
2KINGS 22: 1 Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign; and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath.

Josiah succeeds Amon his father, and reigns thirty-one years, 2Kgs 22:1, 2Kgs 22:2. He repairs the breaches of the temple, 2Kgs 22:3-7. Hilkiah finds the book of the law in the temple, 2Kgs 22:8. It is read by Shaphan the scribe, before the king and his servants, 2Kgs 22:9, 2Kgs 22:10. The king, greatly affected, sends to inquire of Huldah the prophetess, 2Kgs 22:11-13. She delivers an afflictive prophecy concerning the evils that were coming upon the land, 2Kgs 22:14-17. But promises Josiah that these evils shall not come in his time, 2Kgs 22:18-20.

Verse 1

Josiah was eight years old - He was one of the best, if not the best, of all the Jewish kings since the time of David. He began well, continued well, and ended well.

2KINGS 22: 2 He did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, and walked in all the way of David his father, and didn't turn aside to the right hand or to the left.

2KINGS 22: 3 In the eighteenth year of king Josiah, the king sent Shaphan, the son of Azaliah the son of Meshullam, the scribe, to the LORD's house, saying,

2KINGS 22: 4 "Go up to Hilkiah the high priest, that he may sum the money which is brought into the LORD's house, which the keepers of the threshold have gathered of the people.

Verse 4

That he may sum the silver - As Josiah began to seek the Lord as soon as he began to reign, we may naturally conclude that the worship of God that was neglected and suppressed by his father, was immediately restored; and the people began their accustomed offerings to the temple. Ten years therefore had elapsed since these offerings began; no one had, as yet, taken account of them; nor were they applied to the use for which they were given, viz., the repairing the breaches of the temple.

2KINGS 22: 5 Let them deliver it into the hand of the workmen who have the oversight of the LORD's house; and let them give it to the workmen who are in the LORD's house, to repair the breaches of the house,

2KINGS 22: 6 to the carpenters, and to the builders, and to the masons, and for buying timber and cut stone to repair the house.

2KINGS 22: 7 However there was no accounting made with them of the money that was delivered into their hand; for they dealt faithfully."

2KINGS 22: 8 Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, "I have found the book of the law in the LORD's house." Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan, and he read it.

 Verse 8

I have found the book of the law - Was this the autograph of Moses? It is very probable that it was, for in the parallel place; 2Chr 34:14, it is said to be the book of the law of the Lord by Moses. It is supposed to be that part of Deuteronomy (28, 29, 30, and 31), which contains the renewing of the covenant in the plains of Moab, and which contains the most terrible invectives against the corrupters of God's word and worship.

The rabbins say that Ahaz, Manasseh, and Amon endeavored to destroy all the copies of the law, and this only was saved by having been buried under a paving-stone. It is scarcely reasonable to suppose that this was the only copy of the law that was found in Judea; for even if we grant that Ahaz, Manasseh, and Amon had endeavored to destroy all the books of the law, yet they could not have succeeded so as to destroy the whole. Besides, Manasseh endeavored after his conversion to restore every part of the Divine worship, and in this he could have done nothing without the Pentateuch; and the succeeding reign of Amon was too short to give him opportunity to undo every thing that his penitent father had reformed. Add to all these considerations, that in the time of Jehoshaphat teaching from the law was universal in the land, for he set on foot an itinerant ministry, in order to instruct the people fully: for "he sent to his princes to teach in the cities of Judah; and with them he sent Levites and priests; and they went about through all the cities of Judah, and taught the people, having the book of the Lord with them;" see 2Chr 17:7-9. And if there be any thing wanting to show the improbability of the thing, it must be this, that the transactions mentioned here took place in the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah, who had, from the time he came to the throne, employed himself in the restoration of the pure worship of God; and it is not likely that during these eighteen years he was without a copy of the Pentateuch. The simple fact seems to be this, that this was the original of the covenant renewed by Moses with the people in the plains of Moab, and which he ordered to be laid up beside the ark; (Deu 31:26); and now being unexpectedly found, its antiquity, the occasion of its being made, the present circumstances of the people, the imperfect state in which the reformation was as yet, after all that had been done, would all concur to produce the effect here mentioned on the mind of the pious Josiah.

2KINGS 22: 9 Shaphan the scribe came to the king, and brought the king word again, and said, "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 LORD's house."

2KINGS 22: 10 Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, "Hilkiah the priest has delivered a book to me." Shaphan read it before the king.

2KINGS 22: 11 When the king had heard the words of the book of the law, he tore his clothes.

2KINGS 22: 12 The king commanded Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Micaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the king's servant, saying,

2KINGS 22: 13 "Go 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 listened to the words of this book, to do according to all that which is written concerning us."

2KINGS 22: 14 So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asaiah, went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe (now she lived in Jerusalem in the second quarter); and they talked with her.

Verse 14

Went unto Huldah the prophetess - This is a most singular circumstance: At this time Jeremiah was certainly a prophet in Israel, but it is likely he now dwelt at Anathoth and could not be readily consulted; Zephaniah also prophesied under this reign, but probably he had not yet begun; Hilkiah was high priest, and the priest's lips should retain knowledge. Shaphan was scribe, and must have been conversant in sacred affairs to have been at all fit for his office; and yet Huldah, a prophetess, of whom we know nothing but by this circumstance, is consulted on the meaning of the book of the law; for the secret of the Lord was neither with Hilkiah the high priest, Shaphan the scribe, nor any other of the servants of the king, or ministers of the temple! We find from this, and we have many facts in all ages to corroborate it, that a pontiff, a pope, a bishop, or a priest, may, in some cases, not possess the true knowledge of God; and that a simple woman, possessing the life of God in her soul, may have more knowledge of the Divine testimonies than many of those whose office it is to explain and enforce them.

On this subject Dr. Priestley in his note makes the following very judicious remark: - "It pleased God to distinguish several women with the spirit of prophecy, as well as other great attainments, to show that in his sight, and especially in things of a spiritual nature, there is no essential pre-eminence in the male sex, though in some things the female be subject to the male."

2KINGS 22: 15 She said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: 'Tell the man who sent you to me,

2KINGS 22: 16 "Thus says the LORD, 'Behold, I will bring evil on this place, and on its inhabitants, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read.

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

Verse 17

My wrath shall be kindled - The decree is gone forth; Jerusalem shall be delivered into the hands of its enemies; the people will revolt more and more; towards them longsuffering is useless; the wrath of God is kindled, and shall not be quenched. This was a dreadful message.

2KINGS 22: 18 But to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, thus you shall tell him, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: 'Concerning the words which you have heard,

2KINGS 22: 19 because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before the LORD, when you heard what I spoke against this place, and against its inhabitants, that they should become a

desolation and a curse, and have torn your clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard you,' says the LORD.

Verse 19

Because thine heart was tender - Because thou hast feared the Lord, and trembled at his word and hast wept before me, I have heard thee, so far that these evils shall not come upon the land in thy lifetime.

2KINGS 22: 20 'Therefore behold, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, neither shall your eyes see all the evil which I will bring on this place.'"" They brought back this message to the king.

Verse 20

Thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace - During thy life none of these calamities shall fall upon the people, and no adversary shall be permitted to disturb the peace of Judea, and thou shalt die in peace with God. But was Josiah gathered to the grave in peace? Is it not said, 2Kgs 23:29, that Pharaoh-nechoh slew him at Megiddo? On this we may remark, that the Assyrians and the Jews were at peace; that Josiah might feel it his duty to oppose the Egyptian king going against his friend and ally, and endeavor to prevent him from passing through his territories; and that in his endeavors to oppose him he was mortally wounded at Megiddo: but certainly was not killed there; for his servants put him in his second chariot and brought him to Jerusalem, where he died in peace. See 2Chr 35:24. So that, however we take the place here, we shall find that the words of Huldah were true: he did die in peace, and was gathered to his fathers in peace.

From the account in the above chapter, where we have this business detailed, we find that Josiah should not have meddled in the quarrel between the Egyptian and the Assyrian kings, for God had given a commission to the former against the latter; but he did it in error, and suffered for it. But this unfortunate end of this pious man does not at all impeach the credit of Huldah; he died in peace in his own kingdom. He died in peace with God, and there was neither war nor desolation in his land: nor did the king of Egypt proceed any farther against the Jews during his life; for he said, "What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? I come not against thee, but the house wherewith I have war; for God commanded me to make haste: forbear then from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not. Nevertheless, Josiah would not turn his face from him, and hearkened not to the words of Nechoh, from the mouth of God. And the archers shot at King Josiah: and the king said, Bear me away, for I am sore wounded. And his servants took him out of that chariot, and put him in the second chariot, and they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died and was buried in the sepulcher of his fathers;" 2Chr 35:21-24.

It seems as if the Egyptian king had brought his troops by sea to Caesarea, and wished to cross the Jordan about the southern point of the sea of Tiberias, that he might get as speedily as possible into the Assyrian dependencies; and that he took this road, for God, as he said, had commanded him to make haste.