

2CHRONICLES 34: 1 Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign; and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem.

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Josiah reigns thirty-one years; destroys idolatry in Judah, as also in Manasseh, Ephraim, Simeon, and even to Naphtali, 2Chr 34:1-7. He begins to repair the temple, and collects money for the purpose, and employs workmen, 2Chr 34:8-13. Hilkiah the priest finds the book of the law in the temple, which is read by Shaphan before the king, 2Chr 34:14-19. He is greatly troubled, and consults Huldah the prophetess, 2Chr 34:20-22. Her exhortation, and message to the king, 2Chr 34:23-28. He causes it to be read to the elders of Judah, and they make a covenant with God, 2Chr 34:29, 2Chr 34:32. Josiah reforms every abomination, and the people serve God all his days, 2Chr 34:33.

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2CHRONICLES 34: 2 He did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, and walked in the ways of David his father, and didn't turn aside to the right hand or to the left.

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#### Verse 2

He declined neither to the right hand, nor to the left - He never swerved from God and truth; he never omitted what he knew to be his duty to God and his kingdom; he carried on his reformation with a steady hand; timidity did not prevent him from going far enough; and zeal did not lead him beyond due bounds. He walked in the golden mean, and his moderation was known unto all men. He went neither to the right nor to the left, he looked inward, looked forward, and looked upward. Reader, let the conduct of this pious youth be thy exemplar through life.

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2CHRONICLES 34: 3 For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father; and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the Asherah poles, and the engraved images, and the molten images.

2CHRONICLES 34: 4 They broke down the altars of the Baals in his presence; and the incense altars that were on high above them he cut down; and the Asherah poles, and the engraved images, and the molten images, he broke in pieces, and made dust of them, and strewed it on the graves of those who had sacrificed to them.

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#### Verse 4

The altars of Baalim - How often have these been broken down, and how soon set up again! We see that the religion of a land is as the religion of its king. If the king were idolatrous, up went the altars, on them were placed the statues, and the smoke of incense ascended in ceaseless clouds to the honor of that which is vanity, and nothing to the world; on the other hand, when the king was truly religious, down went the idolatrous altars, broken in pieces were the images, and the sacrificial smoke ascended only to the true God: in all these cases the people were as one man with the king.

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2CHRONICLES 34: 5 He burnt the bones of the priests on their altars, and purged Judah and Jerusalem.

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Verse 5

He burnt the bones of the priests - כומרֵיָא kumeraiya, the kemarim, says the Targum. See this word explained, 2Kgs 23:5 (note).

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2CHRONICLES 34: 6 He did this in the cities of Manasseh and Ephraim and Simeon, even to Naphtali, around in their ruins.

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Verse 6

The cities of Manasseh - Even those who were under the government of the Israelitish king permitted their idols and places of idolatry to be hewn down and destroyed: after the truth was declared and acknowledged, the spade and the axe were employed to complete the reformation.

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2CHRONICLES 34: 7 He broke down the altars, and beat the Asherah poles and the engraved images into powder, and cut down all the incense altars throughout all the land of Israel, and returned to Jerusalem.

2CHRONICLES 34: 8 Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land and the house, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, and Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the LORD's house his God.

2CHRONICLES 34: 9 They came to Hilkiah the high priest, and delivered the money that was brought into God's house, which the Levites, the keepers of the threshold, had gathered of the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, and of all the remnant of Israel, and of all Judah and Benjamin, and of the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

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Verse 9

And they returned to Jerusalem - Instead of וישבו vaiyashubu, "they returned," we should read יושבי yoshebey, "the inhabitants;" a reading which is supported by many MSS., printed editions, and all the versions, as well as by necessity and common sense. See the note on 2Chr 19:8, where a similar mistake is rectified.

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2CHRONICLES 34: 10 They delivered it into the hand of the workmen who had the oversight of the LORD's house; and the workmen who laboured in the LORD's house gave it to mend and repair the house;

2CHRONICLES 34: 11 even to the carpenters and to the builders gave they it, to buy cut stone, and timber for couplings, and to make beams for the houses which the kings of Judah had destroyed.

2CHRONICLES 34: 12 The men did the work faithfully: and their overseers were Jahath and Obadiah, the Levites, of the sons of Merari; and Zechariah and Meshullam, of the sons of the Kohathites, to set it forward; and others of the Levites, all who were skilful with instruments of music.

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Verse 12

All that could skill of instruments of music - Did the musicians play on their several instruments to encourage and enliven the workmen? Is not this a probable case from their mention here? If this were really the case, instrumental music was never better applied in any thing that refers to the worship of God. It is fabled of Orpheus, a most celebrated musician, that such was the enchanting harmony of his lyre, that he built the city of Thebes by it: the stones and timbers danced to his melody; and by the power of his harmony rose up, and took their respective places in the different parts of the wall that was to defend the city! This is fable; but as all fable is a representation of truth, where is the truth and fact to which this refers? How long has this question lain unanswered! But have we not the answer now? It is known in general, that the cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii were overwhelmed by an eruption of Mount Vesuvius, about the seventy-ninth year of the Christian era. It is also known that, in sinking for wells, the workmen of the king of Naples lighted on houses, etc., of those overwhelmed cities; that excavations have been carried on, and are now in the act of being carried on, which are bringing daily to view various utensils, pictures, and books, which have escaped the influence of the burning lava; and that some of those parchment volumes have been unrolled, and facsimiles of them engraved and published; and that our late Prince Regent, afterwards George IV., king of Great Britain, expended considerable sums of money annually in searching for, unrolling, and deciphering those rolls. This I record to his great credit as the lover of science and literature. Now, among the books that have been unrolled and published, is a Greek Treatise on Music, by Philodemus; and here we have the truth represented which lay hidden under the fables of Orpheus and Amphion. This latter was a skillful harper, who was frequently employed by the Theban workmen to play to them while engaged in their labor, and for which they rewarded him out of the proceeds of that labor. So powerful and pleasing was his music, that they went lightly and comfortably through their work; and time and labor passed on without tedium or fatigue; and the walls and towers were speedily raised. This, by a metaphor, was attributed to the dulcet sounds of his harp; and poetry seized on and embellished it, and mythology incorporated it with her fabulous system. Orpheus is the same. By his skill in music he drew stones and trees after him, i.e., he presided over and encouraged the workmen by his skill in music. Yet how simple and natural is the representation given by this ancient Greek writer of such matters! See Philodemus, Col. viii. and ix. Orpheus, and Amphion, by their music, moved the workmen to diligence and activity, and lessened and alleviated their toil. May we not suppose, then, that skillful musicians among the Levites did exercise their art among the workmen who were employed in the repairs of the house of the Lord? May I be allowed a gentle transition? Is it not the power and harmony of the grace of Jesus Christ in the Gospel, that convert, change, and purify the souls of men, and prepare them for and place them in that part of the house of God, the New Jerusalem? A most beautiful and chaste allusion to this fact and fable is made by an eminent poet, while praying for his own success as a Christian minister, who uses all his skill as a poet and musician for the glory of God: -

Thy own musician, Lord, inspire,

And may my consecrated lyre

Repeat the psalmist's part!

His Son and thine reveal in me,  
And fill with sacred melody  
The fibres of my heart.  
So shall I charm the listening throng,  
And draw the Living Stones along  
By Jesus' tuneful name.  
The living stones shall dance, shall rise,  
And Form a City in the skies,  
The New Jerusalem.  
Charles Wesley.

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2CHRONICLES 34: 13 Also they were over the bearers of burdens, and set forward all who did the work in every kind of service: and of the Levites there were scribes, and officers, and porters.

2CHRONICLES 34: 14 When they brought out the money that was brought into the LORD's house, Hilkiah the priest found the book of the LORD's law given by Moses.

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Verse 14

Found a book of the law - See on 2Kgs 22:8 (note).

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2CHRONICLES 34: 15 Hilkiah answered Shaphan the scribe, "I have found the book of the law in the LORD's house." Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan.

2CHRONICLES 34: 16 Shaphan carried the book to the king, and moreover brought back word to the king, saying, "All that was committed to your servants, they are doing.

2CHRONICLES 34: 17 They have emptied out the money that was found in the LORD's house, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and into the hand of the workmen."

2CHRONICLES 34: 18 Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, "Hilkiah the priest has delivered me a book." Shaphan read therein before the king.

2CHRONICLES 34: 19 When the king had heard the words of the law, he tore his clothes.

2CHRONICLES 34: 20 The king commanded Hilkiah, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the king's servant, saying,

2CHRONICLES 34: 21 "Go inquire of the LORD for me, and for those who are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found; for great is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out on us, because our fathers have not kept the LORD's word, to do according to all that is written in this book."

2CHRONICLES 34: 22 So Hilkiah, and they whom the king had commanded, went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tokhath, the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she lived in Jerusalem in the second quarter;) and they spoke to her to that effect.

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Verse 22

Huldah the prophetess - See on 2Kgs 22:14 (note).

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2CHRONICLES 34: 23 She said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: 'Tell the man who sent you to me,

2CHRONICLES 34: 24 "Thus says the LORD, 'Behold, I will bring evil on this place, and on its inhabitants, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah.

2CHRONICLES 34: 25 Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore is my wrath poured out on this place, and it shall not be quenched.'"

2CHRONICLES 34: 26 But to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, thus you shall tell him, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: "As touching the words which you have heard,

2CHRONICLES 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 have humbled yourself before me, and have torn your clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard you," says the LORD.

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Verse 27

Because thine heart was tender - "Because thy heart was melted, and thou hast humbled thyself in the sight of the Word of the Lord, מימרא דיי meymera daya, when thou didst hear his words, ית פתגמוי yath pithgamoï, against this place," etc. Here the Targum most evidently distinguishes between מימרא meymera, the Personal Word, and פתגם pithgam, a word spoken or expressed.

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2CHRONICLES 34: 28 "Behold, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, neither shall your eyes see all the evil that I will bring on this place, and on its inhabitants.'"" They brought back word to the king.

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Verse 28

Gathered to thy grave in peace - See particularly the note on 2Kgs 22:20 (note).

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2CHRONICLES 34: 29 Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem.

2CHRONICLES 34: 30 The king went up to the LORD's house, and all the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, both great and small:

and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the LORD's house.

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Verse 30

The king went - See on 2Kgs 23:1 (note).

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2CHRONICLES 34: 31 The king stood in his place, 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 his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book.

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Verse 31

Made a covenant - See on 2Kgs 23:3 (note). And see the notes on that and the preceding chapter, 2 Chronicles 33 (note), for the circumstances detailed here.

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2CHRONICLES 34: 32 He caused all who were found in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand. The inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers.

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Verse 32

To stand to it - It is likely that he caused them all to arise when he read the terms of the covenant, and thus testify their approbation of the covenant itself, and their resolution to observe it faithfully and perseveringly.

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2CHRONICLES 34: 33 Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel, and made all who were found in Israel to serve, even to serve the LORD their God. All his days they didn't depart from following the LORD, the God of their fathers.

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