

SECOND KINGS

Chapter 22

The Book of the Law Found

Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years. His mother's name was Jedidah daughter of Adaiah; she was from Bozkath. ² He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and walked in all the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left. ³ In the eighteenth year of his reign, King Josiah sent the secretary, Shaphan son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, to the temple of the LORD. He said: ⁴ "Go up to Hilkiah the high priest and have him get ready the money that has been brought into the temple of the LORD, which the doorkeepers have collected from the people. ⁵ Have them entrust it to the men appointed to supervise the work on the temple. And have these men pay the workers who repair the temple of the LORD— ⁶ the carpenters, the builders and the masons. Also have them purchase timber and dressed stone to repair the temple. ⁷ But they need not account for the money entrusted to them, because they are acting faithfully." ⁸ Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the secretary, "I have found the Book of the Law in the temple of the LORD." He gave it to Shaphan, who read it. ⁹ Then Shaphan the secretary went to the king and reported to him: "Your officials have paid out the money that was in the temple of the LORD and have entrusted it to the workers and supervisors at the temple." ¹⁰ Then Shaphan the secretary informed the king, "Hilkiah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read from it in the presence of the king. ¹¹ When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his robes. ¹² He gave these orders to Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Acbor son of Micaiah, Shaphan the secretary and Asaiah the king's attendant: ¹³ "Go and inquire of the LORD for me and for the people and for all Judah about what is written in this book that has been found. Great is the LORD's anger that burns against us because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book; they have not acted in accordance with all that is written there concerning us." ¹⁴ Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Acbor, Shaphan and Asaiah went to speak to the prophetess Huldah, who was the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. She lived in Jerusalem, in the Second District. ¹⁵ She said to them, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Tell the man who sent you to me, ¹⁶ 'This is what the LORD says: I am going to bring disaster on this place and its people, according to everything written in the book the king of Judah has read. ¹⁷ Because they have forsaken me and burned incense to other gods and provoked me to anger by all the idols their hands have made, my anger will burn against this place and will not be quenched.' ¹⁸ Tell the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, 'This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says concerning the words you heard: ¹⁹ Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I have spoken against this place and its people, that they would become accursed and laid waste, and because you tore your robes and wept in my presence, I have heard you, declares the LORD. ²⁰ Therefore I will gather you to your fathers, and you will

be buried in peace. Your eyes will not see all the disaster I am going to bring on this place.’ ” So they took her answer back to the king.

22:1 *Josiah was eight years old.* The boy king evidently was under the tutelage of such elders as Hilkiah, the high priest, who taught him “what was right in the eyes of the LORD” (v 2; parallel case in 12:2). During his reign, Josiah vigorously promoted a national return to covenant faithfulness (22:3–23:25). (TLSB)

thirty-one years. 640–609 B.C. (see note on 21:19). (CSB)

Bozkath. Located in Judah in the vicinity of Lachish (see Jos 15:39). (CSB)

22:2 *ways of his father David.* See note on 18:3. Josiah was the last godly king of the Davidic line prior to the exile. Jeremiah, who prophesied during the time of Josiah (see Jer 1:2), spoke highly of him (Jer 22:15–16). Zephaniah also prophesied in the early days of his reign (Zep 1:1). (CSB)

David was the head of the dynasty and the touchstone for a righteous king. (TLSB)

right or ... left. Cf Dt 5:29; 17:11, 20; 28:14. Even a faithful king might later stray. (TLSB)

22:1–2 Through the faithful guidance of Hilkiah, the Lord instructs Josiah and raises up another faithful king for Judah. God’s people cannot overestimate the value of faithful teachers and counselors for their youth. Do not withhold the teachings of God’s Word from the young but teach them right and wrong, truth distinguished from falsehood, during their earliest years. God’s beloved Son, who grew up in favor with God and people, will Himself instruct your youth with love and mercy through the Word. • Lord, give us a heart for Christian education, that our children may grow in Your grace and favor. Amen. (TLSB)

22:3 *eighteenth year.* 622 B.C. Josiah was then 26 years old (see v. 1). He had begun to serve the Lord faithfully at the age of 16 (the 8th year of his reign, 2Ch 34:3). When he was 20 years old (the 12th year of his reign, 2Ch 34:3), he had already begun to purge the land of its idolatrous practices. (CSB)

According to 2Ch 34:3–8, Josiah began his reforms 10 years before he undertook the repair of the temple. In this project, he followed procedures adopted two centuries earlier by Jehoash, who likewise came to the throne at an early age (11:21–12:18). (TLSB)

secretary, Shaphan. See note on 2Sa 8:17. Two additional individuals are mentioned as accompanying Shaphan in 2Ch 34:8. (CSB)

22:4 *Hilkiah.* Father of Azariah and grandfather of Seraiah, the high priest executed at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians (see 25:18–20). It is unlikely that this Hilkiah was also the father of Jeremiah (see Jer 1:1). (CSB)

money ... the doorkeepers have collected. Josiah used the method devised by Joash for collecting funds for the restoration of the temple (see 12:1–16; 2Ch 34:9). (CSB)

22:5 *men appointed to supervise.* See 2Ch 34:12–13. (CSB)

22:7 *they deal honestly.* Trust and good reputation go hand in hand. (TLSB)

22:3–7 King Josiah, Shaphan, and Hilkiah organize the repairs of the temple, contracting faithful workers. In your work, honor your Christian vocation and your Lord by gaining a reputation for honesty and faithfulness. The Lord will not fail to bless those who deal honestly. He deals honestly with us in calling us to repentance and in setting all things right by the faithful service of His beloved Son. • Lord, make me wise in my work, especially in fairness and honesty, that I might enjoy a God-pleasing reputation before all people. Amen. (TLSB)

22:8 *Book of the Law.* Some interpreters hold that this refers to a copy of the entire Pentateuch, while others understand it as a reference to a copy of part or all of Deuteronomy alone (see Dt 31:24, 26; 2Ch 34:14). (CSB)

The scroll contained the Law, a definite body of legislation of unchallenged authority. Its teaching had existed in written form and was known as “the Book of the Law of Moses” (14:6; cf Jsh 1:8; 8:34). A copy of it survived the religious persecutions of Manasseh (55 years) and of Amon (2 years). Perhaps it lay hidden at the bottom of the treasury chest as 2Ch 34:14 seems to indicate. Scholars debate the exact contents of the scroll. Many propose that it was Dt because of literary parallels with that writing of Moses. However, 1 and 2Ki use expressions similar to “Book of the Law” for Moses’ writings generally (1Ki 2:3; 2Ki 14:6; 17:13; 21:8), and many parallels can be found with Ex (a portion of which was called “the Book of the Covenant,” Ex 24:7) and Lv so it is not safe to assume the scroll contained only Dt. (TLSB)

22:9 Matter-of-fact report indicates that Shaphan, and perhaps also Hilkiah, had not fully appreciated the importance of the discovery. (TLSB)

22:10 *Shaphan read it.* Kings typically relied on professional scribes for reading and writing. Cf Est 6:1. (TLSB)

22:11 *tore his robes.* See note on 18:37; contrast Josiah’s reaction with that of Jehoiakim to the words of the scroll written by Jeremiah (see Jer 36:24). Perhaps the covenant curses of Lev 26 and/or Dt 28, climaxing with the threat of exile, were the statements that especially disturbed Josiah. (CSB)

22:12 *Ahikam.* Father of Gedaliah, who was later to be appointed governor of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar (see 25:22; Jer 39:14). He was also the protector of Jeremiah when his life was threatened during the reign of Jehoiakim (see Jer 26:24). *Acbor.* His son Elnathan is mentioned in 24:8; Jer 26:22; 36:12. (CSB)

Shaphan the secretary. See note on v. 3. (CSB)

wrath of the LORD. “The words of this book” that threatened to “bring disaster” on an apostate city and nation (v 16) were clearly summarized in such passages as Lv 26:14–20; Dt 31:16–18. (TLSB)

22:14 *prophetess Huldah.* Why the delegation sought out Huldah rather than Jeremiah or Zephaniah is not known. Perhaps it was merely a matter of her accessibility in Jerusalem. (CSB)

No reason is given why Jeremiah, who began his ministry in the 13th year of Josiah, was not consulted (Jer 1:2). (TLSB)

Shallum ... keeper of the wardrobe. Perhaps the same Shallum who was the uncle of Jeremiah (see Jer 32:7). (CSB)

Second District. A section of the city (the Hebrew for this phrase is translated “New Quarter” in Zep 1:10) probably located in a newly developed area between the first and second walls in the northwest part of Jerusalem (see 2Ch 33:14). (CSB)

Probably the newer residential area of Jerusalem on the western hill. (TLSB)

22:16 *this place.* Jerusalem. (CSB)

22:17 God had earlier determined to do away with Judah. Cf 21:14. (TLSB)

22:19 *your heart was responsive.* See v. 11. (CSB)

Lit, “your heart was soft” or tender. (TLSB)

22:20 *gather you to your fathers.* See note on 1Ki 1:21. (CSB)

In contrast to Manasseh and Amon. (TLSB)

you will be buried in peace. This prediction refers to Josiah’s death before God’s judgment on Jerusalem through Nebuchadnezzar and so is not contradicted by his death in battle with Pharaoh Neco of Egypt (see 23:29–30). Josiah was assured that the final judgment on Judah and Jerusalem would not come in his own days. (CSB)

Based on the Book of the Law, Huldah proclaimed that God’s wrath against the people would “not be quenched” (v 17). No doubt, Josiah’s reforming legislation met only with grudging and outward compliance that by and large left the hearts of the people untouched. (TLSB)

shall not see all the disaster. Because of the sincerity of the king’s repentance, Jerusalem would remain intact during Josiah’s lifetime, even though he would die in battle (23:30). (TLSB)

22:8–20 Through the prophetess Huldah, the Lord confirms the message that King Josiah learned from the Book of the Law: the Lord would condemn Judah. However, the Lord also promises mercy to Josiah, in view of his repentance. Sincere repentance is never in vain, even if

someone continues to experience hardship after turning to the Lord. Rather, it is the loving work of God's Holy Spirit through His Word, and His works avail for our salvation. • Instruct me, dear Savior, through Your precious Word, and take not Your Holy Spirit away from me. Amen.
(TLSB)