

2 Kings Chapter 22

Verses 1-2: "Josiah" was the long-awaited king (1 Kings 13:2). He instituted great reform, although too late to make any difference to Judah's fate.

2 Kings 22:1 "Josiah [was] eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty and one years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name [was] Jedidah, the daughter of Adaiah of Boscath."

"Josiah" was the son of King Amon, whom the people made king of Judah after Amon's assassination (639 B.C.). Josiah's reign began when he was only eight years old and lasted 31 years, three decades of peace, prosperity, and reform. King Josiah devoted himself to pleasing God and reinstating Israel's observance of the Mosaic Law. The Bible focuses almost exclusively on Josiah's spiritual reform, which climaxes in the eighteenth year of his reign with the discovery of the book of the law 621 B.C. There were three stages of this reform:

1. At the age of 16, Josiah "began to seek the God of David his father" (2 Chron. 34:3).
2. At the age of 20, Josiah began to cleanse Jerusalem and the land of Judah of idolatrous objects (2 Chron. 34:3-7).
3. At the age of 26, Josiah ordered that the temple be repaired (2 Chron. 34:8).

Josiah died while engaging Pharaoh-necho II of Egypt in battle (in 609 B.C. at Megiddo; 23:29). His death evoked widespread lamentation (2 Chron. 35:20-27). Jeremiah and Zephaniah prophesied during his reign, and he was considered Judah's outstanding monarch (23:25; see 1 Kings 13:2; 2 Kings 21:24 – 23:34).

"Thirty and one years": 640-609 BC. During Josiah's reign, power in the ancient Near East passed from Assyria to Babylon. Nineveh, the capital of Assyria was destroyed by the Babylonians (in 612 B.C.), and the whole Assyrian empire fell (in 609 B.C.). Josiah was the last good king of the Davidic line prior to the Babylonian exile. Jeremiah (Jer. 1:2), possibly Habakkuk, and Zephaniah (Zeph. 1:1), were prophets to Judah during the reign of Josiah (see notes on 2 Chron. 34:1-35:27).

This is an unusually young age to begin the reign as king. Someone will have a great influence upon him, perhaps his mother. It appears his mother was Hebrew. "Jedidah" means beloved. "Adaiah" means whom Jehovah adorns. Boscath was a city of Judah. He reigned until he was 39.

2 Kings 22:2 "And he did [that which was] right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left."

"Turned not aside": Josiah had complete devotion to God's approved course of conduct for his life (23:25). He obeyed the Mosaic stipulations as he came to know them, following the example of David, who set the pattern for the rulers of God's people (Deut. 11:17, 20; Joshua 1:7).

This is high praise of any of the kings, but is even more so because of the king's age. The last king of Judah that this had been said of, was Hezekiah. The land was full of idolatry and he made a stand for God. He was a man after God's heart. It was wonderful how he broke the chain of sins of his father and grandfather, and lived for the LORD.

Verses 3-7: The account of Josiah's life (in 2 Chronicles 34:3-7), tells of Josiah's spiritual reforms before this program for the "repair" of the temple. "Josiah" had a consistent testimony for righteousness and spiritual concern. Shaphan's oversight of the temple repairs and the financing of the work at Josiah's request was similar to the role Jehoash played (in 12:1-16).

2 Kings 22:3 "And it came to pass in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, [that] the king sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, the scribe, to the house of the LORD, saying,"

"Eighteenth year" (622 B.C.), when Josiah was 26 years of age.

In the book of 2 Chronicles, there is a more extensive list of the things that Josiah did.

2 Chronicles 34:3-5 "For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father: and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images." "And they brake down the altars of Baalim in his presence; and the images, that [were] on high above them, he cut down; and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images, he brake in pieces, and made dust [of them], and strewed [it] upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them." "And he burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars, and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem."

In verse 3 above, he would be 26 years old. He had begun to cleanse the land when he was 16. He had been a good king, doing what was right in God's sight. Shaphan was a very prominent officer in the service of Josiah. Josiah sent him to the temple for him.

Verses 4-7: "Keepers of the door" (see note on 12:9). Josiah used the same procedure as King Joash had for collecting funds to repair the temple after its abuse in the days of Manasseh and Amon.

2 Kings 22:4 "Go up to Hilkiah the high priest, that he may sum the silver which is brought into the house of the LORD, which the keepers of the door have gathered of the people:"

"Hilkiah": The High-Priest was the father of Azariah and the grandfather of Seraiah, the High-Priest who would be executed at the time of the exile by the Babylonians (25:8-20).

We see there was now a high priest in the temple. It appears, that Josiah had been gathering silver for the temple. He wanted an accounting of that silver.

2 Kings 22:5 "And let them deliver it into the hand of the doers of the work, that have the oversight of the house of the LORD: and let them give it to the doers of the work which [is] in the house of the LORD, to repair the breaches of the house,"

That were overseers of the workmen, whose names are mentioned (2 Chron. 34:12), into their hands the money was to be delivered by the high priest, when he had taken the account of it, and perhaps along with the king's scribe (see 2 Kings 12:10).

"And let them give it to the doers of the work, which is in the house of the Lord, to repair the breaches of the house as their wages for their work": It seems it had not been repaired from the times of Jehoash, a space of two hundred and eighteen years, according to the Jewish chronology.

The house of the LORD had been allowed to fall into need of repair under the evil kings. They had done much damage as well, with their evil altars and statues of idols. Josiah had already had the evil removed, but now the building and its furnishings were in need of repair. Josiah had them to gather silver from the people to pay for it. He now has the silver distributed to the overseers, and they could in turn pay the actual workmen.

2 Kings 22:6 "Unto carpenters, and builders, and masons, and to buy timber and hewn stone to repair the house."

Who were employed, some in mending the woodwork, and others in repairing the stone walls.

"And to buy timber and hewn stone to repair the house. Not only money was to be given them for their workmanship, but to buy timber and stone to work with.

2 Kings 22:7 "Howbeit there was no reckoning made with them of the money that was delivered into their hand, because they dealt faithfully."

No account was kept between the high priest, and the king's scribe who delivered the money and the overseers of the workmen. Who received it from them the latter and were not called to any account by the former, nor was an audit made of their accounts.

"Because they dealt faithfully": They were persons of such known honor and integrity, that their fidelity was not in the least called in question. But were trusted without examining their accounts, and how they disposed of the money committed to them (see 2 Kings 12:15).

There was no need for a reckoning since they were all men chosen by Josiah for their honesty. It appears that Josiah had removed those who were not worshippers of Jehovah. The silver was used not only for the wages of the laborers, but for the materials for building such as stone and wood.

Verses 8-13: Upon hearing the words in “the Book of the Law” (the Torah, the Pentateuch), Josiah was deeply grieved. How far Judah had fallen!

2 Kings 22:8 "And Hilkiyah the high priest said unto 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."

“The book of the law”: A scroll containing the Torah (the Pentateuch), the revelation of God through Moses to Israel (see notes on 23:2; Deut. 28:61). Manasseh may have destroyed all the copies of God’s law that were not hidden. This could have been the official copy laid beside the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place (Deut. 31:25-26). It may have been removed from its place under Ahaz, Manasseh, or Amon (2 Chron. 35:3), but was found during repair work.

Liberal scholars have tended to associate the “book of the law” with the basic material of the Book of Deuteronomy, much of which they suppose had just been written. Such a position cannot stand the tests of literary and historical accuracy. Josiah’s reaction to the reading of the book and the nature of his later reforms (23:4-20; 2 Chron. 35:1-19), suggest that a copy of the whole Pentateuch had been found, one which possibly had been deposited beside the Ark of the Covenant (Deut. 31:26), or had been hidden during a purge of the Word of God by the previous kings.

This book of the law is probably speaking of the Pentateuch (five books of Moses). At one time, there was a copy kept at the side of the ark. I would not say they found this by chance. I believe God planned this, for this young king to know fully the law of God that he loved. The high priest would have been in the area where the book would have been kept. Shaphan, being the record keeper, checked it to see if he thought it was a true work. He would have to tell the king his opinion of whether this is the law or not.

Verses 9-10: Some believe that Shaphan must have read (Deut. Chapters 28 to 30), in which are recorded a renewal of the national covenant and a listing of the terrible threats and curses against all who violate the law of God.

2 Kings 22:9 "And Shaphan the scribe came to the king, and brought the king word again, and said, Thy servants have gathered the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of them that do the work, that have the oversight of the house of the LORD."

Of the delivery of his message to the high priest, and of what had been done upon it.

"And said, thy servants have gathered the money that was found in the house": Meaning Hilkiyah and himself, who had examined the chest in the temple, into which the money was put for the repairs of it, and had taken it out, and told it.

"And have delivered it into the hand of them that do the work, that have the oversight of the house of the Lord": According to the king's orders.

2 Kings 22:10 "And Shaphan the scribe showed the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king."

Further related to him what follows.

"Saying, Hilkiah the high priest hath delivered me a book": But did not say what book it was.

"And Shaphan read it before the king; part of it": And it is thought by Kimchi and Ben Gersom that he particularly read the reproofs and threatenings in the book of Deuteronomy. They suppose that Hilkiah read those to Shaphan, and directed him to read them to the king, that he might take into consideration a further reformation.

Shaphan had carried out the request of his king to count the funds and distribute it for the rebuilding of the temple. In the process of seeing what needed to be done to the temple, the high priest had found the book of the law. Shaphan read the law to the king, for his approval.

2 Kings 22:11 "And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes."

"Rent his clothes": Josiah's reaction at the reading of the law was one of immediate contrition, expressed by the common sign of lamentation and grief (see 18:37; 19:1). Josiah's grief sprang from Judah's guilt and God's punishment (verse 13).

The king's reaction was one of genuine repentance for himself and his people. The entrance of God's Word brings correction and guidance to a man of godliness and true wisdom (Psalms 119:9-11; chapters 129 to 136).

King Josiah accepted this book as the truth from the beginning. After hearing the book, he knew that Judah had greatly sinned against God when they committed all of the sins during his father's time. He also realized that there were definite things to be observed in the temple. The tearing of his clothes, showed his grief in seeing how Judah had failed God. He knew the wrath of God should fall upon them.

2 Kings 22:12 "And the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Michaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asahiah a servant of the king's, saying,"

The high priest, as he is called (2 Kings 22:4).

"And Ahikam the son of Shaphan": Whether the same with Shaphan the scribe, before mentioned, or another of the same name, is not certain.

"And Achbor the son of Michaiah": Who is called Abdon, the son of Micah (2 Chron. 34:20).

"And Shaphan the scribe": Who brought and read the book to the king.

"And Asahiah, a servant of the king's": That waited on him constantly.

"Saying": As follows.

2 Kings 22:13 "Go ye, inquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great [is] the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us."

Of some of his prophets, as Jeremiah, who began to prophesy in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign, and had been a prophet five years (Jer. 1:1).

"For me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found": For he observed that this book threatened and foretold not only the captivity of the ten tribes, but of Judah, and of their king. And Jarchi thinks, he had a particular respect to that passage. "The Lord shall bring thee and thy king," etc. (Deut. 28:36), and therefore was desirous of knowing what he and his people must do to avert those judgments.

"For great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us": Which he concluded from the threatenings denounced.

"Because that our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according to all which is written concerning us": He clearly saw that his ancestors more remote and immediate had been very deficient in observing the laws, commands, and ordinances enjoined them in that book. And therefore, feared that what was threatened would fall upon him and his people, who, he was sensible, came short of doing their duty.

These were people of importance in the kingdom. The high priest represented the religious in this. The Urim and the Thummim of the high priest, in the days of Moses, was the way the LORD spoke to the people. The temple had been so desecrated from time to time and the priesthood reduced to a puppet situation that the king would inquire of God through a prophet, or a prophetess now. Isaiah is dead. Manasseh killed him. King Josiah wanted to hear from God to know what to do, to save Judah. Whatever God wanted him to do, is what they would do.

Verses 14-20: "Huldah" is rarely mentioned in the Old Testament except in (2 Chron. 34:22-28). Her words relative to the king (verse 20), refer to Josiah's spiritual well-being with God and the present withholding of Jerusalem's final judgment, for Josiah died in battle (23:29-30). The Hebrew word translated "college" probably means "second district."

2 Kings 22:14 "So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asahiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son

of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college;) and they communed with her."

"Huldah": This prophetess is otherwise unknown in the Old Testament. She was held in some regard for her prophetic gift, though why she was consulted and not another prophet like Jeremiah or Zephaniah (see note on 22:1), is unexplained. Rarely did God speak to the nation through a woman. Miriam (Exodus 15); Deborah (Judges 4:4); and Anna (Luke 2:36), are best-known). And never did a woman have an ongoing prophetic ministry identified in Scripture. No woman was inspired to author any of Scripture's 66 books.

"The wardrobe": Likely, these were the royal garments or those used by the priest.

"In the college": This district of Jerusalem was called "second" because it comprised the city's first major expansion. It was probably located on the western hill of Jerusalem, an area enclosed by the city wall and built during the reign of Hezekiah. The expansion of the city during Hezekiah's reign was perhaps to accommodate Jewish refugees who had escaped from the Assyrian invasion of Israel.

Jeremiah was a prophet in these days. We are not told why he was not consulted on this matter. There is a confirmation in this following Scripture that these men of authority in the temple and the civil government went to inquire of this prophetess. Her husband was not a prophet. This one verse (in Chronicles and in Kings), defeats the complaint about women ministers.

2 Chronicles 34:22 "And Hilkiyah, and [they] that the king [had appointed], went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvath, the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college:) and they spake to her to that [effect]."

"Huldah" means weasel. This lets us know that her prophetic ability had been underground, perhaps to save her life. She was not a feminist. She was married. It appears, that she was a teacher of the prophets in the school of the prophets. That is the school that is meant here. It appears that she was held in high esteem as a prophetess by the king, and his government officials, and by the temple authorities as well. Hilkiyah was the high priest.

Verses 15-20: Huldah gave God's message to Josiah through his messengers. "thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace" means Josiah would die before these terrible events befell Jerusalem.

First, the Lord confirmed to Josiah that He was surely going to bring His judgment upon Jerusalem because of her idolatry (verses 15-17). Second, the Lord's personal word to Josiah was that he would die "in peace" (verse 20), meaning that he would escape the horrors in store for Jerusalem. This promise was based on Josiah's response of tenderness and humility before the Lord when he heard the scroll describing Judah's future devastation (verses 18-19).

2 Kings 22:15 "And she said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Tell the man that sent you to me,"

The king's messengers.

"Thus saith the Lord God of Israel": Being immediately inspired by him, she spake in his name, as prophets did.

"Tell the man that sent you to me": Which may seem somewhat rude and unmannerly to say of a king; but when it is considered she spake not of herself, but representing the King of kings and Lord of lords, it will be seen and judged of in another light.

She was unusual amongst women. She spoke as an oracle of God. As Isaiah and Jeremiah and prophets of that stature, she spoke the Words of God to the people (Thus saith the LORD). Notice, she wanted these people to realize that the king was not deity. She called him man.

2 Kings 22:16 "Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, [even] all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read:"

Destruction to the place, and captivity to the inhabitants of it.

"Even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read": Particularly what is contained (in Leviticus 26:14), even all the curses in it (as in 2 Chron. 34:24).

She boldly brought the judgment of God to the ears of these listeners. She said the things in the book they had found, were true and God will bring judgment upon Judah for their unfaithfulness to God.

2 Kings 22:17 "Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched."

My worship, as the Targum; his word and ordinances.

"And have burnt incense unto other gods": To Baal, to the host of heaven, and other Heathen deities.

"That they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands": Their idols of wood, stone, gold, and silver, which their hands had made, to worship. To which nothing was more provoking to God.

"Therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched": The decree for the destruction of Jerusalem was gone forth, and not to be called back. The execution of it could not be stopped or hindered by cries, prayers, entreaties, or otherwise. This wrath of God was an emblem of the unquenchable fire of hell (Matt. 3:12).

"The burning of incense" symbolizes prayer. To burn incense to a false god, means they were praying to that false god. God's wrath was kindled against Judah, because they had been unfaithful and turned to false gods. There had been so much worship of false gods before the reign of Josiah, that God's wrath would not be quenched.

2 Kings 22:18 "But to the king of Judah which sent you to inquire of the LORD, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, [As touching] the words which thou hast heard;"

That is, with respect to him, or what may concern him.

"Thus shall ye say unto him": Carry back this message to him as from the Lord he desired to inquire of.

"Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, as touching the words which thou hast heard": Read out of the law, concerning the destruction of the land, and its inhabitants therein threatened.

This king had not gone unnoticed by the LORD. In all of this land of evil, Josiah stood out as someone who truly loved God. This part of the message was specifically to him. Shaphan had read Josiah the law, and that was when he rent his clothes in horror.

2 Kings 22:19 "Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard [thee], saith the LORD."

Soft like wax, and susceptible of impressions; or was "moved", or "trembled", as the Targum. For God has respect to such as are of contrite hearts, and tremble at his word (Isa. 66:2).

"And thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord": External humiliation, such as in Ahab, was regarded by the Lord. Much more internal and cordial humiliation is regarded by him (see 1 Kings 21:29).

"When thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse": (As in Lev. 26:1).

"And hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me": As expressive of the inward contrition, sorrow, and grief of his heart.

"I also have heard thee, saith the Lord": His cries and prayers.

Josiah loved the LORD. The tearing of the clothes by Josiah, was an act of humiliating himself before the LORD. It was as if Josiah were saying, "I am at your mercy LORD". God heard the prayer of Josiah because it was from a humble, loving heart. God will not lift the curse off this evil land, but there was no curse on Josiah.

2 Kings 22:20 "Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again."

“In peace”: His heart was at peace with God and he never lived to see Jerusalem destroyed, but he did die in battle (2 Chron. 35:23).

The destruction of Jerusalem in particular, and Judah in general, will be delayed until after the death of Josiah. God will not punish the righteous with the wicked. In the lifetime of Josiah, there would be peace in the land. What a wonderful report to take back to the king. Huldah explained that the destruction of Judah was ordained of God and would come, but Josiah would be dead when it came.

2 Kings Chapter 22 Questions

1. How old was Josiah, when he began to reign?
2. Who was his mother?
3. What does "Jedidah" mean?
4. How long did he reign?
5. And he did that which was _____ in the sight of the LORD.
6. Who was the last king of Judah, before him, this had been said of?
7. Who did Josiah send to the house of the Lord for him?
8. What was his reason for sending him?
9. Read 2 Chronicles chapter 34:3-5.
10. Who was the high priest?
11. What had the silver been gathered for?
12. What was Josiah having done to the temple?
13. What did they have to buy to repair the house?
14. What had Hilkiyah found in the house of the LORD?
15. Who read it?
16. What was this book of the law?

17. When Shaphan read it to the king, what did the king do?
18. Where did the king send the high priest and the high officers in his government, to get Word from the LORD?
19. What had Josiah realized, that had disturbed him?
20. Who was a prominent prophet at that time?
21. Was Huldah's husband a prophet?
22. What was he?
23. Where was Huldah living?
24. What did it appear that she was doing at the college?
25. How do we know that she spoke as an oracle of God?
26. What message did she have for the king that was distressing?
27. What does the "burning of incense" symbolize?
28. Why was God's wrath kindled against Judah?
29. What exception did the LORD make in His condemnation of Judah?
30. Why did He make this exception?
31. When will the wrath of God be poured out on Judah?