

Radical Together Part 2: Second Chronicles 33-35 January 22, 2012 “Breaking a Family Tradition”

While there are some who have been raised in Christ-loving families, the majority of people today grew up in families that either did not believe in Christ, or either gave mere lip service to Christ but never actually followed Him.^{1 2} The life of Josiah is one of revolutionary change within a society that almost universally denied the God of the Bible or, at best, gave Him only lip service. God continues to call people to break with a family tradition of unbelief or half-hearted lip service to a passionate devotion that will eventually engulf all nations with the power of the Gospel.

Breaking with the past requires:

- 1) You realize that you can't make a **treaty** with sin – 34:3-7
 - 2) You allow God's Word to take **center stage** and your life will change – 34:19,27,31
 - 3) You allow God's Word to penetrate your heart and then you will live with the lenses of **eternity** – 34:31
- Soren Kierkegaard, “Define life backwards but live it forwards” (PHI 201, Week 1, Lesson 2 video).
- 4) Your heart cry begins to be to God and for God...He will hear you and **heal** you – 34:27-28
 - 5) God allows you to **find** Him if you seek for Him – 34:3

The year is 2048. America is in a state of insanity. The Constitution has now been replaced by executive order of the President. In fact, the President has performed what would amount to a coup de tat. All politicians and preachers opposing him are dead or in hiding. Churches no longer have church. Yet you can go to church but instead of hearing singing and the preaching of the Word of God, you encounter something entirely different. Instead of being a place where people can meet God, church buildings have become “Religious Centers of Toleration” (except for those who insist on following the Bible), where the government has set up a whorehouse in which people engage in gross acts of immorality as a way to increase tax revenue so as to advance “Religious Freedom” as well as the new regime. You would see things inside the building for worship that would make any “Gentleman's Club” seem family friendly in comparison. Imagine it as some kind of supplementary income for the government. Before all this happened, certain preachers refused to back down and were dragged from their pulpits by armed guards and publicly executed as traitors and Enemies of the State. Those loyal people who served and feared God (meaning they did not fear people), were imprisoned and killed as well. Because those who claimed to believe the Bible and tell others about God's truth were deemed as “cancer to society” (as Bill Maher said), and were brutally

¹ <http://www.barna.org/culture-articles/532-70-million-americans-feel-held-back-by-their-past>

² <http://www.barna.org/faith-spirituality/524-self-described-christians-dominate-america-but-wrestle-with-four-aspects-of-spiritual-depth>

oppressed by the new and “tolerant” administration. Everyone else was brainwashed. State sponsored and government encouraged abortion was a thriving industry.

All this was done under the guise of patriotism and seeking to keep America strong due to the rising up of enemies of America that make Al-Qaeda look like the Vienna Boys Choir.

Point = Translate this scenario over 6,000 miles away and over 2,600 years ago and you have just a glimpse into the world in which Josiah was born into. For every good story there is a setting and this is the setting of the life of Josiah.

Josiah’s life is kind of a conclusion in a Trilogy of madness. Understanding what the previous 2 generations of Josiah’s family were like, sets the stage for understanding his life. The narrative of his life occurs in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles. We will examine the 2 Chronicles account. Just a quick FYI, different accounts of the same event in the Bible do not mean that one of them is wrong. Rather, different details are added and highlighted. Just as different people see different aspects of the same event, so God allows us to see multiple facets of the same event so that we really get the picture. Even further, think about how important an event or story must be for God to have two or more accounts of it? The story of the death and resurrection of Jesus is recorded in every single one of the four Gospel accounts. Although every word of God is pure, it seems like this story is of such significance that God organized the Bible as if to say, “PAY ATTENTION THIS IS IMPORTANT!”

Here is the setting:

His grandfather, Manasseh, was the worst king Judah ever had and Josiah’s Dad was, in my opinion, the stupidest king Judah ever had. Although Josiah had some great ancestors generations earlier, the last 2 could have been poster boys for MAD magazine. In fact, 2 Chronicles 33 and 2 Kings 21 provide vivid details of how terrible these guys actually were but we’ll just hit the highlights:

- A. Tried to eradicate the worship of the true God from the nation.
- B. Rebuilding the high places – 2 Kings 21:3
- C. Built altars for Baal – 2 Kings 21:3
- D. Made a wooden image – 2 Kings 21:3
- E. Built pagan altars inside the temple – 2 Kings 21:4-5
- F. The bold and courageous prophet Isaiah stood up to the state sponsored wickedness.³
- G. Promoted Asherah (See, note on Judges 2:13 and Deut. 16:21 in Scofield Bible). Asherah was also the Babylonian goddess Ishtar, the Aphrodite of the Greeks, the Venus of the Romans (p.275, Scofield). = A sex-based and sex-driven religion.
- H. Sacrificed his own children to Molech (the pagan god of the Ammonites whose doctrine required the sacrifice of children)⁴ – 2 Kings 21:6
- I. Practiced witchcraft – 2 Kings 21:6
- J. Placed a symbol from a pagan sex religion in the temple (Asherah) – 2 Kings 21:7
- K. He did more terrible things than the Canaanites, the people who God destroyed via the Israelites – 2 Kings 21:9
- L. Killed innocent people (probably prophets/preachers) – 2 Kings 21:16

³ “The Martyrdom of Isaiah” <http://m.ccel.org/ccel/charles/otpseudepig/martisah.htm>

⁴ <http://www.russellmoore.com/2012/01/19/the-gospel-in-an-abortion-culture/>

M. Called the “Nero of Palestine”

N. God brought Manasseh to repentance through brutal imprisonment and humiliation. Easton describes the scenario as follows:

“Esarhaddon, Sennacherib’s successor on the Assyrian throne, who had his residence in Babylon for thirteen years (the only Assyrian monarch who ever reigned in Babylon), took Manasseh prisoner (B.C. 681) to Babylon. Such captive kings were usually treated with great cruelty. They were brought before the conqueror with a hook or ring passed through their lips or their jaws, having a cord attached to it, by which they were led. This is referred to in 2 Chr. 33:11, where the Authorized Version reads that Esarhaddon “took Manasseh among the thorns;” while the Revised Version renders the words, “took Manasseh in chains;” or literally, as in the margin, “with hooks.” (Comp. 2 Kings 19:28.)”⁵

O. Reigned from 698-642/43 B.C.

Paul possibly echoes Manasseh’s attitude with these words in 1 Timothy 1:15-16:

The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. ¹⁶ But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.

I don’t think it is a stretch to say that Manasseh was as cruel as Saddam Hussein, weird as Marilyn Manson and as twisted as Howard Stern. Not only that, but Manasseh was far worse than any of these guys. How do we know? We know this simply because none of these guys killed their own children in a pagan ritual of sacrifice. In Manasseh’s day, there were untold numbers of “Invisible Children.” Guess what is even more shocking...Manasseh was the king of the entire nation of Judah. You just think your family is tough.

(Amon) 2 Chronicles 33:10, *“The Lord spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention.”*

His father, Amon, was horrendous. Amon, step by step, followed the example of Manasseh even though that way of life was shown to end only in disaster and captivity (Assyrian capture of Manasseh). Not only this, but check it out 2 Chronicles 33:23 says, “And he did not humble himself before the LORD, as his father Manasseh had humbled himself; **but Amon trespassed more and more.**” Get this, if Manasseh was bad, Amon was even worse. Did you catch the fact that the Bible does not even attempt to explain how bad Amon was? It’s almost like, “if trying to describe how dirty and low Manasseh was is difficult, try depicting the moral depths that Amon plunged to!”

“A wise man sees danger and takes refuge but a fool keeps going and suffers for it.”

This is the context in which Josiah was born. It would be an understatement to say that Josiah came from an “Issue-Filled” family. But Josiah made a profound choice to break from the family tradition of rebellion against God. 2 Chronicles 34 is where our story picks up. The point and purpose of the narrative or the story of Josiah is breaking a family tradition of rebellion against God. As I read this passage try to notice the difference in the actions Josiah took compared with his family for the past 2 generations. We will read verses 1-7.

⁵ M.G. Easton, *Easton's Bible Dictionary*. (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996), in *Logos Library System* [CD-ROM].

(Read text) 2 Chronicles 34:1-7

4. He was 8 years old when his father was murdered

He recognized the concept of cause and effect. Even from his early years it becomes evident that Josiah did not follow the same path that his family had for the previous 2 generations. In effect, Josiah was intent on beginning a new “family tradition.” He saw the result of refusing to obey God’s Word.

5. Began to seek God at the age of 16 years old – 2 Chronicles. 34:3

-He studied in search for God four years before taking action (age 16-20). The teenage years are a crucial time.

6. Began to “purge” Judah when he was 20 years old. The word \square הָחֵל (hiphil, perfect, 3ms), in conjunction with ψ רָוֶן \square לָקַח (Qal, infinitive construct) is used to describe Josiah seeking God. The same word is used in connection with Γ \square לְטַהַר (Piel, infinitive construct), to describe how Josiah, “*began to purge Judah and Jerusalem*” (2 Chronicles 34:3).

*Josiah could have simply changed his way of life to following after God. However, he understood that no man is an island. Not only did he have the potential of making a difference in his generation but he also had a duty.

7. Josiah began his changes by confronting the culture head on. Check out how hardcore he was, “They broke down...he cut down...made dust...scattered it...burned...cleansed...cut down” (2 Chronicles 34:4-7).

8. Then he starts the process of restoring the temple which was where people went to worship God (2 Chronicles 34:8).

9. Everything is going on schedule until all of a sudden a guy named Hilkiyah found “The Book of the Law.” 2 Chronicles 34:14-18.

34:19 They found what was missing.

When the Word was read repentance came = God’s Word is like infra-red that pinpoints sin.

*A person’s life is neither complete nor on track until God’s Word takes center stage.

*Rediscovering the Bible/Gospel

Matthew 24:3 “*As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”*”

= Where Jesus prophesied about the End Times.

Luke 22:39 *“And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him.”*

= Where Jesus prayed.

Zech 14:4 *“On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east,”*

Point = Where Jesus will return. The very ground that was once used for sin was selected for the return of Christ.

10. His death was lamented by many people – 2 Chronicles 35:25.

11. He left a legacy like no one else in his generation or before – 2 Kings 23:25.

Lessons from the life of Josiah – How can we also break with the past?

Breaking with the Past requires:

1. You Can't Make a Treaty with Sin – 34:3-7 'verbs'

“Make no provision for the flesh.”

*Solomon thought he could control and contain sin but it cost him his potential effectiveness for God and peace of mind. Furthermore, upon Solomon's death, the kingdom was split in two because of what he had allowed to go on. Don't live a lukewarm life! There were other kings in Israel and Judah's history who tried to do this and their effectiveness for God was extinguished just like a match half submerged in water. It barely flickers and quickly goes out.

Q# Why was Josiah so hardcore against any kind of sin? It was simply because what sin was capable of doing to a person's life. Many of you have observed the devastating effects of alcoholism, drug use, fornication and adultery (sex outside of marriage), and bitterness.

Q# How do you deal with temptation? The Bible tells us in 2 Timothy 2:22 to, *“Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”*

*John Wesley said, “The world is anything that cools my love for God.”

In fact, it took Josiah 6 whole years to rid the nation of idolatry. Galatians 6:9 says, *“And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.”*

= Progressive sanctification

*Uncle Tommy and the water moccasin –

Point = Understand that without the POWER OF GOD you and I are helpless to resist sin. James 4:8 tells us, *“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”* We, like Josiah, must submit ourselves to God, receive His power, then resist the devil and temptation. We confront and resist the devil with the Word of God!

*Jesus quoted Scripture when tempted

2. You allow God’s Word to take **center stage** and your life will change – 34:19,27,31
Book of the Law being neglected – Romans 3:19-20
The Law of God is the X-Ray that removes all facades

Point = Josiah did not relegate biblical teaching to the realm of “my faith” but instead, allowed it to permeate and dictate the decisions they made on an every day basis.

34:19 = Josiah’s conversion!

Jesus Christ is the centerpiece of God’s Word

He followed God – His source of strength was from God.

*Me boxing Josh Pierce – don’t trust in your own ability.

Jesus said, “My food is to do the will of my Father.”

You say, ‘but Jeff, I don’t believe God’s Word or that there is a God.’ Augustine said (#1916), “I cannot show you my God; not because there is no God to show but because you have no eyes to see Him.”

Point = You may not be a king with political power but your life testimony can be far more influential than some legal degree or executive order.

*Authority – everyone has a source of authority. The question is what is it going to be. When Josiah heard God’s Word, he obeyed. We hear God’s Word and try to find the version that makes us the least uncomfortable. There is the tendency for us to discard what we are unfamiliar or uncomfortable with.

3. You allow God’s Word to penetrate your heart and then you will live with the lenses of **eternity** – 34:31 Josiah understood that this life will soon be past and only what is done for Christ will last.

Soren Kierkegaard, “Define life backwards but live it forwards” (PHI 201, Week 1, Lesson 2 video).

*Wisdom is seeing life from God’s perspective.

*He was not a slave of public opinion = The Slavery of the Fear of Man

-The Fear of Man/Woman – The question is who do we love more, our own view of how other people view us or the God who made us and loves us and for all those people who can only be saved by trusting in Jesus Christ. Your life could be the very instrument God uses to convince lost people that He is real! Never underestimate the impact of a single life in the lenses of eternity.

*Country song, “You’ve got to stand for something or you’ll fall for anything.”

= Anything isn’t good enough. Kneel before Jesus, be transformed, & rise a new person filled with the Holy Spirit, a backbone of steel and a heart of flesh.

Proverbs 15:9, *“The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But He loves him who follows righteousness.”*

4. Your heart cry begins to be to God and for God...He will hear you and **heal** you – 34:27-28

5. God allows you to **find** Him if you seek for Him – 2 Chronicles 34:3 = Matthew 7:7-8, *“Ask, and it shall be given you. Seek, and you shall find. Knock, and the door shall be opened unto you. For everyone who asks receives, and to he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened.”*

Jesus is seeking some of you out. Some to be saved, others to put their faith in gear.

Matthew 6:33 “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.”

Point = Following a process is necessary in the end turning out the way it should. Don't seek after 'all these things' first. High schoolers and college students seek a spouse, young professionals seek a good job and paycheck, parents seek a way to raise kids without raising their blood pressure, seniors seek vacation spots and things to fill their time but NONE OF THESE THINGS SHOULD BE THE MAIN FOCUS. Seeking Jesus and following His teachings is a first and everything else will fall into line.

*Treasure movies – Seek Christ in all that you do! Christ is the treasure!

6. Josiah removed what shouldn't be there and accepted from God what should be there.

One definition of stupid is, “Doing the same things the same way but expecting different results.” Another saying is, “If you do what you've always done, you'll get what you always got.”

*Eric Geiger and the importance of not wasting your “while he was young” years.

“Let me tell you what really happened...”

Repentance in 2 Chronicles 34:27:

“because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words against this place and against its inhabitants, and you humbled yourself before Me, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard *you*,” says the LORD.”

After hearing this, Josiah assembled the meeting that began the restoration of true worship back to the nation of Judah. = What can happen here is for us to humble ourselves before God, and it may be that He hears us and grants us mercy. Only then can we be set back onto the right track.

Closing AGI: Joshua – but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.