

All Shook Up: The Story of King Josiah

by Bryan Gibson

When God says we're wrong, it ought to make us tremble. "But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word" (Isaiah 66:2, NASV). I hope that describes us, but I know for a fact it describes King Josiah (2 Chronicles 34:8-33). When he heard God's word and found out he was wrong, he was humble; he was contrite in spirit; and yes, he did tremble. He reacted the very way you and I should react when God says we're wrong.

Here's how it happened. In the 18th year of his reign, when he was 26 years old, Josiah ordered repairs on the temple. The Book of the Law, which had been lost for some time, was discovered during this repair work. Josiah had someone read the law and the news was not good. The law of God revealed to him two things—that He and the people were guilty of breaking a number of God's commandments, and that God's wrath was about to be poured out on them. It was too late to save the nation of Judah, over whom Josiah reigned, but God had mercy on Josiah, and here's why: "...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" (2 Chronicles 34:27-28).

But that's not the end of the story. Josiah did more than just tremble; he set out immediately to make the necessary changes to his own life, and to influence as many others as he could to do the same. Read carefully: "Then the king stood in his place and made a covenant before the LORD, to follow the LORD, and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book. And he made all who were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin take a stand. So the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. Thus Josiah removed all the abominations from all the country that belonged to the children of Israel, and made all who were present in Israel diligently serve the LORD their God. All his days they did not depart from following the LORD God of their fathers" (2 Chronicles 34:31-33). In other words, Josiah REPENTED, and that's the part we too often leave out.

Some folks will tremble when they hear or read God's word, but that's as far as it goes. Felix trembled when he heard Paul preach the gospel (Acts 24:25), but he didn't respond; he didn't make the necessary changes. Even demons tremble (James 2:19), and we know there is no hope for them. I want to be more like King Josiah, and I'm sure you do too. We must—if we want to go to heaven.