

Josiah: Whole-Hearted Loyalty

Ponder: Getting Serious About Serving God

Scripture: “Now before him there was no king like him, who turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him did any arise like him” (2 Kings 23:25, NKJV).

Jesus said the greatest command in the Law was to love God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mk. 12:30). How many of us even come close to such a tall order? King Josiah of Judah appears to be one who took his relationship with God seriously.

Josiah’s zealous loyalty stands out in part because his family background put him at a profound disadvantage. His grandfather, Manasseh, was both the longest-reigning and the worst-behaving of all the kings of Judah. Though he repented toward the end of his life, he didn’t live long enough to un-do the horrific damage he had inflicted on the nation. His son Amon (Josiah’s father) reigned only two years, but imitated Manasseh’s wickedness. So by the time eight-year-old Josiah became king, Judah had endured fifty-seven years of wholesale apostasy.

Nevertheless, Josiah instituted tremendous reforms which moved the nation far closer to God than it had been under Manasseh and Amon. The records in 2 Kings 22-23 and 2 Chron. 34-35 tell how Josiah repaired the temple, which had been defiled with idolatry and gross immorality. He destroyed idols and pagan altars in Jerusalem and all over Judah, while expelling the idolatrous priests. He got rid of various forms of occultism, putting away the fortune-tellers and mediums. He restored true worship at the temple, including the greatest Passover observance since the time of Samuel.

All of this took time. Over half a century of apostasy could not be changed overnight. Some of the work didn’t start until the king was in his mid-twenties. Josiah was contemporary with the prophet Jeremiah; undoubtedly the two young men worked closely together.

We would do well to learn that regardless of age or family background, we can and should serve God with all of our hearts. Change may come slowly, but by God’s grace it will come.

Song: “True Hearted, Whole-Hearted”

Prayer: Gracious Father, please forgive us for the half-hearted service we sometimes offer. Help us to be like Josiah, and even more to be like Jesus. In His name we pray, Amen.