

2 Kings 22: Biblical Reading and Reflections

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Date: 09 November 2020

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[0 : 00] 2 Kings chapter 22 Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Judidah the daughter of Adiah of Bozkath, and he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, and walked in all the way of David his father, and he did not turn aside to the right or to the left.

In the eighteenth year of King Josiah the king sent Shaphan, the son of Azaliah, son of Meshulam, the secretary, to the house of the Lord, saying, Go up to Hilkiyah the high priest, that he may count the money that has been brought into the house of the Lord, which the keepers of the threshold have collected from the people.

And let it be given into the hand of the workmen, who have the oversight of the house of the Lord, and let them give it to the workmen who are at the house of the Lord, repairing the house, that is, to the carpenters, and to the builders, and to the masons.

And let them use it for buying timber, and quarried stone to repair the house. But no accounting shall be asked from them for the money that is delivered into their hand, for they deal honestly.

And Hilkiyah the high priest said to Shaphan the secretary, 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. And Shaphan the secretary came to the king, and reported to the king, Your servants have emptied out the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of the workmen who have the oversight of the house of the Lord.

[1 : 23] Then Shaphan the secretary told the king, Hilkiyah the priest has given me a book, and Shaphan read it before the king. When the king heard the words of the book of the law, he tore his clothes, and the king commanded Hilkiyah the priest, and Ahicham the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Micaiah, and Shaphan the secretary, and Esaiah the king's servant, saying, Go inquire of the Lord for me, and 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 kindled 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, and Ahicham, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Esaiah, went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shalom, the son of Tikva, son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe.

Now she lived in Jerusalem in the second quarter. And they talked with her. And she said to them, Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, Tell the man who sent you to me, Thus says the Lord, Behold, I will bring disaster upon this place, and upon its inhabitants, all the words of the book that the king of Judah has read, because they have forsaken me, and have made offerings to other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the work of their hands.

Therefore my wrath will be kindled against this place, and it will not be quenched. But to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord, thus you shall say to him, Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, Regarding the words that you have heard, because your heart was penitent, and you humbled yourself before the Lord, when you heard how I spoke against this place, and against its inhabitants, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and you have torn your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you, declares the Lord.

Therefore, behold, 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 disaster that I will bring upon this place. And they brought back word to the king.

[3 : 21] In 2 Kings chapter 22, Judah is on the brink. After over fifty years of Manasseh's reign, and the wickedness that had flourished within it, we might think that the threat of judgment that the Lord had declared concerning Jerusalem and Judah would soon come upon them.

The prophetic judgment hangs like a sword of Damocles over the sinful nation and city. At any time, the thread of grace by which it hangs might be cut, and destruction and exile befall the people. Yet in the very twilight of the kingdom, Judah is granted a brief reprieve. Under the reign of Josiah, the nation undergoes a spiritual reformation, and their judgment is postponed. Chapter 22 and 23 recount Josiah's reign, where there is a temporary reversal of Judah's trajectory.

These should be read as a unit. Josiah is the son of Ammon, the wicked son of the wicked Manasseh, who only reigned for two years and was killed by a conspiracy. Josiah does not have promising parentage, but he proves to be a very faithful king.

He walks in the ways not of Ammon and Manasseh, but of David. Josiah begins his reign in his youth at the age of only eight, and presumably he was thrown into his reign relatively unprepared, his father being assassinated before he could enjoy a full education as the crown prince.

[4 : 38] As a boy king who ends up seeking to restore the temple, Josiah should naturally remind us of Joash. Peter Lighthouse observes the way that this sets up a broader parallel sequence in the book of 2 Kings, running from chapter 11 to the end of the book.

The structure as he sees it is as follows. First, Athaliah, daughter of Ahab, kills the royal seed in chapter 11 verse 1. Then there's Joash's reign in chapters 11 to 12.

Then there's a quick sequence of kings of Israel and Judah in chapters 13 to 16. In chapter 17, there's the fall of Samaria. And the first iteration of the sequence concludes with the revival of Judah under Hezekiah in chapters 18 to 20.

The second sequence begins with Manasseh as a king like Ahab promoting idolatry and killing the innocent in chapter 21. In chapters 22 and 23, Josiah reigns.

In chapter 24, there is a quick succession of kings of Judah. And in chapter 25, the fall of Jerusalem. And finally, the concluding element of the sequence is the elevation of Jehoiakim in chapter 25 verses 27 to 30.

[5 : 47] Josiah reigns from 640 to 609 BC. In the 18th year of his reign, at around the age of 26, Josiah determines to repair the temple.

This wasn't the first reforming action that Josiah engaged in. 2 Chronicles tells us that he was seeking the Lord from his youth and that he had already started a widespread purge of idolatry from the land in his 12th year.

2 Chronicles chapter 34 verses 3 to 7 read,

The text's description of Josiah's reforms invite a parallel between him and Joash back in chapter 12, who also repaired the temple some years into his reign. As Lyssa Rae Beale notes, the parallels also reveal contrasts between Joash and Josiah.

Josiah is far more directly overseeing the repairing of the temple than Joash. However, despite Joash's extensive purge of idolatry from the land and his repairs of the temple, these primarily set the scene for a far greater event, which is the discovery of the book of the law in the temple.

[7 : 50] When the book of the law is discovered, the repairs of the temple move to the background. The book of the law is given to Shaphan the secretary by Hilkiah the high priest and is then read to Josiah by Shaphan.

The book of the law was likely the book of Deuteronomy, the second giving of the law, as Israel was on the brink of entering into the promised land. Besides the Ten Commandments, it contained extensive material, exhorting Israel to remember the lessons of the exodus in the wilderness as they prepared to possess the land.

The book concludes with blessings and curses and witnesses called against the people. Hearing the book, Josiah is devastated by its message. He tears his clothes and he weeps in response. It is clear that neither the people nor their rulers had obeyed the book of the law and as a result they had called down the judgment of the Lord upon them. Indeed, both the people and their king were supposed to be familiar with the book of the law.

In Deuteronomy chapter 17 verses 18 to 20, the king is instructed, And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests.

[8 : 56] And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel.

