

A Heart of Revival, a Nation in Decline

2 Kings 23 — Josiah's Faithful Reforms and the People's Fading Hearts

1. Real Commitment Starts with the Heart

"Then the king stood by a pillar and made a covenant before the Lord, to follow the Lord and to keep His commandments... with all his heart and all his soul... And all the people took a stand for the covenant." — 2 Kings 23:3 NKJV

Josiah didn't just order religious reforms—he led with his own example. Standing in the temple, he publicly renewed his commitment to the Lord and called the people to do the same. It wasn't half-hearted. It was **all in**.

Personal Application:

There comes a time when you have to **draw a line in the sand** and say, *"I'm going to follow the Lord—no matter what others do."* That's what Josiah did. His faith wasn't cultural or convenient. It was **personal** and **passionate**.

Have you made that kind of wholehearted commitment? Not just in words—but in action?

2. Tear Down the Idols—For Good

"And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest... to bring out of the temple of the Lord all the articles that were made for Baal and for Asherah and for all the host of heaven; and he burned them..." — 2 Kings 23:4 NKJV

Josiah didn't play games with sin. He removed every trace of idolatry—altars, statues, shrines, even the bones of pagan priests. He traveled throughout the land, tearing down what generations had built up. When he reached Bethel, he fulfilled a centuries-old prophecy by desecrating Jeroboam's altar (see 1 Kings 13).

Personal Application:

Revival isn't just about turning to God—it's **also about turning away from sin**. What idols need to be torn down in your life? What habits, influences, or hidden compromises have taken root? Real change means real removal.

Don't store sin in the attic for later—**burn it in the valley**.

3. God Keeps His Word—Even Over Time

"According to the word of the Lord which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words." — 2 Kings 23:16 NKJV

Josiah unknowingly fulfilled a prophecy that had been spoken over 300 years earlier. When he desecrated Jeroboam's altar and burned bones upon it, it was exactly as the unnamed prophet in 1 Kings 13 had declared.

Personal Application:

God never forgets what He says. Even if it takes generations, **His word will come to pass**. That's both a warning and a comfort. If He promises to judge sin, He will. But if He promises to bless obedience, **He will do that too**.

Stand on God's promises. Time doesn't wear them out.

4. Rediscovering True Worship

Josiah reinstated the Passover—something that hadn't been properly observed in years.

"Surely such a Passover had never been held since the days of the judges... nor in all the days of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah." — 2 Kings 23:22 NKJV

He brought the nation back to remembering God's faithfulness—the Exodus, redemption through the blood of the lamb, and their covenant identity.

Personal Application:

Sometimes the best way to move forward is to look back—to **remember what God has done for you**. When was the last time you paused to thank God for your salvation, for His mercy, and for the cross?

Worship isn't just about songs or rituals—it's about remembering and responding to who God is and what He's done.

5. A Godly Leader Can't Save a Godless People

Josiah was one of the most godly kings Judah ever had. But despite all his reforms, the hearts of the people remained unchanged.

"Nevertheless the Lord did not turn from the fierceness of His great wrath... because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked Him with." — 2 Kings 23:26 NKJV

Eventually, Josiah was killed in battle at Megiddo. His death marked the beginning of Judah's rapid downfall.

Personal Application:

Leadership matters—but **it can't replace personal faith**. You might live in a godly family, attend a solid church or ekklesia, or have a great spiritual mentor—but *you* still have to choose to follow God. Josiah led well, but the people didn't follow with their hearts.

No one else can follow Jesus for you. It's a personal decision.

6. After Josiah—A Fast Fall

"Jehoahaz... did evil in the sight of the Lord." — 2 Kings 23:32 NKJV

"Jehoiakim... did evil in the sight of the Lord." — 2 Kings 23:37 NKJV

After Josiah's death, his sons quickly reversed everything he had done. Jehoahaz ruled only three months before being exiled by Pharaoh. Jehoiakim, his brother, was installed as a puppet king—and

he, too, turned away from God. Jeremiah the prophet wept and warned, but the people refused to listen.

Personal Application:

Spiritual momentum doesn't carry forward unless the next generation makes it their own. A revival can't be inherited—it has to be **reborn**. If we don't disciple the next generation, they'll drift into darkness quickly.

If you're a parent, mentor, or leader: are you **passing on truth or just hoping it sticks**?

Final Takeaway: Reforms Can Start with You

Josiah was one man in a dark time—but he made a difference. He turned to God with all his heart, led bold reforms, and honored God's Word.

You may not be a king, but you can still lead. You can lead your family, your small group, your friends, and most importantly—**your own heart**.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” — Proverbs 3:5–6 NKJV