

## Dr. John Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 29.3, 2 Kings 22-23, Part 3 Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

### 1. Abstract of Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 29.3, 2 Kings 22-23, Part 3, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Oswalt's lecture analyzes King Josiah's reforms in Judah, as detailed in 2 Kings 22-23. The lecture highlights Josiah's efforts to purge pagan elements from the temple and the land. **Oswalt emphasizes the radical nature of Josiah's obedience, while also noting the lack of widespread participation among the people.** He connects Josiah's actions to a 300-year-old prophecy and suggests they served to strengthen the faith of a remnant in Judah. **Oswalt believes that this remnant was essential in preparing for the coming exile, with the people taking the words of God with them, even if they could not take the temple.** He concludes with a prayer, drawing parallels to contemporary societal challenges and seeking God's mercy and guidance.

**2. 15 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 29.3 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Historical Books → Kings).**



**Oswalt\_Kings\_Sessi  
on29\_3.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document: Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 29.3, 2 Kings 22-23, Part 3

Okay, here's a briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. John Oswalt's session on 2 Kings 22-23.

#### Briefing Document: Dr. John Oswalt on 2 Kings 22-23 (Josiah's Reforms)

##### Main Themes:

- **Radical Obedience and Reform:** The primary focus is on King Josiah's comprehensive and forceful removal of pagan practices and idols from the Temple of Yahweh and throughout the land of Judah, surpassing the reforms of previous kings.
- **Theological Implications of Josiah's Actions:** Oswalt explores whether Josiah's actions brought about true repentance in the hearts of the people. He argues that even if they didn't fully convert the population, they strengthened the faith of a remnant who were prepared to stand firm in the coming exile.
- **Prophecy and Divine Foreknowledge:** Oswalt emphasizes the fulfillment of a 300-year-old prophecy regarding Josiah's actions in Bethel, directly challenging skeptical views within Old Testament scholarship regarding predictive prophecy.
- **Lessons for Contemporary Faith:** Oswalt draws parallels between the situation in ancient Judah and contemporary society, particularly regarding the need for radical commitment to faith, the potential for societal decline, and the importance of holding onto God's word in times of crisis.

##### Key Ideas and Facts:

- **The Extent of Josiah's Reforms:** Josiah purged the temple of items associated with pagan worship, including: "the articles made for the pagan gods," "the Asherah pole," "male cult prostitutes," women weaving for Asherah, "the horses of the sun and the chariot," and "Manasseh's altars."
- He removed idolatrous priests from the high places and destroyed the Tophet where children were burned.
- He eliminated the high places Solomon had built for his foreign wives on the Mount of Olives, dedicated to gods like Chemosh and Molech.

- He destroyed the altar at Bethel, a significant holy site for the northern kingdom of Israel.
- He executed the priests who were not from the Levitical line, burning their bones on their altars.
- **Significance of the Reforms:** Oswalt argues that Josiah's reforms were more radical than those of any previous king in Judah's history, indicating a deep commitment to eliminating idolatry.
- Josiah's actions took place at a time when Assyria's control was weakening, allowing him to extend his reforms into the former territory of the northern kingdom.
- While the reforms may not have changed the hearts of the entire population, Oswalt believes they strengthened the faith of a remnant, preparing them for the exile. "I'm confident that Josiah confirmed the faith of the remnant in the land—people who had been sighing and groaning under the sins of Manasseh and Ammon."
- He argues that these faithful people were then prepared to persevere through the siege and exile: "And so there were people who, when the exile came, there were people who had an Isaiah scroll inside their robes, a Jeremiah scroll inside their robes. We can't take the temple with us, but we can take God's word with us. And so, more than ever before, they become the people of the book."
- **The Role of Prophecy:** The destruction of the altar at Bethel fulfilled a prophecy made 300 years earlier, where a prophet foretold that a man named Josiah would burn dead men's bones on the altar.
- Oswalt emphasizes the importance of believing in predictive prophecy, contrasting his view with that of many Old Testament scholars who would attribute the story to post-event fabrication. "Again, I'm sorry to say that the bulk of Old Testament scholars do not, and they say this was made up after the fact to try to demonstrate this was all of God."
- **Contemporary Relevance:** Oswalt draws parallels between the spiritual state of Judah before the exile and the current state of America, expressing concern about the nation's moral decline and political instability. "I have taken for granted that yes, the America that I have known from my childhood would persevere, would survive. I'm not so sure of that now."

- He suggests the COVID pandemic might serve to "weed out" those who are not fully committed to their faith.
- He calls for radical obedience to God and a willingness to stand firm in faith, even in the face of adversity. "Help us, oh Lord, to stand and have done all to stand."

### **Quotes:**

- "He removed the articles made for the pagan gods in the temple of Yahweh. Number two, he removed the Asherah pole. Again, this is not comfortable, but there's pretty good reason to believe that this was the symbol of an erect penis."
- "Don't make a place for it. Don't leave a place for it. So, you see this kind of radical obedience to God, more radical, particularly at this point right here, than any other king in Judah's history, going to go after the roots."
- "This was all predicted 300 years earlier. Jeroboam was up, I presume, standing on the edge of the altar as the high priest leading the sacrifices, and a prophet from Judah shows up, and he says, one day, a man named Josiah will burn dead men's bones on this altar."
- "I'm confident that Josiah confirmed the faith of the remnant in the land...And so, more than ever before, they become the people of the book."
- "We see our political system showing cracks, and we wonder. I have taken for granted that yes, the America that I have known from my childhood would persevere, would survive. I'm not so sure of that now."

### **Conclusion:**

Dr. Oswalt's analysis of Josiah's reforms highlights the importance of radical obedience, the power of prophecy, and the enduring relevance of biblical narratives for understanding contemporary challenges to faith and society. He emphasizes the need for believers to stand firm in their convictions and to hold onto God's word in times of crisis, just as the faithful remnant did during the Babylonian exile.

## 4. Study Guide: Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 29.3, 2 Kings 22-23, Part 3

### Josiah's Reforms: A Study Guide

#### Quiz: Short Answer Questions

1. What actions did Josiah take to remove pagan elements *from within* the Temple of Yahweh?
2. What does Oswalt suggest the Asherah pole symbolized? Why was it removed?
3. What was the Tophet, and why was Josiah's removal of it significant?
4. Why was Josiah able to extend his reforms into the territory of the former Northern Kingdom of Israel?
5. What specific prophecy did Josiah fulfill, and approximately how long before his reign was it given?
6. Why do some modern scholars doubt the authenticity of the prophecy concerning Josiah?
7. According to Oswalt, what was the primary benefit of Josiah's reforms, considering they did not change everyone's hearts?
8. What is Oswalt's theory regarding the exile and Josiah's reign?
9. What did the faithful remnant take with them into exile, signifying a shift in religious practice?
10. How does Oswalt connect the account of Josiah's reforms to the modern-day United States?

#### Quiz: Answer Key

1. Josiah removed articles made for pagan gods, the Asherah pole, male cult prostitutes, women weaving for Asherah, the horses of the sun, the chariot, and Manasseh's altars from within the Temple of Yahweh.
2. Oswalt suggests the Asherah pole symbolized an erect penis. It was removed because it represented a fertility goddess and pagan worship within the Temple.

3. The Tophet was an altar to the god Molech in the Hinnom Valley where people burned their children. Removing it was significant because it stopped the practice of child sacrifice.
4. Josiah was able to extend his reforms into the Northern Kingdom because Assyria was losing control of that territory.
5. Josiah fulfilled the prophecy that a man named Josiah would burn dead men's bones on the altar at Bethel. This prophecy was given approximately 300 years earlier.
6. Some scholars doubt the prophecy's authenticity, arguing that it was written after the events to make it seem divinely ordained.
7. Oswalt believes the main benefit of Josiah's reforms was that they confirmed the faith of the righteous remnant, preparing them for the exile.
8. Oswalt theorizes that the exile was inevitable unless there was a radical revival. Josiah prepared the hearts of the remnant to stand strong in their faith during the exile.
9. The faithful remnant took the word of God (Isaiah and Jeremiah scrolls) with them into exile, emphasizing a shift towards becoming "the people of the book" rather than focusing solely on Temple worship.
10. Oswalt draws a parallel between Judah's need for revival and America's current state, expressing concern about societal and political trends and praying for God's mercy.

## Essay Questions

1. Discuss the scope and impact of Josiah's reforms, considering both the actions he took to eliminate pagan practices and the potential motivations behind them.
2. Explore the significance of predictive prophecy in the Old Testament, using the example of the prophecy concerning Josiah. Analyze the different perspectives on its authenticity and implications for understanding the nature of God.
3. Analyze Oswalt's interpretation of Josiah's reforms in light of the impending exile. How did these reforms prepare the faithful remnant for the challenges they would face?
4. Consider the ethical implications of Josiah's actions, particularly the killing of idolatrous priests. How can we reconcile such actions with contemporary moral values, and what lessons can be learned from this account?
5. Compare and contrast the reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah, highlighting their respective roles in preserving Judah and preparing its people for the future.

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Asherah Pole:** A symbol, possibly representing an erect penis, associated with the Canaanite fertility goddess Asherah. Its presence in the Temple was a sign of syncretism, mixing Yahwistic worship with pagan practices.
- **High Places:** Elevated sites outside of the Temple where sacrifices and worship often occurred, frequently associated with pagan deities or non-approved Yahwistic practices.
- **Molech:** A pagan god to whom child sacrifices were offered, particularly in the Tophet located in the Hinnom Valley.
- **Remnant:** A small group of faithful people who remain true to God amidst widespread apostasy or destruction.
- **Syncretism:** The mixing or blending of different religious beliefs and practices, often resulting in the compromise or corruption of one or both religions.
- **Temple of Yahweh:** The central place of worship for the Israelites in Jerusalem, meant to be dedicated solely to the worship of the God of Israel.
- **Tophet:** A site in the Hinnom Valley south of Jerusalem, where sacrifices, including child sacrifices to Molech, were performed.
- **Exile:** The forced removal of a people from their homeland, specifically referring to the Babylonian exile of the Israelites.
- **Predictive Prophecy:** A statement made by a prophet, inspired by God, that foretells future events.
- **Jeroboam:** He was the first king of the northern Israelite Kingdom of Israel after the revolt of the ten northern Israelite tribes against Rehoboam that put an end to the united Kingdom of Israel.



## **5. FAQs on Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 29.3, 2 Kings 22-23, Part 3, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)**

### **Frequently Asked Questions about Josiah's Reforms (Based on Oswalt's Lecture)**

#### **1. What were some of the key idolatrous practices that Josiah removed from the temple and surrounding areas?**

Josiah's reforms were extensive and targeted various forms of idolatry. He removed articles made for pagan gods from the Temple of Yahweh, the Asherah pole (likely a symbol associated with fertility), male cult prostitutes, women weaving for Asherah, the horses and chariot dedicated to the sun, and altars erected during Manasseh's reign. Outside Jerusalem, he removed idolatrous priests from high places, destroyed the Tophet (altar to Molech where children were sacrificed), and eliminated high places built by Solomon for his foreign wives' gods (Chemosh, Molech). He extended his efforts to Bethel in the Northern Kingdom, destroying the altar and killing non-Aaronic priests.

#### **2. Why is Josiah's destruction of the altar at Bethel particularly significant?**

The destruction of the altar at Bethel is significant because it fulfilled a prophecy made approximately 300 years prior, where it was foretold that a man named Josiah would burn dead men's bones on that very altar. This event underscores the idea of predictive prophecy and divine sovereignty. Moreover, Bethel was a crucial religious site for the Northern Kingdom after the split, representing a challenge to the exclusive worship of Yahweh in Jerusalem. Josiah's actions there demonstrated his commitment to purging idolatry even in territories beyond his immediate rule.

#### **3. Why was Josiah able to reform the Northern Kingdom when previous kings could not?**

Josiah was able to extend his reforms into the Northern Kingdom because Assyria, which had controlled the area, was losing its grip on power. Previously, kings like Hezekiah could only invite northerners to Jerusalem, but they lacked the authority to enforce religious changes within the Assyrian-controlled territories. With Assyria's decline, Josiah seized the opportunity to dismantle idolatrous practices in the north.

**4. What is the speaker's perspective on whether Josiah's reforms had a lasting impact on the hearts of the people?**

The speaker suggests that while Josiah's reforms were radical and thorough, they may not have fundamentally changed the hearts of the majority of the people. While the people didn't stop Josiah, they didn't really participate either. He believes Josiah's actions primarily served to strengthen the faith of a remnant within the population—those already devoted to Yahweh. The speaker sees Josiah's reign as a way of confirming the faith of the "remnant" that existed in the land.

**5. According to the speaker, what was the primary purpose of Josiah's reforms if they didn't convert the entire nation?**

The speaker argues that the primary purpose of Josiah's reforms was to prepare the faithful remnant for the impending exile. By demonstrating that it was possible to live courageously for God and that God keeps his promises, Josiah's actions strengthened the resolve of those who would face immense challenges during the siege of Jerusalem and subsequent exile. It allowed the people of faith to become "people of the book," taking the word of God with them into exile.

**6. How does the speaker relate Josiah's time to contemporary concerns and potentially the COVID-19 pandemic?**

The speaker draws a parallel between Josiah's time and contemporary society, particularly reflecting on the state of churches. He speculates that, similarly to how Josiah's reforms revealed who was truly committed to God, the COVID-19 pandemic might serve to "weed out" those who are not fully engaged in their faith. The speaker reflects on the future of America and asks God to have mercy on America even yet.

**7. What was the speaker's warning about sin in light of Josiah's actions?**

The speaker cautions listeners to take sin seriously and not to make a place for it in their lives. He uses Josiah's radical destruction of idolatrous objects and practices as an example of how one should decisively remove sin from their lives and surroundings. While he doesn't advocate violence against "false priests," he emphasizes the need for radical obedience.

**8. How does the speaker view predictive prophecy in relation to Josiah and the Old Testament?**

The speaker acknowledges that many Old Testament scholars do not believe in predictive prophecy. However, he holds that God can and does inspire individuals to make specific predictions about the future when it serves his purposes. He cites the prophecy concerning Josiah's actions at the altar in Bethel as evidence, emphasizing his belief in a God who knows and governs the future.