

LESSONS FROM JOSIAH'S REVIVAL

2 Chronicles 34–35

- 1. Revival begins with seeking the LORD (2 Chron 34:3).** Revival began in Israel when a young king began to seek the LORD: “in the eighth year of his reign while he was still a youth, he began to seek the God of his father David” (2 Chron 34:3a). Revival is the fulfillment of the promises “If you seek Him, He will let you find Him” (1 Chron 28:9; 2 Chron 15:2) and “you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart” (Jer 29:13).
 - 2. Revival can begin with a teenager (2 Chron 34:3).** Since Josiah “was eight years old when he became king” (34:1a) and he started seeking God “in the eighth year of his reign” (34:3a), this national revival in Israel began when king Josiah was only sixteen years old. He initiated the most sweeping reform in ancient Israel.
 - 3. Revival removes all competing religious paraphernalia (2 Chron 34:3–7).** In a national revival, such as occurred in the days of King Josiah, all false prophets, false religions, and cult objects are removed from the nation: “they tore down the altars of the Baals in his presence, and the incense altars that were high above them he chopped down; also the Asherim, the carved images, and the molten images he broke in pieces and ground to powder and scattered *it* on the graves of those who had sacrificed to them” (34:4).
 - 4. Revival often spreads to other geographical locations (2 Chron 34:6–7).** People turned back to the LORD “in the cities of Manasseh, Ephraim, Simeon, even as far as Naphtali, in their surrounding ruins” (34:6). These cities were in tribal areas outside Judah and Benjamin and not under Josiah’s rule. They asked for help, which was forthcoming: “he also tore down the altars and beat the Asherim and the carved images into powder, and chopped down all the incense altars throughout the land of Israel. Then he returned to Jerusalem” (34:7). It’s interesting to note that the same thing occurred 273 years earlier during Asa’s Revival (895 B.C.). King Asa “gathered all Judah and Benjamin and those from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon who resided with them, for many defected to him from Israel when they saw that the LORD his God was with him” (2 Chron 15:9).
 - 5. In revivals attention is given to repairing and restoring local churches (2 Chron 34:8–13).** After cleansing the land Josiah set about restoring Solomon’s Temple: “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 an official of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of the LORD his God. And they came to Hilkiah the high priest and delivered the money that was brought into the house of God, which the Levites, the doorkeepers, had collected from Manasseh and Ephraim, and from all the remnant of Israel, and from all Judah and Benjamin and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Then they gave *it* into the hands of the workmen who had the oversight of the house of the LORD, and the workmen who were working in the house of the LORD used it to restore and repair the house. They in turn gave *it* to the carpenters and to the builders to buy quarried stone and timber for couplings and to make beams for the houses which the kings of Judah had let go to ruin. And the men did the work faithfully. . .” (34:8–12).
 - 6. Revival produces a renewed emphasis on hearing, learning, and obeying God’s Word (2 Chron 34:14–28).** After purging the land of idols and *beginning* the restoration of the Temple, “Hilkiah the priest found the book of the law of the LORD *given* by Moses” (34:14) “in the house of the LORD” (34:15) and Shaphan the scribe “read from it in the presence of the king” (34:18). This was most likely the Book of Deuteronomy. The king in turn assembled “all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem,” “all the men of Judah,” and “all the people, from the greatest to the least” and “read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the LORD” (34:29–30). Revival leads to more revelation from God, which in turn leads to greater understanding, greater service, greater blessings in this life, and greater rewards in the next life.
 - 7. Revival produces conviction, sadness, anguish, weeping, tender hearts, and humility (2 Chron 34:19, 27).** Josiah was convicted by the words of Deuteronomy. “And it came about when the king heard the words of the law that he tore his clothes” (34:19). Then Huldah the prophetess told the king: “Thus says the LORD God of Israel *regarding* the words which you have heard, ‘Because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before God, when you heard His words against this place and against its inhabitants, and *because* you humbled yourself before Me, tore your clothes, and wept before Me, I truly have heard you,’ declares the LORD” (34:26–27).
 - 8. Revival postpones divine discipline (2 Chron 34:28).** God also told King Josiah: “Behold, I will gather you to your fathers and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, so your eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring on this place and on its inhabitants” (34:28). His godly reign preserved the southern kingdom for another 23 years, from the time he began to seek the LORD in 632 B.C. to his death in 609 B.C. Question: of what value is a godly ruler to his nation? Answer: he brings blessings to his people and postpones national punishment.
 - 9. In revivals God’s Word spreads quickly among the people (2 Chron 34:29–33).** It appears that for some time the Law, Prophets, and Writings had been lost in Judah. The whole nation lost their Bibles! That seems hard to imagine. The people were well taught 200 years earlier in the days of King Jehoshaphat: “Then in the third year of his reign he sent his officials, Ben-hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel, and Micaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah; and with them the Levites, Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tobadonijah, the Levites; and with them Elishama and Jehoram, the priests. And they taught in Judah, *having* the book of the law of the LORD with them; and they went throughout all the cities of Judah and taught among the people” (2 Chron. 17:7–9). And the Law of Moses was available in the reigns of Joash (23:18; 24:6, 9), Amaziah (25:4), Uzziah (26:4–5), Jotham (27:6), and Hezekiah (30:16; 31:3–4, 21). But apparently most copies of the Scriptures were destroyed in the reigns of the wicked kings Manasseh and Amnon—in a short period of 57 years from 687 B.C. to 640 B.C..
 - 10. Revival leads to renewed commitment and service among the people (2 Chron 34:31–32).** “Then 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 written in this book. Moreover, he made all who were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand *with him*. So the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers” (34:31–32).
 - 11. Revival can last for a decade or two (2 Chron 34:33).** Josiah’s Revival continued for 13 years—from age 26 to Josiah’s death at age 39. “And Josiah removed all the abominations from all the lands belonging to the sons of Israel, and made all who were present in Israel to serve the LORD their God. Throughout his lifetime they did not turn from following the LORD God of their fathers” (34:33). Hezekiah’s Revival lasted about 29 years (715 B.C. to 686 B.C.).
 - 12. Revival leads to exuberant worship (2 Chron 35:1–19).** Revival produced a spirit of joy and giving: the rich provided sacrificial animals for the people to offer and to eat for the seven days of the Passover feast (35:7–9, 12–13). Almost twice as many sacrifices were offered in Josiah’s Revival (35:7–9) than in Hezekiah’s Revival (30:24).
- Application:** for believers today, revival is turning from carnality and going back to the basics of the Christian life: to confession of sin (1 John 1:9), having fellowship with God (1 John 1:6–7), being filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18), walking in the Spirit (Gal 5:16, 25), developing the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22–23), using your spiritual gifts to serve God (1 Peter 4:10), growing in the Word (Heb 5:13–14), obedience (1 John 2:5), and walking by faith (2 Cor 5:7).
- Further Study:** see 2 Chronicles 29–31 and my handout entitled “Lessons from Hezekiah’s Revival.”