

# Revival and Reformation

## Day 2. Josiah and the Last Reformation in Judah

### Our Example Today

*“Josiah, from his earliest manhood, had endeavored to take advantage of his position as king to exalt the principles of God’s holy law. And now, while Shaphan the scribe was reading to him out of the book of the law, the king discerned in this volume a treasure of knowledge, a powerful ally, in the work of reform he so much desired to see wrought in the land. He resolved to walk in the light of its counsels, and also to do all in his power to acquaint his people with its teachings and to lead them, if possible, to cultivate reverence and love for the law of heaven.”*

*Prophets and Kings, 398.*

# Let Us Meditate Upon Psalm 119:17-24

GIMEL.

Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word. Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. I am a stranger in the earth: hide not thy commandments from me. My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times. Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from thy commandments. Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept thy testimonies. Princes also did sit and speak against me: but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes. Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors.”

## Day 2. Josiah and the Last Reformation in Judah

“The kingdom of Judah, prosperous throughout the times of Hezekiah, was once more brought low during the long years of Manasseh’s wicked reign, when paganism was revived, and many of the people were led into idolatry. “Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen.” 2 Chronicles 33:9. The glorious light of former generations was followed by the darkness of superstition and error. Gross evils sprang up and flourished – tyranny, oppression, hatred of all that is good. Justice was perverted; violence prevailed.

Yet those evil times were not without witnesses for God and the right. The trying experiences through which Judah had safely passed during Hezekiah’s reign had developed, in the hearts of many, a sturdiness of character that now served as a bulwark against the prevailing iniquity. Their testimony in behalf of truth and righteousness aroused the anger of Manasseh and his associates in authority, who endeavored to establish themselves in evil-doing by silencing every voice of disapproval. “Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another.” 2 Kings 21:16. “ Prophets and Kings, 381. 3

## Day 2. Josiah and the Last Reformation in Judah

“One of the first to fall was Isaiah, who for over half a century had stood before Judah as the appointed messenger of Jehovah....Faithfully the prophets continued their warnings and their exhortations; fearlessly they spoke to Manasseh and to his people; but the messages were scorned; backsliding Judah would not heed. As an earnest of what would befall the people should they continue impenitent, the Lord permitted their king to be captured by a band of Assyrian soldiers, who “bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon,” their temporary capital.

This affliction brought the king to his senses; “he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him: and He was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord He was God.” 2 Chronicles 33:11-13. But this repentance, remarkable though it was, came too late to save the kingdom from the corrupting influence of years of idolatrous practices. Many had stumbled and fallen, never again to rise..” 2 Kings 21:16.” Prophets and Kings, 381, 382, Excerpts.

## Day 2. Josiah and the Last Reformation in Judah

“Among those whose life experience had been shaped beyond recall by the fatal apostasy of Manasseh, was his own son, who came to the throne at the age of twenty-two. Of King Amon it is written: “He walked in all the way that his father walked in, and served the idols that his father served, and worshiped them: and he forsook the Lord God of his fathers” (2 Kings 21:21, 22); he “humbled not himself before the Lord, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself; but Amon trespassed more and more.” The wicked king was not permitted to reign long. In the midst of his daring impiety, only two years from the time he ascended the throne, he was slain in the palace by his own servants; and “the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his stead.” 2 Chronicles 33:23, 25.

With the accession of Josiah to the throne, where he was to rule for thirty-one years, those who had maintained the purity of their faith began to hope that the downward course of the kingdom was checked; for the new king, though only eight years old, feared God, and from the very beginning “he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left.” 2 Kings 22:2.”

Prophets and Kings, 383, 384.

## Day 2. Josiah and the Last Reformation in Judah

“Born of a wicked king, beset with temptations to follow in his father’s steps, and with few counselors to encourage him in the right way, Josiah nevertheless was true to the God of Israel. Warned by the errors of past generations, he chose to do right, instead of descending to the low level of sin and degradation to which his father and his grandfather had fallen. He “turned not aside to the right hand or to the left.” As one who was to occupy a position of trust, he resolved to obey the instruction that had been given for the guidance of Israel’s rulers, and his obedience made it possible for God to use him as a vessel unto honor.

At the time Josiah began to rule, and for many years before, the truehearted in Judah were questioning whether God’s promises to ancient Israel could ever be fulfilled. From a human point of view the divine purpose for the chosen nation seemed almost impossible of accomplishment. The apostasy of former centuries had gathered strength with the passing years; ten of the tribes had been scattered among the heathen; only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained, and even these now seemed on the verge of moral and national ruin.”  
Prophets and Kings, 384.

## Day 2. Josiah and the Last Reformation in Judah

“The prophets had begun to foretell the utter destruction of their fair city, where stood the temple built by Solomon, and where all their earthly hopes of national greatness had centered. Could it be that God was about to turn aside from His avowed purpose of bringing deliverance to those who should put their trust in Him? In the face of the long-continued persecution of the righteous, and of the apparent prosperity of the wicked, could those who had remained true to God hope for better days?

These anxious questionings were voiced by the prophet Habakkuk. Viewing the situation of the faithful in his day, he expressed the burden of his heart in the inquiry: “O Lord, how long shall I cry, and Thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto Thee of violence, and Thou wilt not save! Why dost Thou show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention. Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.” Habakkuk 1:2-4.” Prophets and Kings, 384, 385.

## Day 2. Josiah and the Last Reformation in Judah

“God answered the cry of His loyal children. Through His chosen mouthpiece He revealed His determination to bring chastisement upon the nation that had turned from Him to serve the gods of the heathen. Within the lifetime of some who were even then making inquiry regarding the future, He would miraculously shape the affairs of the ruling nations of earth and bring the Babylonians into the ascendancy. These Chaldeans, “terrible and dreadful,” were to fall suddenly upon the land of Judah as a divinely appointed scourge. Habakkuk 1:7. The princes of Judah and the fairest of the people were to be carried captive to Babylon; the Judean cities and villages and the cultivated fields were to be laid waste; nothing was to be spared.

Confident that even in this terrible judgment the purpose of God for His people would in some way be fulfilled, Habakkuk bowed in submission to the revealed will of Jehovah. “Art Thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One?” he exclaimed. Habakkuk 1:12.”  
Prophets and Kings, 386.



## Day 2. Josiah and the Last Reformation in Judah

“And then, his faith reaching out beyond the forbidding prospect of the immediate future, and laying fast hold on the precious promises that reveal God’s love for His trusting children, the prophet added, “We shall not die.” Habakkuk 1:12. With this declaration of faith he rested his case, and that of every believing Israelite, in the hands of a compassionate God.

This was not Habakkuk’s only experience in the exercise of strong faith. On one occasion, when meditating concerning the future, he said, “I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me.” Graciously the Lord answered him: “Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.” Habakkuk 2:1-4.”

Prophets and Kings, 386.

## Day 2. Josiah and the Last Reformation in Judah

“The faith that strengthened Habakkuk and all the holy and the just in those days of deep trial was the same faith that sustains God’s people today. In the darkest hours, under circumstances the most forbidding, the Christian believer may keep his soul stayed upon the source of all light and power. Day by day, through faith in God, his hope and courage may be renewed. “The just shall live by his faith.” In the service of God there need be no despondency, no wavering, no fear. The Lord will more than fulfill the highest expectations of those who put their trust in Him. He will give them the wisdom their varied necessities demand....”

Habakkuk was not the only one through whom was given a message of bright hope and of future triumph as well as of present judgment. During the reign of Josiah the word of the Lord came to Zephaniah [1:14, 15] specifying plainly the results of continued apostasy, and calling the attention of the true church to the glorious prospect beyond. His prophecies of impending judgment upon Judah apply with equal force to the judgments that are to fall upon an impenitent world at the time of the second advent of Christ: “The great day of the Lord is near...That day is a day of wrath, A day of trouble and distress.” Prophets and Kings, 386, 389. 10

## Day 2. Josiah and the Last Reformation in Judah

“The silent yet powerful influences set in operation by the messages of the prophets regarding the Babylonian Captivity did much to prepare the way for a reformation that took place in the eighteenth year of Josiah’s reign. This reform movement, by which threatened judgments were averted for a season, was brought about in a wholly unexpected manner through the discovery and study of a portion of Holy Scripture that for many years had been strangely misplaced and lost.

Nearly a century before, during the first Passover celebrated by Hezekiah, provision had been made for the daily public reading of the book of the law to the people by teaching priests. It was the observance of the statutes recorded by Moses, especially those given in the book of the covenant, which forms a part of Deuteronomy, that had made the reign of Hezekiah so prosperous. But Manasseh had dared set aside these statutes; and during his reign the temple copy of the book of the law, through careless neglect, had become lost. Thus for many years the people generally were deprived of its instruction.” Prophets and Kings, 392.

## Day 2. Josiah and the Last Reformation in Judah

“The long-lost manuscript was found in the temple by Hilkiah, the high priest, while the building was undergoing extensive repairs in harmony with King Josiah’s plan for the preservation of the sacred structure. The high priest handed the precious volume to Shaphan, a learned scribe, who read it and then took it to the king with the story of its discovery.

Josiah was deeply stirred as he heard read for the first time the exhortations and warnings recorded in this ancient manuscript. Never before had he realized so fully the plainness with which God had set before Israel “life and death, blessing and cursing” (Deuteronomy 30:19): and how repeatedly they had been urged to choose the way of life, that they might become a praise in the earth, a blessing to all nations. “Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid,” Israel had been exhorted through Moses; “for the Lord thy God. He it is that doth go with thee; He will not fail thee, not forsake thee.” Deuteronomy 31:6.”

Prophets and Kings, 392.

## Day 2. Josiah and the Last Reformation in Judah

“The book abounded in assurances of God’s willingness to save to the uttermost those who should place their trust fully in Him. As He had wrought in their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, so would He work mightily in establishing them in the Land of Promise and in placing them at the head of the nations of earth.

The encouragements offered as the reward of obedience were accompanied by prophecies of judgments against the disobedient; and as the king heard the inspired words, he recognized, in the picture set before him, conditions that were similar to those actually existing in his kingdom. In connection with these prophetic portrayals of departure from God, he was startled to find plain statements to the effect that the day of calamity would follow swiftly and that there would be no remedy. The language was plain; there could be no mistaking the meaning of the words. And at the close of the volume, in a summary of God’s dealings with Israel and a rehearsal of the events of the future, these matters were made doubly plain.”  
Prophets and Kings, 393.

## Day 2. Josiah and the Last Reformation in Judah

“In the hearing of all Israel, Moses had declared:  
“Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak;  
And hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.  
My doctrine shall drop as the rain,  
My speech shall distill as the dew,  
As the small rain upon the tender herb,  
And as the showers upon the grass:  
Because I will publish the name of the Lord:  
Ascribe ye greatness unto our God.  
He is the Rock, His work is perfect:  
For all His ways are judgment:  
A God of truth and without iniquity,  
Just and right is He.”  
Deuteronomy 32:1-4.” Prophets and Kings, 394.

## Day 2. Josiah and the Last Reformation in Judah

“These and similar passages revealed to Josiah God’s love for His people and His abhorrence of sin. As the king read the prophecies of swift judgment upon those who should persist in rebellion, he trembled for the future. The perversity of Judah had been great; what was to be the outcome of their continued apostasy?”

In former years the king had not been indifferent to the prevailing idolatry. “In the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young,” he had consecrated himself fully to the service of God. Four years later, at the age of twenty, he had made an earnest effort to remove temptation from his subjects by purging “Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images.” “They brake down the altars of Baalim in his presence; and the images, that were on high above them, he cut down; and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images, he brake in pieces, and made dust of them, and strowed it upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them. And he burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars, and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem.” 2 Chronicles 34:3-5. ”  
Prophets and Kings, 396.

## Day 2. Josiah and the Last Reformation in Judah

“Not content with doing thorough work in the land of Judah, the youthful ruler had extended his efforts to the portions of Palestine formerly occupied by the ten tribes of Israel, only a feeble remnant of which now remained. “So did he,” the record reads, “in the cities of Manasseh, and Ephraim, and Simeon, even unto Naphtali.” Not until he had traversed the length and breadth of this region of ruined homes, and “had broken down the altars and the groves, and had beaten the graven images into powder, and cut down all the idols throughout all the land of Israel,” did he return to Jerusalem. 2 Chronicles 34:6, 7.

Thus Josiah, from his earliest manhood, had endeavored to take advantage of his position as king to exalt the principles of God’s holy law. And now, while Shaphan the scribe was reading to him out of the book of the law, the king discerned in this volume a treasure of knowledge, a powerful ally, in the work of reform he so much desired to see wrought in the land. He resolved to walk in the light of its counsels, and also to do all in his power to acquaint his people with its teachings and to lead them, if possible, to cultivate reverence and love for the law of heaven.” Prophets and Kings, 397 - 398. 16



## Day 2. Josiah and the Last Reformation in Judah

“During the first Passover celebrated by Hezekiah, provision had been made for the daily public reading of the book of the law to the people by teaching priests. It was the observance of the *statutes* recorded by Moses, especially those given in the book of the covenant, which forms a part of Deuteronomy, that had made the reign of Hezekiah so prosperous.” PK, 392.

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be *holy convocations*, even these are *my feasts*. Six days shall work be done: but the *seventh day* is the sabbath of rest, an *holy convocation*; ye shall do no work therein: it is the *Sabbath of the LORD* in all your dwellings.

These are the feasts of the LORD, even *holy convocations*, which ye shall proclaim *in their seasons*. In the *fourteenth day of the first month* at even is the LORD’s *Passover*.... And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread. In the *first day* ye shall have an *holy convocation*: ye shall do *no servile work* therein...In the *seventh day* is an *holy convocation*: ye shall do *no servile work* therein.” Leviticus 23: 1 – 5; 7, 8, Emphasis Added.

## Day 2. Josiah and the Last Reformation in Judah

“And on the *fifteenth day of the same month* is the feast of *Unleavened Bread* unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the *Firstfruits* of your harvest unto the priest: And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the *morrow after the sabbath* the priest shall wave it...

It shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye *number fifty days* [Pentecost – Feast of Weeks]; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD.... And ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day, that it may be *an holy convocation* unto you: ye shall do *no servile work* therein: it shall be a statute for ever in all your dwellings throughout your generations.” Leviticus 23:6-11, 14-16, 21. Emphasis Added.

## Day 2. Josiah and the Last Reformation in Judah

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, *In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of Trumpets, an holy convocation. Ye shall do no servile work therein: but ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD.*

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Also on the *tenth day of this seventh month* there shall be a *Day of Atonement*: it shall be an *holy convocation* unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD. And ye shall *do no work* in that same day: for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the LORD your God....

....Ye shall do *no manner of work*: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It shall be unto you a *sabbath of rest*, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the *ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even*, shall ye celebrate your *sabbath*.”

Leviticus 23:23-28, 32, Emphasis Added.

## Day 2. Josiah and the Last Reformation in Judah

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The *fifteenth day of this seventh month* shall be the *Feast of Tabernacles* for seven days unto the LORD. On the first day shall be an *holy convocation*: ye shall do *no servile work* therein.

Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: on the *eighth day* shall be an *holy convocation* unto you; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: it is a *solemn assembly*; and ye shall do *no servile work* therein....

...Also in the *fifteenth day of the seventh month*, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day shall be a *sabbath*, and on the *eighth day shall be a sabbath*....And ye shall keep it a feast unto the LORD seven days in the year. It shall be a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the *seventh month*. Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths: That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. And Moses declared unto the children of Israel the feasts of the LORD.” Leviticus 23:33-36, 39, 41-44, Emphasis Added.

# Let Us Meditate Upon Psalm 119:25-32

DALETH.

My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word. I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes. Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works. My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word. Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law graciously. I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me. I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O LORD, put me not to shame. I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.”

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# Let Us Pray

“And the king [Josiah] stood in his place, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after 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 the covenant which are written in this book.” 2 Chronicles 34:31.