

Josiah: Finding the Book!

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There's nothing more important in the development of God's children than "finding the Book" (Ps. 119:103-105, Ps. 19:10, Matt. 4:4, Is. 55:10-11). Things in Judah were very wrong, but with faith in God, Josiah tried to make them right (2 Chron. 34:1). Godly Old Testament kings in 2 Chronicles follow a pattern, each emphasizing an element of 2 Chronicles 7:14. If my people called by my name will humble themselves (King Rehoboam - 2 Chron. 12:12), pray (King Asa - 2 Chron. 14:11-12), seek my face (King Jehoshaphat - 2 Chron 20:3), turn from their wicked ways (King Hezekiah - 2 Chron 29:5), then I will hear from heaven, forgive, and heal their land. Josiah, Judah's last Godly king, did all 4. His obedience to God fulfilled a 360-year-old prophecy (1 Kgs 13:22). Realizing personal responsibility (Deut. 30:19), Josiah chose to do right (2 Chron. 34:2).

The Formula

At 16 *seeking* God became number one priority, and at 20 he began *turning* the nation from its wicked ways (vs. 3-7). Anything that offended God was cut down, burned in the fields of Kidron, and the ashes were carried unto Bethel (2 Kings 22:4). Idols were cut down, burned in the Brook Kidron, ground into powder, and scattered over the graves of idolaters (vs. 6). He smashed sodomite houses (vs. 7), destroyed the valley of Hinnom (vs. 10), dug up the bones of pagan priests and burned them on their altars (vs. 16), and slew false priests (vs. 20). Like his great grandfather Hezekiah (2 Chron. 29:5), Josiah took the filth out of the holy place and united workers to repair the house of the Lord (2 Chron. 34:8-13). Trash taken out, temple building up, Hilkiah the priest found the book and said to Shaphan the scribe, "**I have found the book in the house of the Lord**" (vs.14-15). God's book was so neglected that even the priest responsible for preserving and proclaiming it had to find it. How many churches pursuing numbers, nickels, and noises have neglected the book? Whether "the book" refers to Deuteronomy or the Pentateuch (Gen.-Deut.), every true revival is a return to the book. Spiritual growth requires hearing, responding, and doing something with the book (James 1:21-25). Deuteronomy had gotten dusty. As Shaphan reads the book, Josiah hears God say obey me, I'll bless you; don't I'll curse you (Deut. 28). He hears the King's law (Deut. 17:18-19). He hears, "Hear Oh Israel the Lord thy God is one", thou shalt have no other gods, don't mess with my name, my day, don't make anything that

looks like me (Deut. 5:7-21). As the book is read, Josiah humbles himself, prays, seeks God's face, and turns from his wicked ways.

The Book is Alive (Hebrews 4:12-13)

Hilkiah found the book, but the book found Josiah. Martin Luther said, "The Bible is alive, it speaks to me, it has feet, it runs after me, it has hands, it lays hold of me." Charles Spurgeon said, "This book has wrestled with me, even frowned at me." With absolute authority the plumbline judges and exposes things as they really are (Rom. 3:20). Shaphan simply reading the book shook Josiah up - he sees Israel's evilness, how bad sin angered God, and how much they deserved His wrath. As Josiah hears, his heart melts and he tears his clothes, repenting first over his sins, then those of the people. How we respond to the book is key to development. He doesn't know what to do, but he knows they are hopeless unless God intervenes. GO inquire of the Lord for me, for great is the wrath of the Lord poured out on us because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord to do after ALL that is written in this book (2 Chron. 34:21). Josiah sends for Huldah the prophetess (she was NOT a woman preacher). The Lord speaks first - bad news for Judah (vs. 25) then good news for Josiah (vs. 27-28). Josiah doing right would not stop God's judgement on the wicked nation, but would delay it. Youthful optimism will be challenged with God's school of hard knocks. Hardships will humble, disappointments will discipline, but defeats will not define, they are God's methods of building you in His time by His grace on His word. More important than Josiah's youth or a perceived revival was Josiah's tender heart (Isa. 66:2, Ps. 34:18). Salvation is God taking out the stony heart and giving a new heart, causing us to walk in His statutes, keep His judgements, and do them (Ez. 36:26-27). "Is not my word like fire, declares the Lord and like a hammer that breaks rock into pieces?" (Jer. 23:29) God turns weeping into joy, and it results in spiritual growth. But the process starts with conviction over sin (James 4:9). Josiah humbled himself and God would lift him up (1 Pet. 5:6). Discover the book and you'll find God demands more than you thought, sin is worse than you thought, the consequences of sin worse than you thought; but you also discover God is greater, more merciful, and more forgiving than you could ever imagine. People had lost the book, but the book never lost its power. It'll always be inerrant, infallible, and totally sufficient. If you want to grow in godliness (2 Peter 1:8-11), bring everything in your life under the authority of God's book.

Chopsticks

Josiah gathered the people, read the book, covenanted to keep it with all his heart and soul and to do what was written in the book, and the people stood with him (2 Kings 23:3). It wasn't enough for Josiah to be safe; he hoped against hope that the people could change (Romans 4:18). G. Campbell Morgan wrote, "No pathway of service is more difficult than bearing witness to God in word and in work in the midst of conditions which are unresponsive." God's word when found, read, and obeyed revives, blesses, and brings life. Josiah brought back the Passover like they hadn't seen since Samuel (vs. 18). Why? Because Christ is our Passover. Finding the book puts Christ front and center.

Great Story, Gut Wrenching Ending

He was one of the best kings Judah ever had (2 Kings 23:25), but still Josiah couldn't turn away God's wrath because of Manasseh's sins (2 Kings 23:26,). Josiah dies at 39 not listening to God's word after going into a battle that wasn't his to fight and losing to Neco king of Egypt (2 Chron. 35:22). Josiah's death was God's mercy so he wouldn't have to see the inevitable "curses found in the book". The text says Josiah was "gathered with his fathers". Death would have been seeing his reforms reversed and idolatry restored 3 months later, his sons do evil (36:5,9,12), his grandchildren murdered and his son's eyes plucked out (2 Kings 25:7), his son burn God's word (Jer. 36:27-28), God's house burned (2 Chron. 36:19), and the nation taken into Babylonian captivity for 70 years (vs. 20). The obvious question is why? After all, Josiah had followed 2 Chronicles 7:14. It's a hard lesson to learn - unless God fixes it, it doesn't get fixed. There was an outward appearance of reform during Josiah's reign, but the people's hearts remained attached to idols (Jer. 3:10). Compassionate God sent messengers again and again, but they mocked His messengers, despised His words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people till there was no remedy (2 Chron. 36:15-16). Josiah wasn't Jesus. Josiah temporarily destroyed the idols at the Brook Kidron; Jesus passed through the Brook Kidron (John 18:1) where at the cross He would destroy idols forever. Josiah tore up the valley of Hinnom so that no children would pass through to Molech. Jesus died so all who repent and believe will be saved from the fire of Gehenna - a transliteration from the Aramaic form of the Hebrew ge-hinnom, "valley of Hinnom" (Matthew 10:28). Jesus is the King who changes hearts, never fails, and will never be replaced. Of

His eternally victorious kingdom there'll be no end (Isaiah 9:7. Hebrews 12:28-29).

Conclusion

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Book endures forever (Is. 41:8). John Wesley wrote, "Oh give me that book. At any price give me the book of God." Food sustains the body, but the book sustains the soul (Matthew 4:4). God opened Ezekiel's mouth, he ate the scroll, and it became sweet (Ez. 2:8-3:3). The book is bitter to the rebellious, but to God's children it's sweet because it reveals His perfect will. Jeremiah ate it, and the book became a joy and the delight of his heart (Jer. 15:16). Once found, Jeremiah was persecuted for preaching it but couldn't quit (Jer. 20:9). John ate it, and it made his stomach bitter but, in his mouth, it was sweeter than honey (Rev. 10:10). Are you hungry? (Ps. 119:9-10,11,18; Jos. 1:8, Jn. 17:17, Ps. 1). The B-I-B-L-E, that's the book for me, because I have found the Book!

