

Revival and Reformation

Day 3. The Limit of God's Forbearance

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For: 144000teachers.org
Mars 9, 2025

Revival and Reformation Today – Is it too late?

“Was it possible to bring about the needed reform? Israel had almost reached the limit of divine forbearance; soon God would arise to punish those who had brought dishonor upon His name. Already the anger of the Lord was kindled against the people. Overwhelmed with sorrow and dismay, Josiah rent his garments and bowed before God in agony of spirit, seeking pardon for the sins of an impenitent nation.”
Prophets and Kings, 398.

Let Us Meditate Upon Psalm 119:33-40

HE – Fifth Letter of the Hebrew Alphabet

“Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness. Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way. Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear. Turn away my reproach which I fear: for thy judgments are good. Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness.”

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“At that time the prophetess Huldah was living in Jerusalem, near the temple. The mind of king Josiah, filled with anxious foreboding, reverted to her, and he determined to inquire of the Lord through this chosen messenger to learn, if possible, whether by any means within his power he might save erring Judah, now on the verge of ruin.

The gravity of the situation and the respect in which he held the prophetess led him to choose as his messengers to her the first men of the kingdom. “Go ye,” he bade them, “inquire of the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us.” 2 Kings 22:13.”

Prophets and Kings, 398.

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“Through Huldah the Lord sent Josiah word that Jerusalem's ruin could not be averted. Even should the people now humble themselves before God, they could not escape their punishment. So long had their senses been deadened by wrongdoing that, if judgment should not come upon them, they would soon return to the same sinful course.

“Tell the man that sent you to me,” the prophetess declared, “Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read: because they have forsaken Me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore My wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched.” 2 Kings 22:15-17.” Prophets and Kings, 399.

It begs the question: Is that what is awaiting the whole world today?

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“But because the king had humbled his heart before God, the Lord would acknowledge his promptness in seeking forgiveness and mercy. To him was sent the message:

“Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before Me; I also have heard thee, saith the Lord. Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place.” 2 Kings 22: 19, 20.

The king must leave with God the events of the future; he could not alter the eternal decrees of Jehovah. But in announcing the retributive judgments of Heaven, the Lord had not withdrawn opportunity for repentance and reformation; and Josiah, discerning in this a willingness on the part of God to temper His judgments with mercy, determined to do all in his power to bring about decided reforms.” Prophets and Kings, 399, 400. 5

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“He arranged at once for a great convocation, to which were invited the elders and magistrates in Jerusalem and Judah, together with the common people. These, with the priests and Levites, met the king in the court of the temple. To this vast assembly the king himself read “all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the Lord.” 2 Kings 23:2.

The royal reader was deeply affected, and he delivered his message with the pathos of a broken heart. His hearers were profoundly moved. The intensity of feeling revealed in the countenance of the king, the solemnity of the message itself, the warning of judgments impending – all these had their effect, and many determined to join with the king in seeking forgiveness.” Prophets and Kings, 400.

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“Josiah now proposed that those highest in authority unite with the people in solemnly covenanting before God to co-operate with one another in an effort to institute decided changes. “The king stood by a pillar, 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 their heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book.” The response was more hearty than the king had dared hope for: “All the people stood to the covenant.” 2 Kings 23:3.

In the reformation that followed, the king turned his attention to the destruction of every vestige of idolatry that remained. So long had the inhabitants of the land followed the customs of the surrounding nations in bowing down to images of wood and stone, that it seemed almost beyond the power of man to remove every trace of these evils.”

Prophets and Kings, 400.

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“But Josiah persevered in his effort to cleanse the land. Sternly he met idolatry by slaying “all the priests of the high places;” “moreover the workers with familiar spirits, and the wizards, and the images, and the idols, and all the abominations that were spied in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, did Josiah put away, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiyah the priest found in the house of the Lord.” 2 Kings 23:20, 24.

In the days of the rending of the kingdom, centuries before, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat, in bold defiance of the God whom Israel had served, was endeavoring to turn the hearts of the people away from the services of the temple in Jerusalem to new forms of worship, he had set up an unconsecrated altar at Bethel.”

Prophets and Kings, 401, 402.

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“During the dedication of this altar, where many in years to come were to be seduced into idolatrous practices, there had suddenly appeared a man of God from Judea, with words of condemnation for the sacrilegious proceedings. He had “cried against the altar,” declaring: “O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee.” 1 Kings 13:2. This announcement had been accompanied by a sign that the word spoken was of the Lord.

Three centuries had passed. During the reformation wrought by Josiah, the king found himself in Bethel, where stood this ancient altar. The prophecy uttered so many years before in the presence of Jeroboam, was now to be literally fulfilled.”
Prophets and Kings, 402.

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“On the southern slopes of Olivet, opposite the beautiful temple of Jehovah on Mount Moriah, were the shrines and images that had been placed there by Solomon to please his idolatrous wives. 1 Kings 11:6-8. For upwards of three centuries the great, misshapen images had stood on the “Mount of Offense,” mute witnesses to the apostasy of Israel's wisest king. These, too, were removed and destroyed by Josiah.

The king sought further to establish the faith of Judah in the God of their fathers by holding a great Passover feast, in harmony with the provisions made in the book of the law. Preparation was made by those having the sacred services in charge, and on the great day of the feast, offerings were freely made. “There was not holden such a Passover from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah.” 2 Kings 23:22.”

Prophets and Kings, 402, 405.

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“But the zeal of Josiah, acceptable though it was to God, could not atone for the sins of past generations; nor could the piety displayed by the king's followers effect a change of heart in many who stubbornly refused to turn from idolatry to the worship of the true God. For more than a decade following the celebration of the Passover, Josiah continued to reign.

At the age of thirty-nine he met death in battle with the forces of Egypt, “and was buried in one of the sepulchers of his fathers.” “All Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah: and all the singing men and the singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel: and, behold, they are written in the lamentations.”

2 Chronicles 35:24, 25.” Prophets and Kings, 405.

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“Like unto Josiah “was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him. Notwithstanding the Lord turned not from the fierceness of His great wrath, ... Because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked Him withal.” 2 Kings 23:25, 26.

The time was rapidly approaching when Jerusalem was to be utterly destroyed and the inhabitants of the land carried captive to Babylon, there to learn the lessons they had refused to learn under circumstances more favorable.”

Prophets and Kings, 402, 405.

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Let Us Meditate Upon Psalm 119:41-48

VAU – Sixth Letter of the Hebrew Alphabet

“Let thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD, even thy salvation, according to thy word. So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in thy word. And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in thy judgments. So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever. And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts. I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed. And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved. My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes.”

Let Us Pray

Is this Call for Revival and Reformation the Last One for the World as for Judah?"

"The Lord sent Josiah word that Jerusalem's ruin could not be averted. Even should the people now humble themselves before God, they could not escape their punishment. So long had their senses been deadened by wrongdoing that, if judgment should not come upon them, they would soon return to the same sinful course.... because they have forsaken Me....That they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore My wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched."

2 Kings 22:15-17." Prophets and Kings, 399.