
History Makers

Part 3 - Josiah

History Speaks

We are kicking off the year by having a look at some of the History Makers of the Faith. Throughout the Bible there are amazing godly men and women whose lives we can learn from as they lived for the glory of God.

Do you enjoy looking in history? History speaks of how God has been at work in society and how we, humanity, have been either walking with Him, or away from Him. We honour the past, live in the present and build towards the future. But without knowing the past, we cannot honour how the previous generations lived.

King Josiah

What would you look for in a king? Perhaps a strong leader. Maybe a great family line. What about someone who is really close to God as His representative?

Manasseh, Josiah's grandfather, is known in the Bible as the worst and most wicked king that ever ruled over Judah! The Bible tells us "he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord according to the despicable practices of the nation whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel." (2 Kings 21:2)

Each king is introduced as either doing evil in the sight of the Lord or doing what was right in the eyes of the Lord. Amon, Josiah's father was like his father, who also did evil in the sight of the Lord.

The society is broken and hurting. Perhaps this sounds a bit like today. In 2006, two thirds of our population classified themselves as Christians and ten years later only half of Australia would want to have any affiliation with Christ. The percentage of committed church goers is much lower at only 16% of Australia.

As already mentioned, history speaks. If there is one thing to be sure of as we look back on the past, it is that God uses moments of crisis for His glory.

Personal Renewal

Josiah, meaning “Yahweh has given”, was born around 640BC into this sort of broken and confused world. He has not received any training on how to be king, how to lead a country or how to win a battle, so there is no doubt that he feels the pressure of stepping into such a national crisis. And while the text does not tell us, he would have been in some sort of personal crisis.

We read that “he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in all the way of David his father, and he did not turn aside to the right or to the left.” (2 Kings 22:2) Rather than continuing the horrible heritage of his forefathers, Josiah looks to someone else, the shepherd King, David.

In 2 Chronicles 34, we read that at the age of 16, “while he was yet a boy, he began to seek the God of David his father”. You see, King Josiah knew from a young age that he needed to be right with God.

Personal Crisis Leads to Personal Renewal

It doesn't matter who you are or how old you are, God wants all of us to come to a point of personal renewal! All of us need to begin this year pursuing holiness and righteousness, following King Josiah who did not turn aside to the right or to the left, but faithfully pursued God!

Generational sin has been broken. In Romans we read, “For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:17)

Through Jesus' perfect life, sacrificial death and powerful resurrection, each of us has access to grace through faith in Him. Holiness is only attainable through Jesus' work on the cross.

Corporate Renewal

When Josiah was 20 years old, he began to transform the culture that he was born into. After four years of seeking the Lord, he began to rebuild and repair the temple of the Lord. For this he rightfully includes the High Priest Hilkiah into this process who then hires workmen to repair the house of the Lord. But as the workmen are repairing the house, they stumble across the Book of the Law in the temple.

“When the king heard the words of the Book of the law, he tore his clothes.” (2 Kings 22:11) This is another sign of a personal renewal. The tearing of clothes is Josiah’s response as he recognised that the Lord’s anger was great because His people had not kept the word of the Lord.

It was Josiah’s deep passion for God, and now for this new revelation of His word, that kick started a corporate renewal. Corporate renewal does not begin happily with everyone having a good time. It starts with a broken and contrite heart.

Personal Renewal Leads to Corporate Renewal

Josiah assured to “follow the Lord and keep his commands, statutes and decrees with all his heart and all his soul and to obey the words of the covenant written in this book.” (2 Chronicles 34:31)

While the rebuilding of the physical temple was important, what was really happening was the spiritual rebuilding of the people of God. If we want to see corporate renewal, we need to have a rebirth of the Word of God!

Note the unity of King, Priest and Prophet in this corporate renewal.

Hebrews 1 says “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things... After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on High.” (Hebrews 1:1-2, 3c). In this scene, found in 2 Kings, we have a glimpse of what is to come in Jesus Christ! Kingly leadership, purification from sin as our great High priest and the prophetic word of God as our Prophet. This unity leads to corporate renewal.

But corporate renewal is not the endgame.

Cultural Revival

Josiah not only has a personal renewal that led to corporate renewal. It spread further into a full-fledged cultural revival that swept across the country. Corporate renewal leads to cultural revival.

King Josiah gathers the people to hear the word of God and then “... made a covenant before the Lord to walk after the Lord and to keep his

commandments and his testimonies and his statues with all his heart, and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people joined in the covenant". (2 Kings 23:3)

Corporate Renewal Leads to Cultural Revival

Idols in the temple are brought out and burned, houses of the male cult prostitutes are burned, the high places in Jerusalem and Judah and to the east where offerings were made to pagan gods are destroyed and cast into the river and bones of the pagan priests were burned on their own altars.

It is not enough for God to change us here in the four walls of Riverlife and renew us. We come in, to go out! The personal and corporate renewal that we find and know, needs to spill into a cultural revival in our city and in our nation.

Family Revival

After Josiah has passed away, what sort of King would lead the nation?

We need unity across the generations to put God first. We need a Family Revival. We need three generations, rising up who will faithfully stand on God's Word, who will pray for His kingdom to come, and who will push for cultural change led by His Spirit.

Questions for Discussion

1. When have you had a personal crisis? How did this lead you closer to God?
2. What would corporate revival look like at Riverlife?
3. Josiah did not turn aside to the right or to the left. What is God calling you to let go of at the start of 2021?
4. Looking towards the city of Brisbane, what areas of society is God stirring up in you to pray and contend for?
5. How can you be a part of a family revival with those close to you?