

The Neglected Book • 2 Kings 22:8-11

INTRO • Read 2 Tim 4:1-4 2 Kgs 22:8-11 • New Pastor

1. *Forge Ahead Church* needed a new pastor.
2. The Selection Committee had already rejected several candidates but was thrilled by the latest.
3. Young, handsome, dressed to millennial standards; he spoke with a deep, soothing voice.
4. Testing his Biblical knowledge, they asked him to share his favorite passage.
5. He said it was from the *Book of Parables*, then began ...

Once upon a time, a man went down to Jericho and fell among thorns.

The thorns grew up and choked him.

But laying aside that weight and the thorns that ensnared him, he went on and met the Queen of Sheba.

She gave him 10 talents of gold & a thousand of silver, with a hundred changes of raiment.

So he got in his chariot and drove furiously.

As he was driving along, he passed under a great tree whose branches reached to the heavens and every kind of bird was found there.

But his hair got caught in a limb of the tree and it left him hanging.

He hung there many days and many nights.

Then the ravens brought him food to eat and water to drink.

One night, while he was hanging there asleep, his wife Delilah came along and cut off his hair.

And he dropped, falling to the stony ground.

And it began to rain. It rained for 40 days and 40 nights.

So he hid himself in a cave.

Then he went and met a man who said, "Take sup with me."

He said, "I cannot, for I have married a wife and I must go and try her out."

So the man went in to the highways and byways and compelled him to come in.

He went and he came to Jerusalem and he saw Queen Jezebel sitting high up in a window.

And when he saw her he said, "Throw her down."

Then he said "Throw her down again and again."

They threw her down 70 times 7.

And of the fragments they picked up 12 baskets-full.

Now, whose wife will she be in the Day of Judgment?

6. The Selection Committee was impressed with his deep knowledge of Scripture & unanimously voted him their new pastor.

7. There's an appalling *lack* of Scripture shaping the Church today.

- a. The Bible is given much *lip-service*, but little *place* in framing today's preaching and teaching.
- b. A bit of history, if I may ...

8. The crux of the debate during the Reformation was the question:

*What comes first, Scripture or The Church?*

- a. The Roman Catholic position is that the Church has authority *over* Scripture.
- b. The Reformers, who, don't forget *began* as Catholics, said Scripture comes first.
  - 1) That it's the Bible that tells us what to believe and how to live.
  - 2) Without God's Word, there'd **be** no Church because there'd be no *content* to frame it.
  - 3) There was God's Word LONG before The Church was born. We call it the Old Testament.

9. But something has happened to The Bible in the modern Church that has an eerie precedent here in 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings.

Set the Scene

1. It's nearing the end of the kingdom of Judah.
2. Wicked King Manasseh reigned for 55 yrs, during which he plumbed the depths of depravity.
  - a. It was gross idolatry & utterly abominable perversion all round.
  - b. I'll put it this way; God used had Israel as His judgment on the Canaanites for their exceeding evil.
  - c. What Manasseh did made the Canaanites look like choirboys.
3. So vile had Judah grown, the scales of justice were irreparably tipped toward judgment.
4. There was **no stopping** it, only **delaying** the inevitable.

5. That delay came because of a young king named Josiah; Manasseh's grandson.
  - a. He was the apple that **DID** fall **very far** from his father's & grandfather's tree.
  - b. He was only 8 when he took the throne.
  - c. But from the beginning, he had a heart to love & serve God.
6. He moved quickly to undo the perversions of his grandfather filling Jerusalem.
7. He commissioned major repairs to the temple which suffered decades of neglect.
8. One day, workers found something in the rubble they knew was important.
9. They took it to the high priest.

<sup>8</sup> Then Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, "I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord." And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. <sup>9</sup> So Shaphan the scribe went to the king, bringing the king word, saying, "Your servants have gathered the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of those who do the work, who oversee the house of the Lord." <sup>10</sup> Then Shaphan the scribe showed the king, saying, "Hilkiah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read it before the king.

1. Shaphan bgn's w/ mundane = Upd8 on repairs.
2. V8 calls it "the Book of the Law."
  - a. It was a scroll. And because of the thickness of the parchment and size of the hand-drawn letters, a book of the Bible occupied an entire scroll.
  - b. Based on what it's called and Josiah's reaction when it was read him, this scroll was most likely the Book of Deuteronomy.
3. I'll never forget the first time I read this passage.
  - a. I got to this point and was about to read on when what I'd just read hit me Wait—What?!?!?
  - b. They "*found*" the Book of the Law **in the temple** Uh; where had it been before?
  - c. When they found it, they realized it was a big deal & brought it to the King.
4. So, uh What had Josiah based his reforms on till now?
  - a. What was his relationship with God centered on if not Scripture?
  - b. What was Hilkiah the High Priest doing if not teaching God's Word?
5. Imagine one Sunday I said, "Hey folks!
  - a. We were cleaning out the storage space down the street and found this really awesome book called 'The Holy Bible.' It tells us all about God.
  - b. We thought it'd be fun to read some of it today."
6. You'd be like: "Fun !? Not just *fun*, **essential!** What, for goodness sake, do you mean, you '*found*' The Bible?
  - a. What *else* have you been doing all this time? What's your authority been based on?
  - b. Whose words, what wisdom have you imparted to us for the last 4 decades?"
7. That's the situation here in ch22.
  - a. People would say, "What do you mean you're **JUST NOW** bringing out The Bible?"
  - b. What's 'all this' been about if not what God's Word lays out?"
8. We'll come back to this in a moment. First let's take a look at Josiah's reaction as he listened to Shaphan read.

<sup>11</sup> Now it happened, when the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, that he tore his clothes.

1. People tore their clothes as a way to show intense grief, as in when they received word of the death of a loved one.
  - a. They didn't have clothing stores as we do, with racks of clothes aligned by style, color, size.
  - b. Clothes were made to order by tailors & seamstresses, & expensive.
  - c. Most people owned 2 sets of clothes; 1 for everyday wear, and 1 only for special occasions.
  - d. So, to tear your clothes was a big deal, reserved for times of intense sorrow.
    - 1) Afterwards, you'd sew it up, and bear the stitching for as long as you wore those garments.
    - 2) People could see the evidence of your past loss; like today when people put decals on their vehicle windows marking the loss of a loved one.
2. By custom, a king wasn't supposed to rend his garments.
  - a. His attire was a symbol of his office.
  - b. Tearing *his* clothes meant a loss so great the entire kingdom would suffer.

3. Josiah broke convention, and rightly so.
  - a. As he listened to Deuteronomy being read, he heard the litany of curses that would come when God's people turned from Him to idols.
  - b. When the reading was finished, he asked a prophetess if it was too late to turn back.
  - c. Her reply? Yes, it was too late. Judgment was coming.
  - d. BUT: Josiah's heart for God, poured in to the reforms he'd made, delayed that judgment.
    - 1) National judgment was coming.
    - 2) But Josiah's godly leadership held the door open just long enough for individuals to repent and return to the Lord.
4. You all know I believe we're rapidly approaching the End Times; that the Rapture of the Church could occur any moment.
  - a. Then begins the Tribulation when God's judgment is visited on a Christ-rejecting world.
  - b. There are those who for a while have been saying a great & mighty revival is coming.
  - c. I've been praying for that for years. That before the end, God would reap a vast harvest into His Kingdom.
  - d. But God's Word is clear. At some point, there'll **be** no more revivals; only judgment.
5. If *that*, **rather** than revival, is where we are in the grand scheme of history, then let us be like Josiah --
  - a. Delaying the judgment of nations while holding open the door for individuals to be saved.
  - b. To do that, The Bible **HAS TO BE** front & center in our lives & The Church.

#### The Neglected Book

1. In Josiah's day, The Bible had been lost in the House of the Lord.
  - a. The record of God's covenant with His people, His commandments & counsel just a vague memory.
  - b. The great stories of His love & power, all missing for who knows how long.
2. Yet The priests still went about their rituals.
  - a. Sacrifices were made, horns blown, lamps lit.
  - b. The Show went on. But no one knew why. It was all just a **religious routine**.
3. Ritual wasn't all the priests were supposed to do.
4. They were supposed to instruct people in the Word & Ways of God.
5. But study was hard, a work they forsook for the easier routine of mindless rituals.
6. Eventually, the Bible was lost in the house of God.
7. Has it been lost in the Church today? Sadly, in many places, Yes, it has.
  - a. Solid Bible teaching has been replaced by vague, spiritual-sounding talks.
  - b. Motivational speeches instead of "Thus sayeth the Lord."
  - c. How to be happy rather than holy.
  - d. It's story-telling instead of telling God's Story.
8. There's lights & smoke rivalling a Broadway show. But smoke in the sanctuary matches the fog in the pulpit.
9. Too many use the pulpit as a platform to build celebrity rather declare the glory of God.
10. The pulpit is a *sacred* place that **ought** to be devoted to the proclamation of the Holy Word of God.
  - a. It's not a place for mere opinion.
  - b. It's for teaching & preaching God's inspired & inerrant Word.
  - c. For the Gospel, showing people how to be reconciled to Him.

#### Real Reforms

1. Josiah's earlier reforms were fueled by \knowldg they wern't 2 worshp idls.
2. But once armd w/GW, he embrkd on series evn farthr-reachg refrms that restord measure blessg.
3. It turned out 2B just a respite b4 \storm.
4. Whethr revl or jdgmnt lies b4 us, GW has 2B front & ctr.