



Unit .15

Session .02

God Receives the People's Repentance

Scripture



2 Chronicles 34:1-11,14-15,18-21

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. **8** Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had cleansed the land and the house, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, and Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz, the recorder, to repair the house of the Lord his God. **9** They came to Hilkiah the high priest and gave him the money that had been brought into the house of God, which the Levites, the keepers of

the threshold, had collected from Manasseh and Ephraim and from all the remnant of Israel and from all Judah and Benjamin and from the inhabitants of Jerusalem. **10** And they gave it to the workmen who were working in the house of the LORD. And the workmen who were working in the house of the LORD gave it for repairing and restoring the house. **11** They gave it to the carpenters and the builders to buy quarried stone, and timber for binders and beams for the buildings that the kings of Judah had let go to ruin. ... **14** While they were bringing out the money that had been brought into the house of the LORD, Hilkiah the priest found the Book of the Law of the Lord given through Moses. **15** Then Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the secretary, "I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD." And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan. ... **18** Then Shaphan the secretary told the king, "Hilkiah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read from it before the king. **19** And when the king heard the words of the Law, he tore his clothes. **20** And the king commanded Hilkiah, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Abdon the son of Micah, Shaphan the secretary, and Asaiah the king's servant, saying, **21** "Go, inquire of the LORD for me and for those who are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that has been found. For great is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out on us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do according to all that is written in this book."

Intro Options



Main Point:
**True repentance
leads to worship
and obedience.**

Option 1

In 1928, Alexander Fleming was experimenting with bacteria that cause staph infections. He left a Petri dish uncovered, and it became contaminated with mold spores. The bacteria grew all over the plate except in the area where the mold had formed. This was Fleming's accidental discovery of penicillin, which would later be mass-produced for use in World War II and go on to save countless lives from bacterial infection.

▪ Do you know of any other unintended discoveries from history?

Penicillin is still saving people. However, it doesn't have the power to really save. No matter how we cut it, one day our lives will fail us despite modern medicine.

In this session, we will see King Josiah make an accidental discovery that does have the power to really save. The kingdom of Judah had been led into sin and rebellion by her unfaithful kings. The book of the Law had been lost, but when discovered he repented and led his people to do the same. After Josiah's repentance, he restored the worship of God and greatly influenced his culture.

Option 2

Ask your students to make guides explaining salvation to an unbeliever, noting specifically what the Bible means in reference to salvation and how one is saved/justified before God. These guides can take one of three options: a skit (pretend it will be recorded and put on YouTube); a poster (pretend it will be put around town); or a flyer (pretend it will be put out at restaurants or hotels). They can work solo or in groups. Whatever medium they choose, they should produce a quick view/read product that will allow others to come to Jesus. Give them time to prepare their productions, and then let them show them. Talk about what common elements you saw in them (hopefully faith!). How many of them talked about repentance, whether they used the actual word or not? Specifically where in the skits/posters/flyers did repentance show up? If it didn't show up, where should it appear? Point out that personal repentance is something that can't be overlooked when talking about our relationship with God.

TEACHING PLAN

Read 2 Chronicles 34:1-7.




Even from a young age, King Josiah served as a godly leader to his people and made tremendous reforms for his land. Take a look at three factors that led to his reforms:

Josiah's Age: God used the young son of an evil king, Amon, to bring about great change for His people. Josiah was only sixteen when he committed his way to the Lord, and twenty when he started implementing reform in his territory. God can call people of any age, young or old, to repentance and use them for His Kingdom.

▪ Who are some examples throughout history of young people making a positive impact on their culture?

Josiah's History: Josiah wasn't raised with the example of a repentant father. He was the son and grandson of terrible kings who bent their knees to false gods. So more than likely, Josiah's first religion was one of idolatry. As with Josiah, we must recognize that our history and our past don't determine our future; repentance and living by faith do.

Josiah's Community: Josiah's first responsibility was for his own repentance. Second, as king, he led his people in repentance, first by example and then by action. He couldn't force a heart change in his community, but he could do as much as possible through his influence to turn them from idols and toward the Lord. We don't have a kingdom to rule, but we do have a community of people we can influence through our faithful words and actions. 

▪ How has someone else's example of personal repentance and faith challenged you in your own life?

Read 2 Chronicles 34:8-11.



▪ Why do you think Josiah saw the restoration of the temple as a worthy task?

Josiah, 26 years old and in his eighteenth year of ruling over Judah, set his heart on repairing the temple of God. The next step on his mission to weed out all idolatry and evil from his kingdom required God's temple coming to life once again.

If you go to modern-day Israel, there is no temple on the landscape, only a retaining wall. Instead, you see the Dome of the Rock, a Muslim shrine. It is exquisite in size and design, but the temple built by Solomon would have superseded it.

The Bible describes Solomon's temple building as 90 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 45 feet high (1 Kings 6:2). Its interior design would rival some of our finest modern-day professional buildings. The Lord's eye for detail was keen, and Solomon's direction and resources matched this vision. The same could be said of Josiah as he led his people to repair this ornate temple for the Lord.

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
**True repentance
leads to worship
and obedience.**

2 Chronicles 34

1-2. Josiah had a great opportunity to honor God over the large territory given to him. He easily could have been overwhelmed, but instead, we see him make a complete assault on the evil he saw within his sphere of influence. He tore down the altars of Baal, ripped apart the Asherah poles, executed the priests to these false gods, and defiled their altars (2 Kings 23:16,20). Josiah waged war against the evil in his kingdom because he was humble and repentant before God. Lasting reform only comes from true repentance.

3. According to 34:3, Josiah began his reform initiatives at age twenty, while 2 Kings 22:3 indicates the reform coincides with the finding of the law scroll when he was twenty-six years old. The age of twenty was the age of majority in Hebrew culture and, more than coincidentally for the Chronicler, the age when the Levite began his service to Yahweh (Num 1:3; 1 Chron. 23:24). The decline of the Assyrian empire after the death of Ashurbanipal in 627 BC afforded Judah an opportunity to reassert its own political and religious agenda after languishing as a vassal state since the time of King Ahaz. There is a growing consensus among scholars that Josiah's reform movement predates the finding of the book of Law by Hilkiah the priest. It seems we can speak of Josiah's early reforms prior to the discovery of the law scroll in 622 BC and his later reforms with the temple renovation and eradication of false worship centers.¹

99 Essential Doctrines *(p. 72, DDG)*

Repentance

Repentance is a response to God's gracious call to salvation. It includes a genuine sorrow for one's sin (Luke 5:1-11), a turning away from one's sin toward Christ (Acts 26:15-20), and a life that reflects lasting change and transformation (Ps. 119:57-60). It is the human counterpart to God's work of regeneration; in other words, the human side of our conversion.

TEACHING PLAN

Josiah's faith and pursuit of God became contagious as a result of having experienced repentance and the love of God, which fueled his passion for God's glory. Josiah enlisted a team of people to restore worship at the temple: Shaphan, Maaseiah, Joah, Hilkiah, Levites, doorkeepers, carpenters, builders, and more. His calling overflowed to others and got them involved in the good work he was doing. This was always the purpose of God's kings—to lead their people in worship and obedience to the Lord their God.

The same could (and should) be said about us today in working for the kingdom of God. N. T. Wright says, "What you do with your body in the present matters because God has a great future in store for it ... What you do in the present—by painting, preaching, singing, sewing, praying, teaching, building hospitals, digging wells, campaigning for justice, writing poems, caring for the needy, loving your neighbor as yourself—will last into God's future. These activities are not simply ways of making the present life a little less beastly, a little more bearable, until the day when we leave it behind altogether (as the hymn so mistakenly puts it...). They are part of what we may call building for God's kingdom."²

Read 2 Chronicles 34:14-15,18-21.



The book of the Law had fallen so far from the minds of the people during Manasseh's and Amon's evil reigns that it had slipped between the cracks, perhaps literally. But when it was found, its power became evident once again. When the book was read to King Josiah, he tore his clothes because the words cut through him like a sharp sword. Josiah experienced God's power and holiness as they jumped off the pages of Hilkiah's discovery. And that same power and holiness can be experienced every time we open our Bibles today.

- **When has God's Word overwhelmed you with personal conviction and a greater sense of God's holiness?**
- **If God's Word is sharper than a sword and able to communicate God's power and holiness, then why do we treat it as something as optional in the Christian life?**

Josiah was terrified upon hearing God's word in the Law because he understood the wrath of God against sin and disobedience (2 Chron. 34:21). Fear of judgment is a healthy fear to have, after all. However, around six centuries later, the very embodiment of the Word of God would be sent to earth, not to condemn the world but to save it (John 3:17).

Jesus—the Word (John 1:1,14)—is the creator of all. He is the sustainer of all life. He is the light to all of humanity that the darkness of this world cannot overcome. Josiah feared God's wrath for his people's disobedience and repented. The power behind the word of God's law that created such an overwhelming reaction in Josiah put on skin and became a Man who obeyed God's law perfectly.

Jesus came to die on a cross so God's wrath would fall on Him and His repentant people would be saved. This grace is available to every believer, every day. Josiah would be in awe of the Word made flesh. May we find ourselves in awe too. And let us proclaim to the world the great grace of our God in Jesus Christ.



COMMENTARY

Main Point:
True repentance
leads to worship
and obedience.

2 Chronicles 34

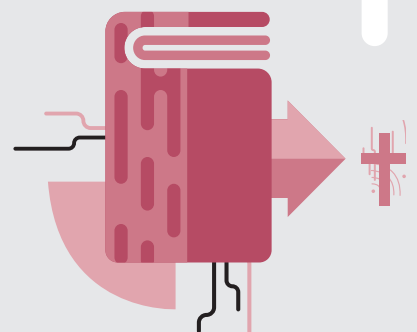
21. Josiah's lack of knowledge about the book of the Law is a mystery, as his ancestors had relied on the teaching of this book during their own reigns.

- David organized the temple activities according to “everything that was written in the law of the LORD” (1 Chron. 16:40).
- Jehoshaphat sent out officials with “the book of the LORD’s instructions” to teach his people (2 Chron. 17:7-9).
- Amaziah did not put the children of his enemies to death because he obeyed what was “written in the law, in the book of Moses” (2 Chron. 25:4).
- Hezekiah made sure the temple ceremonies were conducted according to “the law of the LORD” (2 Chron. 31:3).

The puzzling question for biblical scholars has been the identity of this book. We can only speculate as to why the law scroll disappeared from the collection of Hebrew religious documents. Was it suppressed, or lost, or hidden? Presumably the scroll fell out of the circulation because of the need to hide it for the sake of preservation at the threat of military invasion (e.g., the Assyrian campaign against Hezekiah); or else it was censored by rulers and/or concealed by the priests during one of the lapses of Israel into religious apostasy (e.g., the reigns of Athaliah, Ahaz, Amon, Manasseh).³

(p. 74, DDG) Christ Connection

Josiah was a good king whom God used to lead the people back to Him, but he was not the perfect king that the people needed. Jesus is the righteous King of kings who brings us to God by paying our sin penalty and giving us His righteousness.



Our Mission

God's Story has always been designed to connect with our story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own. Suggested answers to these questions can be found on the right-hand side of the page for leaders.

Head



Why do we find it difficult sometimes to talk about repentance?

What are some similarities between Josiah's desire to restore the temple and the New Testament's teaching that God's people are now the temple where the Holy Spirit resides?

Heart



How would you define repentance? Where else is repentance talked about, and why does the Bible give it so much attention?

Why is daily faith and repentance a better strategy to fight ongoing sin than sheer willpower?

Hands



How does repentance lead us to love and serve others better?

What are you passionate about in God's Kingdom? How can you help spread that passion with others this week?

Main Point: **True repentance leads to worship and obedience.**



Head

It is easy to hail King Josiah as a great reformer. No doubt, he was certainly a gifted leader. But our real takeaway from this man was his repentance—his personal turning away from evil things and moving toward the light. Repentance for salvation is a one-time act, but for a fully engaged, dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ, repentance must happen again and again.

In his repentance, Josiah attempted to restore the temple, but that temple still crumbled. We have a greater temple through the blood of Jesus Christ. Because God longs to dwell with His people, He came to us in His Son and, through faith, has sealed us in His Spirit. We are now God's temple, and nothing can separate us from His love. This gospel story of relentless love is what draws us back into repentance and faithful living again and again.



Heart

The first word of Jesus' first sermon was "Repent" (Matt. 4:17), and His last words before He ascended into heaven were about repentance (Luke 24:47). Jesus' followers took note, and they all went out and preached that people should repent" (Mark 6:12; Acts 2:38). Repentance is key for not only a response to the gospel, but for godly living. Many of us try to attack evil, idolatry, and sin in our lives with the brute force of human willpower, but these attempts will leave us disappointed and tired. We are too weak to effect lasting change in ourselves. Whether it is pride lurking in our hearts letting our temper loose, the only way to tear down the idols of our hearts is through true repentance.



Hands

Lots of Christians today have repented of their sin but fail to see that repentance is meant to lead to restoring and resuming worship through our various gifts as well. What we see in Josiah's reforms is what we see in the early church as well. The early Christians were contagious, and their gospel message spread like wildfire, not because the people were burdened with responsibility but because they had tasted and known God's love and forgiveness. When we are alive with God's love, our hands are free to demonstrate that love to a broken world.