

How Important Is God's Word To You?

2 Kings 22:1—23:3, 21-25

Do you believe the Bible is God's Word to us?

Are you reading the Bible regularly?

What Does The Bible Say?

8 Hilkiyah the high priest said to Shaphan the court secretary, "I have found the Book of the Law in the Lord's Temple!" Then Hilkiyah gave the scroll to Shaphan, and he read it.

9 Shaphan went to the king and reported, "Your officials have turned over the money collected at the Temple of the Lord to the workers and supervisors at the Temple." 10 Shaphan also told the king, "Hilkiyah the priest has given me a scroll." So Shaphan read it to the king. (2 Kings 22:8–10 NLT)

They lost the Bible in Church!

How Can You Obey?

11 When the king heard what was written in the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes in despair. 12 Then he gave these orders to Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Acbor son of Micaiah, Shaphan the court secretary, and Asaiah the king's personal adviser: 13 "Go to the Temple and speak to the Lord for me and for the people and for all Judah. Inquire about the words written in this scroll that has been found. For the Lord's great anger is burning against us because our ancestors have not obeyed the words in this scroll. We have not been doing everything it says we must do." (2 Kings 22:11–13 NLT)

Are you doing everything the Bible says or picking and choosing what you want to obey?

What Does The Bible Say?

14 So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Acbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to the New Quarter of Jerusalem to consult with the

prophet Huldah. She was the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah, son of Harhas, the keeper of the Temple wardrobe.

15 She said to them, “The Lord, the God of Israel, has spoken! Go back and tell the man who sent you, 16 ‘This is what the Lord says: I am going to bring disaster on this city and its people. All the words written in the scroll that the king of Judah has read will come true. 17 For my people have abandoned me and offered sacrifices to pagan gods, and I am very angry with them for everything they have done. My anger will burn against this place, and it will not be quenched.’

18 “But go to the king of Judah who sent you to seek the Lord and tell him: ‘This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says concerning the message you have just heard: 19 You were sorry and humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I said against this city and its people—that this land would be cursed and become desolate. You tore your clothing in despair

and wept before me in repentance. And I have indeed heard you, says the Lord. 20 So I will not send the promised disaster until after you have died and been buried in peace. You will not see the disaster I am going to bring on this city.’ ” (2 Kings 22:14–20 NLT)

God allows Josiah not to see the disaster awaiting Judah.

How Can You Obey?

9 The Lord was very angry with Solomon, for his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. 10 He had warned Solomon specifically about worshiping other gods, but Solomon did not listen to the Lord’s command. 11 So now the Lord said to him, “Since you have not kept my covenant and have disobeyed my decrees, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your servants. 12 But for the sake of your father, David, I will not do this while you are still alive. I will take the kingdom away from

your son. 13 And even so, I will not take away the entire kingdom; I will let him be king of one tribe, for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, my chosen city.” (1 Kings 11:9–13 NLT)

Because of your passion for serving God, is God sparing you or your children from something terrible?

What Does The Bible Say?

2 And the king went up to the Temple of the Lord with all the people of Judah and Jerusalem, along with the priests and the prophets—all the people from the least to the greatest. There the king read to them the entire Book of the Covenant that had been found in the Lord’s Temple. 3 The king took his place of authority beside the pillar and renewed the covenant in the Lord’s presence. He pledged to obey the Lord by keeping all his commands, laws, and decrees with all his heart and soul. In this way, he confirmed all the terms of the covenant that were written

in the scroll, and all the people pledged themselves to the covenant. (2 Kings 23:2–3 NLT)

Have you pledged yourself to God’s Word?

How Can You Obey?

22 But don’t just listen to God’s word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. 23 For if you listen to the word and don’t obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. 24 You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. 25 But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don’t forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it. (James 1:22–25 NLT)

4 If someone claims, “I know God,” but doesn’t obey God’s commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the truth. (1 John 2:4 NLT)

21 “Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. 22 On judgment day many will say to me, ‘Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.’ 23 But I will reply, ‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God’s laws.’ (Matthew 7:21–23 NLT)

You can’t fool God, but are you fooling yourself?

You cannot follow God if you do not know where God is going. Your Bible gives us His path.

Additional Notes:

If you would like to use your home to disciple others, check out our training at www.crosswaveschurch.com/host. Cross Waves has produced short videos to train you how to use your home to reach others for Christ. So please check it out.

Additional Notes:

The Insights To The Biblical World segment was inspired
Michael S. Heiser, Brief Insights on Mastering the Bible: 80
Expert Insights on the Bible, Explained in a Single Minute, The
60 Second Scholar (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 85.

Explore:

In 2 Kings 22, the narrative shifts to the reign of Josiah, the last righteous king of Judah. His reign was characterized by peace, prosperity, and reform. Josiah reigned over Judah from 640-609 BC.

**Believers Honor and Obey God's Word, Making It Their
Final Authority on What to Believe and Practice (2 Kings
22:1-20)**

While chapter 21 ended by recording the death of Amon, chapter 22 began by celebrating Judah's newest and youngest king, Josiah. The contrasts between these two kings could not be any greater. It was said of Amon that he did evil in the sight of the Lord, he served and worshiped idols, and he abandoned the Lord. From Heaven's perspective, his résumé was grim to say the least.

When Josiah ascended the throne at eight years of age, however, he began to change the course of Judah's history. He reigned for 31 years. At the time of his coronation, the culture of Judah had become toxic and unhealthy, plagued with sin, despair, and hopelessness. Josiah, however, is introduced with the healthiest statement that could be made; he did what was right in God's eyes (verse 2). What a breath of fresh air this must have been for the nation of Judah. The expression, to the right or to the left, portrays the king perfectly obeying God's Law and has as its foundation the admonitions given in Deuteronomy 17:20. It is

also noteworthy that Josiah walked in the ways of David his ancestor. David, though not sinless, was the standard for good, kingly behavior, and Josiah was living up to that standard.

It is likely that because of Josiah's young age there were multiple advisors in place who would have established policy and provided tutelage for the young king. In spite of his youth, however, his humble obedience literally changed the future of Judah. Judah was experiencing God's wrath because of two generations of kings who had not honored Him and rampant idolatry among the people. Yet, Josiah's obedient spirit and action delayed the judgment of God and restored peace to His people.

King Josiah initiated numerous reforms that were more extensive than most of his predecessors. In verse 3, during his eighteenth year as king (age 26), he began repairs on the Temple in an attempt to restore it to its former condition. During his

grandfather Manasseh's reign, the Temple had not only fallen into disrepair, it had also been desecrated with various altars and images of pagan deities (2 Kings 21:4-7).

Shaphan, akin to the Secretary of State in our day, was sent along with other high-ranking government officials to begin the repairs. Upon arrival, they were to meet Hilkiah, the high priest, and gather the funds that had been collected by the door keepers or keepers of the threshold, those tasked with collecting funds for the Temple repairs. Scholars believe the funds had accumulated since the twelfth year of Josiah's reign when the reformation intensified. The funds would be used to pay the laborers, but also to purchase any necessary supplies (verses 5-7). The men tasked with carrying out the labor were men of impeccable honesty in whom the nation, and king, could place full confidence.

An amazing discovery took place in verses 8-10 when Hilkiah found a copy of the Book of the Law. This book could have been the book of Deuteronomy or the entire Pentateuch (Five Books of Moses). No one knows for sure. Nonetheless, it was an important find. Hilkiah handed the scroll to Shaphan, the secretary, to be read aloud.

Upon hearing the words of this scroll, King Josiah tore his clothes, a gesture of grief, as he heard the Law of God and pondered how far the nation had drifted from God's purposes (verse 11). The king then sent five of his top officials to inquire of the Lord what should be done in response. Josiah feared the anger of the Lord and wanted to direct His people to do right while turning the anger of the Lord from them (verses 12-13).

The five advisors sought out the prophetess Huldah (verse 14). Huldah is the only prophetess mentioned in the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles. Given the weightiness of the

matters discussed, she may have been the official court prophet. Considering the other note-worthy prophets of the day, including Jeremiah, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk, the fact that she was sought out speaks volumes about her reputation. The message she delivered to them in verses 15- 18 was not one they wished to hear. Her prophecy included the fact that God would send disaster upon Jerusalem and Judah because of their idolatry and the forsaking of the Lord.

For Josiah, however, the message was more encouraging (verses 19-20). While the nation would experience the wrath of God, because Josiah had humbled himself and responded to the Word of God and repented, he would experience God's mercy. This godly king would die and be buried before the judgment was carried out on Judah. Just as God promised, Josiah died in 609 B.C., four years before Nebuchadnezzar's first attack on Jerusalem.

Explore:

Believers Set an Example of Obedience and Deal With Sin

(2 Kings 23:1-3, 21-25)

Having discovered God's will and commands, Josiah sought to lead the people in repentance to God (verse 1). He did not wait for the Temple renovations to be completed before he took his next step of assembling representatives of the people for a public reading of the Word of God. The elders were likely the heads of prominent families that were responsible for and involved in civic duties.

Included in the king's assembly were the men of Judah, the priests, the prophets, and all the people from the least to the greatest (verse 2). When they arrived, Josiah read from the scroll of the Book of the Law that had been found during the Temple renovations. He then encouraged the people to total commitment

and obedience to God. He began by making the people aware of their need by confronting them with the truth of God's Word.

In response to the truth and requirements of God, the king led the people by example, fully committing himself to obedience to God's commands (verse 3). Standing by the pillar in the Temple courtyard, Josiah led the people by making a covenant to the Lord. By definition, a covenant is a legally binding agreement between two parties and, in this case, was between the people and their God. First, Josiah committed himself to walk after or follow the Lord. This expression is used in Deuteronomy 13:4 and speaks of the whole of a person's life being committed to serving and honoring God.

The second component to Josiah's pledge was that he would keep God's commandments, testimonies, and statutes with all his heart and all his soul. While each of these terms (commandments, testimonies or decrees, statutes) refers to the

Word of God, each represents a unique aspect regarding the work of the Scriptures. These terms also take the reader back to the directives given to Solomon by King David in 1 Kings 2:3. For instance, the term for commandment serves as a reminder that the Scriptures consist of divine orders for His children to follow. The term testimonies or decrees reminds the reader that the Scriptures bear witness or testimony to the divine author. The statutes speak of the precepts given by God as He seeks to govern or rule His people. Josiah's covenant was to treasure up, to observe, and to perform all that was given by God through the Scriptures. This he would do with his entire being (heart and soul).

This simple act of total and humble obedience to God became the catalyst for others to make the same commitment. Verse 3 asserts that all the people joined in the covenant. This commitment is similar to that made by the children of Israel in

Exodus 19:8. This was a significant undertaking on the part of the people, led by the young, godly king.

When Josiah began to reign, the decisions he made personally and professionally were a total departure from that of the previous two kings before him (his father and grandfather). His focus was on restoration and obedience. As he became aware of sin through the reading of God's Word, he took steps to deal with it (verses 21-24). Josiah commanded the people to keep the Passover, the celebration commemorating the Lord's deliverance of Israel from Egyptian slavery and bondage.

This Passover celebration was the first one held since Josiah came to the throne. This feast was also conducted with more careful attention to the Law of God than it had been since before the period of the Judges. Even David, Solomon, and Hezekiah had never led a Passover celebration of this magnitude. Second Chronicles 35:18, a parallel passage, points out that people from

the old kingdom of Israel participated alongside the kingdom of Judah. This was a remarkable event. Imagine both nations joining together for a celebration of the Passover.

Josiah led in humble dependence upon his God. The result was that he set a new standard for leadership. He provided unprecedented devotion to God. The accolades given to Josiah here were never used for any other king, including David and Solomon. According to the passage, no one had ever seen this level of devotion, and no one would ever see it again (verse 25). Josiah left a legacy, not only in the nation, but in history. He left a model of what it means to humbly walk with God.

Explore:

Josiah was a key figure in Judah's history. By definition, Josiah's name means "healed by Jehovah," and during his reign he

helped the people remain faithful to the Lord. Below is a basic timeline of the life of this amazing king.

- At the age of eight, Josiah became king (2 Kings 22:1; 2 Chronicles 34:1).

- During the eighth year of his reign at age 16, Josiah began to diligently seek God (2 Chronicles 34:3).

- In the twelfth year of his reign at age 20, King Josiah began making major reforms throughout the land (2 Chronicles 34:3-7).

- During the eighteenth year of his reign, age 26, King Josiah began repair of the Temple and discovered the Law of God (2 Chronicles 34:8-21; 2 Kings 22:3).

- Prophecy was fulfilled against the idol altar set up at Bethel by King Jeroboam who introduced idol worship in Israel (1 Kings 13:1-3; 2 Kings 23:15-20).
- In Josiah's thirty-first year as king, he was wounded in battle against the Egyptian army of Pharaoh Neco (or Necho). He died from these wounds (2 Chronicles 35:20- 25).

Explore:

Josiah becomes king of Judah at the age of eight. He is the ideal king—ranking with his great-grandfather Hezekiah as a fitting descendant of King David.

Assyria's power is fading, which leaves Josiah free to make religious reforms. He organizes some repair work on the temple. It is while this work is being carried out that the old Book of the Law is found.

THE BOOK OF THE LAW

We don't know what the Book of the Law contains. It seems likely to be at least a large part of the book of Deuteronomy (22:8–13).

Deuteronomy contains Moses' farewell speech to the Israelites, when they are about to enter the Promised Land of Canaan. It lists the blessings that will come with obeying God's law and the curses that will result when it is broken (Deuteronomy 28:1–68). The final curse is that Israel will be uprooted from her land and her people scattered as slaves in exile (Deuteronomy 28:63–64).

When King Josiah hears this he tears his clothes in dismay. Judah has fallen so far from God's standard and committed so many of the sins that are forbidden. A prophetess called Huldah confirms that God is going to punish Judah—but not in Josiah's time, because of his humility and repentance.

Andrew Knowles, *The Bible Guide*, 1st Augsburg books ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2001), 166–167.

Explore:

Out of the twenty rulers of Judah, including wicked Queen Athaliah, only eight of them could be called “good”: Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Amaziah, Uzziah, Jotham, Hezekiah and Josiah. There’s no question that Josiah was a great king, for even the Prophet Jeremiah used him as an example for the other rulers to follow. “He pled the cause of the afflicted and needy,” said Jeremiah of Josiah, while the kings that followed Josiah exploited the people so they could build their elaborate palaces (Jer. 22:11–17). Josiah ruled for thirty-one years (640–609) and walked in the ways of the Lord because David was his model. No doubt his mother was a godly woman and guided her son wisely. He was only eight years old when they made him king,

so the court officials were his mentors; but at age sixteen, Josiah committed himself to the Lord and began to seek His blessing.

Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Distinct*, “Be” Commentary Series (Colorado Springs, CO: Victor, 2002), 152.

Explore:

Hilkiah didn’t consult Jeremiah about this matter, or even the Prophet Zephaniah, one of Josiah’s kinsmen (Zeph. 1:1), who was ministering at that same time. Perhaps Jeremiah was not in the city but at his family home in Anathoth, and Zephaniah may also have been out of Jerusalem. But the king’s committee found a capable servant in Huldah the Prophetess, whose husband Shallum was in charge of the royal wardrobe. Along with Huldah, the prophetesses in Scripture include Miriam (Ex. 15:20), Deborah (Judg. 4:4), Naodiah (Neh. 6:14), the wife of Isaiah the Prophet (Isa. 8:3), Anna (Luke 2:36), and the four daughters of Philip the evangelist (Acts 21:8–9).

Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Distinct*, “Be” Commentary Series
(Colorado Springs, CO: Victor, 2002), 154–155.

Explore:

JOSIAH PURGES PAGANISM

Now Josiah clears Judah of every trace of pagan worship (23:4–25). He pulls down shrines and altars, dismisses priests and prostitutes, and destroys the paraphernalia of fertility rites and astrology.

The Asherah pole (the symbol of Astarte, Baal’s goddess) is removed from the temple, burned to ashes, ground to dust and scattered on graves. The grisly altar of Topheth, where children have been sacrificed to Molech, is desecrated and destroyed. The valley of Topheth, called Ben Hinnom, becomes Jerusalem’s ever-burning rubbish tip. It will be known as ‘Gehenna’, and used by Jesus as an image of hell.

Josiah goes north across the border to Samaria and Bethel. Here Jeroboam built one of two shrines for golden Baal-calves. This is where so much trouble began, with Jeroboam preventing his people from worshipping God in Jerusalem. The Bethel shrine is now demolished, burned and littered with dead men's bones.

When all is ready, Josiah summons his people to celebrate the Passover. This is the meal by which the Jews remember how God rescued them from Egypt in the time of Moses.

Andrew Knowles, *The Bible Guide*, 1st Augsburg books ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2001), 167.

Explore:

Josiah was one of Judah's best kings. Peace, prosperity, and reform characterized his reign. Josiah was only a lad of eight ... when he was crowned king, and reigned over Judah 31 years

(640–609 b.c.). During his reign world power passed from Assyrian to Babylonian leadership. Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, was destroyed in 612 b.c., and the Assyrian Empire fell in 609.

Thomas L. Constable, “2 Kings,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 581.

Explore:

The Book of the Law had been neglected and ignored for 57 years. In a building the size of the Temple, and with the priests only entering periodically, the “book” could have been there unseen for this entire period of time. Regardless, God’s providence in preserving His Word and His protection of it is amazing. And what better time for the Law to be found than in

the days of Josiah as he sought to reform both the Temple of God and the people of God.

Explore:

KEY TRUTHS:

1. Believers Honor and Obey God's Word, Making It Their Final Authority on What to Believe and Practice.
2. Believers Set an Example of Obedience and Deal With Sin.

HOW IT FITS: Where This Lesson Fits in the Story of the

Bible: The events of 2 Kings took place after the kingdom was divided following the reigns of David and Solomon. This section took place around 620 BC when the book of the Law was found and Josiah led the people in a covenant to follow God's Law.

Explore:

Christianity is about more than going to church and living a good moral life. Being a Christian is about having a vibrant personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Every Sunday School teacher or Bible study leader should want to see each of his or her learners enter into this relationship—their eternal destiny depends on it. As you work toward this goal, keep the following in mind:

Following Christ is about more than a mere decision; it is about a lifelong relationship. Jesus called us to make disciples, not mere decision-makers. Aim for long-term faith, not momentary emotion.

Salvation is a matter of grace, not works. Our works do not save us (Ephesians 2:8-9), nor do they keep us (Galatians 3:2-6).

Good works are a product of salvation, not a prerequisite to it.

Don't confuse sanctification with salvation. Holiness follows salvation; it doesn't precede it. Don't try to impose "Christian" expectations on men and women who don't know Christ.

- Keep it simple. Being born again is not complicated. Here's a simple way to explain it:

- Acknowledge your sinfulness and your need for a Savior (Romans 3:10, 23).

- Trust in Christ's sacrifice for your sins and in His resurrection (Romans 10:9-10).

Surrender your life to God's transforming power (Romans 12:1-2).

Most of all, remember that your job is to tell the truth in a way others can understand, answer their questions, and give them an opportunity to respond. If you do that faithfully, some will respond and join the band of Christ-followers. When they do, Heaven will rejoice!

Question 1 of 5

God says He loves us, yet he demands obedience; why?

Question 2 of 5

Why is it hard for most people to read the Bible regularly?

Question 3 of 5

Why do people think it is okay to pick and choose what they obey in the Scriptures?

Question 4 of 5

Where does obeying God lead us? Where does ongoing sin lead us?

Question 5 of 5

Is a person who lives a lifestyle of disobeying God a Christian?