

## December 30

**Scriptures:** Read 2 Kings 23

**Key Verse:** “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!’” (2 Kings 23:1)

### Overview

Josiah not only outwardly reacted by tearing his clothes (which signified sorrow and humility) when he heard the Law, but inwardly his heart was pierced, for the Word of God is sharper than a two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12). Once his own heart was in the right place with God, he could have a greater influence and witness to the people. He had the heart of a good shepherd, desiring to see his sheep safe from any harm, and sin brings the greatest harm. After calling upon the people to gather and hear the words of the Book of the Covenant, he personally made a public confession of his faith in God and his adherence to the covenant demands. The people followed Josiah’s example and affirmed the covenant.

Josiah’s own commitment to God and the support of the people led him to purge the land all the more fervently from any form of evil, that the people might not be tempted to sin. Similarly, someone who totally commits himself to the Lord Jesus will naturally desire to remove anything from his or her life that does not glorify God.

Josiah was motivated to first cleanse the defiled Temple by removing from it the idols, pagan altars, and booths for male prostitution that were actually in the Temple! From this we get a clear picture of how vile and corrupted Judah had become. Jesus also was zealous to remove corruption from the House of God (Matthew 21:12-13). The condition of God’s House was like a gauge to the spiritual condition of the people. When they served and honoured God, they took care of their place of worship, since proper corporate worship to the Lord is essential for maintaining a proper relationship with God.

Josiah then began cleansing the whole city of Jerusalem. He destroyed the shrines Solomon had erected for the gods of his pagan wives (23:13; 1 Kings 11:4-8). He also defiled (by burning bones upon it) and destroyed the place of human sacrifice (23:10). He destroyed every other object of idolatry, including the Zodiac (23:5). He threw the broken pieces, dust, and ashes into the Kidron valley outside the walled city (23:12).

Josiah’s widespread reformation was even more thorough than the reforms made by his great grandfather Hezekiah. He not only purged Jerusalem and all of Judah, but even left his Southern Kingdom and went north to Israel which had been conquered by Assyria. He cleansed the cities of Samaria and went to Bethel where he fulfilled the three-hundred-year-old prophecy concerning himself; he destroyed the pagan altar for calf worship and defiled the altar. He burned the bones of the heathen priests upon it, but not the bones of the man of God through whom God had spoken (1 Kings 13:1-2, 31).

Now that Judah was recommitted to God and the Temple had been cleansed and reconsecrated to Him, Josiah obeyed the command in the newly found book of the Law, calling for the observance of the Passover (Deuteronomy 16:1-8). This had not been celebrated since the days

of his great-grandfather, Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 30). On the fourteenth day of the first month of every year (Exodus 12:6), the people were to go to the central sanctuary and offer up the unblemished lamb to commemorate God's miraculous redemption in their exodus from Egypt. The celebration encouraged the unity of the worshippers who gathered around the lamb. It also pointed to the sufficiency of the blood: "when I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Exodus 12:13). Jesus is our Passover Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7) whose blood was shed for our redemption that we might not see death, but eternal life.

In Josiah's death, God fulfilled His purpose and gracious promise that Josiah would die in peace (22:19-20). This was not only because of Josiah's own spiritual peace with God, but because he, with his tender heart, would not live to see the terrible judgment God had ordained for Judah, nor the downfall of the nation under the rule of his sons.

### **Prayer**

Lord God, help us to be Your instruments of reformation. May we get involved in helping to bring about godly reform in our nation. May individual lives be changed for the better, as well as the whole nation. Bless those in leadership with a revelation of Your purpose.