

CLASS: SS2

SUBJECT: CRS

TOPIC: RELIGIOUS REFORM

WEEK: 8

TERM: SECOND

PREVALENT RELIGIOUS EVILS OF THE TIME OF JOSIAH (II Kings 22)

Josiah was the son of Amon and his mother was Jedidah. He was the grandson of king Manasseh of Judah who was notorious for his introduction of many other religious beliefs and doctrine into the Jewish Orthodox mode of worship. Manasseh was succeeded by his son Amon who walked in the way of his fathers by serving idols.

After the death of king Amon, his eight year old son, Josiah was crowned king and he reigned for thirty one years. At the time of King Josiah, the pagan practices which his grandfather Manasseh introduced continued in Judah. These pagan practices in line with pagan worship prevalent at the time include: prostitution in the house of God; child sacrifice in accordance with the religious practices. This was done in Tophet in Judah; the use of medium and wizard (witches and wizards); shrines and idolatrous priests were introduced in every city of Judah.

King Josiah, having shown interest in the ways of God, decided to purge Judah of idolatry. In his eighteenth year of reign (at the age of twenty six years) he embarked on the repair of the temple in order to focus on the true worship of God. It was during this period of repair and renovation that the book of the law was found by the high priest, Hilkiah who later sent it to the king through Shaphan, the king's secretary who came to know the contribution for the work so far from Hilkiah. When the content of the book was read to the king, by Shaphan, it became clear to him that the people had transgressed the law and deviated greatly from the principles and ideals of the worship of God. He was so disturbed that he tore his clothes as a sign of repentance. He therefore became concerned and committed to reforming the religious life of the people.

King Josiah saw his kingdom in a pathetic state of spiritual mess and decay and made up his mind to bring his kingdom and his people back to the true worship of

God. He started the reform in Judah by eradicating idolatrous practices in the temple. All the foreign gods and their idols were destroyed and the altars dedicated to Baal, Asherah, the sun god and all their accessories for worship were taken away from the temple and burnt outside Jerusalem, at Kidron: all the idolatrous priests, priestesses and cult prostitutes were removed from the temple with their houses burnt. All idolatrous priests in the cities of Judah were deposed, the high places and foreign god in this area were defile and destroyed; child sacrifice was abolished and Tophet, a place in the valley of the sons Hinnon where the people were practising child sacrifice to the god Molech was defiled and destroyed, the use of medium (divination or soothsaying) and wizards were abolished with their satanic practitioners. King Josiah purged Judah of idolatry, restored the feast of Passover and rehabilitated the temple of Jerusalem.

Religious Reforms in the North

(II Kings 23:15-20)

King Josiah did not restrict his religious reform to Judah but extended it to the Northern kingdom. He destroyed all the idols and shrines (high places) built by Jeroboam the first king of the Northern kingdom at Bethel and Samaria; and burnt all foreign gods there; he slaughtered all the idolatrous priests officiating in those places. With the eradication of idolatrous practices in Judah, Jerusalem became again the only legitimate place of worship.

The reform brought about spiritual revival as children of Israel rededicated to the service of God. The Passover was again celebrated nationally by all the people in Jerusalem immediately after the reform as the last celebration was at the time of the Judges.

Some Areas of Religious Reforms in Nigeria

To reform means to make better by removing of vices and imperfections. It also means removal of faults and abuses, furthermore, it means to correct or amend or rectify a bad or ugly situation or condition. Religious reforms therefore, is to

correct or rectifying a decaying or worsening conditions in the religious lives of a people with the purpose of bringing and ensuring a practical righteous living.

There is no gainsaying the fact that Nigeria as a nation today is characterised by spiritual vices and idolatry that were evident in Judah and Northern kingdom during the reign of Josiah that warranted reformation.

In Nigeria today, these vices among others stare us in the face. Adulterous Priests abound in the society; Spirits has overtaken our streets, worship centres; the prevalence of witchcraft; idolatrous practices under the cover of Christianity; human sacrifices in some areas in Nigeria for kings burial, for politics and many more; homosexual and lesbian pastors so-called; emphasis on financial prosperity at the expense of morality and honesty; indecent and provocative dressing tolerated by religious groups and leaders, etc.

These, among other problem are possible areas of religious reform in Nigeria which beg to be addressed squarely by concerned civil and religious authorities and individuals.

ASSIGNMENT

List all the characters in the religious reform and explain their roles in the reform.