

II Chronicles 34:14-28 (selected verses) HOW COULD IT BE LOST ?!?

PRONOUNCIATION: Hilkiyah hill-KIGH-ah , Shaphan SHAY-phan, Josiah joe-SIGH-ah

Then Hilkiyah [the Priest] answered and 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. So Shaphan carried the book to the king [King Josiah] bringing the king word, saying, . . . "Hilkiyah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read it before the king.

Thus it happened, when the king heard the words of the Law, that he tore his clothes. Then the king commanded Hilkiyah, . . . "Go, inquire of the LORD for me, and for those who are left in Israel and Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found; for great is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out on us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do according to all that is written in this book."

So Hilkiyah and those the king had appointed went to Huldah the prophetess, . . . Then she answered 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 curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah, 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 will be poured out on this place, and 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 God when you heard His words against this place and against its inhabitants, and you humbled yourself before Me, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you, says the Lord. Surely 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 and its inhabitants."

Have you ever LOST your keys, wallet, checkbook, pocket calendar, glasses, etc.?! How could it be? Something so important! Likewise, the words of our text this morning: What? The Book of the Law, God's Word given to Moses—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy—had been lost?! How does that sort of thing happen? When we don't give important things the attention they deserve.

The King in our text for today is King Josiah of the Kingdom of Judah. Judah was what was left of the Twelve Tribes of Israel. Saul, David, and Solomon had been the first three kings. After Solomon, the Lord caused the nation to divide. Ten tribes went their own way—they were called Israel. They rapidly turned away from God; and after 300 years of calling them to repentance, the Lord let them be defeated and destroyed. Done! However, the remaining two tribes—the nation of Judah—remained, still ruled by family line of King David. Although it endured a little longer, Judah also turned away from the Lord and about 100 years later was also defeated, destroyed, and taken captive to Babylon.

At the time of our text a man named Josiah, a descendant of King David., was king. These events took place about 30 years before the END of the nation of Judah. Likely you can see why. At Josiah's time the Book of the Law was unexpectedly discovered in the Temple of the Lord. It had been lost and no one seemed to miss it! Imagine if we conducted worship at St. Luke's, but for years, the Bible was lost! Shocking. The kings, as well as those serving in the House of God, and the people, had not given it the attention it deserved. It had become lost, stuck away in a closet or corner or someplace-somewhere. Their worship had become ritual, mechanical, and even ungodly.

Josiah's own father and grandfather had done much to cultivate idol worship in Judah, in the capital city Jerusalem, and even in the temple itself. A majority of the church leaders and people willingly followed, blithely turning their hearts away from the Lord and His Word. The Lord had rescued their fathers from Egypt, established them in the land of Canaan, and who was faithfully carrying out His promise to send the Savior from sin through their people. But they had turned away!

By God's grace, Josiah was different. He had been made king at age 8 after his idol worshiping father was assassinated. He followed the ways of his earlier "father" David—that is, his great-grandfather with about 15 "greats" in front of it. At age 16 he began to seek the ways of the Lord, like King David had. At age 20, he began to clear out all the idol temples, altars, and priests from the land. At age 26, he began to repair the 350 year old temple. It had been allowed to go to shambles. That is when the Book of the Law was found. Why was Josiah different? Was it because he was one of the lucky ones whom God had chosen to be

godly and different, and the others were chosen by God to be wicked? First, it was definitely by God's grace that Josiah was different, not by his own doing. But what about the others? By their own fleshly and foolish choice, they had turned away from God. There was no one to blame but themselves. God chooses no one to be evil. "The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9).

Josiah became committed to the Lord. He was committed to act *contrary* to his father's and grandfather's errors. He got rid of the evil worship that his ancestors had set up. Oftentimes people like to stick with what they have been taught, what they learned from their parents! But what is more important?-- sticking with what one's beloved parents have done or taught or believed, or sticking with what the Lord says? Josiah served the Lord. Josiah abandoned the idols his fathers worshiped. Jesus says, "Whoever loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:37). Pay attention to what the Lord wants.

Likely Josiah's reform actions and ousting of the idolatry was not popular with many of the officials and people. But it did not deter him. He was committed to the Lord God, who in His mercy through the Savior -to-come had forgiven King David of his sins, as well as Adam and Eve, and everyone else. Josiah likewise was clinging by faith to this Lord and the Lord's loving forgiveness in Christ to come. You also, cling to the Word of the Lord and the Savior from sin that it proclaims. Do not let this Good News slip out of your life.

No wonder Josiah tore his clothes when the re-discovered Book of the Law was read to him. His forefathers and his people had not been attentive to the Word of God! Do you see how much more "weight" the message of God carried when presented and read directly to Josiah rather than just some report? Let the Word of God, with its condemnation for your sin and with its mercy, forgiveness, comfort, and salvation in Jesus, speak directly to your heart. Pay attention to the Bible. Do not let it get lost in your life. Read it, hear it, and learn it. Make sure your pastor is preaching from it and not just from popular ideas of the day, or from thoughts that please your egos.

Josiah sought help. He sent a delegation to the prophetess Huldah. Nearly 100% of the time the Bible speaks of male leaders of the people and male prophets leading them. But at times, the leadership fell to the ladies. Why? Consider the time of Deborah the woman Judge. The men, to their shame, were reluctant to take the responsibility God had given them. Barak the leader of the army was afraid and would not go out to battle unless Deborah went with him. Now at Josiah's time with all the idol worship, likely being a prophet of God was not a popular role to fill and the men, to their shame, had walked away from it. We do know the mighty prophet Jeremiah comes on the scene very shortly. In the meantime Huldah was the prophetess of God.

Huldah told Josiah the straight facts. Indeed the Lord was angry and His patience with Judah was at its end. The Lord would fulfill upon His people the warnings and curses long ago expressed to them (see Deuteronomy 28:15 and following). Destruction! They had not been attentive to His Word of forgiveness in the coming Savior and would be cast out by Him. The Lord's patience does run out, you know. Come Judgment Day, He will strike down those who have insisted in turning away from Him and from His Son their Savior. Do not ignore or toy with the grace of God!

Josiah also learned from Huldah that the Lord would be merciful to him—not because Josiah's life was so special in and of itself. See how Josiah had rent (torn) not just his garments, but also his heart (see Joel 2:13). Josiah was grieved and stricken for the disregard and lack of attention his people had given to the Lord and His Word. Josiah knew he was part of the people. Josiah repented and sought God's mercy and forgiveness. And the Lord granted him forgiveness and would also grant him a peaceful death in faith.

That is the gift God also gives to you. Through Christ—THE King and descendant of King David, and also Josiah—as well as the holy Son of God—forgiveness, peace, rest, resurrection from the grave eternal life are yours. This is the great message of God's Word! How can you not pay attention to it! Without it, you face only destruction. But with it and the crucified and risen Jesus, your Savior, whom it presents to you, you have forgiveness, peace, resurrection from the grave, and life in heaven. Do not let it get lost in your life and the life of your family. How many generations does it take for the Word of the Lord to be lost? ONE.

The Third Commandment says, "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy." Martin Luther wrote, "We should fear and love God that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but regard it as holy and gladly hear and learn it."

So be it! Amen!

Pastor Kanzenbach --
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