

AMON and JOSIAH

Day 1:

2 Chronicles 33:21-25 New International Version (NIV)

Amon King of Judah

21 Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem two years. 22 He did evil in the eyes of the Lord, as his father Manasseh had done. Amon worshiped and offered sacrifices to all the idols Manasseh had made. 23 But unlike his father Manasseh, he did not humble himself before the Lord; Amon increased his guilt.

24 Amon's officials conspired against him and assassinated him in his palace. 25 Then the people of the land killed all who had plotted against King Amon, and they made Josiah his son king in his place.

I have a friend whose childhood was filled with heartbreaking generational physical and verbal abuse, yet he is one of the kindest, gentlest people I know. It would be easy to think he didn't stand a chance of breaking patterns so deeply ingrained in his heritage, but God has led him down a different path for his life journey, proving that no one is beyond God's reach, even if one's earthly heritage would say differently.

In 2 Chronicles 33: 21-25, we read about Amon, the son of Manasseh. Manasseh reigned for 55 years that were dominated by wickedness and violence but ended with repentance after humiliation and torture at the hands of the Assyrians. Manasseh and Amon were a case of "like father, like son" with the huge exception that Amon never did repent or humble himself before God. His reign as king was very brief – only two evil-filled years. There is not one bright spot in Amon's character to relieve the darkness of his life's brief record. Amon may have thought he'd have time to get right with God since his father had returned to the Lord late in life, but his own officials assassinated him. There is nothing redemptive in Amon's life, but he made one positive contribution to the history of God's people by producing a son, Josiah, who would be remembered as one of the best kings to reign on the throne in Jerusalem.

It was feared that the officials who assassinated Amon would appoint one of their own to be the next king, so the people took matters into their own hands and killed the officials. The dynasty of the throne of David was preserved in the crowning of an eight-year-old. Josiah

broke the pattern of prevailing evil at a time and at an age that seemed unlikely. God's reach is truly beyond our earthly heritage and imagination.

Day 2 (Reading only)

1 Timothy 4:11-16 New International Version (NIV)

11 Command and teach these things. 12 Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. 13 Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. 14 Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you.

15 Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. 16 Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Day 3:

Shortly after we were married at the young age of twenty, my husband was asked to serve in a leadership role at the church we attended. He felt immensely unqualified and planned to decline, but the text in his daily devotions jumped off the page and into his heart: "*Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in*

speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12). He took on the role, deeply grateful for more experienced leaders who mentored him.

When we remember that Josiah was only eight years old when he became King, we wonder what he could possibly grasp of the immensity of this role. Since his father Amon's reign was so brief, perhaps Josiah had memories of his grandfather Manasseh's repentance in the last years of his reign. While still a teenager, Josiah sought after the God of his forefather David, leading to a decisive change in the culture. Josiah was blessed with some godly mentors – Shaphan, his royal secretary, and Hilkiah, the high priest. Interestingly, cultural reforms were well underway before the Book of the Law was discovered and read to the King.

There is a phrase "What if you are the only 'Bible' someone else reads?" Long before Josiah heard the Book of the Law, he did what was "right in the eyes of the Lord" (2 Chronicles 34:2a). His moral compass was guided by what he had learned about David's devotion to Yahweh. Josiah's heart recognized the truth of God's Word when it was read to him, and he was filled with conviction. He continued to follow God all the days of his life.

Prayer

Father God, help us live in such a way that others will seek to follow You as a result. Like Josiah, we pray that we would not "turn aside to the right or the left" (2 Chronicles 34: 2b), but instead would keep our eyes looking forward and upward, no matter our age or station in life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 4 (Reading Only)

2 Chronicles 35:1-19 New International Version (NIV)

Josiah Celebrates the Passover

35 Josiah celebrated the Passover to the Lord in Jerusalem, and the Passover lamb was slaughtered on the fourteenth day of the first month.² He appointed the priests to their duties and encouraged them in the service of the Lord's temple. ³ He said to the Levites, who instructed all Israel and who had been consecrated to the Lord: "Put the sacred ark in the temple that Solomon son of David king of Israel built. It is not to be carried about on your

shoulders. Now serve the Lord your God and his people Israel. 4 Prepare yourselves by families in your divisions, according to the instructions written by David king of Israel and by his son Solomon.

5 “Stand in the holy place with a group of Levites for each subdivision of the families of your fellow Israelites, the lay people. 6 Slaughter the Passover lambs, consecrate yourselves and prepare the lambs for your fellow Israelites, doing what the Lord commanded through Moses.”

7 Josiah provided for all the lay people who were there a total of thirty thousand lambs and goats for the Passover offerings, and also three thousand cattle—all from the king’s own possessions.

8 His officials also contributed voluntarily to the people and the priests and Levites. Hilkiah, Zechariah and Jehiel, the officials in charge of God’s temple, gave the priests twenty-six hundred Passover offerings and three hundred cattle. 9 Also Konaniah along with Shemaiah and Nethanel, his brothers, and Hashabiah, Jeiel and Jozabad, the leaders of the Levites, provided five thousand Passover offerings and five hundred head of cattle for the Levites.

10 The service was arranged and the priests stood in their places with the Levites in their divisions as the king had ordered. 11 The Passover lambs were slaughtered, and the priests splashed against the altar the blood handed to them, while the Levites skinned the animals. 12 They set aside the burnt offerings to give them to the subdivisions of the families of the people to offer to the Lord, as it is written in the Book of Moses. They did the same with the cattle. 13 They roasted the Passover animals over the fire as prescribed, and boiled the holy offerings in pots, caldrons and pans and served them quickly to all the people. 14 After this, they made preparations for themselves and for the priests, because the priests, the descendants of Aaron, were sacrificing the burnt offerings and the fat portions until nightfall. So the Levites made preparations for themselves and for the Aaronic priests.

15 The musicians, the descendants of Asaph, were in the places prescribed by David, Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun the king’s seer. The gatekeepers at each gate did not need to leave their posts, because their fellow Levites made the preparations for them.

16 So at that time the entire service of the Lord was carried out for the celebration of the Passover and the offering of burnt offerings on the altar of the Lord, as King Josiah had ordered. 17 The Israelites who were present celebrated the Passover at that time and observed the Festival of Unleavened Bread for seven days. 18 The Passover had not been observed like this in Israel since the days of the prophet Samuel; and none of the kings of Israel had ever celebrated such a Passover as did Josiah, with the priests, the Levites and all Judah and Israel who were there with the people of Jerusalem. 19 This Passover was celebrated in the eighteenth year of Josiah’s reign.

Day 5:

Josiah's father Amon's story is recorded in four verses (2 Chronicles 33: 21 – 25), whereas Josiah's story is given in far more detail (2 Chronicles 34 and 35). It's startling to realize Josiah was not even forty years old when he was mortally wounded in battle, ending a reign of thirty-one years that began when he was only eight. In 2 Chronicles 34:28, God promised Josiah he would be "buried in peace," yet Josiah's life ended tragically, in part due to a strategic battle misunderstanding. Still, Josiah was spared from seeing what was coming to the Israelites in the not-so-distant future. Though he "rested in peace," all King Josiah had rebuilt and the people he helped restore would be wiped out in one of the most violent periods in his people's history.

Josiah's legacy of godly living in the midst of a very dark period in history reminds us we can also stay true to God even when it seems culture is beyond redeeming. While Josiah was not perfect, his depth of character points us toward Jesus, whose life was also taken in a most violent manner so that lost cultures and peoples could be redeemed through the ages. Will our

legacy be like Amon's, or will it be like Josiah's? The lyrics of a song by Casting Crowns speak to the legacy God is calling each one of us to leave -

All the kingdoms built, all the trophies won

Will crumble into dust when it's said and done

'Cause all that really mattered

Did I live the truth to the ones I love?

Was my life the proof that there is only One

Whose name will last forever?

And I, I don't want to leave a legacy

I don't care if they remember me

Only Jesus

And I, I've only got one life to live

I'll let every second point to Him

Only Jesus

Songwriters: Bernie Herms / John Mark Hall / Matthew Joseph West