



# Enter the Story

## *Reform*

A narrative about what it takes to get back to the heart of God.

## **THE BIBLE**

2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 22-23, 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 34-35

*Prepare for the Story*

## **ICEBREAKER**

Not everyone wants to admit it, but in many ways, we are like our parents. We inherit all kinds of things from them. What are some things that your parents said or did that got on your nerves? What do you hope you never do?

*Rewind the Story*

Can someone highlight what has happened in the story so far ...

- Undying Love – Hosea & Gomer
- The Last Kings of Israel – Alliances and Allegiances
- Judah's Tale of Two Kings – Ahaz & Hezekiah
- Manasseh -Judah's worst king

*Hear the Story*

### ***Scene One: Hezekiah's Legacy***

In the years following King Hezekiah's reign of Judah, his son, Manasseh, and his grandson, Amon, led the nation away from God and back to worshipping other gods.

During this time, things got so bad that the scriptures were lost, and the people were totally depraved, doing whatever seemed right in their own eyes.

Two years into his reign as king, Hezekiah's grandson was assassinated by some of his own officials who were hungry for power. When the people of Judah heard what had happened, they rose up and killed the traitors to put the king's son on the throne. His name was Josiah, and he was only eight years old when he became King.

### **Scene Two: The Boy King**

As you can imagine, many people helped Josiah rule the kingdom as he was still a boy. It wasn't until his eighth year as king that Josiah truly began to make his own decisions. Although he was young, he made it his practice to seek God, and when he turned twenty years old, he began a campaign to purify Judah and Jerusalem from all pagan influences.

He destroyed many shrines, idols, and other images honoring pagan gods. He saw to it that the altars of the Baals were torn down. He also made sure that the Asherah poles and other idols were smashed and scattered over the graves of those who had made sacrifices to them. Through these decisions and actions, Josiah began to purify Judah and Jerusalem, and this was pleasing in the LORD's sight. He followed the example of his ancestor, David, and he did not turn away from doing what was right in God's eyes.

### **Scene Three: The Book of the Law**

During his eighteenth year as King, Josiah began to repair the Temple. He sent messengers to the High Priest and gave him instructions to take the money that had been collected as the temple tax and use it to begin restoring the Temple that had been neglected over the years.

As the High priest was clearing the treasure room, he found the Book of the Law, which had been given to Moses. The High Priest sent the scrolls to the King, and when he heard what was written in the Book of the Law, his heart broke, and he tore his clothes in despair.

Then Josiah said to the High Priest, *"Go to the temple and speak to the LORD for me and for the people. Ask him about the words written in this scroll. The LORD's anger is burning against us because our ancestors have not obeyed His commands. We have not been doing what the LORD says we must do."*

So the High Priest did as King Josiah requested and went to consult the Prophet Huldah. She said to the High Priest, *"The LORD, the God of Israel, has spoken! Go and tell the man who sent you this is what the LORD says: I will destroy this city and its people, just as I stated in the scroll you read. For my people have abandoned me and worshipped pagan gods. I am very angry with them for everything they have done. My anger will be poured out against this place, and nothing will be able to stop it."*

*But also tell the King of Judah: This is what the LORD says concerning what you have heard: You were sorry and humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I said against this city and its people, that this land would be cursed and become desolate. You tore your clothing in despair and wept before me in repentance. So I have indeed heard you. I will not send this promised disaster against this city until after you have died. You will not see the disaster I am going to bring on this place."*

#### **Scene Four: The Covenant Renewed**

After hearing this, the King summoned all the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem. Then he went to the Temple of the LORD with the priests, prophets, and all the people from least to greatest. There, the King read to them the entire Book of the Law that had been found in the Temple. The king took his place of authority and renewed the covenant in the LORD's presence. He pledged to obey the LORD by keeping all His commands, regulations, and laws with all his heart and soul.

Then Josiah instructed the High Priest to remove from the LORD's Temple all the items that had been used to worship pagan gods in the past. The King took all these items to a valley outside of Jerusalem and burned them. Then, he carried the ashes away and threw them in the public cemetery.

He did away with the pagan priests who had been appointed by previous kings. He also tore down the houses of the shrine prostitutes that were inside the Temple of the LORD.

Then Josiah brought back to Jerusalem all the priests of the LORD who were living in other towns in Judah, and any of the priests who had served at pagan shrines were not allowed to serve at the LORD's altar in Jerusalem.

### **Scene Five: Cleansing the Country**

After cleansing the Temple, Josiah focused his efforts on removing the worship of every other god from the land. He went to the valley of Ben-Hinnom and defiled the altar to the pagan god Molech so there would never be another son or daughter sacrificed in the fire. He destroyed and burned the horse and chariot statues that had been placed outside the Temple by his ancestors to worship the sun god. Josiah tore down the altars that King Ahaz had built on the palace roof above his room.

He destroyed the altars his grandfather had built, located in the courtyards of the Temple. He smashed them to bits and scattered the pieces in the valley. He even scattered bones over the pagan shrines east of the city, the ones that King Solomon of Israel had built to the gods of his many wives. He did everything he could to cleanse the land from Geba to Beersheba.

Then, the king went to Bethel and tore down the pagan altar and shrines that King Jeroboam of Israel had built. He crushed the stones to dust, and as he was looking around, he noticed several tombs on the side of a hill. He ordered that the bones be brought out, and he burned them on the altar at Bethel to desecrate the altar. This happened just as the LORD had promised through the man of God as Jeroboam stood beside the altar during the festival nearly 300 years earlier.

Then Josiah demolished all the buildings at the pagan shrines in the towns of Samaria, just as he had done in Bethel. They had been built by the various kings of the northern kingdom, Israel, and had made the LORD very angry. He executed the priests of the pagan shrines on their own altars, and he burned human bones on the altars to desecrate them.

So Josiah removed all detestable idols from the entire land of Israel and required everyone to worship the LORD their God. Throughout his life, the people followed his example and they did not turn away from the LORD.

## **Scene Six: The Passover Celebration**

Soon after, Josiah had cleansed the land. He announced that the Passover of the LORD would be celebrated in Jerusalem on the appointed day in early spring. He assigned the priests to their duties and encouraged them to work at the Temple of the LORD.

He said, *“Since the Ark is now in Solomon’s Temple, you do not need to carry it back and forth; instead, spend your time serving the LORD your God and His people. Prepare the Passover lambs, purify yourselves, and be ready to help those who come. Follow all the instructions that the LORD gave to Moses.”*

Then Josiah contributed to the sacrifices from his personal property. He also encouraged his officials and the leaders of the Levites to contribute to the offering. When they had gathered all of what they gave, there were over 37,000 lambs and goats, as well as nearly 4,000 bulls, that were given for the Passover offering.

When everything was ready for the Passover celebration, the Priests and Levites prepared the animals. They divided the burnt offerings among the people by their family groups so they could offer them to the LORD as they were instructed in the Book of Moses.

The entire Passover ceremony was completed that day. All the burnt offerings were sacrificed on the altar of the LORD, just as King Josiah had ordered. Never since the time of the prophet Samuel had there been such a Passover. None of the kings of Israel had ever kept Passover as Josiah did.

## **Scene Seven: The End of King Josiah’s Reign**

After Josiah had finished restoring the Temple, the King of Egypt led his army up into the region to fight the Babylonian King. Josiah took his army and marched them out to fight the Egyptians. The Egyptian King sent a message to Josiah saying, *“What do you want with me, King of Judah? I have no quarrel with you today! I only want to fight the nation with which I am at war. And God has told me to hurry! Do not interfere with God, who is with me, or He will destroy you.”*

But Josiah refused to listen to the Egyptian King, to whom God had indeed spoken, and he would not turn back. Instead, he led his army into battle, but he chose not to wear his royal robes, hoping the enemy would not recognize him. During the battle, the enemy archers struck King Josiah and fatally wounded him. He was taken back to Jerusalem, where he died.

He was buried in the royal cemetery, and all of Judah and Jerusalem mourned for him. Josiah was an amazing King. He had such a great impact that the prophet Jeremiah composed funeral songs for him. These songs are still known to this day. Never before had there been a king like Josiah, who turned to the LORD with all his heart, soul, and strength, obeying all the laws of Moses, and there has never been a king like him since.

### *Retell the Story*

- How did Josiah become king?
- What did Josiah do in his 18<sup>th</sup> year as king?
- What was found that changed Josiah's reign?
- What did Josiah work to tear down?
- What did Josiah reinstitute?
- What country did Josiah try to fight?
- How was Josiah killed?
- What was Josiah's legacy as a king?

### *Discuss the Story*

- What is your first reaction to this story? How did this story make you feel?
- What stood out to you from this story? What did you notice for the first time?
- What from this story made you wonder?
- Josiah became king at the age of eight. What type of challenges do you think he faced as a young man with so much power?

- Josiah had been king for eighteen years when the Book of the Law was found. How would you describe his reaction to this discovery?
- The king started cleaning up Judah. He began tearing down all the altars that his ancestors had built. What impact do you think he was trying to make?
- Josiah's actions at Jeroboam's altar in Israel's territory fulfilled a 300-year-old prophecy. Why do you think Josiah went to the lengths he did outside of Judah?
- What was the purpose of reinstituting the Passover?
- What do you think about Josiah's decision to go to war against Egypt? Why do you think he would do this? What should he have done? Why would God allow this to be the end of his story?
- Did you hear anything that reminded you of **other** stories?
- From this story, what did you notice about humans?
- What do you notice from this story about God's character or qualities?

## 1) TRUE REPENTANCE

Josiah sought after God, and upon discovering the Book of the Law, he realized the nation was in need of repentance. Using Josiah's actions as a model, outline the steps to true repentance. Then, use a typical modern situation to explain how true repentance would take place in the scenario.

## 2) RADICAL OBEDIENCE

Josiah's obedience may have seemed extremely radical to the people of his time. It didn't matter if it was in making things right or just following God's instructions. He pursued obedience to God's word at any cost. How do you think obedience is viewed in the church today? What would be one thing in your life that you could begin to 'radically' devote to God?

## 3) LEAVING A LEGACY

The kings before Josiah had left a terrible legacy. Josiah spent his entire life, his legacy, undoing what the previous kings had done before him. What can you look at in your life today to gauge what legacy you are creating for your future?

Pray

God,

*We live in a time where the media, entertainment, and public education have become shapers and sources of culture and popular opinion. Your Word has been marginalized and written off in these areas. But even though our culture will not recognize it, Your Word is alive and will endure forever, and it will accomplish what You desire in spite of our rebellious hearts. We ask for the grace to apply Your Word more fully to our lives so that we will not simply be 'hearers of the word' but 'doers of the word.' In doing so, may people see the living Word in me, and be drawn closer and closer to You. Amen.*