

General Church Education



Josiah, Judah's Last Hope

2 Kings 22; 23:1-5, 21-28

Lesson 27

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 6: The Lord Is the Prophet and
Preserver

For ages 11-12 years

Josiah, Judah's Last Hope

2 Kings 22; 23:1-5, 23-28; 12:1-23

Teacher Background

Josiah was one of Judah's most remarkable kings. He assumed the throne at the age of eight and at twelve began to purge Judah's idolatrous worship. As he was restoring the temple in Jerusalem, Hilkiah, the priest, found a hidden copy of the Book of the Law. When Josiah learned what it said he was distraught. He read it to the elders. He made a covenant with the Lord and destroyed the high places where people worshipped idols. Then he returned to Jerusalem and proclaimed the Passover. However, the people did not fully return to the Lord.

The is one of the most dramatic and exciting stories in the Word. It pictures the discovery of the Lord's Word by someone who had never had it before. Before finding it, Josiah may only have had glimmerings of what it contained from priests and prophets. Finding what was most likely a scroll would not have been all that wonderful if Josiah had not recognized the truth in what he read. He lamented its loss and hurried to bring Judah back to the worship of the Lord.

Focus Points

- Josiah started restoring the temple in his youth, leading Hilkiah, the priest to find the Word.
- Josiah read the scroll to his people.
- Josiah did all he could to bring his people back to the worship of the Lord.

Readings from the Writings

“Since a covenant, or conjunction, is effected through the laws or precepts of love, it was effected also through the laws of society given by the Lord in the Jewish Church, which are called ‘testimonies;’ and also through the rites of the church enjoined by the Lord, called ‘statutes.’ All these things are said to be of the ‘covenant’ because they regard love and charity, as we read of Josiah the king: The king stood upon the pillar, and made a covenant before Jehovah, to walk after Jehovah, and to keep His commandments, and His testimonies, and His statutes, with all the heart and with all the soul, to establish the words of this covenant.” *Arcana Coelestia* 1038

“Tearing apart or rending clothes represented mourning the loss of Truth is clear from the following: Hilkiah the priest found the Book of the Law in the house of Jehovah. When Shaphan read it before king Josiah and the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes. Plainly the king did so because the Word, that is, Divine truth, had been lost for so long and in their hearts and life had been blotted out.” *Arcana Coelestia* 763.6

Teacher Activity Overview

The lesson offers students the following choices:

Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

“The word of the Lord which you have spoken is good!” (2 Kings 20:19)

Projects and Activities (for answers, see back of lesson)

Multiple Choice

Read a series of statements and questions and circle the ending or answer that is best.

The Book of the Law Is Found

This activity increases appreciation for the amazing things that occurred when the Word was found. As you think of the feelings Josiah must have had, imagine how your life might change if you had never had the Word and then suddenly you did.

Additional Project and Activity Choices for Parents and Teachers

Play: King Josiah and the Book of the Law

Act out the story of King Josiah finding the book of the law. This play has three scenes. Scene 1 takes place inside the king’s palace. Scene 2 takes occurs in the house of Huldah the prophetess. Scene 3 happens outside the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. Available at: <https://newchurchvineyard.org/file/play-king-josiah-and-the-book-of-the-law-2-kings-22-23.pdf>

Two Good Kings: Hezekiah and Josiah

King Josiah and King Hezekiah were good kings of Judah. Many of the things they did were the same or similar. Examine things Josiah did and put a check after the things that Hezekiah did too. Available at: <https://newchurchvineyard.org/file/activity-two-good-kings-hezekiah-and-josiah-2-kings-18.pdf>

A Chart of the Kings of Israel and Judah

As you learn about the kings of Israel and Judah, complete a chart. As you fill in the spaces, think about whether the king is good or evil. Available at: <https://newchurchvineyard.org/file/activity-a-chart-of-the-kings-of-israel-and-judah-1-kings-2-kings.pdf>

Josiah, Judah’s Last Hope

2 Kings 22; 23-1:5, 21-28

Vocabulary

mentor—experienced and trusted adviser

purge—get rid of something unwanted

momentous—of great importance or significance

Josiah Becomes King in Judah

Josiah became the king of Judah when he was only eight years old, but we are told that,

“He did what was right in the sight of the Lord.” (2 Kings 22:2)

It is not clear how Josiah grew up or even who cared for him. He may have had a mentor. The book of Chronicles says that Josiah began to look for the “god of David, his father” when he was eight and that he began to purge Judah of the evils in the land when he was only twelve.

You might remember hearing about Swedenborg, the man to whom the Lord revealed the Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church. When he was young he began to read and study the Word. He cared deeply about the truth and living a good life while he was still a boy. Perhaps Josiah was like Swedenborg and was born with a desire to know the truth.

The Book of the Law Is Found

Some time after Josiah was made king he restored the temple, which had fallen into disrepair.



In the eighteenth year of his reign, he sent a message to Hilkiah, the high priest, who was overseeing the restoration. Josiah told him to give the money that the gatekeepers collected at the temple to the workers rebuilding the temple. It was to be spent as the workers saw fit. Josiah believed they could be trusted to use the money faithfully.

After Hilkiah received Josiah’s orders he sent Josiah an astounding message.

“I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord.” (2 Kings 22:8)

Hilkiah gave it to Shaphan, the scribe, and one of the messengers sent by Josiah. Shaphan read it and took it to Josiah and then read it to him. When Josiah heard it, he tore his clothes.

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Josiah was overwhelmed by what he heard. He had been looking for the God of Israel and Judah for years and here was a book that could teach him about that God. He was saddened that the book had been lost and that his people were disobeying its teachings.

The Book of the Law is the first five books of the Old Testament. Hilkiah probably found a scroll that had been hidden somewhere in the temple. At the time important documents were often put behind walls or under the floor during construction.

Josiah Seeks Advice from a Prophetess

Josiah recognized that the Book of the Law was an important find. He sent some of his officials, including Hilkiah, to see Huldah, a prophetess of the Lord. Josiah knew that the Lord was angered by the people’s rejection of the commandments written in the Book. So, he wanted to know what the Lord had to say about this discovery.

Huldah’s words from the Lord were not reassuring:

“I will bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants—all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read—because they have forsaken Me and burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands. Therefore My wrath shall be aroused against this place and shall not be quenched.” (2 Kings 22:16, 17)

Judah would not be spared, but Josiah would not see its destruction. His faithfulness and humility would be rewarded.

Josiah Reads the Book of the Law



Josiah’s reaction was to call all of the elders of Judah and all of the people of Jerusalem together to the house of the Lord. There, he read them the entire Book of the Law. Imagine hearing the first five books of the Word. You would have listened for hours hearing things you might not have heard, even the Ten Commandments.

Josiah went on to make a new covenant with the Lord, promising that he would obey those commandments and all that was written in the book “with all his heart and all his soul” (2 Kings 23:3).

Josiah Restores True Worship in Judah

After making a covenant with the Lord, Josiah began to fulfill his part. First, he ordered the cleansing of the temple. He removed and burned the articles dedicated to the worship of false gods and had the ashes sent to Bethel. He

had the wooden image of the Canaanite goddess, Asherah, taken out and burned at the Brook Kidron. He put the ashes on the graves of the common people as a sign of their desecration of the commandments.

Josiah’s reforms did not stop at Judah’s borders, but included the cities of Samaria as well. He removed the priests who led idolatrous worship and ordered the altars and places where the worship and sacrifice to false gods took place to be destroyed.

He also stopped the horrible practice of human sacrifice.

Josiah went to Samaria and broke and burned the high places in Bethel and Dan that Jeroboam had set up. Then he took the bones from the graves on the mountain and burned them on the altar he was destroying. This showed his desire to prevent a return to idolatry and false worship. However, he spared the bones of two of the Lord’s prophets that were buried in Samaria.

Josiah Dies

When Josiah returned to Jerusalem, he asked the people to celebrate the Passover. Although this ritual had continued, most people had forgotten that the Lord saved Israel from slavery in Egypt. This feast was more wonderful than any Passover since the days of the Judges.

In spite of Josiah’s efforts and his commitment to bringing back the Book of the Law, the people of Judah did not truly repent and return to the worship of the Lord. After thirty-one years, Josiah was killed in a battle against the Pharaoh Necho, who had joined forces with the Assyrians. His body was returned to Jerusalem where he was buried in the royal tomb.

“No King Like Him”

It is said that there was no king like Josiah. Many kings were good in some parts of their lives, but Josiah, “turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses” (2 Kings 23:25).

Clearly, Josiah wanted to choose goodness over evil. Receiving the Word meant that wish could become a reality. Everything good he knew up to that point was probably from mentors who did not have the Word. The priests might have had some remnant of its truths, nurses might have taught him kindness and obedience, and others might have shared the civil laws of the land. But finding the Word led Josiah to cleanse the temple and restore true worship.

Today we might learn from the Word, obey our parents and other adults, follow the civil laws of our country and even go to the Lord in times of need. However, we can only become like Josiah when we read the Word, recognize the truth it contains, and try to live it with all our hearts, and souls and might.



Activity Overview

Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

“The word of the Lord which you have spoken is good!” (2 Kings 20:19)

Projects and Activities (answers at back of lesson)

Choose one or two.

Multiple Choice

Read a series of statements and questions and circle the ending or answer that is best.

The Book of the Law Is Found

This activity increases appreciation for the amazing things that occurred when the Word was found. As you think of the feelings Josiah must have had, imagine how your life might change if you had never had the Word and then suddenly you did.

Multiple Choice

2 Kings 22; 23-1:5, 21-28

Circle the best answer for each question.

1. When Josiah was eighteen he had the money collected in the temple given to people so they could:
 - a. Tear down the high places in Bethel and Dan
 - b. Repair the temple
 - c. Destroy the altars in the temple built by Manasseh
 - d. All of the above
2. Hilkiah, the high priest, found something while he was in the Temple. It was
 - a. More evidence of the evils of Manasseh and Amon
 - b. Money that had been hidden by high priests before him
 - c. The Book of the Law
 - d. All of the above
3. When Josiah found out about Hilkiah's find, he:
 - a. Tore his clothes
 - b. Told his servants to inquire of the Lord
 - c. Spoke of the anger of the Lord against the people of Judah
 - d. All of the above
4. The Lord's answer through the prophetess, Huldah, to Josiah told that:
 - a. There would be calamity for Judah
 - b. Judah would be saved because Josiah was such a good king
 - c. Josiah would eventually follow in his father's footsteps
 - d. All of the above
5. What did Josiah do because of the Book of the Covenant?
 - a. Made a covenant to obey all the words in the Book
 - b. Read it to all of the people
 - c. Cleansed the Temple of all idolatrous things and people
 - d. All of the above
6. Josiah did many other things because he wanted his people to follow the Lord. Which of the following didn't he do?
 - a. Broke down the high places at the gates of the city
 - b. Took the bones from tombs and burned them on Jeroboam's altar
 - c. Made animal sacrifices every day in the Temple
 - d. All of the above
7. Judah fought with Egypt during the later part of Josiah's reign. How did this affect Josiah and his family?
 - a. Josiah was killed by the pharaoh
 - b. Josiah's son Jehoahaz was made king and then taken prisoner by the pharaoh
 - c. Josiah's son Eliakim was made king and had his name changed by the pharaoh
 - d. All of the above

The Book of the Law Is Found

2 Kings 22; 23:1-5, 21-28

This lesson's story is about finding something precious that has been lost.

- Have you ever lost something really important to you? How did you feel when you found it?
- While repairing the temple, workmen found the Book of the Law or the Book of the Covenant. How did Josiah feel about this?
- Remember, the Book of the Law is the first five books of the Word. How do you think you would have felt if you had been Josiah? Why?

Circle the ideas below that make the Book of the Law, the Word, so important in our lives.

- a. From the Lord
- b. Is written well
- c. Holy
- d. Source of goodness and truth
- e. Was written by Moses
- f. Main way to learn about the Lord
- g. Main way to learn how to get to heaven
- h. Written a long time ago
- When Josiah realized what the book was, he shared it with the people. The Lord wants us to share the truths of the Word with others. What are some ways you could share the Word with people you know?
- What do you and your family do to show that you think the truths in the Word are Holy?
- We are not told what Josiah did with the Book of the Law after he read it to the people. Imagine yourself as Josiah. Using a separate piece of paper, plan a place in the temple where it could be kept safely, but that would be accessible to the priests and to others.

Answers

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Multiple Choice

1. b; 2. c; 3. a; 5. d; 6. c; 7. a.