

2 Kings 23:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he slew all the priests of the high places that were there upon the altars, and burned men's bones upon them, and returned to Jerusalem.

Analysis

And he slew all the priests of the high places that were there upon the altars, and burned men's bones upon them, and returned to Jerusalem.

This verse contributes to the overall theme of chapter 23: Comprehensive reformation cannot avert certain judgment. In Judah's later history, we see both genuine reforms and deep-rooted corruption, revealing that external religious activity cannot substitute for heart transformation.

The narrative demonstrates God's justice in judging covenant unfaithfulness while maintaining His ultimate purposes for redemption.

Historical Context

Historical Setting: 2 Kings 23 takes place during the final century of Judah's existence, 7th century BCE, including Manasseh and Josiah's reigns. The chapter's theme (Josiah's Thorough Reforms) reflects the historical reality of the worst apostasy under Manasseh followed by the most thorough reforms under Josiah, demonstrating that external righteousness cannot reverse God's determined judgment. Archaeological evidence from this period includes royal inscriptions, administrative documents, and material culture that corroborate the biblical account while providing additional context for understanding the political and social dynamics at work.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does this verse contribute to understanding the theological message of 2 Kings 23 regarding comprehensive reformation cannot avert certain judgment?
2. What does this passage reveal about God's character, particularly His justice, mercy, and faithfulness to covenant promises?
3. In what practical ways should this text shape contemporary Christian thinking about faithfulness, worship, and obedience to God?

Interlinear Text

וַיַּזְכֵּחַ	אֶת	כָּל	כֹּהֲנֵי י	הַבָּמֹת	אֲשֶׁר	שָׁם	עַל
And he slew	H853	H3605	all the priests	of the high places	H834	H8033	H5921
H2076			H3548	H1116			
הַמִּזְבֵּחַ	וְ	וַיִּשְׂרֹף	אֶת	עֲצָמֹת	אֲדָמָה	עֲלֵיהֶם	
that were there upon the altars		and burned	H853	bones	men's	H5921	
H4196		H8313		H6106	H120		
וַיָּשָׁב		יְרוּשָׁלַם:					
upon them and returned		to Jerusalem					
H7725		H3389					

Additional Cross-References

2 Kings 11:18 (Sacrifice): And all the people of the land went into the house of Baal, and brake it down; his altars and his images brake they in pieces thoroughly, and slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars. And the priest appointed officers over the house of the LORD.

Exodus 22:20 (Sacrifice): He that sacrificeth unto any god, save unto the LORD only, he shall be utterly destroyed.

2 Kings 10:25 (Sacrifice): And it came to pass, as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, that Jehu said to the guard and to the captains, Go in, and slay them; let none come forth. And they smote them with the edge of the sword; and the guard and the captains cast them out, and went to the city of the house of Baal.

2 Chronicles 34:5 (Sacrifice): And he burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars, and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem.

1 Kings 13:2 (Sacrifice): And he cried against the altar in the word of the LORD, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the LORD; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee.

1 Kings 18:40 (Parallel theme): And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.