A Call to Prayer.** I wonder what would have happened if Josiah had called the people to prayer and fasting? Josiah cleaned out the Temple of pagan gods and immoral practices, but there was nothing to fill the spiritual void when they were taken away. " (Matthew 12:43-45).
  - a) As soon as he was gone the people were right back doing what was in their hearts.
  - b) It takes more than sweeping your life clean of evil and immoral things – it takes praying for a new heart that will love God more than it loves sin.
  - c) There is a difference between an obedience that is coerced and an obedience that springs from a heart that loves God and wants to do his will.
  - d) The best of reforms are short lived without changes in the hearts and minds of people.
2. **Secondly, a spiritual awakening comes when there is: A Renewed Call to God's Word.**
  - a) There was nothing wrong with the reforms of Josiah, they just didn't go far enough.
  - b) He ordered the people to follow the laws of God, but they missed the heart of God. He reintroduced them to ritual, but neglected relationship. He got the part about the law of God, but missed the love of God.
3. **Thirdly, a spiritual awakening comes when there is: A sense of conviction and repentance.**
  - a) Conviction means that we are convinced that what God says about us is true.
  - b) When you hear what you know to be the truth, you have to respond to the truth. When the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, Peter began preaching to the crowds. He boldly warned them of the consequences of their sin of rejecting Christ and having him crucified. The Bible says, "*When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?'*"

### Conclusion:

- I hope you have seen this morning that fighting for reform without fighting for transformation of hearts is futile. America needs revival! We need to find the heart of God again.
- Finding that heart means listening to the right voices.
- It means seeking after wisdom and applying it to ones own life.
- It is more than reform and behavior modification.
- Wisdom is getting a heart transformation from a holy God!