

Episode: Kings and Prophets Series No. 16

Narrator: King Josiah, Jeremiah

Primary Scriptures: 2 Kings 21-23, 2 Chronicles 33-36, *Zephaniah*

Story Summary: Events leading to the end of the Southern Kingdom

Location: Judah

Time: 700-610 BC

Suggested Memory Scriptures: 2 Kings 21:12; 22:2, 19; 23:25-26

Hezekiah was followed by his son, Manasseh. Manasseh was followed by his son, Amon. Amon was followed by his son, Josiah.

Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, the late-in-life son of a proud, old man. Manasseh led the Southern Kingdom for fifty-five years. He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.

Manasseh rebuilt the places to worship false gods, listened to fortune tellers and sorcerers, and even burned his own children as sacrifices to false gods in the Valley of Hinnom. He also stooped to worship false gods in the Temple.

He was so bad that God had the king of Assyria capture him, bind him with hooks and chains, and take him to Babylon. Although he eventually repented and made some changes, he caused immense spiritual damage to the Southern Kingdom, and would be the final straw that broke its back.

Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned only two years. He was as evil as his father, but did not repent. His servants conspired against him and killed him.

Josiah was only eight years old when he became king. From the start, he worshiped God completely. When he was twenty-six, he led the refurbishing of the Temple. While that work was going on, the priests found the Book of the Law, which appears to have been unknown.

When Josiah heard the words of the Law, he was distressed. He knew the nation had been worshiping false gods and ignoring the true God. The prophetess Hulda prophesied that God was going to destroy the Southern Kingdom because of their long-term false disobedience, but that he would not do it during the life of Josiah.

Josiah started with a vengeance to eliminate the worship of false gods. He tore down all of the places of worship, including those that had been erected hundreds of years before by Solomon. He did everything humanly possible to atone for the sins of his ancestors. Nevertheless, it was not enough. God was finished with his disobedient people.

Josiah's story ends with some of the saddest words in the Bible: The Lord did not turn away from the heat of his fierce anger which burned against the Southern Kingdom because all that Manasseh had done to arouse his anger.

Discussion Questions:

1. 2 Chronicles 33:2 sums up the life of Manasseh. He did evil in the sight of the Lord and followed the detestable practices of the pagan nations. What does all that mean?
2. Do the accounts of Manasseh in 2 Chronicles and 2 Kings seem to give the same message? Might the writers have had different goals in writing what they did?
3. King Josiah was maybe the best of all the kings. Read the account in 2 Chronicles 34 and describe all of the good things he did.
4. 2 Chronicles 34:28 relates a piece of theology that is very uncomfortable for many people. Even though Josiah did every thing possible to follow God and lead the people in his worship, the prophet said it was not enough, that was too late. Josiah could not overcome the evil actions of his predecessors. Does this type of thinking conflict with the New Testament or is it in agreement with it?

1. Manasseh led the kingdom into every kind of worship of false gods that he could think of, and desecrated the Temple of God. These actions are described in 2 Chronicles 33:3-7.

Application Questions:

1. 2 Chronicles 33:6 says that Manasseh did so much evil that it aroused the anger of the Lord. When you are considering following the idols of this world, does it cross your mind that you could be arousing the anger of the Lord?
2. Although Manasseh repented and fixed much of the damage he caused, he could not completely overcome the consequences of his actions, because the people never quit following the practices he instituted. Can you think of some consequences of your actions that continue through time even though you have repented of them?
3. 2 Chronicles 33:22 says that Amon followed in the ways of his father. Have you seen your children follow in your ways, both good and bad? What happened?
4. According to 2 Chronicles 34:27, God was responsive to Josiah because he his heart was responsive and he humbled himself before God. What would such a posture look like in your own life? Are you willing to humble yourself before God no matter what it takes?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. 2 Chronicles 33:10 said that the Lord spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention. One of the ways that the Lord speaks to his people today is through the Bible. When you don't study the Bible regularly, would you consider that not paying attention to the Lord? What are other ways you can focus your attention on him?
2. Josiah was only eight years old when he became king. He followed God, and did not behave like his father or grandfather. How do you think he learned to do that? Do most of your friends tend to behave like their parents? Do you? Why or why not?