

The Beginning of the Reign of Good King Josiah

2 Kings 22

2 Kings 22:1-7 - *“Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.*

Now it came to pass, in the eighteenth year of King Josiah, that the king sent Shaphan the scribe, the son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, to the house of the LORD, saying: “Go up to Hilkiah the high priest, that he may count the money which has been brought into the house of the LORD, which the doorkeepers have gathered from the people. And let them deliver it into the hand of those doing the work, who are the overseers in the house of the LORD; let them give it to those who are in the house of the LORD doing the work, to repair the damages of the house—to carpenters and builders and masons—and to buy timber and hewn stone to repair the house. However there need be no accounting made with them of the money delivered into their hand, because they deal faithfully.”

Background Notes

In 2 Kings 19 we studied the record of Kings Manasseh and Amon, two of the worst kings of Judah. Manasseh, whose 55-year reign was the longest reign of any king in Judah or Israel, was also the most evil of all the kings of Israel. But there’s a wonderful lesson in the marvelous grace of God in Manasseh’s life and reign. 2 Chronicles 23 tells us that Manasseh repented of his evil ways while he was in captivity, and God brought him back to finish his reign in Jerusalem. Unfortunately, Manasseh’s return to the Lord did not prevent his son, Amon, from continuing the former evil ways of his father.

2 Kings 22 is the record of the beginning of the reign of Amon’s son, King Josiah. Because Amon was assassinated after just two years as king, Josiah was only eight years old when he became king. Josiah was one of the eight good kings of Judah.

2 Chronicles 34 says that when King Josiah was 16 years old, he *“began to seek the God of his father David.”* When he was 20 years old, he began to purge the idolatry from Jerusalem and Judah. 2 Kings 22 and 2 Chronicles 34 tell us that in the 18th year of his reign, when he was 26 years old, Josiah began major repairs of the house of the Lord. These repairs led to the discovery of a copy of the Law! This Scripture had been hidden in the Temple, and then lost during the dark days of the evil kings Manasseh and Amon. It seems that all the other copies of God’s Law had been destroyed in their evil reigns!

The discovery of the Law of God led to a major revival, the greatest revival up to this time in Judah’s history! It is well known as “Josiah’s Revival,” dated in 621BC.

Doctrinal Points

1. Faithful workers are a great blessing to any ministry.

Josiah's repair of the Temple reminds us of King Joash (2 Kings 12). There are a lot of parallels. Like Josiah, Joash became king at a very young age, when only 7 years old. Joash also ordered repairs on the house of the Lord. Like Josiah, he had no need to keep accounting records because the workers were faithful! 2 Kings 12:11 - *"Then they gave the money, which had been apportioned, into the hands of those who did the work, who had the oversight of the house of the Lord, and they paid it out to the carpenters and builders who worked on the house of the Lord."* And verse 15: *"Moreover they did not require an account from the men into whose hand they delivered the money to be paid to workmen, for they dealt faithfully."* The faithful workers under good King Joash sound very similar to the faithful workers about 200 years later, under good King Josiah.

The faithful workers under Joash and Josiah were a blessing to the reigns of these two good kings of Judah, and they would be a blessing to any ministry today! Faithful workers are a great blessing to any ministry.

Now the Bible is not teaching here that we don't need to keep account of how money in the Lord's work is used. Far from it! 1 Timothy 6:10 says that *"the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil,"* and as we all know, even people involved in the Lord's service may not be free from the love of money.

Read Ezra 8 to see the precautions and safeguards that Ezra set up to account for all the money going from Babylon to Jerusalem. He wanted to ensure its safe arrival in Jerusalem. Keeping good financial records in the Lord's work is certainly biblical.

What the Bible is teaching in 2 Kings 22 is that faithful workers are a great blessing to any ministry. What a blessing it is in the Lord's work when people are faithful and don't take advantage – when they don't sleep late, and don't falsely call in sick, and don't waste time on the job, and don't shift blame to others, and don't demand their "rights." What a blessing when they willingly "go the extra mile," and keep their word, and show up on time, and are thankful, and count it a privilege to serve the Lord! That's the way it was with Josiah's workers - and that's the way it should be today as well. The Lord is looking for faithful workers.

1 Corinthians 4:2 says that *"it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful."* The "Parable of the Talents" in Matthew 25 teaches that the Lord Himself will tell faithful workers, ***"Well done, good and faithful servant."*** The Lord didn't say that His words would be, "Well done, good and *successful* servant." No! His words will be, "Well done, good and ***faithful*** servant!"

Are you a faithful worker? Are you so faithful that records would not have to be kept if you were put in charge of large sums of money? Faithful workers are a great blessing to any ministry!

2. Faithful leaders are a great blessing to any nation.

2 Kings 22:8-20 - *“Then Hilkiyah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, ‘I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord.’ And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. So Shaphan the scribe went to the king, bringing the king word, saying, ‘Your servants have gathered the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of those who do the work, who oversee the house of the Lord.’ Then Shaphan the scribe showed the king, saying, ‘Hilkiyah the priest has given me a book.’ And Shaphan read it before the king.”*

Now it happened, when the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, that he tore his clothes. Then the king commanded Hilkiyah the priest, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Achbor the son of Michaiah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king, saying, ‘Go, inquire of the Lord for me, for the people and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found; for great is the wrath of the Lord that is aroused against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us.’”

So Hilkiyah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. (She dwelt in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter.) And they spoke with her. Then she said to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God of Israel, ‘Tell the man who sent you to Me, ‘Thus says the Lord: ‘Behold, I will bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants—all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read— because they have forsaken Me and burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands. Therefore My wrath shall be aroused against this place and shall not be quenched.’”

But as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord, in this manner you shall speak to him, ‘Thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘Concerning the words which you have heard—because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, that they would become a desolation and a curse, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you,’ says the Lord. ‘Surely, therefore, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; and your eyes shall not see all the calamity which I will bring on this place.’” So they brought back word to the king.”

In 2 Kings 23 we will read about the great revival that swept through Judah as a result of King Josiah's leadership. The prophet Zephaniah was ministering in Judah during Josiah's reign (Zephaniah 1:1), and his ministry may have paved the way for Josiah's revival. And the prophet Jeremiah was called to the ministry during Josiah's reign (Jeremiah 1:2), although his ministry came primarily after Josiah's revival.

In any case, it was King Josiah's leadership that sparked the great revival. When the Book of the Law was found, it was Josiah who sought out the prophetess Huldah to learn the meaning of God's Word. It was Josiah who led the people to

repentance. It was Josiah who ordered reforms. And it was Josiah who led the nation to make a covenant of commitment with the Lord. Because of Josiah's faithfulness, God said that He would delay His coming judgment on Judah and Jerusalem. Faithful leaders are a great blessing to any nation!

Proverbs 14:34 says, *"Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people."* How thankful we can be when our government leaders govern righteously and promote moral reform, as Josiah did. Faithful leaders are a great blessing to any nation.

Practical Application

Let Scripture judge you!

Why did Josiah take the Book of the Law to Huldah the prophetess, rather than to Zephaniah or Jeremiah? Most likely because Josiah was in great distress when he heard the words in the Book of the Law, and Huldah was nearby - right there in Jerusalem, in the Second Quarter of the city (v14). Josiah was anxious to discover the meaning.

When Josiah heard the Word of the Lord, he tore his clothes - a sign of remorse and repentance. **Josiah let the Word of God judge him - not the other way around!** He did not sit in judgment of Scripture, as many people do today. He didn't say, "Well, those laws were good back in Moses' day, but they don't apply today." And he didn't say, "I disagree with how demanding God is!"

And King Josiah was not afraid to send the Book of the Law to Huldah the prophetess for clarification, even though he knew that it would not be good news, but judgment. Josiah let the Scripture judge him.

What about us? Do we judge Scripture - or do we let Scripture judge us? Let Scripture judge you!