

Spiritual Revival: Renewing the Covenant

It's amazing what had happened to God's people over just 57 years. You will remember that there was an amazing spiritual revival that took place under the leadership of King Hezekiah—the Temple was reopened for worship, the idols were destroyed, the Passover Feast was reinstated, tithes and offerings flooded into the sanctuary, and God gave His people a great victory over the Assyrians.

But under the 55-year reign of his son Mannaseh, and a two-year reign of his son Amon, the people of God had become virtual pagans again. Amazing! But haven't we witnessed a similar spiritual downgrade in our own society over 57 years?

- In political debates: Kennedy-Nixon to a "Jerry Springer" show
- From protection of the unborn to killing over 1 million per year
- Decline in marriage and increase in divorce
- Explosive growth in pornography—\$13 billion industry
- In spiritual leadership: Billy Graham to Oprah
- Criminal justice system still not reformed (read Bryan Stevenson, *Just Mercy*)
- From budget surpluses to a nearly \$20 trillion national debt

In the Old Testament, however, over the course of just 18 years things dramatically turned around:

- The idols were smashed and their priests executed
- True worship was reestablished
- The Book of the Law was rediscovered and put into practice through covenant renewal
- The wrath of God had been averted
- Joyful worship and remembrance of God's grace and power were instituted again

What happened? One word: revival.

"A true revival means nothing less than a revolution, casting out the spirit of worldliness and selfishness, and making God and His love triumph in the heart and life." -D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

A revival, then, really means days of heaven upon earth.

"Revival is falling in love with Jesus all over again." – Vance Havner

2 Chronicles 34:1-7

1 Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. **2** And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, and walked in the ways of David his father; and he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. **3** For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet a boy, he began to seek the God of David his father, and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the Asherim, and the carved and the metal images. **4** And they chopped down the altars of the Baals in his presence, and he cut down the incense altars that stood above them. And he broke in pieces the Asherim and the carved and the metal images, and he made dust of them and scattered it over the graves of those who had sacrificed to them. **5** He also burned the bones of the priests on their altars and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem. **6** And in the cities of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, and as far as Naphtali, in their ruins all around, **7** he broke down the altars and beat the Asherim and the images into powder and cut down all the incense altars throughout all the land of Israel. Then he returned to Jerusalem.

Let's look especially at verse 2 to see what this boy king did to usher in times of refreshment for the Kingdom of God.

I. We must do what is right in the eyes of the Lord. (2a)

It's amazing that this young boy did what was right. Who taught him? The prophetess Huldah? His mother Jedidah?

The scientists and PhDs and philosophers and economists could not lead them out of their malaise, but an 8-year-old boy who sought the Lord delivered them.

II. We must walk in the ways of the godly. (2b)

Notice here that, coming from a dysfunctional family with a wicked father, Josiah chose his own father, David.

III. We must not turn to the right or to the left. (2c)

Christians are tempted to turn to the right—moralism, judgmentalism, traditionalism, ritualism, militarism, pragmatism. And they are tempted to turn to the left—cynicism, skepticism, secularism, liberal theology, liberal ethics, unbelief. Josiah refused these and other side roads and stayed true to the end.

Observe the remarkable reforms in his day: the Temple was restored, the Bible was rediscovered and obeyed through confession and repentance, true worship was joyfully engaged, and peace was enjoyed.

Why did we have Josiah? Because God ordained it. See I Kings 13:2. Who did He ordain for us? No less than Jesus Himself, who set His face like flint to go to Jerusalem, who sought one thing only—His Father's will that we be saved.

How did Josiah die? Tragically and unnecessarily, probably as a result of damaged emotions, perhaps obsessive-compulsive disorder! But look at his epitaph: "he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, and walked in the ways of David his father; and he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left."

Discussion Questions

1. How would you describe the moral and spiritual climate in America? In the American Church? How do our circumstances compare with those in the days of Josiah?

2. What truths is the chronicler teaching his readers in his account of Josiah's life and reign?

3. If we, like Josiah, would seek spiritual revival for ourselves and others, what must we do? (See 34:2)

4. Being only a child with a highly dysfunctional family background, how did Josiah overcome his spiritual and emotional deficits to lead his nation to spiritual renewal? What can we learn from him about our own brokenness?

5. After Josiah died, the nation of Israel continued to decline until taken into exile in Babylon. Since spiritual revival is commonly followed by a spiritual downgrade, why should we even seek spiritual revival?

Going Deeper

1. Are your spiritual eyes fixed on the Lord? Are you seeking to please Him alone? Have you been distracted by the idols of our age? If so, which ones? Are you willing to smash them? If so, how can you do that?
2. Josiah walked in the ways of David. Do you have mentors and models for your life? If not, how can you obtain them?