

July 23

2 Kings 21-22 and 2 Chronicles 33:11-20

Today you read 2 Kings 21 and 22 and 2 Chronicles 33:11-20.

King Hezekiah, despite the fact that he did not finish as strongly as we would have liked, was a good king. He honored the Lord and the Lord honored him as well. He was one of the best kings the Southern Kingdom of Judah ever had. His son, Manasseh, was one of the worst. He rebuilt all of the pagan high places that his father had torn down. Since Manasseh reigned for 55 years in Judah, his influence was very persuasive indeed and he succeeded in "undoing" virtually every positive thing his father Hezekiah had ever accomplished.

Amon's brief reign over Judah is treated almost as a footnote. Whatever degree of repentance and reform Manasseh carried with him in the last years of his life, did not rub off on his son! Amon reigned for just two years before being assassinated!

2 Kings 22 introduces us to one of the greatest kings that Judah had. Coming very near the end of her existence as a nation, Josiah (one of the few kings of whom it is said he "walked in all the ways of his father David, the ultimate compliment for a king in ancient Israel) came to the throne. He was only eight when he started out. He was 16 when he began to truly seek God. He was only 20 when he instituted massive destruction of idols. The parallel passage in Chronicles gives us a bit of data that is omitted from the passage we read today, it will be in the July 24 reading, but I want to read it to you now...

"In the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David. In his twelfth year (20!) he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of high places, Asherah poles, carved idols and cast images. Under his direction the alters of the Baals were torn down; he cut to pieces the incense altars that were above them and smashed the Asherah poles, the idols and the images."

(Note: Some teenagers just go TP-ing to get their energy out! But here is Josiah smashing, trashing, and bashing!)

"These he broke to pieces and scattered over the graves of those who had sacrificed to them. He burned the bones of the priests on their altars, and so he purged Judah and Jerusalem. In the towns of Manasseh, Ephraim and Simeon, as far as Naphtali, and in the ruins around them, he tore down the altars and Asherah poles and crushed the idols to powder and cut to pieces all the incense altars throughout Israel."

Man, you talk about fervor! Josiah got rid of idols.

I don't care how young you are... 8, 16, 20 years old... You can be fully devoted to God. You can cast idols out of your life, your home, your world. You can rid yourself of slavery to finances, hobbies, electronics, TV, peer pressure. You can do it like Josiah did.

I LOVE Josiah as a character. So much so, that I named my son after him. Here he is... or at least a picture of him. Just like King Josiah, he has a heart for God at age 13. And I pray that this heart grows in him so that someday he will be an idol destroyer just like his namesake!

Later on, Josiah will come across a precious copy of the Law of Moses. It was carefully stored in a safe place and somehow survived the awful reign of Manassah. Later in your readings you will see sweeping reforms that come into place as a result of reading God's word for the first time.

You know, many of you are really reading God's word for the first time... at least reading passages like 2 Chronicles 34 for the first time. Maybe today you could spend some time asking God what kind of sweeping reforms he wants to do in your life as a result of your reading. Maybe you could ask him what kinds of idols he wants to destroy. Josiah is a reminder that when we fully obey, wild things happen!

May it be so with you!