

**Faithful: The Life of Josiah**  
**Faithful to Holiness • Message 4**  
**JC Thompson**  
**October 27, 2024**

**A. Introduction**

(Hebrews 12:14; 1 Peter 1:16)

We are continuing our series today on Josiah and our series is entitled Faithful. Josiah as Bryan has been teaching us was a young man, following after a few evil kings, was born again by the Spirit of God and faithfully led the people in the Southern Kingdom to renew their covenant with God and to rid the land of the worship of false gods.

A question I would like to ask you today is this: What does it really mean to be holy?

When I was young, probably around 5 or 6, I was asked to pray in Children's Church to end the service. I agreed and prayed. I don't remember what I prayed or how I prayed, but when I got finished a girl a little bit younger than me told me that I prayed like a preacher!

What do you think my response was?

I cried on the way home. I remember crying because at that time the idea of being a preacher was not fun or exciting, but something that seemed to be totally opposed to the way of life that I wanted to live at 5 years old.

This might be how some of you in this room might think about holiness.

When you hear that the Scripture say, "Be Holy, Because I am Holy" 1 Peter 1:16. The thought creates distress, perhaps frustration, and maybe even some anxiety. How could a Holy God, ask me, a sinner, to be Holy just like Him?

And for us even the idea of becoming holy is more about what we might be missing out on rather than what is possible with God.

The idea of holiness is not something that is as common today as it was a couple of generations ago. Today, I think because of our desire to connect with people and to try and reach them with the gospel we have tried to make Jesus more human. We have tried to make God more relatable. I don't think the motivation behind this is wrong and it is even biblical. Jesus became human, like us after all.

But in over emphasizing his humanity, we have lost some of the picture of His divinity and thus also His holiness. But it is not only important that we understand the holiness of God, but also that we understand that holiness is expected of us as a Jesus follower.

What is holiness? The word holiness or holy means to be morally blameless. It means to be separated. The word itself carries the connotation of being cut off and that the behavior of those who are separated from the world and separated to God live in a way that honors God.

It is a cutting away and a conforming to the image of a Holy God.

That is the call of every follower of Christ. In fact, this verse rings in my mind when we talk about the characteristic of Holiness.

*Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.*

**Hebrews 12:14 (NIV)**

That is what Josiah does in today's passage.

I want us to look at the reforms that Josiah enacts and draw some conclusions about holiness from there.

## **B. Holiness is...**

### **1. A BATTLE to fight.**

(2 Kings 22:8-11; Hebrews 12:14; C/R: Philippians 2:12b-13; Colossians 3:5)

The idea of holiness for Josiah started with the rediscovery of the Law of God.

*Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the court secretary, "I have found the Book of the Law in the LORD's Temple!" Then Hilkiah gave the scroll to Shaphan, and he read it. Shaphan went to the king and reported, "Your officials have turned over the money collected at the Temple of the LORD to the workers and supervisors at the Temple." Shaphan also told the king, "Hilkiah the priest has given me a scroll." So Shaphan read it to the king. When the king heard what was written in the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes in despair.*

**2 Kings 22:8-11 (NLT)**

This did not come from his upbringing or the people around Him. This came from a rediscovery of the law of God. Josiah being awakened and empowered by the Spirit of God, began in personal repentance for the sins of his people. In addition, he also brought this law before the people and the priests.

In order to pursue holiness, we have to know what is holy. This is what happened when Josiah found the law. He was brought to despair when reading the word of God.

So how does Josiah respond to this newfound attitude? He got the people together, made them listen to the law of God read aloud and then got to work on cleansing the land of any idolatry.

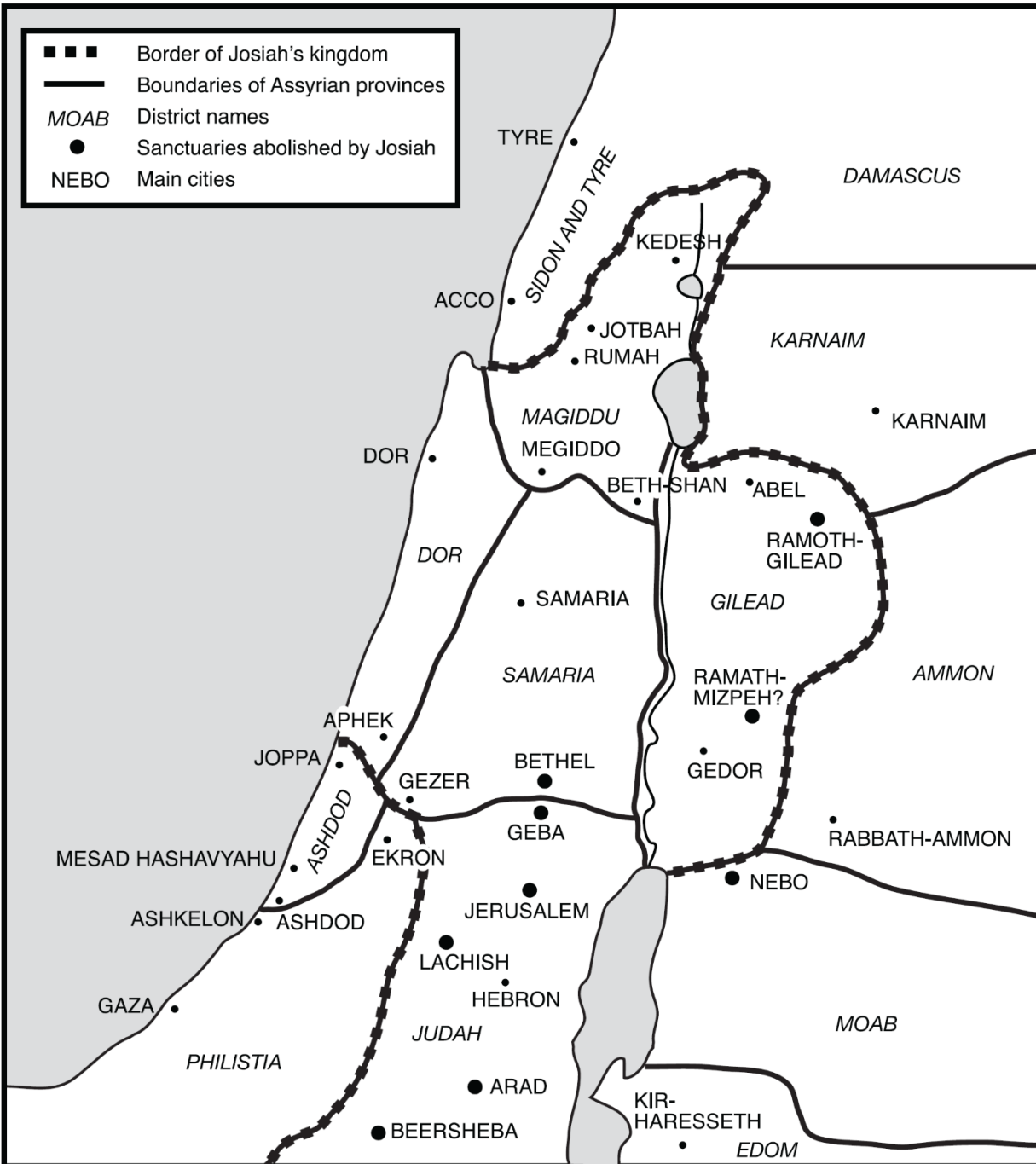
How thorough was he in this project?

### **Chart of Josiah's actions**

1. Remove cultic vessels used to worship other gods from the temple
2. Stopped the priests that were consecrated by previous kings that were not Levites, which were the priests ordained by God.
3. Burns the Asherah pole that Manasseh placed in the temple.
4. Demolishes the place where the male shrine prostitutes lived. Common in Baalism.
5. Desecrated high places along the northern and southern boundaries of Judah.
6. Demolishes shrines at the city gates.
7. Defiles Topheth where child sacrifices were made to Molech.
8. Destroys the models of horses dedicated to the sun that stood at the temple entrance.
9. Removed roof altars more than likely set aside for worship of deities in the stars.
10. Desecrates and then smashes the altars that Solomon built for his wives that worshipped foreign gods.

Then I think this image will be helpful for you to see just how much Josiah traveled to make these things come to pass.

Map of Judah.



These gods that the people of Judah worshipped generally covered a few categories.

1. **Fertility and Prosperity** – Baal was the storm god, and his worshippers believed that by honoring Baal they could get rain for their crops, fertility for their animals and families

and would ultimately lead to prosperity. Asherah was Baal's consort and was a fertility goddess.

2. **Warfare and Power** – Chemosh and Molech were gods that were worshipped for their power and thought to bring victory in battle. If their followers sacrificed their children, this would lead to financial prosperity.
3. **Destiny and Fate** – The worship of celestial bodies would be to control the future or the destinies of families and nations.

So the people of Judah and Israel had been picking and choosing from the culture and from God what they chose. It is important to note that many of the practices of worship also involved sexual immorality.

Often, we miss this when it comes to our discipleship and life with God. We are often thinking about bringing to God only our mind. We need to bring our mind to the table in our discipleship, but often times when the enemy attacks, he comes after our desires. We must not train only our minds but also our hearts and the desires that it contains.

So just as Josiah cleansed the temple, we must wage a war against the things that remove, alter, or negatively affect our worship of Jesus Christ. But in doing that we must have the right strategy going into the battle. How can we pursue holiness.

1. We have to know what is Holy.
2. We have to train ourselves to believe and think that the things that God says are holy, are holy.
3. We have to obey and do the holy things.

There are also some reasons why we might get frustrated in this battle because of bad tactical understanding. This is an age-old issue.

God's Responsibility -----Spirit Empowered Obedience----- Personal Responsibility

On one side of the issue is that our growth in grace and in holiness is only up to God. The other extreme in this issue is that our fight and growth is only up to us.

This is a hotly debated topic and the question is always which is it? But God affirms both things.

Here's an example of God's responsibility and our personal responsibility in partnership.

*Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. <sup>13</sup> For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.*

**Philippians 2:12b-13 (NLT)**

Work hard (personal responsibility) and God is working in you (God's responsibility). Both are necessary for our growth. But if you have been born again by the Spirit, God is taking care of His responsibility, the question is are we taking care of ours?

This is not meant to shame, but often times when I talk with people who are struggling in their relationship with God, it is because they are getting whipped in this area of their life.

Bryan has said this many times in this series, but this isn't a 301 or 401 type learning. This is basic. In order to grow, we must participate in the battle. We must fight for our life with God and for our desire and actions to become more Christ like.

"Good and evil both increase at compound interest. That is why the little decisions you and I make every day are of such infinite importance. The smallest good act today is the capture of a strategic point from which, a few months later, you may be able to go on to victories you never dreamed of. An apparently trivial indulgence in lust or anger today is the loss of a ridge or railway line or bridgehead from which the enemy may launch an attack otherwise impossible."

**-C.S. Lewis**

**2. A BLESSING to Cultivate (2 Kings 23:21-24; C/R: Nehemiah 8:10; Romans 6:19, 1 Timothy 4:7)**

Holiness is not only a battle with which we must engage and fight, but it is also a blessing. But this blessing takes intentional effort to realize and see.

After Josiah goes around the Southern Kingdom and the Northern Kingdom cleansing the land, then he does something unique. He gets everyone together for a feast. What was once an annual feast to remind the Israelites of God's provision hadn't been celebrated in generations.

The Passover was a feast intended to celebrate that God freed the Israelites from slavery.

*'There had not been a Passover celebration like that since the time when the judges ruled in Israel, nor throughout all the years of the kings of Israel and Judah. King Josiah then issued this order to all the people: "You must celebrate the Passover to the Lord your God, as required in this Book of the Covenant." But in the eighteenth year of King Josiah's reign, this Passover was celebrated to the Lord in Jerusalem. Josiah also got rid of the mediums and psychics, the household gods, the idols, and every other kind of detestable practice, both in Jerusalem and throughout the land of Judah. He did this in obedience to the laws written in the scroll that Hilkiah the priest had found in the Lord's Temple. '*

**2 Kings 23:21-24 (NLT)**

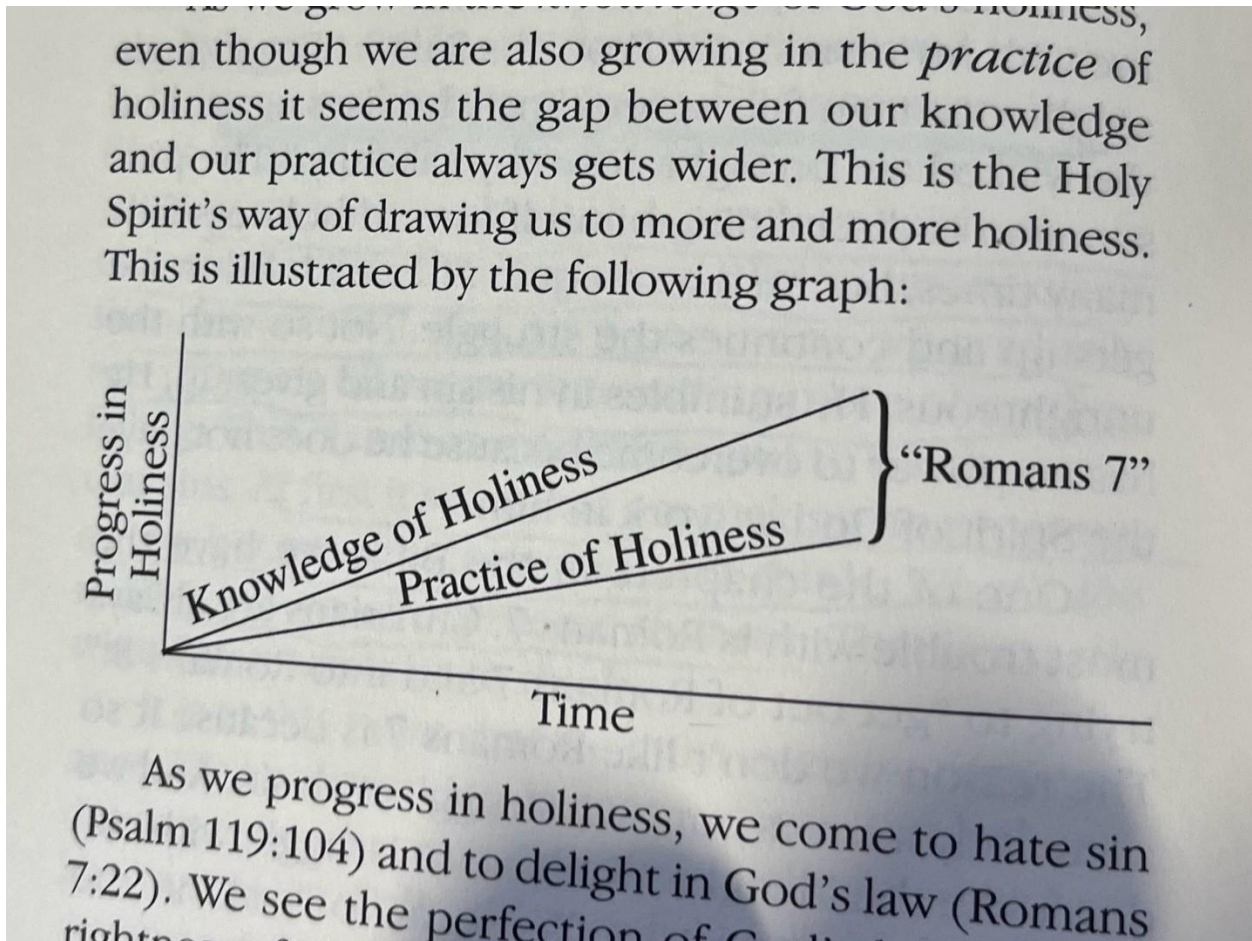
In the midst of this hard work, this war that Josiah is engaged in, he made sure to celebrate God's goodness and the story of God's provision. In the midst of the battle for holiness, we must celebrate the victories.

This is a constant picture in battles and war. One of the most famous examples of this is that when the Greeks defeated the Persian army a messenger ran from the battlefield of Marathon all the way to Athens, which is 26 miles yell the words, We have won before collapsing and dying. This is why we run the race today.

In your obedience to God you will fight many battles over sin, discouragement, grief, illness and many other things, but you have to fight for joy as well.

When you pursue holiness in your life, joy will be the result. We also know that a life of disobedience leads to a life without joy.

Let me ask you a question. Have you ever seen a victory in your life over sin? Have you been born again and had your eternity change? Then celebrate those moments.



In order to pursue holiness, we have to do or obey what is holy and over time our knowledge and practice of holiness increases as we live life in partnership with the Spirit of God.

It is not that His love is conditioned on our obedience. That would be legalism. But our experience of His love is dependent upon our obedience.

Jerry Bridges

It is also important to understand that joy is not only the result of obedience, but it is often a necessary ingredient for the battle of obedience.

Nehemiah said, "The joy of the Lord is my strength." (Nehemiah 8:10)



## Closing

Without Holiness, no one will see the Lord. Do you want to experience more and more of the Spirit's work and power in your life?

Today is the day, Christ's victory is enough for our salvation, but our experience of that love can be affected by our decisions. Make today a day that you come to Christ and renew your commitment to live a life with Him at the Center.

You might be at a place that you need to celebrate God's goodness in your life today. Thank Him for the joy you have.

But others of you in the room might be fighting a battle and seeing very little fruit. Would you come and ask for prayer in your fight?

Some of you in this room might know for the first time that you have been battling against God and not your sin and selfishness. I want to encourage you to surrender. That is a fight, that you will not win. You can only surrender. If that is you, come on down and share with someone that you need to stop fighting God and surrender your life to Him.

Let's pray.