

## 2 Kings 23-24

Good morning and thank you for joining us! Would you please turn in your bibles to 2 Kings 23?

Last week we saw the recipe for revival, as a young king Josiah and the nation rediscovered God's word and began obeying the Lord. Now in chapter 23 king Josiah institutes sweeping reforms throughout Judah...

We're gonna study chapters 23-24, and the title of this morning's message is Escaping the judgment

Let's pray

**SHOW PIC** About 20 years ago I owned a 1995 Dodge Ram truck with a lift kit. It was funny!

Everything was going fine until one day I was driving about 50mph and the hood flipped up like you see in movies-boom! You can imagine I panicked. I was able to get the car off the highway after a terrorizing minute or two of having to peer under the gap in the hood-couldn't look out the window cuz I was too little. **CLOSE PIC**

This morning we'll pop open the hood on the nation of Judah and peer inside, for even though Josiah institutes reforms, when you pop the hood, we'll see the hearts hadn't changed.

1-2

**1 Now the king sent them to gather all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem to him. 2 The king went up to the house of the LORD**

with all the men of Judah, and with him all the inhabitants of Jerusalem—the priests and the prophets and all the people, both small and great. And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant which had been found in the house of the LORD. The first step Josiah takes is to arrange a public reading of the Scriptures. And notice the king himself reads God's Law.

From Genesis to Deuteronomy, Josiah read the words of God to the people of Judah and Jerusalem. See Josiah knew firsthand the power of God's Word because last week in our study we saw when God's Word was initially read to Josiah it melted his heart, brought him to his knees, and prompted him to action.

Now Josiah hopes that God's Word will have the same effect upon the people of Judah...

Imagine what this nation would be like if our political leaders not only read God's word, but declared it like this in front of all the people!

3 Then the king stood by a pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to follow the LORD and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people took a stand for the covenant. This was a powerful moment. The people, because of Josiah's personal commitment, also made their own covenants between them and God.

And now Josiah begins to get rid of all the idolatry that had seeped into the veins of the nation of Judah.

4-5

4 And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, the priests of the second order, and the doorkeepers, to bring out of the temple of the LORD all the articles that were made for Baal, for Asherah,[fn] and for all the host of heaven;[fn] and he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried their ashes to Bethel.

5 Then he removed the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense on the high places in the cities of Judah and in the places all around Jerusalem, and those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun, to the moon, to the constellations, and to all the host of heaven. Josiah not only removed the wicked things, but also the wicked priests.

6-7

6 And he brought out the wooden image[fn] from the house of the LORD, to the Brook Kidron outside Jerusalem, burned it at the Brook Kidron and ground it to ashes, and threw its ashes on the graves of the common people. 7 Then he tore down the ritual booths of the perverted persons[fn] that were in the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the wooden image.

Remember how we've seen that the nation of Judah had worshiped fertility goddesses. Their priests raised funds through prostitution in the temple, and Josiah is getting rid of it all.

8-9

8 And he brought all the priests from the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beersheba; also he broke down the high places at the gates which were at the entrance of the Gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which were to the left of the city gate. 9 Nevertheless the priests of the high places did not come up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, but they ate unleavened bread among their brethren.” This was the first sign that Josiah’s reforms didn’t produce the revival he’d wanted. Recall God hated the high places because they took people away from the Temple.

These priests never came to the Temple to worship God in spirit and truth.

10 And he defiled Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son[fn] of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire to Molech. **SHOW PIC** The Valley of Hinnom is west of the Old City of Jerusalem. Today, it’s a lush green valley with an outdoor theater that hosts over 100 concerts a year.

But 2,500 years ago, in Josiah’s day, the stench of human flesh rose from the valley. It’s where the worshippers of Molech sacrificed infants to their evil idol. The word “Topheth” comes from “toph” or “drum” – and was a reference to the drums the priests of Molech played to drown out the sounds of the screaming children.

**CLOSE PIC**

Josiah shut it down.

11 Then he removed the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun, at the entrance to the house of the LORD,

by the chamber of Nathan-Melech, the officer who was in the court; and he burned the chariots of the sun with fire. Judah's prior king, Manassah, had adopted the Egyptian worship of Ra, the sun god. Even though chariots were valuable, Josiah got rid of them.

12 The altars that were on the roof, the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the LORD, the king broke down and pulverized there, and threw their dust into the Brook Kidron. King Josiah pulverized these altars to dust.

13 Then the king defiled the high places that were east of Jerusalem, which were on the south of the Mount of Corruption, which Solomon king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Sidonians, for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the people of Ammon. Hundreds of years before this, king Solomon sinned in his later years of life by marrying pagan wives and tolerating their idolatry. Shockingly, these idols had been allowed to stand on the southern end of the Mount of Olives for 350 years. That's why this hill became known as "The Mount of Corruption". Josiah was the only king to tear down these idols.

14-15

14 And he broke in pieces the sacred pillars and cut down the wooden images, and filled their places with the bones of men.

15 Moreover the altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he broke down; and he burned the high place and crushed it to powder, and burned the

**wooden image.** Josiah's reformation went on the road... He found the altar of the golden calf Jeroboam had erected in the northern kingdom-Bethel – and oversaw its complete annihilation.

**16** As Josiah turned, he saw the tombs that were there on the mountain. And he sent and took the bones out of the tombs and burned them on the altar, and defiled it according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed **these words.** Burning bones on an altar was a universal sign of desecration. It was Josiah's way of blotting out the sacredness of this site.

Notice, verse 16 references a prophecy. 300 years earlier, a nameless prophet pronounced judgment on the evils of Jeroboam, the first king of the divided kingdom of Israel.

**1 Kings 13:2, Then he cried out against the altar by the word of the LORD, and said, "O altar, altar! Thus says the LORD: 'Behold, a child, Josiah by name, shall be born to the house of David; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and men's bones shall be burned on you.'**" Here's an amazing validation of the truthfulness of Scripture - 300 years before the fact - Josiah's actions were foretold. He was even mentioned by name.

17-18

**17** Then he said, "What gravestone is this that I see?" So the men of the city told him, "It is the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and proclaimed these things which you have done against the altar of Bethel."

18 And he said, “Let him alone; let no one move his bones.” So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet who came from Samaria. Josiah was careful to honor the gravestone of this anonymous prophet.

19-20

19 Now Josiah also took away all the shrines of the high places that were in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke the LORD<sup>[fn]</sup> to anger; and he did to them according to all the deeds he had done in Bethel. 20 He executed all the priests of the high places who were there, on the altars, and burned men’s bones on them; and he returned to Jerusalem. Josiah got rid of the wicked priests.

21-22

21 Then the king commanded all the people, saying, “Keep the Passover to the LORD your God, as it is written in this Book of the Covenant.”

22 Such a Passover surely had never been held since the days of the judges who judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah. This shows how far the Hebrews had strayed from the Law. Not since the days of the Judges – prior to 1060 BC – had the Passover been observed by the Hebrews. That’s over 400 years of disobedience.

23 But in the eighteenth year of King Josiah this Passover was held before the LORD in Jerusalem. What a holy night it must’ve been!

24 Moreover Josiah put away those who consulted mediums and spiritists, the household gods and idols, all the abominations that

were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD. Josiah banished the palm readers, and astrologers, and occultists, and the new age channelers. Josiah cracked the crystal balls and burned the Tarot cards.

And remember-how did this revival start? Simply going back to the word of God and seeking to base all thought and practice on what God has revealed in His word.

25 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. Josiah never killed a lion, slew a giant, made an ax-head float, caused it to rain, or killed a Philistine. What made Josiah so great? He loved God with everything he had!

You and I will probably never be famous in the eyes of this world. But you know what-God knows us! And He knows our works, and He knows our hearts. Now depending on your walk with God that's either a comforting thought, or a terrifying thought.

26-27

26 Nevertheless the LORD did not turn from the fierceness of His great wrath, with which His anger was aroused against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked Him. 27 And the LORD said, "I will also remove Judah from My sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, 'My name shall be there.' "[fn]It's interesting, just four years after



Josiah dies the Babylonians begin their assault on Judah. God's judgment comes through the hands of the Babylonians.

We'll see in a couple minutes that despite Josiah's reformation the people went right back to their wickedness. From Josiah's life we learn an important lesson. Just because a society experiences an outward, political reformation doesn't mean folks have been inwardly and spiritually revived. Josiah is proof.

28-29

28 Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

29 In his days Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt went to the aid of the king of Assyria, to the River Euphrates; and King Josiah went against him. And Pharaoh Necho killed him at Megiddo when he confronted him. Josiah fell on the world's most famous battlefield, the Valley of Megiddo - where the final battle will be staged-  
armageddon

30-32

30 Then his servants moved his body in a chariot from Megiddo, brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own tomb. And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, anointed him, and made him king in his father's place." 31 Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he became king, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. 32 And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done. The reforms of King Josiah were wonderful, but they didn't produce a long-lasting revival. Josiah's own son Jehoahaz didn't follow the godly ways and drives the nation right back into idolatry.

33-34

33 Now Pharaoh Necho put him in prison at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem; and he imposed on the land a tribute of one hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. 34 Then Pharaoh Necho made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in place of his father Josiah, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. And Pharaoh took Jehoahaz and went to Egypt, and he<sup>[fn]</sup> died there. Once again another nation is pulling the strings. This time Egypt is calling the shots for all of Judah. The new king Jehoiakim will serve as a vassal to Egypt – a yes-man to Pharaoh.

35 So Jehoiakim gave the silver and gold to Pharaoh; but he taxed the land to give money according to the command of Pharaoh; he exacted the silver and gold from the people of the land, from every one according to his assessment, to give it to Pharaoh Necho. ” Jehoiakim taxed the citizens of Judah to buy off Egypt so he could stay in power.

36-37

36 Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zebudah the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah. 37 And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done. Now as you read the book of Jeremiah, you'll see that king Jehoiakim became Jeremiah's most bitter enemy. In Jeremiah 36, Jehoiakim takes a knife and cuts up God's Word that Jeremiah sent him and then throws it in the fireplace. This wicked king of Judah even tried to have Jeremiah arrested and murdered.

Now as we move to chapter 24, we know that the Babylonians defeated the Assyrians at Carchemish in 605 BC. And fresh off the heels of victory they want to flex their muscle so Babylon moves south, against the nation of Judah.

Understand the Babylonians had a different policy toward conquered people than did the Assyrians. The Assyrians scattered their defeated foes – while the Babylonians captured them and took them back to Babylon to live in exile. In 605 BC Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were among the first wave of Jews taken to Babylon. They were made servants in the court of Nebuchadnezzar.

Judah will remain in exile in Babylon for 70 years before God allows them to return. It will take a captivity to cure them of idolatry. And this is what the rest of the book of 2 Kings details-the fall of Judah.

The Jews were deported in three waves – 605, 597, 586 BC. The final blow came in the summer of 586 - Jerusalem was sacked, and the temple destroyed.

**SHOW PIC** BTW, that specific attack is documented by the Babylonian Chronicles, a collection of tablets held in the British Museum. They gave us first-rate, detailed political and military information about the first 10 years of Nebuchadnezzar's reign.

**CLOSE PIC**

Chapter 24

1 In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his vassal for three years. Then he turned and rebelled against him. Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Babylonian Empire, was concerned with Judah because of its strategic position in relation to the empires of Egypt and Assyria. Therefore it was important to him to conquer Judah and make it a subject kingdom (his vassal), loyal to Babylon.

2 And the LORD sent against him raiding bands of Chaldeans, bands of Syrians, bands of Moabites, and bands of the people of Ammon; He sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD which He had spoken by His servants the prophets. We're seeing the fulfillment of the many promises of God that if Judah refused to follow Him, judgment would follow  
3-4

3 Surely at the commandment of the LORD this came upon Judah, to remove them from His sight because of the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done, 4 and also because of the innocent blood that he had shed; for he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, which the LORD would not pardon. During this time the book of Jeremiah reveals that the people in the days of Jehoiakim believed that God's will was to deliver Judah from their enemies and to preserve an independent nation

Yet it was God's will to bring Judah into judgment by the hands of Babylon because they refused to repent.

5-7

5 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 6 So Jehoiakim rested with his fathers. Then Jehoiachin his son reigned in his place.

7 And the king of Egypt did not come out of his land anymore, for the king of Babylon had taken all that belonged to the king of Egypt from the Brook of Egypt to the River Euphrates. In the geopolitical struggle between Egypt and Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar defeated Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon are an unstoppable war machine.

8-12

8 Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. His mother's name was Nehushta the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem.

9 And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father had done.

10 At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. 11 And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, as his servants were besieging it. 12 Then Jehoiachin king of Judah, his mother, his servants, his princes, and his officers went out to the king of Babylon; and the king of Babylon, in the eighth year of his reign, took him prisoner. The previous king of Judah (Jehoiakim) led a rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar. Now the king of Babylon came with his armies against Jerusalem, and Jehoiachin hoped to appease Nebuchadnezzar by submitting himself, his family, and his leaders to the Babylonian king. Like his rebellious father, God allowed Jehoiachin to be taken as a bound captive back to Babylon.

The fall of Jerusalem didn't come about in one cataclysmic battle; it occurred in stages. On this second attack against Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar took whatever valuables remained in the temple or in the royal palaces of Jerusalem.

13-16

13 And he carried out from there all the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house, and he cut in pieces all the articles of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, as the LORD had said. 14 Also he carried into captivity all Jerusalem: all the captains and all the mighty men of valor, ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths. None remained except the poorest people of the land. 15 And he carried Jehoiachin captive to Babylon. The king's mother, the king's wives, his officers, and the mighty of the land he carried into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. 16 All the valiant men, seven thousand, and craftsmen and smiths, one thousand, all who were strong and fit for war, these the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar not only took the material treasures of Judah, but also took people he deemed most valuable. Anyone with any skill or ability was taken captive to Babylon.

Among these captives was the Prophet Ezekiel, who compiled his book of prophecies while in captivity in Babylon.

Let's finish the chapter...

17 Then the king of Babylon made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's<sup>[fn]</sup> uncle, king in his place, and changed his name to Zedekiah.

18 Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. 19 He also did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done. 20 For because of the anger of the LORD this happened in Jerusalem and Judah, that He finally cast them out from His presence. Then Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.<sup>2</sup> Chronicles 36:11-20 tells us more of the evil of Zedekiah, specifically that he didn't listen to Jeremiah or other messengers of God. Instead, he mocked and disregarded the message.

God's patience and longsuffering had finally run its course and He allowed — even instigated — the conquering of the kingdom of Judah.

Jeremiah tells us that there were many false prophets in those days who preached a message of victory and triumph to Zedekiah, and he believed them instead of Jeremiah and other godly prophets like him. Therefore, Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

Judgment's not exactly a fun topic is it? But the word judgment is used 190 times in the bible...