

A BIBLICAL STUDY ON JEREMIAH

LESSON SEVENTEEN: KING JOSIAH'S CHOICE

by Sandy Harber

"For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father...." II Chronicles 34:3a

Since Josiah was only eight years old when he ascended the throne, he would have required some kind of regent to guide him and act on his behalf. Scripture doesn't give us any clues on who this person would have been. Perhaps his father had a brother, uncle, or cousin who could step up and take charge of the young king for a few years. King Josiah's mother was Jedidah, whose name means "God's darling." Being female, Jedidah would not have been permitted to act politically on her son's behalf. However, she most likely had a lot of influence over Josiah's upbringing during those important formative years. We don't know definitively any more about her than the meaning of her name and the name of her father, Adaiah of Boscath (II Kings 22:1). But, based on the meaning of her name, most Bible scholars credit Jedidah for training Josiah to love the Lord and desire to follow the path of righteousness.

In 632 B.C., in the eighth year of his reign, sixteen-year-old King Josiah "began to seek after the God of David his father" (II Chronicles 34:3a). Josiah had been on the throne for eight years, and a busy eight years it was! By the age of sixteen, he would have assumed much, if not all, of his kingly authority. He had at least two wives, Zedudah and Hamutal (II Kings 23:31, 36). Scripture gives us the name of Josiah's eldest son, Johanan (I Chronicles 3:5), but we don't know his mother's name. He was likely born in 633 or 634 B.C., when Josiah was thirteen or fourteen years old. Since Johanan's brothers occupied their father's throne, but he did not, we assume that he died before 609 B.C., when King Josiah was slain. Josiah's second son, Eliakim, who reigned as King Jehoiakim, was born in 634 B.C., when Josiah was fourteen years old (II Kings 23:36). King Josiah's third son, Shallum, who reigned as King Jehoahaz, was born in 632 B.C., when Josiah was sixteen years old (II Kings 23:31). It was normal for Jewish kings to marry young and produce sons to keep the royal line going.

The teenage king not only had several wives and three young sons to care for, but the welfare of an entire nation weighed upon him. He was wise to turn to the God of Israel for help. Youth may denote inexperience, but it does not negate wisdom. Paul advised Timothy to "let no man despise thy youth" (I Timothy 4:12). In other words, "Don't let anyone dismiss you as uninformed or ignorant because of your age, show them your maturity and wisdom instead by your speech and actions and moral stance." Josiah demonstrated his wisdom by seeking the Lord. One of the advantages of choosing God in one's youth is that there is more time to get to know Him and serve Him. Also, false teaching has had less time to take root. "Early will I seek thee," said David (Psalm 63:1). Start your day (early) with prayer and Bible reading. Start your life (early) by seeking God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33).

To "seek" after something means "to pursue, search, diligently inquire into" the subject. It takes focus and effort and dedication to be a true seeker. Where do you begin to seek God? Simply open your eyes and look around. His handiwork is everywhere. Paul said, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead" (Romans 1:20). It's obvious that heaven and earth and everything in them came from a Source of great power and intelligence. Psalm 19 tells us that nature "speaks" to us, declaring the glory of God and His handiwork (Psalm 19:1-6). God revealed more about Himself through the written Word (II Timothy 3:16-17). Finally, He came to earth as the Living Word, and communicated what God is like by His words and example (John 1:1, 14). God is knowable through nature, the Bible, and Jesus.

Josiah began this journey at the age of sixteen. His goal was to find the God of David, his ancestor. With a plethora of gods to choose from, Josiah recognized that the God of David was the only true God. David wrote many Psalms/songs praising the God of Israel, extoling His attributes and marvelous works. Josiah could not have chosen a better role model. David walked with God from a young lad keeping his father's sheep until he died of old age, the King of Israel. And, Josiah "walked in the ways of David his father" (II Chronicles 34:2).

"Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." I Timothy 4:12