

JOSIAH, THE BRIGHT LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

Text: II Kings 22:1-3; 23:25

The story of Josiah is one of the most famous stories in the Bible, if for no other reason, because of what God says about him in II Kings 23:25: *“And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him.”* This is quite a statement! In love to God and obedience to God's moral requirements, Josiah is given greater commendation than David and Solomon. As I meditate on his life, I see two things: the power of God's Word to supply light and the power of a surrendered life to be a vessel sharing that light. We certainly have a biblical precedent on that consuming thought. *“The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple”* (Psalm 119:130). *“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path”* (Psa. 119:105). *“For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life”* (Proverbs 6:23). *“Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”* (Matthew 5:15,16). Like John the Baptist, we can say of Josiah, *“He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light”* (John 1:8). *“He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light”* (John 5:35).

1. A light in the darkness is promised.

I Kings 13:1-3. One hundred eighty years before Josiah was born, he was prophesied to come. And when he came, he turned on the light and cleaned house! Peter speaks of the power of the word to give light and especially in the darkness: *“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place...”* (II Peter 1:19a,b). It was said of John the Baptist, *“The same came for a witness, to bear*

witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light" (John 1:7,8). Then as John was moving off the scene, Matthew confirmed that as Jesus would begin His marvelous ministry He would fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah: *"The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up"* (Matthew 4:16). What a privilege to be a lesser light that illuminates others to see the great light in Jesus!

2. A light is kindled and undiminished.

II Kings 22:1-7. Beginning at the young age of eight years, Josiah put his hand to the proverbial ploughshare and did not deviate in the early years of his life to follow God and do His will. *"And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left"* (II Kings 22:2). What a great reminder that it is never too young to follow Jesus. I love the advice that the dying old King David gave to his son Solomon: *"The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain"* (II Samuel 23:3,4). This is my prayer for the youth of our church. I pray for a morning without the clouds of a wicked and wasted youth. A cloudy morning often promises a stormy life! I want all of our kids to look back over their life when they become the age their parents are now with no regrets!

It should be noted that Josiah was blessed to have in his kingdom men that he could trust as illustrated in II Kings 22:7. He was not the only young person surrendered to the Lord.

3. The light came on in the Temple

II Kings 22:8-13. The Word of God was found by the priest Hilkiah, given to the scribe Shaphan who in turn read it to the king. Josiah responded correctly by repenting in a very serious manner. Josiah was convicted by the Word of God that their forefathers had begun a cycle of disobedience that continued until the day the law was read in his presence. When the Bible was read, conviction followed: *"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the*

heart" (Hebrews 4:12). Paul told Timothy, *"All scripture is given by inspiration (the very breath of God) of God, and is profitable for doctrine (what's right), for reproof (what's wrong), for correction (how to get right), for instruction in righteousness (how to stay right)"* (II Timothy 3:16). When the apostles spoke the Word of God, the Bible says, *"When they (the people listening) heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them"* (Acts 5:33). The Word of God goes straight to the heart. Hopefully, even today that same Word will draw any alienated from God to God rather than to rebel and go further away from God. When the light comes on, dirt, bugs, and clutter are revealed!

4. A light is joined to the light.

II Kings 22:14-20. The priest and the scribe went to the prophetess, Huldah with the Word of God that had been discovered. She pronounced judgment on Judah for their sins, but then she pronounced a blessing on the young king, Josiah. We witness a light (Josiah) coming to the light (the Word of God). When we agree with God and His word, blessing will always follow. If we disobey, a curse will ensue. *"Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God..."* (Deuteronomy 11:26-28a).

5. The light is turned on in the country.

II Kings 23:1-24. What a nation-wide revival broke out when the king became a light and in agreement began to obey the light from the word! The Passover was kept, idols were removed, idolatrous priests were removed and the old idols Solomon had permitted were destroyed. I like the way II Chronicles 34:4 says it: *"And they brake down the altars of Baalim in his presence; and the images, that were on high above them, he cut down; and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images, he brake in pieces, and made dust of them, and strowed it upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them."*

6. The light is turned off.

II Kings doesn't go into detail in the description of Josiah's death, but II Chronicles 35: 20-27 does. This is an unusual situation. The Pharaoh, Necho of Egypt came out against Carchemish to war. King Josiah launched an attack on Necho. Necho's ambassadors explained to Josiah they were here under the

orders from God. They tried to explain their battle wasn't with Josiah. The warning was given that strikes the fear of God in my heart: "...What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war: for God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not." (II Chronicles 35:21). In verse 22, Josiah's disobeys the Word of God. It is a messy thing to meddle with the Word of God. Josiah may not have liked it coming from Necho, but God's word is God's word even if it comes from the mouth of a donkey (Numbers 22:28). Josiah disguised himself, went into battle against the word of the Lord and became mortally wounded. We cannot hide from God! The great witness of God is silenced because of his disobedience. We need to always keep in mind that no one gets to the point where they cannot be corrected and we never become bulletproof. We cannot rely on yesterday's walks in the light to keep us in the light today. Walking in the light is a daily decision. Keep the light on!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.