

Unit I: Isaiah and the Renewal of the Temple

Finders Keepers!

DEVOTIONAL READING: Romans 7:7-12
BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: 2 Chronicles 34:1-33
PRINT PASSAGE: 2 Chronicles 34:15-22, 26-27

KEY VERSE

Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan. (2 Chronicles 34:15, KJV)

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Hilkiah said to Shaphan the secretary, “I have found the Book of the Law in the temple of the LORD.” He gave it to Shaphan. (2 Chronicles 34:15, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Explore the significance of Hilkiah’s discovery.
- Appreciate the role that Scripture plays in faithful living.
- Honor Scripture as the holy Word of God.

*Key Terms

Delivered (verse 17)—Hebrew: *nātan* (naw-than'): gave, put, laid, set; brought; sent; “entrusted” (NIV).

Inquire (verse 21)—Hebrew: *darash* (daw-rash'): to seek, require, investigate, demand; “enquire” (KJV).

Law (verse 15)—Hebrew: *torah* (to-raw'): direction; instruction; teaching.

Read (verse 18)—Hebrew: *qara* (kaw-raw'): to call, proclaim, name; dictate.

Servant (verse 20)—Hebrew: *ebed* (eh'-bed): slave; bondservant; “attendant” (NIV).

Word (verse 21)—Hebrew: *dabar* (daw-baw'): matter; thing; speech; command; promise.

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)



The Biblical Context

King Josiah became king of Judah at just eight years old in 640 BC, following his father Amon's assassination. Remarkably, despite being raised during a time of spiritual darkness—his father and grandfather Manasseh were notorious for their idolatry—Josiah became one of Judah's most righteous kings. By age 16, he sought the God of David, and by age 20, he initiated major religious reforms, destroying high places, Asherah poles, and idolatrous artifacts.

During a Temple renovation in 622 BC, Hilkiah, the high priest, discovered the Book of the Law, likely parts of Deuteronomy. This significant discovery revealed how thoroughly God's Word had been neglected during the reigns of Amon and Manasseh. Upon hearing the Law, Josiah recognized Judah's serious disobedience and the urgent need for reform.

At this time, the Assyrian Empire was in decline while Babylon was on the rise, enabling Josiah to extend his reforms into the former territories of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The reforms initiated the most significant religious transformation in Judah since King Hezekiah, culminating in a Passover celebration unmatched since the days of Samuel. This revival occurred roughly thirty-five years before the Babylonian Exile, marking Judah's last major spiritual awakening prior to Jerusalem's destruction in 586 BC.

Introduction

Sister Regina sat in her grandmother's living room, carefully unpacking an old trunk she had not opened in decades. Between faded photographs and well-worn church programs, her hand brushed against something familiar—her grandmother's Bible, its pages filled with handwritten notes spanning generations. As she opened it, yellowed newspaper clippings and funeral programs fluttered to the floor, each marking a moment in their family's journey of faith through more than seven decades.

This moment of rediscovery mirrors the powerful narrative in 2 Chronicles 34, where Hilkiah found the long-lost Book of the Law in the Temple. Just as that ancient scroll had been overlooked during years of spiritual neglect, many African Americans have experienced times when elements of spiritual heritage—passed down through songs, prayers, and the unwavering faith of our elders—seemed to fade into the background of busy living.

Like King Josiah, who was deeply moved upon hearing God's Word read aloud, anyone can experience profound renewal by reconnecting with the spiritual wisdom preserved by those who came before them. Their notes and petitions, written in the margins of well-worn Bibles and whispered in midnight prayers, still speak through time.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

Discovery and Impact of God's Word (2 Chronicles 34:15-19)

KJV

15 And Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan.

16 And Shaphan carried the book to the king, and brought the king word back again, saying, All that was committed to thy servants, they do it.

17 And they have gathered together the money that was found in the house of the LORD, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and to the hand of the workmen.

18 Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiyah the priest hath given me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king.

19 And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes.

NIV

15 Hilkiyah said to Shaphan the secretary, “I have found the Book of the Law in the temple of the LORD.” He gave it to Shaphan.

16 Then Shaphan took the book to the king and reported to him: “Your officials are doing everything that has been committed to them.

17 “They have paid out the money that was in the temple of the LORD and have entrusted it to the supervisors and workers.”

18 Then Shaphan the secretary informed the king, “Hilkiyah the priest has given me a book.” And Shaphan read from it in the presence of the king.

19 When the king heard the words of the Law, he tore his robes.

The passage from 2 Chronicles 34:15-22, 26-27 captures a pivotal moment in King Josiah's reign, igniting a powerful spiritual revival and reform. The discovery of the Book of the Law, likely Deuteronomy, during the Temple's repairs represented a profound awakening in the nation's spiritual life, showcasing the transformative power of God's Word to guide us toward humility and obedience. Hilkiyah, the high priest, found the Book amid the renovations (verse 15), a compelling reminder of how easily God's Word can be neglected. Its presence in the Temple calls believers back to essential spiritual truths, urging them to realign with divine instruction. Shaphan, the royal secretary, played a vital role in bringing this important discovery to King Josiah, ensuring that its powerful message reached him. When he reported on the Temple repairs and the Book (verse 16), it connected the restoration of the physical space to the urgent need for spiritual renewal, sparking a deep longing for revival among the people. Verse 17 highlights Josiah's unwavering commitment to restoring the Temple and revitalizing worship practices, exemplifying diligent stewardship. Shaphan's reading of the Book to the king (verse 18) awakened Josiah to the nation's spiritual crisis, showcasing the remarkable ability of God's Word to illuminate truth and soften hearts.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What is the relationship between physical restoration of the Temple and spiritual renewal for the community?

Seeking Divine Guidance and Understanding (2 Chronicles 34:20-22)

KJV

20 And the king commanded Hilkiah, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king's, saying,

21 Go, enquire of the LORD for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do after all that is written in this book.

22 And Hilkiah, and they that the king had appointed, went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvath, the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college:) and they spake to her to that effect.

NIV

20 He gave these orders to Hilkiah, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Abdon son of Micah, Shaphan the secretary and Asaiah the king's attendant:

21 "Go and inquire of the LORD for me and for the remnant in Israel and Judah about what is written in this book that has been found. Great is the LORD's anger that is poured out on us because those who have gone before us have not kept the word of the LORD; they have not acted in accordance with all that is written in this book."

22 Hilkiah and those the king had sent with him went to speak to the prophet Huldah, who was the wife of Shallum son of Tokhath, the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe. She lived in Jerusalem, in the New Quarter.

Josiah's deep distress and remorse upon hearing the Law (verse 19) demonstrate a true sensitivity to God's Word. Tearing his robes—a customary sign of mourning—showed his profound acknowledgment of the nation's failure to follow God's ways. Josiah's immediate orders to his officials reflect his urgency in addressing the spiritual crisis (verse 20). He sought clarity regarding the implications of the Book of the Law for both himself and the nation, emphasizing the importance of decisive action in response to divine revelation. His call to seek the Lord reveals his deep concern for the nation's spiritual condition (verse 21). By recognizing their disobedience, Josiah sought divine wisdom to understand the consequences and the path to restoration, illustrating the necessity of turning to God for guidance. The officials' consultation with a respected prophetess, Huldah, highlights the value of prophetic insight and the importance of seeking God's Word through His chosen messengers (verse 22). Josiah's proactive approach in seeking God's guidance through Huldah underscores the significance of turning to God for wisdom and direction. In our modern context, this can parallel seeking spiritual counsel, prayer, and studying God's Word to navigate the complexities of life.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What actions did Josiah take upon discovering the Book of the Law, and how did these actions reflect his commitment to seeking God's guidance for himself and the nation?

Response and Divine Assurance (*2 Chronicles 34:26-27*)

KJV

26 And as for the king of Judah, who sent you to enquire of the LORD, so shall ye say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel concerning the words which thou hast heard;
27 Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard thee also, saith the LORD.

NIV

26 “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:
27 “‘Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before God when you heard what he spoke against this place and its people, and because you humbled yourself before me and tore your robes and wept in my presence, I have heard you, declares the LORD.’”

Huldah's message from God highlights Josiah's humility and responsiveness to His Word (verse 26). God acknowledged Josiah's contrite heart and genuine repentance, illustrating the essence of humility and a willingness to change (verse 27). The divine assurance that Josiah's prayer had been heard reflects God's readiness to forgive and show mercy to those who sincerely turn to Him. Regardless of our past failures, God's arms are always open to receive us when we seek Him. God's promise to hear Josiah's prayer and respond with mercy emphasizes His compassionate nature and willingness to forgive those who approach Him sincerely. This promise serves as a profound reminder of God's grace and the transformative power of true repentance. The story of King Josiah remains an enduring inspiration, demonstrating the remarkable effects of humility, obedience, and a genuine response to God's Word. It reminds the church that God's Word can still transform individuals and communities when believers embrace, honor, and actively apply it.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What do you think are some practical ways that we can maintain a humble heart and respond to God's Word in our daily lives?

A Closing Thought

In modern life, just as in Josiah's time, there are moments when those who identify as God's people realize that they have neglected or forgotten essential truths. Rediscovering the Book of the Law during Temple repairs symbolizes the awakening to these truths. It could mean revisiting foundational principles, values, or even Scriptures we have overlooked. This passage encourages us to continually seek and prioritize God's Word, allowing it to guide our actions and decisions.

Your Life

The impact of reading the Book of the Law on Josiah and the subsequent reforms he initiated demonstrate the transformative power of God's Word. The Bible remains a powerful tool for personal and communal transformation, offering wisdom, correction, and inspiration.

Your World!

Share how God's Word, even when long forgotten or neglected, can transform lives and communities when rediscovered with a humble heart, just as it did in Josiah's time. Then, encourage others to examine their response to God by asking, "What changes in my life when I truly encounter God's Word with an open heart?"

Closing Prayer

Gracious Father, like You inspired King Josiah, ignite in us a hunger for Your truth. Transform us and give us hearts that obey Your will through Jesus Christ, our Lord. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Conclusion

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

Please be prepared for next week's lesson. The lesson topic for Sunday, September 28, 2025, is "How Do You Spell 'Relief'?" The Devotional Reading is Matthew 12:14-21, the Background Scriptures are Isaiah 52:13-53:12, and the Print Passage is Isaiah 53:1-7.

Home Daily Bible Readings

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| MONDAY, September 22 | "The Humble Servant Exalted by God" | (Philippians 2:5-10) |
| TUESDAY, September 23 | "The Faithful Servant" | (Isaiah 42:1-7) |
| WEDNESDAY, September 24 | "The Resurrected and Glorified Servant" | (Acts 2:25-31) |
| THURSDAY, September 25 | "A Light for the World" | (Acts 13:44-49) |
| FRIDAY, September 26 | "A Doorkeeper in God's House" | (Psalm 84) |
| SATURDAY, September 27 | "God's Servant Obeys" | (Isaiah 50:4-9) |
| SUNDAY, September 28 | "The Suffering Servant" | (Isaiah 53:1-7) |