

September 8, 2021

Josiah's Repentance

As the Levites were in the process of repairing the house of God, they found a copy of a portion of the Word of God, hidden in the temple. Read **II Chronicles 34:14-28**. Apparently, hiding copies of books to keep them from being stolen or destroyed, was not an uncommon practice. A number of years later, Jeremiah wrote scripture by the hand of Baruch which was then read to Josiah's son, King Jehoiakim. In **Jeremiah 36:21-25**, how did King Jehoiakim respond to the reading of Jeremiah's letter? No doubt during the reign of Josiah's grandfather, King Manasseh, the priests were compelled to hide copies of the Word of God to keep them from being destroyed.

Josiah's response to the reading of God's Word was three-fold. First, he humbled himself before the Lord. Verse 19 says "he rent his clothes." Renting of one's clothes, fasting, and putting on sackcloth and ashes were all signs of humility. What might a person do today as a demonstration of humility? Humility is the first step of repentance. A person who refuses to humble themselves before God will never be repentant. John the Baptist was the forerunner of Christ. His ministry was to prepare the heart of the people and to announce the coming of the Messiah. According to **Mark 1:4**, **Acts 13:24**, and **Acts 19:4**, what was John's message? The word repent means to express sorrow for something done in the past, "to change the mind in consequence of the inconvenience or injury done by past conduct." (Webster's 1828 dictionary). This change in one's mind leads to a change in direction. True repentance is turning from sin and turning to God, **I Thessalonians 1:9**. If a person turns from sin to a hobby or some other "wholesome" activity, is it true repentance? Although they may express sorrow and turn from their sinful behavior, if they do not turn to Christ, it is not true repentance. Inevitably, they simply move from one sin or hinderance to another. How do we know Josiah was genuinely sorry for the sin of the nation?

Second, he enquired of the Lord. It is interesting to note that Josiah sent others to enquire of the Lord instead of going himself. Most likely, because he was in a state of mourning over the sin of the people, having rent his clothes, he considered it inappropriate to enquire himself. In **II Kings 19:14-20**, what did Josiah's great-grandfather, King Hezekiah do when he received bad news in the form of a letter? Even though Hezekiah went to the House of God and prayed himself, did God answer him directly or through another? As God answered Hezekiah through the prophet Isaiah, now God sends an answer to Josiah through Huldah the prophetess. In the Old Testament, God spoke to His people through the prophets. How does God speak to us today? Does He still use specific individuals to communicate to His people and if so, who? One of the key differences between the Old Testament and the church today, is we have the complete Word of God. During the reign of the Kings of Israel and Judah, the law of Moses was the only scriptures they had. Over time the Psalms of David and others were used in the temple worship and the letters from the prophets were recorded and added to the scrolls of the temple to be read and studied as the Word of God.

What was God's answer? It was a confirmation of the coming judgment upon Israel for

their sin. Israel had provoked God to the point that the only remedy was judgment. Turn over to **II Chronicles 36:16**. Without doing harm to scripture, read the verse again adding the two words, “except judgment” to the end of the verse. Even though Josiah repented, God’s wrath could not be quenched. God does, however, recognize the humility of Josiah and chooses to defer the judgment until after Josiah’s death.

We will look at the third aspect of Josiah’s response in our next meditation.

As we conclude, consider your own response to the reading and preaching of God’s Word. On any given Sunday, how do you respond to the preaching of God’s Word? Does your response demonstrate humility, indifference, or rebellion? What might have happened if Josiah had not responded with humility? What consequences might you face if you are indifferent or rebellious to God’s Word?