

NOON BIBLE STUDY: 2 KINGS 22

2 KINGS 22:1-2 - REIGN OF JOSIAH

JOSIAH BECOMES KING AT 8 YEARS OLD AND RULES FOR 31 YEARS. HIS LIFE AND REIGN IS MODELED AFTER HIS FATHER DAVID RATHER THAN HIS FATHER AND GRANDFATHER (MANASSEH AND AMON)

2 CHRONICLES 34:1-7 - JOSIAH SEEKS YAHWEH, THE GOD OF DAVID

IN A FEW YEARS, JOSIAH WILL DISCOVER SOMETHING WHICH WILL TRANSFORM HIM AND HIS KINGDOM (MORE ON THAT IN A MINUTE. BUT BEFORE THIS TRANSFORMATIVE DISCOVERY, HE BEGINS TO SEEK THE GOD OF HIS FATHER DAVID. HE BEGINS THIS JOURNEY WHEN HE IS ONLY 16 YEARS OLD. REMEMBER HIS GRANDFATHER MANASSEH WAS THE WORST KING TO EVER REIGN IN JERUSALEM - THE WORST! JOSIAH'S FATHER AMON WORSHIPPED IDOLS AND REJECTED YAHWEH. AND YET 16 YEAR OLD JOSIAH BEGINS TO SEEK THE GOD OF DAVID AND 4 YEARS LATER (AT 20 YEARS OF AGE) HE BEGINS TO REFORM THE NATION AND REMOVE THE IDOLS.

ONE MIGHT ASK "WHAT MADE JOSIAH START SEEKING GOD? WHY DOES HE BEGIN TO MAKE A CHANGE FROM HIS FATHER AND GRANDFATHER? SCRIPTURE GIVES US SOME INSIGHT. YOU SEE, THE LORD WAS SPEAKING THROUGH HIS PROPHETS:

LOOK AT THE MESSAGE OF THE PROPHET ZEPHANIAH AND NOTICE WHEN HE PROPHESIED:

ZEPHANIAH 1:1-6 - THE WORD OF THE LORD WHICH CAME TO ZEPHANIAH...IN THE DAYS OF JOSIAH SON OF AMON, KING OF JUDAH: 2 "I WILL COMPLETELY REMOVE ALL THINGS FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH," DECLARES THE LORD. 3 "I WILL REMOVE MAN AND BEAST; I WILL REMOVE THE BIRDS OF THE SKY AND THE FISH OF THE SEA, AND THE RUINS ALONG WITH THE WICKED; AND I WILL CUT OFF MAN FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH," DECLARES THE LORD. 4 "SO I WILL STRETCH OUT MY HAND AGAINST JUDAH AND AGAINST ALL THE INHABITANTS OF JERUSALEM. AND I WILL CUT OFF THE REMNANT OF BAAL FROM THIS PLACE, AND THE NAMES OF THE IDOLATROUS PRIESTS ALONG WITH THE PRIESTS. 5 "AND THOSE WHO BOW DOWN ON THE ROOFTOPS TO THE HOST OF HEAVEN, AND THOSE WHO BOW DOWN AND SWEAR TO THE LORD AND YET SWEAR BY MILCOM, 6 AND THOSE WHO HAVE TURNED BACK FROM FOLLOWING THE LORD, AND THOSE WHO HAVE NOT SOUGHT THE LORD OR INQUIRED OF HIM."

THESE WERE ALL OF THE PRACTICES OF MANASSEH/AMON. NOW A TIME OF ACCOUNTING IS COMING, AND JOSIAH STARTS TO MAKE A CHANGE...

2 KINGS 22:3-7 — REPAIR BEGINS ON THE HOUSE OF THE LORD

2 KINGS 22:8-11

V. 8 - FOLLOWING UP ON WHAT WE READ FROM 2 CHRONICLES 34, JOSIAH HAS ALREADY BEGUN TO CLEAR AND CLEANSE THE TEMPLE, PREPARING IT AGAIN FOR SANCTIFIED WORSHIP. WHILE THIS WORK PROCEEDS, THE "BOOK OF THE LAW" IS FOUND. MOST SCHOLARS BELIEVE IT WAS A COPY OF THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY BASED ON THE RESPONSE JOSIAH WILL HAVE (MORE ON THAT IN CHAPTER 23).

V. 11 - WHEN JOSIAH HEARD THE WORDS, HE "TORE HIS CLOTHES" THIS IS AN PHYSICAL ACT EXPRESSING GRIEF, MOURNING & SORROW.

WHAT AN AMAZING MOMENT. TO THINK THAT DURING THE REIGNS OF MANASSEH AND AMON (57 YEARS TOTAL) THE IDOLATRY AND EVIL WAS SO RAMPANT THAT THE "BOOK OF THE LAW" ENDS UP BEING DISCOVERED LIKE AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ARTIFACT! THIS BOOK OF THE LAW WAS SUPPOSED TO BE CLOSE AND NEAR TO GOD'S PEOPLE AND YET IT IS UNDER RUBBLE AND DUST. REMEMBER THE WORDS OF GOD TO MOSES AND ISRAEL BEFORE THEY ENTERED THE PROMISED LAND:

DEUTERONOMY 6:4-8 - "HEAR (SHEMA), O ISRAEL! THE LORD IS OUR GOD, THE LORD IS ONE! 5 "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL AND WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT. 6 "THESE WORDS, WHICH I AM COMMANDING YOU TODAY, SHALL BE ON YOUR HEART. 7 YOU SHALL TEACH THEM DILIGENTLY TO YOUR SONS AND SHALL TALK OF THEM WHEN YOU SIT IN YOUR HOUSE AND WHEN YOU WALK BY THE WAY AND WHEN YOU LIE DOWN AND WHEN YOU RISE UP. 8 "YOU SHALL BIND THEM AS A SIGN ON YOUR HAND AND THEY SHALL BE AS FRONTALS ON YOUR FOREHEAD.

THE NATION HAD NOT BEEN FAITHFUL TO THIS COMMAND IN HEART OR IN PRACTICE.

IT'S ALSO INTERESTING TO NOTE THE TIMING OF THE FINDING OF THE BOOK AND THE COURSE THAT IT SENT JOSIAH ON. 2 CHRONICLES 34 TOLD US THAT WHEN JOSIAH WAS IN HIS 8TH YEAR (16 YEARS OLD) HE ALREADY BEGAN TO SEEK THE LORD AND START REMOVING THE IDOLS. THE FINDING OF THE BOOK OF THE LAW WILL SET JOSIAH ON A MORE SPECIFIC AND OBEDIENT COURSE OF ACTION, BUT JOSIAH HAD ALREADY STARTED ON THE RIGHT PATH OUT OF LOVE FOR AND DEVOTION TO THE LORD.

THIS GIVES US SOME INSIGHT INTO THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONVERSION AND THE MATURING PROCESS OF A BELIEVER. WHEN SOMEONE IS INITIALLY SAVED, AND AWAKENED TO THEIR NEED FOR AND LOVE OF GOD, THINGS CAN BEGIN TO CHANGE. NO SPECIAL KNOWLEDGE IS NEEDED TO LIVE FOR GOD, FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT BEGINS TO WORK AND TRANSFORM THE HEART, MOTIVATION AND DESIRES OF THAT PERSON. THEY ARE LIVING OUT OF A GRATEFUL HEART.

BUT THERE ALSO REACHES A POINT WHERE MORE INSTRUCTION IS NEEDED AND THE SPECIFIC COMMANDS OF THE LORD MUST BE KNOWN AND FOLLOWED. THIS IS WHERE THE SCRIPTURE COMES IN AND WHY IT IS SO IMPORTANT FOR ALL OF US (ESPECIALLY NEW BELIEVERS) TO READ AND STUDY THE BIBLE. AND WHY GOD HAS PRESERVED IT FOR EACH GENERATION - EVEN IF IT'S UNDER SOME RUBBLE AND DUST, IT IS HIS WILL THAT HIS WORD IS FOUND, READ AND KNOWN!

2 KINGS 22:12-14 - JOSIAH WANTS TO KNOW WHAT TO DO

AFTER HEARING THE LAW READ JOSIAH COMMANDS THE SCRIBES AND PRIEST TO FIND A PROPHET TO KNOW MORE SPECIFICALLY WHAT THE LORD WANTS DONE IN LIGHT OF THESE FINDINGS. AND SO THEY GO AND FIND HULDAH, A PROPHETESS. THE REQUEST FOR HULDAH'S INSIGHT HIGHLIGHTS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE SPIRIT AND THE WORD. WE HAVE THE WORD OF GOD AND NEED THE SPIRIT TO HELP ENLIGHTEN US AND DIRECT US. IN THIS CASE THE SPIRIT WORKS THROUGH HULDAH TO GIVE SPECIFIC DIRECTION AND APPLICATION.

JOSIAH IS EAGER TO HEAR WHETHER OR NOT WHAT HE HAS READ IS GOING TO LEAD TO JUDGMENT AGAINST THE NATION. IF INDEED THEY HAD READ DEUTERONOMY, VERSES LIKE THIS WOULD HAVE LED TO THIS CONCERN

DEUTERONOMY 28:15-20, 32-37, 45-50 - "BUT IT SHALL COME ABOUT, IF YOU DO NOT OBEY THE LORD YOUR GOD, TO OBSERVE TO DO ALL HIS COMMANDMENTS AND HIS STATUTES WITH WHICH I CHARGE YOU TODAY, THAT ALL THESE CURSES WILL COME UPON YOU AND OVERTAKE YOU: 16 "CURSED SHALL YOU BE IN THE CITY, AND CURSED SHALL YOU BE IN THE COUNTRY. 17 "CURSED SHALL BE YOUR BASKET AND YOUR KNEADING BOWL. 18 "CURSED SHALL BE THE OFFSPRING OF YOUR BODY AND THE

PRODUCE OF YOUR GROUND, THE INCREASE OF YOUR HERD AND THE YOUNG OF YOUR FLOCK. 19 "CURSED SHALL YOU BE WHEN YOU COME IN, AND CURSED SHALL YOU BE WHEN YOU GO OUT. 20 "THE LORD WILL SEND UPON YOU CURSES, CONFUSION, AND REBUKE, IN ALL YOU UNDERTAKE TO DO, UNTIL YOU ARE DESTROYED AND UNTIL YOU PERISH QUICKLY, ON ACCOUNT OF THE EVIL OF YOUR DEEDS, BECAUSE YOU HAVE FORSAKEN ME.

32 "YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL BE GIVEN TO ANOTHER PEOPLE, WHILE YOUR EYES LOOK ON AND YEARN FOR THEM CONTINUALLY; BUT THERE WILL BE NOTHING YOU CAN DO. 33 "A PEOPLE WHOM YOU DO NOT KNOW SHALL EAT UP THE PRODUCE OF YOUR GROUND AND ALL YOUR LABORS, AND YOU WILL NEVER BE ANYTHING BUT OPPRESSED AND CRUSHED CONTINUALLY. 34 "YOU SHALL BE DRIVEN MAD BY THE SIGHT OF WHAT YOU SEE. 35 "THE LORD WILL STRIKE YOU ON THE KNEES AND LEGS WITH SORE BOILS, FROM WHICH YOU CANNOT BE HEALED, FROM THE SOLE OF YOUR FOOT TO THE CROWN OF YOUR HEAD. 36 "THE LORD WILL BRING YOU AND YOUR KING, WHOM YOU SET OVER YOU, TO A NATION WHICH NEITHER YOU NOR YOUR FATHERS HAVE KNOWN, AND THERE YOU SHALL SERVE OTHER GODS, WOOD AND STONE. 37 "YOU SHALL BECOME A HORROR, A PROVERB, AND A TAUNT AMONG ALL THE PEOPLE WHERE THE LORD DRIVES YOU.

45 "SO ALL THESE CURSES SHALL COME ON YOU AND PURSUE YOU AND OVERTAKE YOU UNTIL YOU ARE DESTROYED, BECAUSE YOU WOULD NOT OBEY THE LORD YOUR GOD BY KEEPING HIS COMMANDMENTS AND HIS STATUTES WHICH HE COMMANDED YOU. 46 "THEY SHALL BECOME A SIGN AND A WONDER ON YOU AND YOUR DESCENDANTS FOREVER. 47 "BECAUSE YOU DID NOT SERVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH JOY AND A GLAD HEART, FOR THE ABUNDANCE OF ALL THINGS; 48 THEREFORE YOU SHALL SERVE YOUR ENEMIES WHOM THE LORD WILL SEND AGAINST YOU, IN HUNGER, IN THIRST, IN NAKEDNESS, AND IN THE LACK OF ALL THINGS; AND HE WILL PUT AN IRON YOKE ON YOUR NECK UNTIL HE HAS DESTROYED YOU. 49 "THE LORD WILL BRING A NATION AGAINST YOU FROM AFAR, FROM THE END OF THE EARTH, AS THE EAGLE SWOOPS DOWN, A NATION WHOSE LANGUAGE YOU SHALL NOT UNDERSTAND, SO A NATION OF FIERCE COUNTENANCE WHO WILL HAVE NO RESPECT FOR THE OLD, NOR SHOW FAVOR TO THE YOUNG.

IMAGINE THE KING HEAR THESE WORDS HIMSELF! NO WONDER HE TORE HIS CLOTHES IN ANGUISH.

2 KINGS 22:15-20 - HULDAH'S MESSAGE

HULDAH CONFIRMS THAT INDEED THE NATION IS UNDER THE CURSE OF THE LORD BECAUSE THEY HAVE FORSAKEN THE LORD. AFTERALL, THOSE WERE THE TERMS OF THE COVENANT! HOWEVER, BECAUSE OF JOSIAH'S HUMILITY AND "TENDER HEART" (V. 19), THE LORD IS GOING TO HOLD OFF THIS JUDGMENT DURING HIS LIFETIME! OH WHAT MERCY THE LORD SHOWS TO THOSE WHO ARE BROKEN AND HONOR HIS WORD!

LET'S JUMP BACK TO ZEPHANIAH FOR A MOMENT. LOOK WHAT ELSE ZEPHANIAH SAID AFTER PROCLAIMING JUDGMENT WAS ON THE HORIZON:

ZEPHANIAH 2:2-3 (NLT) - GATHER BEFORE JUDGMENT BEGINS, BEFORE YOUR TIME TO REPENT IS BLOWN AWAY LIKE CHAFF. **ACT NOW.** BEFORE THE FIERCE FURY OF THE LORD FALLS AND THE TERRIBLE DAY OF THE LORD'S ANGER BEGINS. 3 SEEK THE LORD, ALL WHO ARE HUMBLE, AND FOLLOW HIS COMMANDS. SEEK TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT AND TO LIVE HUMBLY. PERHAPS EVEN YET THE LORD WILL PROTECT YOU-- PROTECT YOU FROM HIS ANGER ON THAT DAY OF DESTRUCTION.

ACT NOW AND THERE MIGHT STILL BE A CHANCE TO BE SAVED FROM ALL OF THIS - AND THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT JOSIAH DID.

SO WE PAUSE OUR STORY HERE FOR NOW BUT FIND OURSELVES ON THE EVE OF A GREAT MOMENT IN BIBLICAL HISTORY. THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH, LED BY THE YOUNG AND DEVOTED JOSIAH - WITH A REVIVED SPIRIT FUELED BY GOD'S DELAY OF JUDGMENT - WILL OVERSEE A NATIONAL REVIVAL AND INDIVIDUAL RENEWAL OF THE PEOPLE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, DAVID AND THEIR KING, JOSIAH.

TAKEAWAYS: WHAT IS OUR ATTITUDE AND HEART POSTURE WHEN WE "DISCOVER" AGAIN THE WORD OF THE LORD CONCERNING A CERTAIN AREA OF OUR LIFE OR DEVOTION? JOSIAH MODELS A KING WHO IS HUMBLE, REPENTANT AND THEN ZEALOUS TO HEAR AND OBEY THE WORD OF THE LORD, NO MATTER THE COST OR SACRIFICE INVOLVED - BECAUSE IF IT IS THE WORD OF THE LORD, THEN IT'S SUPREMELY VALUABLE AND WORTH EMBRACING. WE LIKELY HAVE AN EASIER TIME RESPONDING THIS WAY WHEN THE WORD FROM GOD (BY THE SCRIPTURE OR BY THE SPIRIT) IS CLEAR AND EASY TO FOLLOW. BUT WHAT ABOUT WHEN HIS TRUTH TOUCHES AN AREA OF OUR HEART OR LIFE THAT'S NOT SO EASY? WHAT ABOUT WHEN HE HAS SOMETHING TO SAY ABOUT OUR RELATIONSHIPS? HOW WE STEWARD AND SPEND OUR MONEY? WHAT WE DO FOR ENTERTAINMENT OR LEISURE? HOW WE SPEAK? WHO WE SHOULD SERVE?

WE CANNOT PICK AND CHOOSE WHICH PART OF GOD'S WORD WE WILL BE READY AND WILLING TO OBEY. IF WE HEAR OURSELVES SAYING (OR THINKING) "I WOULD NEVER..." OR "THAT'S A LITTLE TOO EXTREME" OR OTHER SUBTLE EXCUSES TO OBEYING...WATCH OUT AND WAKE UP. THIS DOESN'T NEGATE THE NEED FOR GOD'S HELP IN OBEYING HIS WORD - THAT'S THE WAY IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE - BUT IF JESUS IS LORD, HE DICTATES THE TERMS OF OUR LIVES, WE ARE NOT HIS BUSINESS PARTNERS WITH AN EQUAL STAKE OR SAY IN THE DIRECTION OF THE COMPANY. AND JOSIAH SHOWS US WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE. HE IS HUMBLE AND EAGER TO CORRECT AND FOLLOW WHERE HE NEEDS TO, IN HIS OWN LIFE AND HIS KINGDOM. AND THE LORD'S BLESSING COMES.

MICAH 6:8 - HE HAS TOLD YOU, O MAN, WHAT IS GOOD: AND WHAT DOES THE LORD REQUIRE OF YOU BUT TO DO JUSTICE, TO LOVE KINDNESS, AND TO WALK HUMBLY WITH YOUR GOD?

ECCLESIASTES 12:13 (ESV) - THE END OF THE MATTER: ALL HAS BEEN HEARD. FEAR GOD AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS, FOR THIS IS THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN.

A SECOND TAKEAWAY IS RELATED TO JOSIAH'S AGE. HE BECOMES KING AT 8 (WOW!), AND BEGINS TO SEEK THE LORD AT 16. HE BEGINS REFORMS AT 20 AND TRANSFORMS A KINGDOM AND A GENERATION OF HEARTS AT THE AGE OF 26. I POINT OUT THESE NUMBERS BECAUSE THE TEXT ITSELF DOES. WE OFTEN ARE TEMPTED TO SKIP OVER DATES AND HARD-TO-PRONOUNCE-NAMES...BUT GOD HAS PUT THEM IN SCRIPTURE FOR A REASON. IN THIS CASE HE IS TELLING US THE AGE OF JOSIAH AT THE DIFFERENT POINTS IN THE AMAZING STORY. AND GOD IS LIKELY DOING THIS AS A MEMORIAL RECORDING TO TEACH US ABOUT THE WAY GOD CAN WORK IN THE LIFE OF SOMEONE WHO SEEKS HIM, REGARDLESS OF THEIR AGE.

OUR SOCIETY OFTEN PUTS OFF "SETTLING DOWN" OR "GETTING SERIOUS" ABOUT RELIGION OR SPIRITUAL MATTERS UNTIL A PERSON IS "OLDER" (WHATEVER THAT MEANS). NO NEED FOR GOD WHILE YOU'RE A TEENAGER OR COLLEGE-AGED YOUTH. IT'S FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE OLD, MAYBE ONCE THEY ARE MARRIED AND HAVE KIDS, OR ONCE THEY START THINKING ABOUT THEIR OWN LIMITATION OF MORTALITY. BAH HUMBUG!!!

IT IS NEVER TOO EARLY TO START SEEKING THE LORD, NOR HAVING AN EXPECTATION THAT GOD CAN DO GREAT THINGS THROUGH YOU. IT'S ALSO NEVER TOO LATE TO WAKE UP TO HIS GOODNESS OR BE USED BY HIM IN WONDERFUL WAYS. A 16 YEAR OLD CHANGES THE NATION BECAUSE HE DIDN'T ACCEPT THAT SEEKING GOD WAS SOMETHING TO DO LATER IN LIFE. WE HAVE COUNTLESS OTHER STORIES OF THIS - AND STORIES FROM THE OTHER END OF THE SPECTRUM. GOD CALLING MEN AND WOMEN TO BE HIS VESSELS IN THE LATER YEARS OF THEIR LIFE.

THE TESTIMONY OF THOSE THINGS BEING TRUE IS CLEAR - NOW THE QUESTION IS FOR US TO ANSWER: HAVE WE LIMITED GOD'S ABILITY TO WORK IN AND THROUGH US BECAUSE WE AREN'T _____? HAVE YOU WRITTEN OFF THE "GLORY DAYS" OF GOD GETTING GLORY FROM YOUR LIFE BECAUSE NOW YOU ARE OLDER? HAVE YOU CLOSED YOUR MIND TO GOD'S PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT "OLD ENOUGH"? STOP THAT! GOD IS NOT LIMITED TO WORK IN AND THROUGH YOU BASED ON AGE OR GENDER OR ECONOMICS OR PHYSICALITY OR RACE OR ETHNICITY OR MARITAL STATUS - HE IS ONLY LIMITED BY OUR FAITH AND AVAILABILITY! OH THAT THE OLDER WOULD BE AN EXAMPLE TO THE YOUNGER OF THIS AND THAT THE YOUNGER WOULD INSPIRE THE OLDER. GOD IS NOT FINISHED WITH YOU YET! NOR IS HE WAITING FOR YOU TO GET YOUR DRIVER'S LICENSE OR GRADUATE HIGH SCHOOL! IN FACT, NO MATTER WHAT YOUR AGE OR WHAT YOU FEEL ARE LIMITATIONS, THESE ARE EXACTLY THE MOMENTS THAT GOD DOES HIS BEST WORK!