

2 Kings Chapter 23

2 Kings 23:1 "And the king sent, and they gathered unto him all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem."

Josiah sent messengers throughout the land, and convened all the principal men in it at Jerusalem.

We find that king Josiah believed the message which had come from Huldah, that this is truly the law of God. He wastes no time in gathering the elders from all over Judah, so they could represent their group in hearing the law.

Verses 2-3: The reading of the "Book of the Covenant" was similar to readings by Moses (Exodus 24:3-8), and Joshua (Josh. 8:34-35). Once the words were heard, both leader and people responded publicly with repentance and covenant renewal. Scrolls were the books of antiquity.

2 Kings 23:2 "And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the people, both small and great: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the LORD."

"Book of the covenant": Although this designation was used (in Exodus 24:7), with reference to the contents of (Exodus 20:22 - 23:33), it seems here to refer to a larger writing. Since the large part of the Pentateuch focused on the Mosaic Covenant, these 5 books came to be called thusly. Since all of the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were assembled together by Josiah, it seems best to view this as the reading of the whole written law found (in Genesis 1 through Deut. 34; see notes on Deut. 31:9, 11).

The godly Josiah did what a righteous ruler in Israel was expected to do (Deut. 31:10-13). He may have "read" to the "people" those texts that dealt with Israel's covenant responsibilities to God (i.e., Lev. Chapter 26; Deut. Chapter 28)

Josiah had great respect for the LORD, and for His temple. This law of God was to be read aloud, so that all of the people could hear. The prophets, priests, and people must hear this Word of the law. They will be without excuse, if they sin again. They will know the commandments of God. Josiah renews the covenant with God on this day.

He is saying, "This is the law of God, and will be the law of this land, while I am king". There was no separation of classes that came to hear the law. All were represented in one way, or another. The king did not leave this for others to do, he did it himself.

2 Kings 23:3 "And 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. And all the people stood to the covenant."

"Pillar" likely refers to one of the two large columns at the temple's entrance (1 Kings 7:21), and suggest an authoritative location from which the king acted. This is where Joash stood when he was crowned king (11:14).

"This covenant": Josiah made a public, binding agreement to completely obey the Lord by doing all that was commanded in the Book of the Covenant that the people had just heard read to them. Following Josiah's example, all the people promised to keep the stipulations of the Mosaic Covenant (see notes on 11:17; Exodus 24:4-8).

This is a renewal of the old covenant. The people had totally neglected the law of God. The king declares that from this day forward he will keep covenant with his LORD, and he will expect everyone in the land to do the same. He had gone to this place to renew the covenant with God, because in some way the presence of the LORD was in the temple. This standing to the covenant means the people agreed. They were saying in essence, "All that the LORD says, we will do".

Verses 4-6: For the introduction of these abominations into the temple precincts (see 21:3-7). For the taking of such cult objects to the "Kidron" (verse 12; see 1 Kings 15:13; 2 Chron. 29:16; 30:14).

After hearing the Word of God, Josiah purged Israel of all vestiges of idolatry, from north to south ("Geba to Beersheba"). He brought out, tore down, burned, removed, defiled, broke, cut down, crushed, or "put away" every worship article, image, site, tomb, and shrine. And lastly, he executed all the priests of the high places. The comprehensiveness of the language in this section reveals how vile the worship in Judah had become.

2 Kings 23:4 "And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the host of heaven: and he burned them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Beth-el."

"The grove": The Asherah (see note on 21:7).

"The fields of Kidron": Josiah burned everything in the temple that was devoted to idolatry. This was one in the lower portion of the Kidron Valley, east of the city of Jerusalem (verse 6).

"Ashes of them unto Beth-el": Located about 10 miles north of Jerusalem, Beth-el was one of the two original places where Jeroboam I established an apostate worship center (1 Kings 12:28-33). Beth-el was located just north of the border of Judah in the former northern kingdom, which was then the Assyrian province of Samaria. With a decline in Assyrian power, Josiah was able to

exert his religious influence in the north. He used the ashes of the burned articles of idolatry to desecrate Jeroboam's religious center (verse 15-20).

King Josiah meant business. He immediately had all the vessels in the temple that were not dedicated to the LORD, to be brought out and burned. Hilkiah was a high priest of Jehovah. He and his subordinate priests were ordered to bring all the vessels of the false gods out. I would like for everyone in our generation to see that Josiah, the king, burned all of the things pertaining to astrology. These keepers of the door were Levites, who watched the entering of the temple.

2 Kings 23:5 "And he put down 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 round about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven."

"The planets" (compare 21:3). The astrologers were also removed (see Isa. 47:13).

We see that all of the priests in the land, who were not priests of Jehovah, were put down by king Josiah. The kings of Judah before Josiah, had been idolaters themselves. Manasseh and Amon had done the most wicked things of all of the kings. The worship of the sun, moon, and the planets had to do with the twelve astrological signs. This is why the studying of the horoscope is so deadly in our society today. The heavens, and everything in it, are part of God's creation. They are not God and do not represent Him.

2 Kings 23:6 "And he brought out the grove from the house of the LORD, without Jerusalem, unto the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and stamped [it] small to powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the children of the people."

"The grove": The idol of Asherah (see note on 21:7).

"Graves of the children of the people": The Kidron Valley contained a burial ground for the common people (Jer. 26:23). Scattering ashes from the object of idolatry said (in 2 Chron. 34:4), to have been on the graves of those who sacrificed to that idol. The common people who had followed their leaders to apostasy, defilement and damnation, all symbolized by the act of scattering the ashes.

This is speaking of Asherah. The ashes of this idol were burned and poured over the graves of the children, who had been sacrificed.

Verses 7-8: "The sodomites" were cultic prostitutes conducting their perversions on the temple grounds.

2 Kings 23:7 And he brake down the houses of the sodomites, that [were] by the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the grove.

“Houses”: Tents (called “Succoth-benoth” in 17:30), used by women who were devoted to Asherah, in which they made hangings and committed sexual sins.

The male prostitutes were part of the worship of Astarte. Some of these male prostitutes wore women's clothing. This is speaking of homosexual activity, but it is also speaking of them mutilating their bodies and becoming transvestites. The women were no better. They were involved in every evil act of prostitution available to them. Many of them were lesbians.

2 Kings 23:8 "And he brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beer-sheba, and brake down the high places of the gates that [were] in the entering in of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which [were] on a man's left hand at the gate of the city."

“Geba to Beer-sheba”: Geba was located about 7 miles northeast of Jerusalem at the far north of Judah and Beer-sheba was located 45 miles south of Jerusalem at the southern end of Judah. Thus, this phrase was an idiomatic way of saying “Throughout all of Judah.”

We see in this, that all of the Levitical priests who had been conducting services in the high places were brought back into Jerusalem, and Josiah destroyed all of the high places throughout the land.

2 Kings 23:9 "Nevertheless the priests of the high places came not up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, but they did eat of the unleavened bread among their brethren."

To sacrifice there, as the Targum. Though they were removed from the high places, they were not admitted to officiate at the altar of the Lord, having offered in forbidden places.

"But they did eat of the unleavened bread with their brethren": The priests that were pure, as the sons of Zadok. Though they might not offer sacrifices, they were allowed to partake of the holy things with the priests, as the meat offerings made of flour unleavened (Lev. 2:4). Which are here meant, and put for all the rest on which the priests lived (see Ezek. 44:10).

We see that Josiah did not allow the priests to go back into the temple to serve, because they conducted services in the high places. The Levites lived of the offerings made to the LORD. They were still allowed a living, even if they could no longer serve in the temple.

2 Kings 23:10 "And he defiled Topheth, which [is] in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech."

“Topheth”: Meaning “a drum” and identifying the area in the Valley of Hinnom where child sacrifice occurred (Isa. 30:33; Jer. 7:31-32; 19:5-6). Perhaps called “drum” because drums were beaten to drown out the cries of the children being sacrificed.

“Topheth” was a sacred enclosure for the “Molech” rites. For the nature of this sacrifice (see the note on 16:3-4).

Topheth was the place where they had sacrificed their children, by making them walk through the fire. This was one of the most vilest false worship they had participated in.

2 Kings 23:11 "And he took away the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entering in of the house of the LORD, by the chamber of Nathan-melech the chamberlain, which [was] in the suburbs, and burned the chariots of the sun with fire."

“Horses ... given to the sun”: The horses and the chariots of the sun were probably thought to symbolize the sun blazing a trail across the sky and were a part of worshipping the sun. Recently, a religious shrine with horse figurines has been found in Jerusalem (compare Ezek. 8:16).

They had become so bad, that they dedicated horses and chariots to the sun god. They were even placed at the entrance to the temple. Josiah burned the chariots and removed the horses. Everything that would burn, that was used in false worship, was burned. The people and animals that were used in false worship, Josiah removed from any authority at all.

2 Kings 23:12 "And the altars that [were] on the top of 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, did the king beat down, and brake [them] down from thence, and cast the dust of them into the brook Kidron."

“On the top of the upper chamber”: Altars were erected on the flat roofs of houses so people could worship the “host of heaven” by burning incense (Jer. 19:13; Zeph. 1:5).

We spoke of these altars in an earlier lesson. They were used for sacrifice in the temple, as well as in the chambers of the king. They were an abomination to God. The altar that was on the rooftop was connected in the worship of the sun, moon, and planets. Josiah destroyed all of them, and put the remains in the brook Kidron, so they would wash away any evidence.

2 Kings 23:13 "And the high places that [were] before Jerusalem, which [were] on the right hand of the mount of corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had builded for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Zidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the children of Ammon, did the king defile."

“Solomon ... had builded”: Solomon had built high places east of Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives, renamed after the desecration. To be used in worship of foreign gods, e.g., the fertility goddess Ashtoreth from Sidon, the Moabite god Chemosh, and the Ammonite god Molech (1 Kings 11:7). These altars existed for over 300 years before Josiah finally destroyed them. The placing of human bones defiled them and, thus, rendered these sites unclean and unsuitable as places of worship.

These places of worship for false gods, had been erected by Solomon for his heathen wives. Ashtoreth is the male counterpart of Astarte. These two false gods were worshipped in all of the Phoenician cities, but especially in Zidon. Chemosh is mentioned on many of the Moabite stones, and seemed to be their national false god. Milcom was the same as Moloch and Malcom.

It was connected with the sacrifice of children, by forcing them to walk through fire. They were all abominations.

2 Kings 23:14 "And he brake in pieces the images, and cut down the groves, and filled their places with the bones of men."

Of Ashtoreth, Chemosh, and Milcom, in the above high places. Which as these high places had been rebuilt by Manasseh or Amon, so new images of these deities were placed there.

"And cut down the groves": In which they were set.

"And filled their places with the bones of men": Of idolatrous priests and worshippers, buried in parts adjacent; these he dug up and scattered in the high places and groves to defile them. Bones of the dead being by law unclean (Num. 19:15).

This is an explanation of what he did to them.

2 Kings 23:15 "Moreover the altar that [was] at Beth-el, [and] the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he brake down, and burned the high place, [and] stamped [it] small to powder, and burned the grove."

"The altar ... at Beth-el": Josiah reduced the altar that Jeroboam I had built at Beth-el to dust and ashes (see 1 Kings 12:28-33).

Josiah's reforms spilled over into the northern kingdom (verses 19-20), including the destruction of the "altar" at "Beth-el" which had been set up by Jeroboam I (1 Kings 12:28-29).

This is jumping back to Israel. They had worshipped the golden calf at Beth-el. All of the things connected with the worship of false gods was destroyed by Josiah. Jeroboam had been the king that caused the golden calves to be made and worshipped.

Verses 16-18: The story of the "man of God" and the "prophet ... from Samaria" is told (in 1 Kings Chapter 13:26-32). Josiah's actions here fulfilled the prophecy made some three centuries earlier.

2 Kings 23:16 "And as Josiah turned himself, he spied the sepulchres that [were] there in the mount, and sent, and took the bones out of the sepulchres, and burned [them] upon the altar, and polluted it, according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words."

"The sepulchres": Seeing graves nearby, perhaps where idolatrous priests were buried, Josiah had their bones removed and burned on the altar at Beth-el to defile it. This action fulfilled a prophecy given about the altar approximately 300 years before (1 Kings 13:2).

Josiah was not aware of the prophecy that had been given at this place so many years ago. He fulfilled the prophecy, without even knowing there had been a prophecy. The following is the prophecy.

1 Kings 13:1-2 "And, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the LORD unto Beth-el: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense." "And he cried against the altar in the word of the LORD, and said, 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."

Verses 17-18: See 1 Kings 13:1-32, especially verses 31-32.

2 Kings 23:17 "Then he said, What title [is] that that I see? And the men of the city told him, [It is] the sepulcher of the man of God, which came from Judah, and proclaimed these things that thou hast done against the altar of Beth-el."

A high and large monument over a grave, with an inscription on it, more remarkable than any of the rest, which made Josiah take notice of it. And the Jews have a tradition, as Kimchi observes, that on one side of the grave grew nettles and thistles, and on the other side odoriferous herbs; which is not to be depended on. But what he further observes may be right, that the old prophet, as he gave orders to his sons to lay his body in the same grave with the man of God, believing his words would be fulfilled, so he likewise gave orders to have a distinguished monument or pillar erected over the grave. And which people in later times took care to support, in memory of the man of God, that thereby it might be known. By which means not only the bones of the man of God were preserved from being burnt, but those of the old prophet also, buried with him.

"And the men of the city told him, it is the sepulcher of the man of God, which came from Judah, and proclaimed these things that thou hast done against the altar of Bethel" (see 1 Kings 13:1).

2 Kings 23:18 "And he said, Let him alone; let no man move his bones. So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet that came out of Samaria."

“Samaria”: The former northern kingdom of Israel had become known as Samaria, so named as an Assyrian province (see note on 17:24).

Josiah showed honor to the true man of God, and did not let them disturb his bones.

2 Kings 23:19 "And all the houses also of the high places that [were] in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke [the LORD] to anger, Josiah took away, and did to them according to all the acts that he had done in Beth-el."

“Cities of Samaria”: The desecration of the high place at Beth-el was only the beginning of Josiah’s desecration of all the high places in the Assyrian province of Samaria.

We are not sure how Josiah had this much influence in the area of Samaria. We know that it had already been taken over by the Assyrians. We must accept this Scripture just as it says. It is not our job to figure out how he had permission to do this. We know that he did, because the Scripture says he did. It seems that he destroyed all of these houses dedicated to false gods.

2 Kings 23:20 "And he slew all the priests of the high places that [were] there upon the altars, and burned men's bones upon them, and returned to Jerusalem."

“He slew all the priests”: These non-Levitical priests, who led apostate worship in the former northern kingdom, were idolaters who seduced God’s people into idolatry. They were put to death in accordance with the statutes of (Deut. 13:6-18; 17:2-7), and their graves were doubly defiled with burned bones.

The priests of Samaria were involved in worship of false gods. They were false prophets.

Verses 21-23: Full details of Josiah’s strict observance of the “Passover” are given (in 2 Chronicles 35:1-19).

Judah’s celebration of the Passover (see Deut. 16:2-8), more closely conformed to the instructions given in the Mosaic Law than any in the previous 400 years of Israel’s history. Though the Passover was observed by Hezekiah (2 Chron. Chapter 30), no observance had been in exact conformity to God’s law since the judges. Further details of the Passover observance are found (in 2 Chron. 35:1-19).

2 Kings 23:21 "And the king commanded all the people, saying, Keep the passover unto the LORD your God, as [it is] written in the book of this covenant."

Not at Jerusalem only, but throughout the whole kingdom: saying.

"Keep the passover unto the Lord your God, as it is written in this book of the covenant": Which had been lately found and read, and they had agreed to observe. And in which this ordinance was strictly enjoined, and was a commemoration of their deliverance out of Egypt, and a direction of their faith to the Messiah, the antitype of the Passover.

In (chapter 35 of 2 Chronicles), there are many more details about keeping the Passover. Josiah saw to it that every little detail was carried out, just as it was written in the books of the law.

2 Kings 23:22 "Surely 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;"

As the king commanded; the people obeyed and kept the Passover, according to the law of the Lord. The manner of its being kept is not here recorded, but is at large (in 2 Chron. 35:1), where it is observed there had not been such a one from the days of Samuel, the last of the judges. So that the days of the judges here mean the last days of them.

"Nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah": Since the division of the kingdoms; for as for the kings of Israel, they kept it not; and though it was observed in the times of Hezekiah king of Judah, yet not universally, and by some in their uncleanness. For it is a mistake of Clemens of Alexandria that it was not kept in the times between Samuel and Josiah. In the days of David and Solomon it might be kept by greater numbers, but not with such purity, and with such cheerfulness and joy of heart, or with so many other sacrifices attending it. Or so exactly agreeable to the law of God, and with such munificence and liberality. The king, and the chief of the priests and Levites, providing out of their own substance for the people and their brethren.

2 Kings 23:23 "But in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, [wherein] this passover was holden to the LORD in Jerusalem."

"Eighteenth year": 622 B.C. All the reforms of Josiah described took place in the same year (compare 22:3).

In the days of the kings, they had wandered away from God, and they had not kept the Passover. That particular service was to be remembered every year. It was the remembrance of death passing over the Hebrew homes, where the blood of the lamb was over the door. If any of the feasts were kept, it should have been this one. There had been Passovers observed from time to time, but none of them in the manner prescribed in the law. This was the first one that had been kept in every aspect.

2 Kings 23:24 "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."

"The book ... found" (see 22:8).

Consulting "familiar spirits" and communicating with the dead were acts of rebellion (Lev. 19:31; 20:27), that accompanied Judah's idolatry disappeared when revival and restoration came to Israel.

All of these mentioned had done very evil things in the sight of the LORD. In the days of Manasseh and Amon, they had been thought of highly. Josiah changed all of that. He took all ability to do these things away from these people. He did just as the law of God said.

2 Kings 23:25 "And like unto him 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."

"No king before him": Of all the kings in David's line, including David himself, no king more closely approximated the royal ideal of (Deut. 17:14-20), than Josiah (Matt. 22:37). Yet, even Josiah fell short of complete obedience because he had multiple wives (verses 31, 36; see note on

Gen. 2:24). However, even this righteous king could not turn away the Lord's wrath because of Manasseh's sin (verses 26-27; see chapters 17 and 18).

Just as Hezekiah was commended for his faith, so Josiah was recognized as having no peer in his stand for the strict application of the "law of Moses".

The thing that made Josiah so different, even from Hezekiah was the fact that he kept the law in every detail. Hezekiah loved the LORD with all his heart, but possibly, did not know the law as well as Josiah. Hezekiah trusted God completely. He just did not enforce the law as fully as Josiah. The kings after Josiah certainly did not keep God's law.

Verses 26-27: Despite all of the reforms that Josiah had led the people to observe, Judah's basic rejection of God was too entrenched. Judah's sin was irremediable. Therefore, its demise could not be long in coming (17:19; 24:3, 19-20; 25:14-16).

2 Kings 23:26 "Notwithstanding the LORD turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal."

Notwithstanding the great reformation wrought among them; for though Josiah was a sincere reformer, and did what he did heartily, as to the Lord, according to his will, and for his glory. Yet the people were not sincere in their compliance, they turned to the Lord not with their whole heart, but feignedly (Jer. 3:10).

"Because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal": By shedding innocent blood and committing idolatry, which the people consented to and approved of, and even now privately committed idolatry, as the prophecies of Jeremiah and Zephaniah show. And it may easily be concluded that their hearts were after their idols, by their openly returning to them in the days of the sons of Josiah.

The land of Judah was sentenced to destruction. The destruction had been delayed until the death of Josiah. Josiah had found favor in the sight of the LORD. The land of Judah had been accustomed to the sin of unfaithfulness to God. They had never truly repented in their hearts.

2 Kings 23:27 "And the LORD said, I will remove Judah also out of 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."

Not from his all seeing eye, but from being the object of his special care and protection. The meaning is, that he would suffer them to be carried out of their land into captivity as Israel was. This he had said in his heart, was determined upon; the decree was gone forth, and it was irrevocable.

"And will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen": For the place of his worship, the people having forsaken his worship there, and followed after idols.

"And the house of which I said, my name shall be there": The temple, called after his name, and where his name was to be, and had been, called upon.

God had already determined to destroy Judah and Jerusalem. He had already destroyed Israel for the same sins. Judah had been spared longer, because it had a few kings that found favor with the LORD. God had chosen Jerusalem to be his city, but the people had wandered far away from God. He had said that he would put His name there, but there was a condition, which had not been kept. They had not kept God's commandments.

Verses 28-29: The Egyptian "Pharaoh-nechoh" was on the way to assist his Assyrian allies at Haran. When the Assyrian capital at Nineveh fell (in 612 B.C.), to an allied force that included the Chaldeans (or Neo-Babylonians), and Medes, the Assyrians fell back westward to Haran. Pharaoh-nechoh had just come to the throne of Egypt's Twenty-Sixth Dynasty. This kingdom had emerged from a previous Assyrian vassalage and would become Egypt's last important dynasty (663-525 B.C.). Because of Egypt's long-standing allegiance to "Assyria", and a fear of the new Medo-Babylonian alliance, Pharaoh-nechoh was leading his forces to Haran to link up with the Assyrian army there. Josiah's attempt to prevent the Egyptians from reaching Haran cost him his life (2 Chron. 35:20-25), but did delay them long enough so that Haran fell before Pharaoh-nechoh could arrive (609 B.C.). The Assyrian forces subsequently moved still further westward to Carchemish, where Nebuchadnezzar finally defeated them (in 605 B.C.).

2 Kings 23:28 "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?"

For abolishing idolatry, and restoring the true worship of God.

"Are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?" And also of Israel, in which an account was kept of the transactions of their reign. Many other of the acts of Josiah are recorded in the canonical book of Chronicles (2 Chron. 34:1).

There is a great deal written about Josiah in the book of Chronicles in the Bible. The record book of the kings of Judah contained a record of his actions as well.

2 Kings 23:29 "In his days Pharaoh-nechoh king of Egypt went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates: and king Josiah went against him; and he slew him at Megiddo, when he had seen him."

"Pharaoh-nechoh": Pharaoh-nechoh II (609-594 B.C.), was an ally of Assyria against the growing power of Babylon. For some unstated reason, Josiah was determined to stop Pharaoh-nechoh and his army from joining the Assyrian army at the Euphrates River to fight Babylon.

“Megiddo”: The well-fortified stronghold overlooking the Jezreel Valley about 65 miles north of Jerusalem. Megiddo guarded a strategic pass on the route between Egypt and Mesopotamia. Josiah’s death is explained in more detail (in 2 Chron. 35:20-27).

It appears that Josiah disguised himself and went out to this battle. While he was there, a random shot of an arrow hit him and killed him. This happened at Megiddo. In a sense, the king killed him, but he did not kill him himself.

2 Kings 23:30 "And his servants carried him in a chariot dead from Megiddo, and brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own sepulcher. And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and anointed him, and made him king in his father's stead."

“Jehoahaz” was not Josiah’s eldest “son” (1 Chron. 3:15 with Jer. 22:11).

It appears he received his fatal wound on the battlefield and was carried back to Jerusalem and died. He was buried in a place prepared in advance to bury the king. This was probably with his father, as it says in Chronicles. There was a great lamentation for this great king. The LORD, possibly shortened his life, so he would not see the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah. Jehoahaz would be an evil king. Another name for Jehoahaz was Shallum. "Jehoahaz" means whom Jehovah holds fast. This is what his father, Josiah, had wanted for him but not what he was. Eliakim was an older son. We do not know immediately why Jehoahaz was anointed king. Perhaps, Eliakim was not available.

2 Kings 23:31 "Jehoahaz [was] twenty and three years old when he began to reign; and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. And his mother's name [was] Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah."

“Three months”: Jehoahaz reigned during 609 B.C. then became a prisoner of Pharaoh-nechoh II, and ultimately died in Egypt (see note on 2 Chron. 36:1-4).

He was the younger brother of Eliakim, who was twenty-five. This Jeremiah is not the same one as the prophet. He reigned three months, until Pharaoh-nechoh came back from his battle.

2 Kings 23:32 "And he did [that which was] evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done."

Committed idolatry.

"According to all that his fathers had done": His grandfather and great grandfather, Amon and Manasseh; so soon after Josiah's death was the revolt to idolatry.

His father had not done evil. This was speaking of the evil of Manasseh and Amon. It appears, he re-instated the false gods.

Verses 33-35: A disgruntled Pharaoh-nechoh took the newly crowned “Jehoahaz” to “Egypt” as a spoil of war. He installed on the throne “Eliakim” (or Jehoiakim), who was forced to raise a heavy tribute.

2 Kings 23:33 "And Pharaoh-nechoh put him in bands at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem; and put the land to a tribute of a hundred talents of silver, and a talent of gold."

“Riblah in the land of Hamath”: Jehoahaz was in prison at Pharaoh-nechoh II’s military headquarters located on the Orontes River in the north Lebanon Valley (see note on 25:6).

“A tribute” was a tax.

It appears that Pharaoh-nechoh was coming back from battle, and stopped at Riblah, and required Jehoahaz to come out and meet him. He captured him and took him back to Egypt with him, where he later died. He demanded a hundred talents of silver and one talent of gold for tribute. This would be 125 pounds of gold and 12,500 pounds of silver.

2 Kings 23:34 "And Pharaoh-nechoh made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the room of Josiah his father, and turned his name to Jehoiakim, and took Jehoahaz away: and he came to Egypt, and died there."

“Eliakim ... Jehoiakim” (In 609 B.C.), Pharaoh-nechoh II placed Jehoahaz’s older brother on the throne of Judah. Nechoh changed his name from Eliakim, meaning “God has established”, to Jehoiakim, “the Lord has established.” The naming of a person was regarded in the ancient Near East as sign of authority; so by naming Jehoiakim, Nechoh demonstrated that he was the lord who controlled Judah. As a vassal of Egypt, Judah risked attack by Egypt’s enemy Babylon (see note on 2 Chron. 36:5-8).

He did not want the land of Judah, he just wanted tribute money. He set Eliakim up as king (who would have been the next in line from Josiah), and then changed his name to Jehoiakim. His new name proved him to be subject of Egypt.

2 Kings 23:35 "And Jehoiakim gave the silver and the gold to Pharaoh; but he taxed the land to give the money according to the commandment of Pharaoh: he exacted the silver and the gold of the people of the land, of every one according to his taxation, to give [it] unto Pharaoh-nechoh."

Jehoiakim taxed his people severely to pay tribute to Egypt, though he still had enough to build a magnificent palace for himself (see Jer. 22:13-14).

This silver and gold was gathered up as a tax on the land. There was no wealth in the treasury, so this had to be done to pay Egypt.

2 Kings 23:36 "Jehoiakim [was] twenty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name [was] Zebudah, the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah."

"Eleven years" (609-597 B.C.).

2 Kings 23:37 "And he did [that which was] evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done."

Jehoiakim's "evil" reign is detailed (in 2 Chronicles 36:5, 8 and Jer. 22:13-17; 25:1-7). He burned Jeremiah's scroll that contained the Lord's word for the nation of Judah (Jer. 36:21-24), and murdered the prophet Urijah (Jer. 26:20-23).

We see that Jehoiakim and Jehoahaz were half-brothers. They had the same father and different mothers. He was evil, like his ancestors.

2 Kings Chapter 23 Questions

1. How did Josiah feel about the message he got from Huldah?
2. Who did he gather to Jerusalem?
3. Where did he meet with these people?
4. What did he read to them?
5. What does verse 3 say that Josiah did before the Lord?
6. This is a renewal of the old _____.
7. What did Josiah have the high priest and the secondary priests to bring out of the temple?
8. What did Josiah do with those things?
9. What did he do with the idolatrous priests?
10. What had they burned incense to?
11. What children were the ashes, in verse 6, spread over?
12. The _____ were part of the worship of Astarte.
13. What is sodomites speaking of?
14. Who had been conducting services in the high places?

15. What did Josiah do with them?
16. What was Topheth noted for?
17. What did he do with the chariots that had been dedicated to false gods?
18. The altars on the roofs had been used in worshipping what?
19. What king had built buildings to false gods?
20. What is unusual about him going to Beth-el, to destroy the worship of false gods?
21. What did he do with the bones in the sepulchers he found there?
22. What prophecy had been given pertaining to this?
23. How did he show honor to the true man of God?
24. Who did he kill, mentioned in verse 20?
25. What feast did Josiah command they keep?
26. How long had it been, since this had been done properly?
27. Who were the evil ones mentioned in verse 24?
28. How did he differ from Hezekiah in his belief?
29. The land of Judah was sentenced to _____.
30. What happened to Josiah?
31. How did he get back to Jerusalem?
32. Who reigned in his stead?
33. How long did Jehoahaz reign?
34. Who reigned next?
35. What did the king of Egypt require of them?