

# America Needs a Josiah

## Pray for a Humble and Courageous Leader

By Joel Rosenberg



America is heading toward implosion. Judgment is coming. We cannot avoid it. The best we can hope for is that God in His sovereignty chooses to forestall His judgment, much like He did for the nation of Judah when He raised up a leader like King Josiah. Let me explain.

Since the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision legalized abortion, Americans have murdered more than 58 million babies. If we don't radically change course, in a few years we will have murdered 60 million babies. If we cross that threshold, God forbid, we as Americans will have killed ten times more human beings than the number of Jews killed by the Nazis during the Holocaust. Do we think we will escape judgment when our sins are ten times worse? The blood of these children cries out from the ground for justice.

Yet abortion is not our only national sin. We have five Supreme Court justices who have decided that the Bible is wrong and that they know better than God what the definition of marriage should be. We have a national debt that has soared past \$18 trillion. We have a tragic epidemic of murder, rape, and other violent crime, as well as out-of-control drug abuse and pornography.

What's more, we have a president who is steadily—tragically—turning against the State of Israel and the Jewish people in defiance of Genesis 12:3, in which God says, “I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse.”

God will not be mocked. We will reap what we sow. It's not a matter of if, but when.

## **Is There Hope for America?**

Wherever I go, people ask me, “Is there any hope for America?”

My answer is yes, but we're running out of time. God in His great power could pour out His Holy Spirit upon our nation and grant us another series of sweeping spiritual revivals throughout the Church and another Great Awakening among the lost. He did it in the early 1700s. Millions repented and gave their lives wholly and completely to Christ. He did it again in the early- and mid-1800s. Tens of millions of Americans turned to Christ, and the nation was transformed.

Imagine Christians, en masse, truly repenting of our sins and our nation's sins. Imagine us truly humbling ourselves and pleading with the Lord to pour out His Holy Spirit to radically transform us so we're faithfully walking with the Lord again. I'm talking about sustained, consistent pleading with the Lord to have mercy on a nation that is on the fast track to implosion.

I have no doubt the Lord would respond by granting us another

game-changing Great Awakening. As the pastor who disciplined my wife and me used to say, “Our God is a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God, a wonder-working God!”

Imagine, too, American Christians truly humbling ourselves and praying and fasting and earnestly seeking the Lord’s counsel in every area of life—including who should lead our government.

Imagine registering tens of millions of previously apathetic Christians to vote, and then voting at every government level for leaders who really love the Lord and are deeply committed to restoring the U.S. Constitution to its central place in American governance.

The Lord declared this to the nation of Israel: “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chron. 7:14).

Though a specific promise to Israel, this passage also lays out universal principles of national repentance and restoration—principles that reveal God’s heart and His character. He wants to redeem a nation willing to repent. That’s why the Lord said this, through Jeremiah, about all nations: “If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned” (Jer. 18:7–8).

## **What Kind of Leadership Do We Need?**

Ultimately, revivals and Great Awakenings are sovereign acts of our Almighty God. Still, human leadership matters. God responds to the prayers of men and women. That’s why we need pastors and elders and other spiritual leaders consistently calling the Church to prayer and repentance.

Likewise, we need government leaders who have the courage to turn this ship of state around, to go in the right direction again. This is why for the past year I have been preaching all over the country that America urgently needs a Josiah.

Read carefully through 2 Kings 22–23 and 2 Chronicles 34–35, and you will find a dark time in Jewish history. Hebrew prophets like Jeremiah were warning the leaders and people of Jerusalem and Judah of imminent judgment. Why? Because they refused to read, listen to, or obey the Word of God. Yet in 640 B.C., the Lord mercifully raised up Josiah, a leader who came to love the Lord his God and to love His Word. Josiah became ready, willing, and able to pursue big changes for a nation in big trouble.

As a result of Josiah's humble yet courageous leadership, God chose to forestall the coming judgment for more than two decades. Indeed, during Josiah's tenure, the Jewish people experienced one of the greatest periods of repentance, reform, and revival in their history. Oh, that America would experience the same! Josiah was not raised in a God-fearing home. His grandfather was Manasseh, the most wicked king in the history of Judah (2 Kings 21:1–18), and his evil ways triggered the certain coming judgment of Judah. Josiah's father was Amon, another wicked king of Judah (2 Kings 21:21–23), who was assassinated after only two years on the throne.

Josiah became king at age eight! He had no idea how to lead, but God planned to do a great work in his life. At 16, the Bible says, Josiah "did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and followed the ways of his father David" (2 Chron. 34:2). At 20, Josiah began to purge Judah of the idols and altars and places of false worship. At about 26, Josiah directed the high priest Hilkiah to hire workers to clean up and repair the temple in Jerusalem (2 Chron. 34:3–13).

At this time, a lost copy of "the Book of the Law" given by

Moses was found in the temple. When King Josiah learned of this, he asked that it be read to him. "When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his robes. He gave these orders to [his servants], 'Go and inquire of the Lord for me and for the people and for all Judah about what is written in this book that has been found. Great is the Lord's anger that burns against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book'" (2 Kings 22:8–13).

## **Where Does Our Power Come From?**

Hearing the Word of God had a powerful impact on Josiah. He suddenly understood that though he was making some important reforms, much more remained to get the nation headed in the right direction. He understood that Judah faced enormous consequences for its long path of sin and rebellion. Judgment was coming. So Josiah asked his advisors to seek the Lord to find out whether there was any way to avoid cataclysmic judgment.

Sadly, the high priest did not know the Lord well enough to seek a word from Him directly. So Hilkiah sought out a true servant of God, a prophetess named Huldah, who was living in Jerusalem (2 Chron. 34:20–22).

This is the message Josiah received from the Lord: Judgment is coming to the nation because the people have turned against the Lord and His Word. The judgment is deserved, it is certain, it will come to pass, and nothing can be done to stop it.

The Lord said, "I am going to bring disaster on this place and its people, according to everything written in the book the king of Judah has read. Because they have forsaken me and burned incense to other gods and aroused my anger by all the idols their hands have made, my anger will burn against this place and will not be quenched" (2 Kings 22:16–17).

But then the Lord gave Josiah words of hope: "Because your

heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I have spoken against this place and against its people . . . I also have heard you. . . . Therefore I will gather you to your ancestors, and you will be buried in peace. Your eyes will not see all the disaster I am going to bring on this place” (2 Kings 22:19–20).

God in His great mercy, sovereignly chose to delay the certain coming judgment until after Josiah’s death. So Josiah, emboldened by God’s promises, demonstrated tremendous courage, making one bold reform after another, leading his nation in the right way.

When Josiah passed away, however, new leaders emerged, and, tragically, they turned away from the Lord and led the people astray. Finally, judgment—though forestalled—came to Judah in 586 B.C. The Babylonian army destroyed Jerusalem and the temple just as Jeremiah prophesied.

## **So What?**

Some might ask, “So what? What does the life of Josiah—who lived thousands of years ago—have to do with me today?”

As the 2016 presidential campaign heats up, we urgently need the Lord to raise up a leader like Josiah. Will He? I don’t know. But we need to ask Him to. So I’m asking the Lord to raise up a national leader who knows Christ personally and loves Him deeply, a leader passionate about reading and following God’s Word, a leader who wants to see a Great Awakening and revival, a leader who has the vision, plans, and courage to make bold, serious, sweeping reforms to get America back on the right course.

To be clear, I’m not looking for a pastor-in-chief nor a theologian-in-chief, to be president of the United States. America is a democratic republic, not a theocracy. The role of the American president isn’t the same as the role of king in the days of Judah.

But the Church's job is to call followers of Christ to pray, fast, and repent, to love the Lord and love others, to preach the gospel, to teach and obey the "whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27, ESV), to make disciples of all nations, and to lead a great moral and spiritual revival. Only the Church can do this.

The American president's job is not to impose the Bible on the nation but to follow the U.S. Constitution, to make bold reforms in keeping with the spirit and letter of our founding documents, and to execute the laws of the land with wisdom and discernment. The mission of the commander-in-chief is to protect the safety and freedom of the American people and, in a time of great peril and volatility, to lead the free world to victory over evil and tyranny. The role of the nation's chief executive is to protect our God-given rights and liberties (starting with the right to life), create optimum conditions for economic growth and opportunity, and appoint judges and Supreme Court justices who will follow the Constitution.

Obviously, a president cannot preach the gospel to the nation or impose religious faith on the nation. But a president and his (or her) family can set a moral example. He can be friendly to people of faith and be a champion of religious liberty. The president can—and should—use what Teddy Roosevelt called the "bully pulpit" to speak to the nation about the importance of marriage and raising children. He can also call the nation to prayer and fasting in times of national crisis, just as great presidents like George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Ronald Reagan did.

America is in deep trouble. We're heading for implosion. Judgment is coming. Yet Scripture gives us hope. The Word of God makes it clear that God in His mercy and sovereignty could grant us a great spiritual awakening and raise up a leader like Josiah. In so doing, the Lord could choose not to cancel the coming judgment, but to forestall it.

This is what I am earnestly, desperately pleading for Him to do. Time is short, and the stakes are high, so I pray you are doing the same.

JOEL C. ROSENBERG is a New York Times best-selling author of fiction and nonfiction books, including *Implosion: Can America Recover from Its Economic and Spiritual Challenges in Time?* ([joelrosenberg.com](http://joelrosenberg.com)).