

Who were the sons of Josiah, and what happened to them?

Josiah was one of the last and best kings of Judah. He became king at 8 years old and reigned for 31 years. Under his reign, the high priest Hilkiah found the Book of the Law, and the prophetess Huldah warned that God would judge Judah for not following it. The king immediately enacted a nation-wide education program to teach the people the law. He destroyed most pagan worship practices and repaired the temple. He reinstated the Passover, donating a great number of animals for sacrifices. Josiah then made the foolish decision to challenge Pharaoh Neco and died in battle (2 Kings 22; 2 Chronicles 34–35).

Josiah's sons were Johanan, Jehoiakim, Zedekiah, and Shallum (1 Chronicles 3:15). Jehoiakim was originally named Eliakim. Zedekiah was originally Mattaniah. And Shallum is later called Jehoahaz.

We know nothing of Johanan. He may have died young.

After Josiah's death, Shallum, also called Jehoahaz, was made king. His evil reign lasted three months before Neco of Egypt imprisoned him (2 Kings 23:31–34; 2 Chronicles 36:1–3). He is noted in a prophecy by Jeremiah: “For this is what the Lord says about Shallum son of Josiah, who succeeded his father as king of Judah but has gone from this place: ‘He will never return. He will die in the place where they have led him captive; he will not see this land again’” (Jeremiah 22:11–12).

Pharaoh Neco made the second brother, Eliakim, king of Judah instead, changing his name to Jehoiakim. This son of Josiah paid the tribute Neco demanded, taxing the people to do

so. He was also evil. When the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar swept the Levant, Jehoiakim became his vassal for three years before rebelling. Nebuchadnezzar then took him to Babylon where he died (2 Kings 23:33-24:6; 2 Chronicles 36:3-8). In addition, Nebuchadnezzar took “some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility” including Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel 1:3, ESV).

Nebuchadnezzar made Jehoiakim’s son Jehoiachin king. He reigned for three months before Jerusalem was besieged by Babylon. King Jehoiachin surrendered and was brought to Babylon along with a great amount of treasure as well as officials, warriors, craftsmen, and 10,000 captives; only the poor remained in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 36:8-10; 2 Kings 24:6-16).

Having taken Jehoiachin captive, Nebuchadnezzar made Jehoiakim’s brother Zedekiah king, instead. Zedekiah reigned for eleven years but rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar so egregiously that Nebuchadnezzar had his sons killed in front of him and then blinded him before taking him into exile (2 Chronicles 36:11-14; 2 Kings 24:18-25:7). During this third deportation of Jews, Jerusalem was sacked, the temple was destroyed, and the leadership of Jerusalem was transferred to a Babylon-appointed governor named Gedaliah. A small group conspired and assassinated Gedaliah two months later (2 Kings 25:8-26).

Years later, Evil-merodach, king of Babylon, freed Jehoiachin from prison and gave him a position in the courts (2 Kings 25:27-30). Although Jehoiachin had done evil, he was the only king to do as God commanded and surrender to Nebuchadnezzar.