



In our penultimate study in Chronicles we reached a blip in the general downward spiral of the kings: Josiah. Like Joash from last week he begins as a positive king who starts his reign well as a boy with reformation and temple re-building. However where Joash had a poor 'second-half' of his reign Josiah's problem occurred in 'injury time' at the very end.

#### **+ 34v1-3: a new king...**

His reign begins as a young boy but starts in earnest from about age 20 (12 years in) he receives the 'reins' and starts to be the one making the decisions.

#### **+ 34v4-7: with a total mortification...**

Josiah's initial job is to get rid of false worship from the land and so he removes all the Baal and Asherah poles, as well as getting rid of the priests. Where our Western ears might struggle with the totality of the de-construction that perhaps reveals something of the way that we've downplayed the holiness of God and the 'sinfulness' of sin, as well as the danger of false worship. We noted that we're not called to the same task as Josiah, through we are called personally to putting to death the sinful nature, as well as to not justify sin within the community of the church. It's a call for us having the awkward conversations that lovingly challenge people when needed...

#### **+ 34v8-13: with a pursuit of total worship...**

We are beings made to worship and so as well as removal of false worship, Josiah repairs the temple that they might engage in true worship again. As always in the scriptures repentance is followed by faith, false worship must be replaced by true worship. It's during this repair that the book of the Law is discovered.

#### **+ 34v14-28: with a desire to hear the word of God...**

Reading the newly found Law is a profoundly uncomfortable experience for Josiah who sees the implications of who God is, the unfaithfulness of their worship and the need to reform. We noted that very often through the scriptures an encounter with God through his word can be uncomfortable. It ought to lead us as believers to the cross where we can know the joy of sins forgiven and the reality of being found in Christ.

#### **+ 34v29-35v19: with a faithful new beginning...**

At the heart of this account is the Passover meal that Josiah leads the people in. We spotted a number of salient points: (1) the Passover reminds the people who they are and so their true identity, as well as being a sort of new beginning, (2) everybody hears the word read (not simply leadership of keenies), (3) they are faithful in following it to the letter of the law and as prescribed by Moses, David etc, (4) Jerusalem at this point is pretty small so this will have been a huge festival, (5) the role of the Levites slightly changes from this point on with more of an emphasis on teaching and sacrifice etc, (6) there's a generosity that is reminiscent of 1 Chronicles 29 - once again the leadership are generous in enabling the people to worship, in 1 Chr 29 it was David (et al) giving to the temple being built, here it's Josiah (et al) giving to enable Passover to happen.

35v18 shows how this Passover was seen and celebrated:

*The Passover had not been observed like this in Israel since the days of the prophet Samuel; and none of the kings of Israel had ever celebrated such a Passover as did Josiah, with the priests, the Levites and all Judah and Israel who were there with the people of Jerusalem.*

It would be lovely to finish the sermon here! But we can't...

#### **+ 35v20-26: but who still couldn't create an internal transformation**

The passage ends on a bit of a deliberate damp squib as Josiah gets involved in political things that he ought not, and ends up dying on the battle-field. It's telling that he doesn't enquire of the Lord now and so misses what God is saying to him through a neighbouring Egyptian leader. Where he had started his reign listening well to the word of God, at the very end it goes very wrong...

We noted that the mention of Jeremiah (v25) at Josiah's funeral reminds us of his ministry with both the reality of

a) a hard truth: Jer 17v9 - the human heart is deceitful but also

b) a beautiful truth Jer 31v33 - the new Covenant deals with human hearts.

The good news for us (and the truth that Josiah needed) was that, under the New Covenant, God has internalised the law. Josiah was not perfect and the generations after him quickly fell away, however as we have the New covenant so we have a king who is perfect, as well as the promise of transformation

#### **→ Here are few questions to start your group off should you need them...**

- What part does the word of God play in this account? How does Josiah do with listening? Do you think it's true that reformation only comes via the word of God?
- What about the importance of worship? Why is the Passover so important to God's people? How do they get this right? Why does it matter that they get it right?
- How does Josiah point us to Jesus? Look up the Jeremiah passages above - how do they give us hope?