

(2 Kings 22:1-2) - Josiah was the great grandson of Hezekiah who did right in the sight of the Lord, the grandson of Manasseh, and the son of Amon, both who did evil in the sight of the Lord. Manasseh was one of the most wicked kings of Judah. As Hezekiah purged the land of idolatry and brought reforms to Judah, Manasseh reversed it all and did much worse (*2 Kings 21:1-9*). Manasseh began his reign when he was twelve, and he reigned fifty-five years. Amon, his son, began his reign when he was twenty-two. He followed in the evil of his father Manasseh, and he reigned for two years. He was murdered by his own servants (*2 Kings 22:19-26*). Josiah began to rule when he was eight years old, and he reigned for thirty-one years. Like his great grandfather, Hezekiah, *“he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left.”* He led the people in following the law of Moses and brought about great reforms in Judah calling on the nation to repent of the unbelief and idolatry fostered by his father and grandfather.

The question may arise about how Josiah came to know and follow the Lord when his father and grandfather were so evil. We know that the Lord, even in the midst of the most evil times in Israel, always had His witness through prophets and priests. We do not know for certain from whom Hezekiah heard the truth of God’s law and ways, but we know he had the prophet Isaiah to advise him (*2 Kings 19:1-7*). We also do not know for certain as to who schooled Josiah in the ways of the Lord, but we know that he had the benefits of the prophets Zephaniah and Jeremiah. We are given more information about Josiah in *2 Chronicles 34:1-7*. We know that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (*Rom. 10:17*). The only way that any of us can be brought from natural unbelief and rebellion against the Lord is by the Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit revealing Himself to us through His Word of the Gospel (*Rom. 1:16-17; 2 Cor. 4:6*).

(2 Kings 22:3-7) - Josiah’s dedication to the Lord and the true worship of God is evidenced by his command to repair the temple which had been neglected for many years under evil kings. The temple represented everything that was holy concerning the one living and true God and everything that was significant about Israel as the chosen people of God through whom the Messiah would come into the world. It was a physical representation of the shekinah glory of God revealed in God’s way of the salvation of sinners by His free and sovereign grace based on the blood of His appointed substitute and sacrifice which would be fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. It was a testimony of how a holy and just God could save and justify sinners in mercy and grace while still honoring and maintaining His justice to punish all sin with death. The temple was a picture of the glorious Gospel wherein the righteousness of God is revealed in the glorious Person and finished work of redemption in Christ.

(2 Kings 22:8-13) - While purging and repairing the temple, Hilkiah the high priest found the book of the law. When Hilkiah read the law to Josiah, the king tore his clothes, a sign of mourning and repentance. Josiah was brought to see his own sins and the sins of the whole nation. He was brought to see that he and all the people were sinners who deserve nothing but God’s wrath (*Rom. 3:10-20,23*) - *“for great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us.”* Remember that this book of the law was NOT a manual on how to be saved by works of the law. It was a law given to expose the sinfulness of the people, the impossibility of salvation by works of the law, and to drive them to beg for mercy from God based on the righteousness of the Messiah to come (*Rom. 5:20-21; 9:33–10:4*).

We are told in *2 Kings 23* how that King Josiah called for a time of national repentance. The Law was read to the people of the land, and a covenant was made between the people and the Lord - *“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” (2 Kings 23:3)*. Another very significant act of Josiah was to restore the Passover in Judah (*2 Kings 23:21-27*), one of the greatest pictures of Christ our Passover Lamb Who by His one sacrifice for the sins of His people turned back the wrath of God and brought in the only ground upon which God justifies His elect - the imputed righteousness of Christ (*Rom. 4:6-8; 2 Cor. 5:21*). This restoration of the Passover, in essence, was a rediscovery of the truth of Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead for the salvation of His people, God’s elect out of every tribe and nation.

(2 Kings 22:14-20) - Obviously with Josiah’s approval, Hilkiah sought counsel from Huldah, a well-known prophetess in Judah. There were other prophets in Judah such as Jeremiah and Zephaniah, but for reasons not revealed Hilkiah chose to consult Huldah. She was connected with the temple in that her husband was (or had been) *“keeper of the wardrobe,”* probably the priestly garments. *“She dwelt in Jerusalem in the college”* which is translated as *“second quarter”* in some translations, meaning a suburb of Jerusalem and probably a school or place of learning. Huldah’s message for Judah as a nation was one of judgment against them for their sins and idolatry (*2 Kings 22:15-17; cf. 2 Chron. 34:23-25*). This is the Lord’s testimony that sin must be punished with death. God is a just God and cannot overlook or let sin go unpunished. And when we read of the awful sins of Judah under many wicked kings, we should all admit that we deserve no better than they - *“For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23); “If Thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O LORD, who shall stand” (Psa. 130:3)*.

But Huldah’s message from the Lord to King Josiah was one of peace and security even unto death (*2 Kings 22:18-20*). We need to realize that Josiah’s salvation, peace, and safety were gifts of God’s grace to him. God graciously and mercifully gave Josiah ears to hear and eyes to see His Word of truth in the Book of the Law. God gave Josiah a tender heart and humbled him before the LORD. God brought Josiah to repentance of sin and faith in the LORD of Glory. This was all due to God’s promise concerning the coming of the Messiah into the world to save His people from their sins.

What took place with Josiah during his reign in Judah represents what must take place in every generation as time goes on until the second coming of Christ. As each generation comes and goes, the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ seems to fade away until the Lord raises up preachers by whom He recovers the good news of Christ crucified and risen from the dead, of grace that reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. The true Gospel has never been popular with the majority, but God has always had His remnant by whom He has kept His message of grace alive on earth. It is rediscovering of the glory of Christ in the salvation of His people. Many people own a book called *“the Bible,”* but that book is a mystery until God reveals its truth to us. Like in Josiah’s day, it is a book that is hidden among a ruined temple of false religion and idolatry. But God causes His people to find that book and rediscover its truth as He gives us ears to hear and eyes to see His glory in Christ and His righteousness by which God justifies us and from which God gives us eternal life.