

Seeking Renewal

Key Verse: *“The king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all their heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant.”*
—II Kings 23:3

Selected Scripture:
*II Kings 22:8-10;
23:1-3, 21-23*

FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF

Manasseh, his son Amon succeeded him as king of Judah. Born and raised during the period of his father’s idolatry, his reign was full of wickedness, and would cost him his life after only two years on the throne. He was followed in the kingdom by his son Josiah, whose name signifies, ‘God will support.’ He, at the age of eight, would develop a very different character, and would become a true servant of God—“He did that which was right in the sight of the LORD.” (II Kings 22:2) He came to be known as one of the greatest reform kings of the nation of Israel through a magnificent ceremony of covenant renewal.

Life provides us with opportunities for second chances and other forms of renewal. What spurs us to seek renewal? It is necessary that we become the Lord’s, devoting ourselves wholly to his will, and to seek after him to know his will that we may do it. For those who draw near to the Lord, this promise extends, “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.”

(James 4:8) This young king, under the guidance of his religious mother, “began to seek after the God of David, . . . and . . . began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, . . . and the carved images, and the molten images.” (II Chron. 34:3) This reform work was so extensive that even with his personal direction it took six years to complete. Josiah now looked at ways to further serve God, and determined that this would be in the form of repairing the Temple, which now had been completely neglected. During this repair work, a very ancient manuscript of the Law was discovered. We should remember that books were uncommon in that day, and few people could write or read them. The Law of Moses was therefore presented to the people orally, by the priests, from memory. It is no wonder that this Book of the Law, when found by Hilkiah, was deemed a treasure. After hearing the book read by his secretary Shaphan, the king was so moved and astonished by them, “that he rent his clothes.”—II Kings 22:11

Realizing how far short Israel had come from the demands of the Law, and noting the punishments prescribed for unfaithfulness, the king was troubled. He inquired of the LORD respecting what should be done to escape the punishments which were justly to come to the nation under the conditions of the Law Covenant. The LORD’s reply, through the prophetess Huldah, was direct concerning the penalties that would come upon the nation for their years of wickedness. God added words of consolation for the king, “Because thine heart was tender, . . . and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the LORD.” (vs. 19) God promised that he would spare Josiah from seeing the severe punishments that would come upon Israel.—vs. 20

The result of this promise led to the words from our key text, ‘to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all their heart.’ Our lesson is to do the Father’s will, looking for ways to serve him with a pure heart, and be faithful to him in all things. ■