
2KINGS 23: 1 The king sent, and they gathered to him all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem.

Josiah reads in the temple to the elders of Judah, the priests, the prophets, and the people, the book of the covenant which had been found, 2Kgs 23:1, 2Kgs 23:2. He makes a covenant, and the people stand to it, 2Kgs 23:3. He destroys the vessels of Baal and Asherah, and puts down the idolatrous priests; breaks down the houses of the sodomites, and the high places; defiles Topheth; takes away the horses of the sun; destroys the altars of Ahaz; breaks in pieces the images; and breaks down and burns Jeroboam's altar at Beth-el, 2Kgs 23:4-15. Fulfills the word of the prophet, who cried against the altar at Beth-el, 2Kgs 23:16-18. Destroys the high places in Samaria, slays the idolatrous priests, and celebrates a great passover, 2Kgs 23:19-23; and puts away all the dealers with familiar spirits, etc., 2Kgs 23:24. His eminent character; he is mortally wounded at Megiddo, and buried at Jerusalem, 2Kgs 23:25-30. Jehoahaz reigns in his stead, and does evil in the sight of the Lord, 2Kgs 23:31, 2Kgs 23:32. Is dethroned by Pharaoh-nechoh; and Eliakim, his brother, called also Jehoiakim, made king in his stead; the land is laid under tribute by the king of Egypt, and Jehoiakim reigns wickedly, 2Kgs 23:33-37.

2KINGS 23: 2 The king went up to the LORD's house, and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the people, both small and great: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the LORD's house.

Verse 2

The king went up into the house of the Lord - Here is another very singular circumstance. The high priest, scribes, priest, and prophets, are gathered together, with all the elders of the people, and the king himself reads the book of the covenant which had been lately found! It is strange that either the high priest, Jeremiah, Zephaniah, or some other of the prophets, who were certainly there present, did not read the sacred book! It is likely that the king considered himself a mediator between God and them, and therefore read and made the covenant.

2KINGS 23: 3 The king stood by the 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 his heart, and all his soul, to confirm the words of this covenant that were written in this book: and all the people stood to the covenant.

Verse 3

Stood by a pillar - He stood, על העמוד al haammud, "upon the stairs or pulpit." This is what is called the brazen scaffold or pulpit which Solomon made, and on which the kings were accustomed to stand when they addressed the people. See 2Chr 6:13, and the parallel places.

Made a covenant - This was expressed,

1. In general. To walk after Jehovah; to have no gods besides him.
2. To take his law for the regulation of their conduct.
3. In particular. To bend their whole heart and soul to the observance of it, so that, they might not only have religion without, but, piety within.

To this all the people stood up, thus giving their consent, and binding themselves to obedience.

2KINGS 23: 4 The king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the threshold, to bring out of the LORD's temple all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the Asherah, and for all the army of the sky, and he burned them outside of Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron, and carried their ashes to Bethel.

Verse 4

The priests of the second order - These were probably such as supplied the place of the high priest when he was prevented: from fulfilling the functions of his office. So the Chaldee understood the place - the sagan of the high priests. But the words may refer to those of the second course or order established by David: though it does not appear that those orders were now in use, yet the distinction was continued even to the time of our Lord. We find the course of Abia, which was the eighth, mentioned Luk 1:5 (note); where see the note.

All the vessels - These had been used for idolatrous purposes; the king is now to destroy them; for although no longer used in this way, they might, if permitted to remain, be an incentive to idolatry at a future time.

2KINGS 23: 5 He put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places around Jerusalem; those also who burned incense to Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the army of the sky.

Verse 5

The idolatrous priests - הכמרים hakkemarim. Who these were is not well known. The Chaldee, Syriac, and Arabic, call them the priests simply, which the kings of Judah had ordained. Probably they were an order made by the idolatrous kings of Judah, and called kemarim, from כמר camar, which signifies to be scorched, shriveled together, made dark, or black, because their business was constantly to attend sacrificial fires, and probably they wore black garments; hence the Jews in derision call Christian ministers kemarim, because of their black clothes and garments. Why we should imitate, in our sacerdotal dress, those priests of Baal, is strange to think and hard to tell.

Unto Baal, to the sun - Though Baal was certainly the sun, yet here they are distinguished; Baal being worshipped under different forms and attributes, Baal-peor, Baal-zephon, Baal-zebub, etc.

The planets - מזלות mazzaloth. The Vulgate translates this the twelve signs, i.e., the zodiac. This is as likely as any of the other conjectures which have been published relative to this word. See a similar word Job 37:9; Job 38:32.

2KINGS 23: 6 He brought out the Asherah from the LORD's house, outside of Jerusalem, to the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and beat it to dust, and cast its dust on the graves of the common people.

Verse 6

He brought out the grove - He brought out the idol Asherah. See at the end of 2Kgs 21:26 (note).

Upon the graves of the children of the people - I believe this; means the burial-place of the common people.

2KINGS 23: 7 He broke down the houses of the sodomites, that were in the LORD's house, where the women wove hangings for the Asherah.

Verse 7

The houses of the sodomites - We have already often met with these קדשים kedeshim or consecrated persons. The word implies all kinds of prostitutes, as well as abusers of themselves with mankind.

Wove hangings for the grove - For Asherah; curtains or tent coverings for the places where the rites of the impure goddess were performed. See at the end of 2Kgs 21:26 (note).

2KINGS 23: 8 He brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beersheba; and he broke down the high places of the gates that were at the entrance of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which were on a man's left hand at the gate of the city.

Verse 8

The gate of Joshua - The place where he, as governor of the city, heard and decided causes. Near this we find there were public altars, where sometimes the true God, at other times false gods, were honored.

2KINGS 23: 9 Nevertheless the priests of the high places didn't come up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, but they ate unleavened bread among their brothers.

Verse 9

The priests of the high places came not up - As these priests had offered sacrifices on the high places, though it was to the true God, yet they were not thought proper to be employed immediately about the temple; but as they were acknowledged to belong to the priesthood, they had a right to their support; therefore a portion of the tithes, offerings, and unleavened bread, shew-bread, etc., was appointed to them for their support. Thus they were treated as priests who had some infirmity which rendered it improper for them to minister at the altar. See Lev 21:17, etc., and particularly Lev 21:22, Lev 21:23.

2KINGS 23: 10 He defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech.

Verse 10

He defiled Topheth - St. Jerome says that Topheth was a fine and pleasant place, well watered with fountains, and adorned with gardens. The valley of the son of Hinnom, or Gehenna, was in one part; here it appears the sacred rites of Molech were performed, and to this all the filth of the city was carried, and perpetual fires were kept up in order to consume it. Hence it has been considered a type of hell; and in this sense it is used in the New Testament.

It is here said that Josiah defiled this place that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire. He destroyed the image of Molech, and so polluted the place where he stood, or his temple, that it was rendered in every way abominable. The rabbins say that Topheth had its name from תוף toph, a drum, because instruments of this kind were used to drown the cries of the children that were put into the burning arms of Molech, to be scorched to death. This may be as true as the following definition: "Topheth, or the valley of the son of Hinnom, was a place near Jerusalem, where the filth and offal of the city were thrown, and where a constant fire was kept up to consume the wretched remains of executed criminals. It was a human shambles, a public chopping-block, where the arms and legs of men and women were quartered off by thousands." Query, On what authority do such descriptions rest?

2KINGS 23: 11 He took away the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entrance of the LORD's house, by the room of Nathan Melech the officer, who was in the court; and he burned the chariots of the sun with fire.

Verse 11

The horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun - Jarchi says that those who adored the sun had horses which they mounted every morning to go out to meet the sun at his rising. Throughout the East the horse, because of his swiftness and utility, was dedicated to the sun; and the Greeks and Romans feigned that the chariot of the sun was drawn by four horses - Pyroeis, Eous, Aethon, and Phlegon. See the note on 2Kgs 2:11.

Whether these were living or sculptured horses, we cannot tell; the latter is the more reasonable supposition.

2KINGS 23: 12 The king broke down the altars that were on the roof of the upper room of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the LORD's house, and beat them down from there, and cast their dust into the brook Kidron.

Verse 12

On the top of the upper chamber - Altars built on the flat roof of the house. Such altars were erected to the sun, moon, stars, etc.

2KINGS 23: 13 The king defiled the high places that were before Jerusalem, which were on the right hand of the mountain of corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Sidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Milcom the abomination of the children of Ammon.

Verse 13

Mount of corruption - This, says Jarchi, following the Chaldee, was the mount of Olives, for this is the mount המשחה hammishchah, of unction; but because of the idolatrous purposes for which it was used, the Scripture changed the appellation to the mount המשחית hammashchith, of corruption.

Ashtoreth the abomination, etc. - See on 1Kgs 11:7 (note).

2KINGS 23: 14 He broke in pieces the pillars, and cut down the Asherah poles, and filled their places with the bones of men.

Verse 14

Filled their places with the bones of men - This was allowed to be the utmost defilement to which any thing could be exposed.

2KINGS 23: 15 Moreover the altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, even that altar and the high place he broke down; and he burned the high place and beat it to dust, and burned the Asherah.

2KINGS 23: 16 As Josiah turned himself, he spied the tombs that were there in the mountain; and he sent, and took the bones out of the tombs, and burned them on the altar, and defiled it, according to the LORD's word which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these things.

Verse 16

And as Josiah turned himself - This verse is much more complete in the Septuagint, and in the Hexaplar Syriac version at Paris. I shall give the whole, making a distinction where, in those versions, any thing is added: "And as Josiah turned himself, he spied the sepulchres that were there in the mount, and sent and took the bones out of the sepulchres, and burnt them upon the altar, and polluted it: according to the word of the Lord which the man of God proclaimed [when Jeroboam stood by the altar at the feast. And turning about, he cast his eyes on the sepulcher of the man of God] who proclaimed these words." See 1Kgs 13:2 (note), where these things were predicted, and see the notes there.

2KINGS 23: 17 Then he said, "What monument is that which I see?" The men of the city told him, "It is the tomb of the man of God, who came from Judah, and proclaimed these things that you have done against the altar of Bethel."

Verse 17

What title is that - There was either a stone, an image, or an inscription here: the old prophet no doubt took care to have the place made sufficiently remarkable.

2KINGS 23: 18 He said, "Let him be! Let no man move his bones." So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet who came out of Samaria.

Verse 18

The prophet that came out of Samaria - See the note on 1Kgs 13:32.

2KINGS 23: 19 All the houses also of the high places that were in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke the LORD to anger, Josiah took away, and did to them according to all the acts that he had done in Bethel.

Verse 19

That were in the cities of Samaria - Israel had now no king; and Josiah, of the blood royal of Judah, had certainly a direct right to the kingdom; he had, at this time, an especial commission from God, to reform every abuse through the whole land - all that ground that was given by the Lord as an inheritance to the twelve sons of Jacob. Therefore he had every right to carry his plans of reformation into the Samaritan states.

2KINGS 23: 20 He killed all the priests of the high places that were there, on the altars, and burned men's bones on them; and he returned to Jerusalem.

Verse 20

Slew all the priests - The lives of these, as corrupters of the people, were forfeited to the law.

2KINGS 23: 21 The king commanded all the people, saying, "Keep the Passover to the LORD your God, as it is written in this book of the covenant."

2KINGS 23: 22 Surely there was not kept such a Passover from the days of the judges who judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah;

Verse 22

Surely there was not holden such a passover - Not one on purer principles, more heartily joined in by the people present, more literally consecrated, or more religiously observed. The words do not apply to the number present, but to the manner and spirit. See the particulars and mode of celebrating this passover in 2 Chronicles 35:1-18 (note).

2KINGS 23: 23 but in the eighteenth year of king Josiah was this Passover kept to the LORD in Jerusalem.

2KINGS 23: 24 Moreover Josiah removed those who had familiar spirits, and the wizards, and the teraphim, and the idols, and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might confirm the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the LORD's house.

Verse 24

The workers with familiar spirits - See on 2Kgs 21:5 (note).

And the images - The teraphim. See the note on Gen 31:19.

2KINGS 23: 25 Like him was there no king before him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him.

Verse 25

Like unto him was there no king - Perhaps not one from the time of David; and, morally considered, including David himself, none ever sat on the Jewish throne, so truly exemplary in his own conduct, and so thoroughly zealous in the work of God. David was a greater but not a better man than Josiah.

2KINGS 23: 26 Notwithstanding, the LORD didn't turn from the fierceness of his great wrath, with which his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocation with which Manasseh had provoked him.

Verse 26

The Lord turned not - It was of no use to try this fickle and radically depraved people any longer. They were respited merely during the life of Josiah.

2KINGS 23: 27 The LORD said, "I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and I will cast off this city which I have chosen, even Jerusalem, and the house of which I said, 'My name shall be there.'"

2KINGS 23: 28 Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and all that he did, aren't they written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

2KINGS 23: 29 In his days Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates: and king Josiah went against him; and Pharaoh Necho killed him at Megiddo, when he had seen him.

Verse 29

In his days Pharaoh-nechoh - See the note on the death of Josiah, 2Kgs 22:20 (note).

Nechoh is supposed to have been the son of Psammitichus, king of Egypt; and the Assyrian king, whom he was now going to attack, was the famous Nabopolassar. What the cause of this quarrel was, is not known. Some say it was on account of Carchemish, a city on the Euphrates, belonging to the Egyptians, which Nabopolassar had seized. See Isa 10:9.

2KINGS 23: 30 His servants carried him in a chariot dead from Megiddo, and brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own tomb. The people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and anointed him, and made him king in his father's place.

Verse 30

Dead from Megiddo - The word מֵת meth should here be considered as a participle, dying, for it is certain he was not dead: he was mortally wounded at Megiddo, was carried in a dying state to Jerusalem, and there he died and was buried. See 2Chr 35:24.

Herodotus, lib. i., c. 17, 18, 25, and lib. ii. 159, appears to refer to the same war which is here mentioned. He says that Nechoh, in the sixth year of his reign, went to attack the king of Assyria at Magdolum, gained a complete victory, and took Cadytis. Usher and others believe that Magdolum and Megiddo were the same place. The exact place of the battle seems to have been Hadadrimmon, in the valley of Megiddo, for there Zechariah tells us 2Kgs 12:11, was the great mourning for Josiah. Compare this with 2Chr 35:24, 2Chr 35:25.

2KINGS 23: 31 Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he began to reign; and he reigned three months in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.

Verse 31

Jehoahaz was twenty and three years old - This was not the eldest son of Josiah, which is evident from this, that he was twenty-three years old when he began to reign; that he reigned but three months; that, being dethroned, his brother Eliakim was put in his place, who was then twenty-five years of age. Eliakim, therefore, was the eldest brother; but Jehoahaz was probably raised to the throne by the people, as being of a more active and martial spirit.

2KINGS 23: 32 He did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done.

2KINGS 23: 33 Pharaoh Necho put him in bonds at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem; and put the land to a tribute of one hundred talents of silver, and a talent of gold.

Verse 33

Nechoh put him in bands - But what was the cause of his putting him in bands? It is conjectured, and not without reason, that Jehoahaz, otherwise called Shallum, raised an army, met Nechoh in his return from Carchemish, fought, was beaten, taken prisoner, put in chains; and taken into Egypt, where he died; 2Kgs 23:34, and Jer 22:11, Jer 22:12. Riblah or Diblath, the place of this battle, was probably a town in Syria, in the land or district of Hamath.

2KINGS 23: 34 Pharaoh Necho made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the place of Josiah his father, and changed his name to Jehoiakim: but he took Jehoahaz away; and he came to Egypt, and died there.

Verse 34

Turned his name to Jehoiakim - These names are precisely the same in signification: Eliakim is God shall arise; Jehoiakim, Jehovah shall arise; or, the resurrection of God; the resurrection of Jehovah. That is, God's rising again to show his power, justice, etc. The change of the name was to show Nechoh's supremacy, and that Jehoiakim was only his vassal or viceroy. Proofs of this mode of changing the name, when a person of greater power put another in office under himself, may be seen in the case of Mattaniah, changed into Zedekiah; Daniel, Mishael, Hananiah, and Azariah, into Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; and Joseph into Zaphnath-paaneah. See Dan 1:6, Dan 1:7; Gen 41:45.

2KINGS 23: 35 Jehoiakim gave the silver and the gold to Pharaoh; but he taxed the land to give the money according to the commandment of Pharaoh: he exacted the silver and the gold of the people of the land, of everyone according to his taxation, to give it to Pharaoh Necoh.

Verse 35

Jehoiakim gave the silver and the gold - Necoh had placed him there as viceroy, simply to raise and collect his taxes.

Every one according to his taxation - That is, each was assessed in proportion to his property: that was the principle avowed: but there is reason to fear that this bad king was not governed by it.

2KINGS 23: 36 Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Zebidah the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah.

2KINGS 23: 37 He did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done.

Verse 37

He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord - He was a most unprincipled and oppressive tyrant. Jeremiah gives us his character at large, Jer 22:13-19, to which the reader will do well to refer. Jeremiah was at that time in the land, and was an eyewitness of the abominations of this cruel king.