

August 25, 2021

Josiah's Reforms

After being anointed king of Judah at the young age of eight, Josiah spent the next eight years of his reign receiving educational and spiritual instruction. Now at the age of sixteen, **II Chronicles 34:3** tell us that he began to seek after God. It is unfortunate today that most young people are not characterized as having a tender heart toward spiritual things. Early and frequent exposure to the world through modern technology hardens many hearts at a much younger age. Notice that this renewed interest in spiritual things did not lead to immediate results. It was four years before he began implementing his reforms. In **II Chronicles 34:5-7**, Josiah began to purge and cleanse Judah and Jerusalem. The word purge in verse 3 and the word cleansed in verse 5 are the same Hebrew word, meaning to purify or to cleanse.

Israel had fallen into idolatry and spiritual decay. The first step was to destroy the places of idolatry. The high places, the groves, the images, and the altars all had to be destroyed. He broke them into pieces and pounded them into dust. When he was finished there was nothing left of the places of idolatry. It was all gone and destroyed. As believers, we are to purge or cleanse our lives of sin. Just as Josiah left no place for idolatry to return, so too, we must leave no place for sin to return in our lives. **Romans 13:14** says we are to make no "provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." In **Galatians 5:13**, Paul says we are not to use our "liberty as an occasion to the flesh..." When we confess our sins, God is "faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," **I John 1:9**, but we must also take steps to remove any opportunity or occasion of temptation to return to that sin. What are some sins you struggle with? What occasions or things in your life lead you into that sin? How can you remove the opportunities for temptation?

Josiah's second step was to destroy all the people who practiced and preached idolatry. He literally put the idolatrous priests to death and then burned their bones upon the altars of their false gods. In so doing he desecrated both their bodies and their altars. Certainly, we cannot kill those who lead us astray, but it may be necessary to cut off some friendships in order to prevent a return to sin. In what way do your friends influence you? How would you describe your influence on your friends? If there are some relationships in your life that need to change, determine to sever the tie in as gracious a manner as possible, explaining your personal desire to walk or grow closer to Christ.

Notice in verse 4 that Josiah was present during the purging process. He did not send someone else to do it but was personally involved. No one else can clean up your life for you. You must make the difficult decisions that will enable you to purge your life of sin. After he had purged the land, he returned to Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the center of the spiritual life of Israel and Judah. What is the center of our spiritual life today? The center of our spiritual life today is the person of Jesus Christ and the central place of worship is the church. After purging the land, Josiah had to get the people back to the true and living God and back to the temple of God. The house of God is fundamental to our spiritual well-being. Any person who gets away from the house of God will soon fall into worldly idolatry. God has created the church to help us live a

victorious life. It is a sanctuary from the world. It is a place of refreshment and restoration. It is a place of edification and encouragement. **Hebrews10:22-25** warn us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. How does the church help the believer in their walk with God? Do you appreciate the gift of the church God has given you? Are you faithful to attend the house of God, every time the doors are open for worship? How can you express your appreciation for the church? What reforms need to take place in your life?