

OpenTheo

2 Kings 23 - 24



2 Kings - Steve Gregg

In this section of his teaching, Steve Gregg discusses the reigns of Josiah and his successor, Jehoiakim. Josiah worked to eliminate idol worship from the land and made a covenant to follow the Lord. He destroyed shrines and high places in Samaria and consulted with a prophetess to clarify his understanding of God's will. However, Josiah's successors did not follow in his footsteps, which ultimately led to the destruction of Judah by Babylon.

Transcript

Last time we saw that Josiah took the throne at 8 years old. His father and his grandfather had been wicked kings and yet somehow Josiah was influenced to seek the Lord. He had a heart toward the Lord.

And the first indication of this was that he decided to take the treasuries of the temple and apply them to the maintenance of the temple. Apparently there was some continuation of giving to the temple even in the time when other gods were being worshipped and when Manasseh had set up altars in the temple to other gods, people were still worshipping there. Who they were worshipping is maybe ambiguous, but there was money coming in.

And so Josiah decided that he would apply those monies to fixing up things that had fallen into disrepair around the temple. And he gave the money to carpenters and stonemasons and started a refurbishing project of the temple. And in the course of that, one of his ministers found a scroll in the temple.

And it was the scroll of the book of Deuteronomy apparently. And it was actually found by Hilkiah, the high priest, but he gave it to one of Josiah's men who brought it to Josiah and read it to him, Shaphan the scribe. And he read him the law.

And as Josiah heard the law being read, including apparently the curses that God said would come upon Israel if they departed from him and worshipped other gods, Josiah was convicted and realized that Israel for some time had been in violation and had been therefore under the curses that God had warned about. And so he tore his clothes and he

repented and he humbled himself and said, we've been sinning and we need to change that. And so he set out to do reforms.

Now he sent his messengers to a prophetess named Huldah and she prophesied that Jerusalem would in fact be judged and would suffer the curses in the book because of their violations. However, because of Josiah's humbling himself and having a tender heart toward God, it would not happen in his lifetime. In fact, she prophesied that the king would come to a peaceful end, which he would have if he had been obedient to the end.

All the promises of God are conditional. And at least Huldah clarified that it was God's intention that Josiah should be blessed and would not have to come to a violent end like some of his predecessors had, who had been assassinated or killed in war. But he, we will find, did not do the right thing at the very end.

He did the right thing most of his life. And the Bible remembers him as it remembers Hezekiah as one who was unlike others in his zeal for the Lord. And in chapter 23 of 2 Kings, we find the description of the reforms as he sought to restore pure worship of Yahweh in a land that had been worshipping other gods and not serving God in the proper way.

So it says, Then the king sent them to gather all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem to him. And the king went up to the house of Yahweh with all the men of Judah and with him all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests and the prophets and all the people, both small and great. And he read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant, which had been found in the house of the Lord.

Now, Deuteronomy actually said that every seven years all the people of Israel should be gathered together at the Feast of Tabernacles to have the law read to them. This was probably not the Feast of Tabernacles, but it was nonetheless overdue, had been neglected for a long time. So he read the law publicly to the people who should have been hearing it every seven years read to them.

Then the king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the Lord to follow the Lord and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all his heart and with all his soul to perform the words of this covenant that were written in the book. And all the people took their stand for the covenant. That is, they agreed with him.

How deep their commitment was is really questionable because his reforms, though he was zealous for them, did not continue after his death. The people seemed to vacillate and seemed to just go with whatever the king said. We were told that Manasseh, the worst of their kings, had seduced the people into worshipping other gods.

Now, it seems to me that if you have a very wicked ruler, that doesn't mean that you

have to do the wicked things he does, but people often just follow the government's policies. And that is perhaps one reason, one argument that people have for maintaining a Christian presence in government because even though Christianity is not spread by governmental action and righteousness is not even maintained through law, yet righteous government does influence people because there's a certain number of people who don't think for themselves. There's a certain number of people who just are sheep or lemmings.

And what the leaders do is what they decide to do. They don't like to rock the boat. They don't like to go against the tide.

And so what the leaders do, the people just kind of sheepishly do. And if you have wicked leaders, the average person who was given a brain by God to think more than an animal thinks, doesn't use his brain and doesn't think any more than an animal thinks and just follows whatever the crowd is doing or whatever the leaders are doing. So here we see the people stood by this reform that Josiah did, but after he was gone, they didn't.

So it was perhaps shallow on their part. On his part, it was genuine. He obviously had a real heart for God and perhaps he influenced others to have a real heart for God, but I'm sure that the majority of the population was just going along with whatever the king said.

And the king commanded Hilkiah, the high priest, the priests of the second order and the doorkeepers to bring out of the temple of the Lord, all the articles that were made for Baal, for Asherah and for all the hosts of heaven. And he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron and carried their ashes to Bethel. Then he removed the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah and in the places all around Jerusalem and those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun, to the moon, to the constellations and to all the hosts of heaven.

And he brought out the wooden image from the house of the Lord to the brook Kidron outside Jerusalem. He burned it at the brook Kidron and ground it into ashes and threw its ashes on the graves of the common people. Then he tore down the ritual booths of the perverted persons.

Apparently this would be male prostitutes that were associated with the worship of some of the pagan gods. And so he tore down their places of business, their booths. And it says they were in the house of the Lord where the women wove hangings for the wooden image.

And he brought all the priests from the chief cities of Judah and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense. Now to defile them means that he did something that would make them unusable. When we think of something being defiled, we might

usually think in terms of the temple being defiled.

That's when Antiochus Epiphany sacrificed a pig in the temple. It was defiling to the temple. But even the pagan shrines could be defiled if something was done that made it impossible for them to be used and that could be breaking them down or it could be doing some kind of abominable thing that's abominable to those religions on them so that the place is considered to be unusable because it's been tainted.

And so he defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense from Geba to Beersheba. Also he broke down the high places at the gates which were at the entrance of the gate of Joshua, the governor of the city which were to the left of the city gate. Nevertheless, the priests of the high places did not come up to the altar of the Lord in Jerusalem but they ate unleavened bread among their brethren.

And he defiled Topheth. Now Topheth is the Valley of Hinnom which is to the southwest of Jerusalem. He defiled Topheth which is the Valley of the Sons of Hinnom that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech.

So Topheth or the Valley of Hinnom had been used in Manasseh's time and apparently in Ammon's time to burn children to Molech. And as I've said before, Molech was a statue of a human figure with its arms, its forearms extended forward at the elbow, horizontal to the ground and the palms up. And this big bronze statue had fires built within it till it glowed red-hot.

And it was the ritual of the worship of Molech that involved placing a live infant into the hands of this burning, this red-hot idol. And this is what was called causing your children to pass through the fire to Molech. The Valley of Hinnom is where that happened.

And that was obviously among the most abominable of all the abominations that Israel did when they sacrificed their sons. Even the prophets had God saying, you're sacrificing my sons to Molech. These Jewish children are my children and you're sacrificing my children to Molech, he says.

So that place in particular had to be defiled. It is believed that the defilement of that place was to make it a garbage dump and that it was a place where garbage from the city was always taken and burned there. And even the dead corpses of people who were criminals and who had died out of favor with society and were not given a burial were thrown into the Valley of Hinnom.

Some of this is a little speculated but it is believed by scholars for the most part that this is what the Valley of Hinnom was used for from the days of Josiah because of the former worship of Molech there. And in order to prevent anything like that from ever happening again and turning the Valley of Hinnom into a place that could never be used for idol worship again, it became a place of garbage and continual burnings. The fires of course

burned all the time, day and night, because there was a continual supply of fuel added.

You probably are aware, as most partially educated Christians are, that the Valley of Hinnom, this valley, Tophet, Tophet means drum, the drum, but the Valley of the Sons of Hinnom, it is in Greek, the word is Gehenna. Gehenna is a Greek word that simply means Valley of Hinnom. And when Jesus spoke about the judgment that was coming upon the people of Israel in his generation, he warned them that they had two choices.

They could follow him and become part of his movement, his kingdom, or they could risk being thrown into Gehenna, the Valley of Hinnom. Now, for some reason, the traditional English translations of Gehenna in the New Testament, and Jesus is the only one who used that term, except one time it was used by James, where James said, the tongue is set on the fire of Gehenna. But apart from James using that term one time, Jesus alone used the term Gehenna.

The apostles did not. And in the English Bibles, the King James and the early translations, the translators chose to translate Gehenna as hell. Now of course the word Gehenna doesn't mean hell, it means Valley of Hinnom, that's the literal translation.

And there was an actual location by that name, and people were actually thrown there. Their corpses actually did get thrown in Gehenna when they died. Not everybody's, but the people who died, especially in great slaughters.

For example, in the book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah was living at a time when Jerusalem was under siege from Babylon. And Jeremiah was telling the people that they should surrender to Babylon and go into captivity rather than fight and lose and be slaughtered.

And in the course of his prophecies, there's a couple of different times in Jeremiah, that he mentions that the Valley of Hinnom will no longer be called the Valley of Hinnom, it will be called the Valley of Slaughter, because of the abundance of the corpses that would be thrown there. Now what he's referring to is that when the Babylonians would destroy Jerusalem and slaughter the people, they'd have to dispense with the corpses, there'd be way too many to bury, so they'd just give them mass cremation, as it were, by casting their bodies into the Valley of Hinnom, where the fires were always burning and where they could be disposed of. So that in Jeremiah's day, he spoke of Gehenna or the Valley of Hinnom as the place where, in the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., the corpses would be deposited.

Now Jesus, of course, came at a time when Jerusalem was in danger of being invaded again, and he said within that generation it would happen, and it did. The Romans came and they destroyed Jerusalem, just as the Babylonians had done in 586 B.C. Thus, Jesus stood in relation to that calamity very much in the same place that Jeremiah stood in relation to the earlier one. Jesus was warning the people of Israel, as Jeremiah had warned the people of Israel, that destruction was coming upon Jerusalem.

And both Jesus and Jeremiah warned them that if they did not listen, they were going to end up with their corpses thrown into Gehenna, that is into the Valley of Hinnom. So it does not seem likely that when Jesus spoke of Gehenna, he was speaking about what we call hell. And unfortunately, the traditional English translations of the New Testament have translated Gehenna as hell.

Which means, of course, we read in the words of Jesus, when we read them, it sounds like he's talking about what's going to happen to people after they die, and what's going to happen to their soul for all eternity. You sometimes will hear people say, Jesus talked more about hell than anyone else in the Bible. Well, if Gehenna is hell, you're right.

He did use the word Gehenna about a dozen times, but if Gehenna is really the Valley of Hinnom, which is what the word actually means, then Jesus didn't really speak about hell very much. Nor did anyone else. The apostles never did.

In none of the writings of the apostles do you find a reference to hell. You do find references to judgment, but you don't find reference to hell in the writings of any of the apostles. The real descriptions of what we call hell are found in the book of Revelation, the lake of fire.

But neither the apostles nor Jesus really used the term much, except in the cases where Jesus did speak of Gehenna, as I said, many believed he was talking about hell, not the Valley of Hinnom. Now, how can they justify that translation? Well, there is a reason. And that is that in the intertestamental period, after the Old Testament was finished, and before John the Baptist came, the rabbis had done a lot of speculating about lots of things.

There were lots of traditions of the rabbis that had developed, and a lot of that speculation had to do with what happens to people after they die, and after the judgment. And many of the rabbis, there was no agreement among them, there were lots of different views, but many of the rabbis had come to use the word Gehenna as an image for the place of final judgment for the wicked. To them, they knew that Gehenna was an actual valley outside Jerusalem, the Valley of Hinnom, but they used it as an image for the horrible punishment that would come upon wicked people after the final judgment.

So, in a sense, when Jesus came along, Gehenna already had come to be used as a term representing what we might call hell. And that is what justified, I think, the English translations using the word hell as a translation of Gehenna. The question is, is that what Jesus meant? Now, it's a toss-up that really no one can say for sure, but the question comes down to this.

When Jesus used the word Gehenna, did he use it the way the prophet Jeremiah used it, or did he use it the way the rabbis used it? Many people think that since the rabbis had

influenced Jewish thought completely by the time of Jesus, and that the average Jew listening to him would think in terms that the rabbis had taught them, that he would use the word Gehenna in the way that the rabbis meant it. And therefore, when Jesus spoke about Gehenna, many think he was talking about hell, speaking of it as the rabbis would use that term. Others feel that it's more likely that Jesus would use the terms in a biblical way rather than in the way the traditions of the rabbis had come up with.

And since Jesus' teaching about the destruction of Jerusalem was so prominent in all of his teaching, and he did speak of Gehenna as the judgment that they would face, and interestingly, since the apostles, writing to churches outside of Israel, never mentioned Gehenna. They did talk about the judgment, but Paul, writing to the Gentile churches, never spoke about Gehenna. Peter, writing to Gentile churches, didn't speak of Gehenna.

Why? Maybe because the people in the Gentile world were not in danger of being thrown into the Valley of Hinnom. They were not going to be there at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, and therefore the judgment was spoken of without reference to that term. There's much ambiguous about this.

My own thoughts, as you can probably tell, lean toward Jesus using the term the way Jeremiah used it. And Jeremiah, by the way, came into his ministry during the reign of Josiah, the time we're reading about. Actually, the 13th year of Josiah's reign was the first year that Jeremiah began to prophesy, and Jeremiah continued to prophesy through the remaining history of Judah until the fall of Jerusalem.

So, when Jeremiah talked about corpses being thrown in abundance into Gehenna, this was in the context of Gehenna having now been defiled. It was a place where the Jews, when worshipping Moloch, had voluntarily burned their babies. But now Josiah defiled that place, and Jeremiah said, okay, now if you people don't repent, you're going to be thrown into those fires there.

You burned God's children, you burned God's babies there, now you're going to be burned up there when the Babylonians come and slaughter you all and your corpses are thrown into Gehenna. And so this is what, here in Josiah, this is the beginning of Gehenna's role, or the Valley of Hinnom's role, as a garbage dump. And it was a defilement of the place of worship of Moloch.

Now, verse 11, Then he removed the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun, that is, in worshipping the sun. They didn't actually sacrifice these horses, they just had them there, apparently dedicated to the sun. I don't know whether they rode in procession from time to time, in processions of the sun or whatever, but they had been dedicated to worship of the sun, so he got rid of them.

At the entrance of the house of the Lord, that's where they put them. The entrance to the house of the Lord was on the east, and so since the sun rises from the east, they no

doubt had positioned certain horses and who knows what else there at the eastern end of the temple to honor the rising sun, whom they no doubt were viewing as one of their deities. It says they were at the entrance of the house of the Lord by the chamber of Nathan-Malak, the officer who was in the court, and he burned the chariots of the sun with fire.

The altars that were on the roof, the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the Lord, the king broke down and pulverized there, and he threw their dust into the brook Kidron, of course, principally so that they would be carried away. Then the king defiled the high places that were east of Jerusalem, which were on the south of the Mount of Corruption. The Mount of Corruption is no doubt the Mount of Olives because that's the mountain that's on the east side of Jerusalem.

As you leave Jerusalem and go eastward, the mountain you come to is the Mount of Olives, so they referred to it here as the Mount of Corruption because it had been used as a place of idolatry, which Solomon, king of Israel, had built for Ashereth, the abomination of the Sidonians, for Chemish, the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom, the abomination of the people of Ammon. Now Milcom is another word for Moloch also. All of these gods were worshipped by the sacrificing of children, and Solomon had built these high places on the Mount of Olives, and they apparently remained there from Solomon's day until this.

And he broke in pieces the sacred pillars and cut down the wooden images and filled their places with the bones of men. Putting bones of men in their places would be how they defiled them. Dead men's bones, the presence of dead bones, would defile something, make it unclean.

If the bones were there permanently, then the place would be permanently unclean. And then there's this little fulfillment of prophecy here. You may remember back in 1 Kings 12, when Jeroboam established that altar at Bethel and put gold calves there and in Dan, that a prophet, unnamed, came and prophesied the destruction of that altar and the defilement of it.

Remember that's the prophet who got himself killed by a lion later on. But he first prophesied against the altar and said it would split open and the ashes would pour out on the ground, and they did right there and then. And he said, a man named Josiah will rise up and he'll defile this altar, he'll burn the bones, he'll burn the priests of this altar on the altar.

Now he actually mentioned Josiah by name. This prophecy is found in 1 Kings 12, 28-33. And, you know, that was like a couple hundred years before this.

It says in verse 15, Moreover the altar that was in Bethel, in the high place which

Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel, sin had made, both the altar and the high place he broke down, and he burned the high place and crushed it to powder and burned the wooden image. And as Josiah turned, he saw the tombs that were there on the mountain, and he sent and took the bones out of the tombs and burned them on the altar and defiled it according to the word of the Lord which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words. Then he said, What gravestone is this that I see? And the men of the city told him, It is the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and proclaimed these things which you have done against the altar of Bethel.

And he said, Let him alone, let no one move his bones. So they let his bones alone, and the bones of the prophet who came from Samaria, the old prophet who was buried next to him. So they were kind of just rampaging the graves, or ransacking the graves I suppose is what I would mean to say, and they were taking the bones out of the local graves which apparently is where the priests of that altar had been buried, but also those prophets had been buried near there, and their bones were left undisturbed.

Verse 19, Then Josiah took away all the shrines of the high places that were in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke the Lord to anger, and he did to them according to all the deeds he had done in Bethel. So we can see that he actually didn't restrict his reforms to the land of Judah. He went up into the northern territory which he had not ever ruled over, and which the kings of Judah had never ruled over, but which had been ruled over by the kings of the northern kingdom.

He went to Samaria, and he went to Bethel. These were the places that had been controlled by the kings of the north, but those kings were now history. There was no kingdom there, and what was there were the people from other lands that had been brought in by the Assyrians to repopulate the area after the Israelites were taken away, and apparently there was not a strong Assyrian military presence there to resist Josiah, so he just went and pressed his advantage and went up there to Bethel and to Samaria and defiled the high places and the altars there, and he seemed to have the support of the people, so no one apparently resisted him, although he was kind of out of his jurisdiction.

So Josiah took away all the shrines of the high places that were in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke the Lord to anger, and he did to them according to all the deeds that he had done in Bethel. He executed all the priests of the high places who were there on the altars and burned men's bones on them, and he returned to Jerusalem. So these shrines were continually used even in Israel after Israel had fallen, and Josiah just kind of took charge and killed the priests there.

They were idolatrous priests. They didn't belong there. They shouldn't have been there.

They were doing something that the law condemned as a capital crime. No one had ever punished them, so Josiah took it upon himself to punish them, kill them, and sacrifice

them, not sacrifice them, but burn them on the altars there and defile their high places. Then he returned to Jerusalem.

Then, verse 21, the king commanded all the people, saying, Keep the Passover to the Lord your God, as it is written in the book of the covenant. Surely such a Passover had never been held since the days of the judges who judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah. But in the eighteenth year of King Josiah, this Passover was held before the Lord in Jerusalem.

Moreover, Josiah put away those who consulted mediums and spiritists, the household gods and idols, all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the Lord. It says, Now before him there was no king like him who turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to the law of Moses, nor after him did any arise like him. Well, you may remember in chapter 18 when it's talking about Hezekiah, chapter 18, verse 5, it says, He trusted the Lord God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any who were before him, for he held fast to the law.

Now, you see, both Hezekiah and Josiah were such exceptional reformers. Each of them is spoken of as if they were unique, and yet they were not, because Josiah was like Hezekiah, and Hezekiah was like Josiah, and yet it says of each of them there was never anyone like them before or after him. Now, this is not to point out some error in the Bible, the opposite.

I'd like to point out the error in our approach to many passages because there is this hyperbole that is used not infrequently in Scripture. The destruction of Babylon mentioned in Ezekiel chapter 5 when God was predicting what he was going to do in Babylon. He said, I'm going to do in you, Jerusalem, the like of which I've never done before, nor ever will do again.

And yet, when Jesus spoke about the destruction of Jerusalem in Matthew 24, He said, then there should be great tribulations such as never was since the beginning of the world, nor ever will be. Both the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD and the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC are both said to be the worst God ever had done or ever would do. And we have other cases like that in Scripture.

I've given you some of them earlier in this school. For example, the locust plague in Egypt in Exodus is said to be there was no locust plague like that before or after it. And in Joel, another locust plague is described in chapter 2. It says there's never been one like them before or after it.

What we're to understand here is that in the Hebrew writings, this kind of hyperbole was used. It's not being literal. It's just saying He was so exceptional.

It was like no one else before. And people use those kinds of hyperboles all the time. The main thing is we have to recognize when a hyperbole is being used so we don't make a mistake.

And this becomes especially necessary when we're trying to understand what Jesus was predicting in Matthew 24-21. When He said, Then shall be great tribulation such as never was since the world began nor ever shall be. Many people actually take that quite literally because they don't read the Old Testament.

Or if they do read the Old Testament, they don't read it very carefully. They don't recognize that it's very common among the Jewish prophets and Jewish writers to speak in this way even though it's not literally the case. And it's simply saying that this is maybe not uniquely disastrous, but it's exceptionally disastrous.

So severely so that one might use the hyperbole of there's never anything like it before. And people use that kind of hyperbole all the time in advertising, in praising their beloved, and all kinds of things. Just saying, you know, there's never been anyone in the world like you.

You're the most wonderful person. Or this air show is going to be like nothing ever before in history. And yet it's very much like other things in history.

And we're accustomed to that. We realize that the exaggeration is being used in order to make an emphatic point. And so we have to recognize that in Scripture, too.

Because the Bible being the Word of God, we sometimes think that God must speak literally all the time. Well, why should He? We don't. He communicates with people using human language and human idioms and so forth.

Why should He speak a way that we do not? He wants to communicate with us. But our mistake is when we think that the Hebrews would speak the way we do. The Hebrews living thousands of years ago.

And that they would have the same conventions of speech we do. They have some. But they don't always talk the way we would.

And so it says of Josiah, there's never one like him before or after him. But there was. Hezekiah was before him.

Verse 26. Nevertheless, the Lord did not turn from the fierceness of his great wrath with which his anger was aroused against Judah because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked him. And the Lord said, I will also remove Judah from my sight as I have removed Israel and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen and the house of which I said my name shall be there.

The Bible says that God, if He pronounces judgment against a nation and if they repent, He will repent of the evil He said He'd do to them. This is what Jeremiah actually said in Jeremiah 18 and verses 7 through 10. And one might think well then God should have repented of the evil He had said He would do to Jerusalem because here we see repentance.

Well, that's the question. Is that what we see here? Is that what God saw here? God saw true repentance on the part of Josiah and therefore saw that he should not be judged and determined that the judgment would not come in his day because he truly was repentant. If he had not been, if he had been like Manasseh and Ammon before him, maybe the judgment would have come in Josiah's day.

But God said because he humbled himself and tore his clothes and repented he was not going to bring it in Josiah's day. So God did honor Josiah's repentance. The problem is the nation didn't really repent apparently.

They went along with the king. They couldn't much stop him. He was destroying all the shrines and all the altars to the wrong gods and this was a general house cleaning but it was a surface thing unfortunately.

It was a deep thing for Josiah but for the rest of the people it was not a heartfelt repentance and that is simply seen by the fact that when Josiah was gone they went back and worshipped the wrong gods again. So even though we see a really encouraging house cleaning going on here in Judah, it wasn't enough. It was too little, it was too late, it was too shallow.

And so God said yet I will still destroy Judah sadly and it's largely because of what Manasseh had done. In verse 26 it says and that may simply mean that Manasseh had so ingrained idolatry in the hearts of the people that Josiah's reformers were not able to really get them to give it up in their hearts. So Manasseh's influence continued even though Manasseh had in the end of his life repented and torn down the idolatrous altars and so forth but it was too late for him.

He got right with God himself but he had already instilled idolatrous practices in the hearts of his son and his people so when he died Ammon his son just went back to the same idolatrous practices Manasseh had done. It was now like a cancer that's deep in the cells of the body and you can remove a tumor here or there but it pops up again somewhere else. The body of Judah was cancerous.

Now the rest of the acts of Josiah and all that he did are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? In his days Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt went to the aid of the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates and King Josiah went out against him and Pharaoh Necho killed him at Megiddo when he confronted him. Now this story in Chronicles we find that Josiah should not have gone. Obviously he died there.

It was a mistake but there's more details about this. In 2nd Chronicles chapter 35 beginning at verse 20 it says after all this when Josiah had prepared the temple Necho the king of Egypt came up to fight against Carchemish by the Euphrates and Josiah went out against him but he sent messengers to him saying what have I to do with you king of Judah? I have not come against you this day but against the house with which you have a war for God commanded me to make haste refrain from meddling with God who is with me lest he destroy you. Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him but disguised himself so that he might fight with him and did not heed the words of Necho from the mouth of God.

So he came to fight in the valley of Megiddo and the archers shot King Josiah and the king said to his servants take me away for I am severely wounded. His servants therefore took him out of the chariot and put him in the second chariot that he had and they brought him to Jerusalem. So he died and was buried in one of the tombs of his fathers and all Judah and Jerusalem mourned him.

Jeremiah the prophet also lamented for Josiah and to this day all the singing women and the singing men and singing women speak of Josiah in their lamentations. They made it a custom in Israel and indeed they are written in the lamp in the laments. So apparently what is going on here is Pharaoh of Egypt was going to assist the Assyrian king in fighting against the Babylonians at Carchemish up at the river Euphrates.

This became a very important battle for the rise of Babylon. Until this time the Assyrians had been the most powerful kingdom in the region and we know that they had swallowed up Syria and Israel and many many other lands in the area. They also had controlled Babylon for some time but at this point in 605 BC actually Babylon was reasserting itself under the named Nebuchadnezzar and the Assyrians were seeking to fight off Babylon and and to prevent them from rising to the power position that Assyria had enjoyed for some time and apparently the Egyptians felt that Babylon was a serious threat also and wanted to aid Assyria and so Pharaoh Necho of Egypt was bringing his troops up to the river Euphrates to assist the Assyrians in fighting against Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king, general, general slash king and there's no explanation of why Josiah was inclined as he was to resist this move on the part of Necho.

Pharaoh Necho did not intend to bother Judah. He intended just to skirt Judah and go up to the river Euphrates and do something else not related to Judah and so when Josiah went out to meet him to resist him Necho said I'm not, I don't need war with you. I'm fighting against your, our mutual enemy Babylon.

Babylon's going to be your enemy so leave me alone so I can go up there and fight against them. But Josiah for some reason didn't heed and Necho said God has sent me. You're resisting God.

Now Necho is not exactly a prophet of God at least maybe we'd say Josiah would have no reason to believe that Necho was really speaking from God as it turned out he should have. He should have listened to him and he went to war against Necho. But what motivated Josiah to do that? Apparently Josiah didn't like Assyria remaining in power.

He must have thought that if the Babylonians would succeed Assyria as the power of the region it wouldn't be worse. It might even be better. The Assyrians were a ruthless people to their to the people they conquered.

So were the Babylonians but the Assyrians were arguably more ruthless and maybe Josiah thought you know I don't want to see Assyria succeed here. I don't want Egypt helping Assyria to stay in power. That must have been something like what he was thinking because there's no explanation given of why he went and meddled in somebody else's war.

Especially against Egypt. Egypt was not the superpower it once had been but it certainly was a more powerful nation than Judah. Egypt was the power that little nations like Judah would usually call upon to help them against the big aggressors like Assyria.

And so I don't know what Josiah was thinking. It was not wise and it was a mistake and he got himself killed there. Now it's possible that whatever resistance Josiah put up against Necho weakened Necho because history, secular history tells us that Necho did go up and fight against Babylon along with Assyria and Nebuchadnezzar won.

Nebuchadnezzar beat them. Now Necho came back down again and he punished Judah but Nebuchadnezzar rose to power after this in 605 BC and so there was there's a power change in the region and the enemy of Judah from this point on is not going to be Assyria but Babylon and it would be Babylon of course that would take Judah eventually into captivity. It says in verse 30 here of 2nd Kings 23 Then his servants moved his body in a chariot from Megiddo and brought him to Jerusalem and buried him in his own tomb.

And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah and anointed him in the place and made him king in his father's place. Now Jehoahaz was 23 years old when he became king and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libna not our prophet Jeremiah and he did evil in the sight of the Lord according to all that his father's had done not his father Josiah but his ancestors before Josiah.

Now Pharaoh Necho put him in prison at Riblah in the land of Hamath that he might not reign in Jerusalem and he imposed on the land a tribute of 100 talents of silver and a talent of gold. This is apparently after Pharaoh Necho had failed in his mission against Babylon he came back to Judea or Judah and he punished them punished Josiah's successor and put him in prison and put a heavy tribute upon the land of Judah. Then Pharaoh Necho made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in his place.

Now Eliakim is also called Jehoiakim so you're going to find the name Jehoiakim in the narratives as well as Eliakim same person. Now he was a brother of Jehoahaz he was another son of Josiah so Jehoahaz was not succeeded by his own son he was only 23 years old when he's put in prison so he if he had a son at all it'd be a little child instead his brother Eliakim was put in place in the place of his father Josiah and he changed his name to Jehoiakim and Pharaoh took Jehoahaz and went to Egypt and he died there that is Jehoahaz died in Egypt. Now it was Pharaoh who changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim and he must have done that in order just to press to show his authority that he could rename the king there.

So Jehoiakim gave the silver and the gold to Pharaoh but he taxed the land to give money according to the commandment of Pharaoh he exacted the silver and gold from the people of the land from everyone according to his assessment to give it to Pharaoh Necho. Jehoiakim was 25 years old when he became king and so he's just a little older than Jehoiaz a year or so and he reigned 11 years in Jerusalem his mother's name was Zebediah the daughter of Hedayah of Rumah and he did evil in the sight of the Lord according to all that his father had done. Now Jehoiaz was taken into Egypt and never came back so Pharaoh Necho apparently was just showing that he had the power to do what he wanted in Judah because I don't know that it advantaged Egypt at all to have Jehoiakim instead of Jehoiaz as king of Judah.

We don't read anywhere about anything that Jehoiaz had done specifically to offend the Pharaoh or anything that Eliakim his brother had done to please him and it's not like the Pharaoh just decided to come and take over in Judah or else he probably would have wiped out all of Josiah's family. He not only would have taken Jehoiaz into prison but wouldn't have put his brother in place and given him authority left. It seems like Necho is just angry at Josiah and at Judah because of the interference that Josiah had brought against him and so he's coming and interfering in the political power structure of Judah and so we have a second son a second son of Josiah reigning there will be a third and that will be Zedekiah.

So a number of Josiah's sons reigned serially. Chapter 24 in his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up and Jehoiakim became his vassal for three years. Now this was in 605 BC after Nebuchadnezzar had conquered Assyria at the Battle of Carchemish and now it was there was little question that Babylon was now the power people in this region and apparently Judah didn't resist him and he didn't destroy Judah he wasn't coming to burn it down or anything like that like he later did and he later did because they rebelled against him he just came and asserted his power and Jehoiakim did not resist and just became his vassal so okay we'll pay tribute to you just leave us alone and so that's how it was at that time Nebuchadnezzar took into captivity in Babylon a few Jewish men it was mainly people of the royal family and nobles I don't know if this was just to again assert his power over Judah or or what but perhaps he felt that if he had some of the families of the nobles and the royal family living with him in Babylon then

Judah would not you know dare to resist him or do anything that might endanger their relatives that were in Babylon and among the people that were taken at that time into Babylon were Daniel and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

These men that we read about in Daniel's book in the early chapters were taken into captivity in 605 BC by Nebuchadnezzar on this occasion there had not at this point been a war Nebuchadnezzar had not fought against Jehoiakim he just came and put him under tribute and took what he wanted including some of them the most intelligent and blue-blood youths that he could find and he took them to Babylon and gave them a good education treated them like royalty he was not punishing them he was making some kind of a connection apparently between himself and the royal families in Judah which as I say were perhaps you know had sort of the same intention that they had when they had political marriages you know when two kingdoms would marry their royalty between each other it would suggest that there be cooperation of sorts between the two probably Nebuchadnezzar intended for this to simply be a means by which he would keep Judah under control that he had in his possession some of their prized offspring but he treated them well he fed them with the best foods he gave them the best education he gave them positions in his advisors and so forth because they were wise so Nebuchadnezzar although he came in as it were kidnapped these people he didn't do it in a very hostile manner as he later would come back there were three times that Nebuchadnezzar came and took Jews into captivity from Jerusalem this was the first time and it was not a very hostile situation and that's why the captives were not treated badly and Jehoiakim came under tribute became a vassal and paid tribute to him for three years however Jehoiakim was stupid enough to rebel and after three years he turned and rebelled against him and the Lord sent against him raiding bands of Chaldeans that be Babylonians bands of Syrians bands of Moabites and bands of the people of Ammon he sent them against Judah to destroy it according to the word of the Lord which he had spoken by his servants the prophets surely at the commandment of the Lord this came upon Judah to remove them from his sight because of the sins of Manasseh according to all that he had done and also because of the innocent blood that he had shed for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood which the Lord did not pardon now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim and all that he did are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah so Jehoiakim rested with his fathers then Jehoiakim his son who's also called Jeconiah reigned in his place and the king of Egypt did not come out of his land anymore for the king of Babylon had taken all that belonged to the king of Egypt from the brook of Egypt to the river Euphrates there's everything in what had been Solomon's territory was now under the control essentially of Babylon now Babylon didn't fully control Jerusalem after Jehoiakim rebelled he was controlling Jerusalem and Jerusalem was a vassal state of his but Jerusalem rebelled three years later and so there was going to be some more military effort needed by Nebuchadnezzar to just solidify his control of this region but the king of Egypt didn't dare to try to reassert his power now he had of course exercised some power over Jerusalem by taking Jehoiachin into captivity and by setting up Jehoiachin

or Eliakim as the king but apparently the king of Egypt just said well if Babylon wants him they can have him because I'm not going to fight him for that now it's interesting that it says in verse 4 that these things happen partly because of the innocent blood that Manasseh had filled the land with which the Lord would not pardon you know it says in the law that the land is defiled by innocent blood and a land cannot be pardoned for innocent blood cannot be atoned for except by the blood of the murderer and so apparently in Manasseh's day the population was so murderous and killed so many innocent babies and so forth that all the murderers had to be killed the land could not be atoned for except by the blood of those who did the killing and it must have been so widespread that the whole population of Judah was considered to be guilty in the sight of God and had to die or otherwise suffer and I you wonder we sometimes say you know unless we have a revival in this country our country is doomed because God will have to judge us because of all the innocent blood that we shed all the abortions you know we we have millions and millions of babies that we have killed that our country has killed that the common citizens have killed it's not been done by some tyrant ordering the deaths of these people like Herod or someone doing that this has been done by the ordinary citizenry by doctors by patients abortions are just commonplace this is the shedding of innocent blood and this land is defiled by it and although it took a few administrations maybe a few generations and for Judah to come under the punishment that was do it because of what Manasseh had done and it may take a few generations or maybe maybe this is the last of them in this country that will be you know around before the judgment falls we really can't say even a revival in this country might not turn it back because there's have been so much innocent bloodshed Josiah's revival did not stop the judgment of God coming on Judah because there was all that innocent blood that God wouldn't pardon so I mean we can hope for a revival pray for revival and if there is one we'll rejoice to see many people saved but it's hard to know whether it's too late for this country now we've have tolerated without serious protest the absolute Holocaust on the unborn babies of this country and I mean the church some people in church raise a voice of protest there are ministries out there trying to publicize this but in general the people of America don't care there's babies being slaughtered right now in abortion clinics and in hospitals and doctors offices as we speak and the average American just doesn't really care and because of that I would think that if God is consistent that he must not pardon our land I hope he will and we can pray for it but it's interesting to read that God said he wouldn't pardon this innocent blood he he didn't do it in the days of Josiah and it was during the days of his sons these things happen but I can't help but think of the parallels with our own time in our own country in verse 8 Jehoiachin who is also called Keniah or Jeconiah was 18 years old when he became king and he reigned in Jerusalem three months his mother's name was Nehushtah the daughter of El Nathan of Jerusalem and he did evil in the sight of the Lord according to all that his father had done at that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem and besieged it and Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city as his servants were besieging it then Jehoiachin king of Judah his mother his servants his princes and

his officers went out to the king of Babylon and the king of Babylon in the eighth year of his reign took him prisoner this was now 597 BC this was the second deportation of Jews in 605 only a few people have been taken out to Babylon and including Daniel and Shadrach Meshach and Abednego this is the second time people were taken not only Jehoiachin but some feel that as many as perhaps 10,000 Jews were taken into captivity of Babylon at this time the city did not yet it was not yet destroyed and the people were not all deported this was not the complete Babylonian captivity but it did include Ezekiel Ezekiel was a priest in Jerusalem at this time and he was one of the ones taken captive at this time now verse 13 and Nebuchadnezzar carried out from there all the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king's house and he cut in pieces all the articles of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the Lord as the Lord had said also he carried into captivity all Jerusalem all the captains and all of all the mighty men of valor 10,000 captives and all the craftsmen and smiths none remained except the poorest people of the land and he carried Jehoiachin captive into Babylon the king's mother the king's wives his officers and the mighty of the land he carried into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon all the valiant men 7,000 and craftsmen and smiths 1,000 all who were strong and fit for war these the king of Babylon brought captive into Babylon now we will find later on at the very end of this book at the end of chapter 25 verses 27 through 30 that Jehoiachin though he lived the remainder of his life in Babylon eventually he was let go after 37 years in captivity and he was 18 when he went into captivity so was he 55 years old or something at that time after 37 years he was released from prison and he was treated kindly by the king of Babylon and treated like royalty and any of the king's table and so forth so the king dealt mercifully with Jehoiachin eventually Jehoiachin is also the one of Josiah's sons through whom Jesus came or at least we should say the genealogy of Jesus and Matthew which is Joseph's genealogy is through Jehoiachin now there were other sons of Josiah including this next one who became king and who was the last king in Judah in 2nd Kings 24 17 says then the king of Babylon made Mattaniah Jehoiachin's uncle king in his place and changed his name to Zedekiah now it says Zedekiah was 21 years old when he became king and he reigned 11 years in Jerusalem his mother's name was Hamutah the daughter of Jeremiah of Lydna he also did evil in the sight of the Lord according to all that Jehoiachin had done for because of the anger of the Lord this happened in Jerusalem and Judah and he finally cast them out from his presence then Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon and of course that rebellion against the king of Babylon was what brought the end of the nation which we read about in the final chapter and we'll take that next time but Zedekiah reigned for 11 years and was no more smart no wiser than the foolish kings before him these kings never did learn and it said these things happened because God was angry it sounds like it's saying that God was so angry at what Manasseh had done that he punished the nation by giving them one king after another who were jerks I mean he could have allowed a better man a and he could have you know possibly turned the nation partially around and like he had in the days of Josiah but that was Josiah's reign was their last chance really after that there were a series of foolish kings who

reigned for very short periods of time and this was because God had given them over essentially had given them over to the destruction that he had prophesied against them so the actual complete downfall of Jerusalem is all that really remains to consider and that is going to be found in chapter 25 the last of our chapters of this book