

2 Kings Series #14 - "The Book In The House" 2 Kings 22:8-20

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Do Something Else?*

1. A letter to the editor was sent some time back to *The British Weekly*; it read Dear Sir: It seems ministers feel their sermons are very important and spend a great deal of time preparing them. I have been attending church quite regularly for 30 years, and I have probably heard 3,000 of them. To my consternation, I discovered I cannot remember a single sermon. I wonder if a minister's time might be more profitably spent on something else?
2. For weeks a storm of editorial responses ensued, finally ended by *this* letter Dear Sir: I have been married for 30 years. During that time I have eaten about 32,850 meals—mostly my wife's cooking. Suddenly I have discovered I cannot remember the menu of a single meal. And yet, I have the distinct impression that without them, I would have starved to death long ago.

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3. Chances are, most of us don't remember what we had for dinner last Tuesday evening
 4. But what we ate *did* provide what we needed to give us strength and energy for Wednesday

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5. In like manner, you may not remember what I taught on two weeks ago
 6. But the fact is, it went in to your heart and mind and the Holy Spirit will use it to nourish your spirit and give you the strength you need to live faithfully
 7. As Jesus said in John 14:26, the Holy Spirit will call these things to our remembrance, when we *need* them

B. *Still, A Point*

1. But still, I wonder if that first letter doesn't make a good point
2. And I guess a good question to ask of the writer is this:
3. The preachers you've heard may have indeed spent many hours in study and preparation for their sermons,
 - a. but did they really teach the Word of God or merely their own opinions?
 - b. did they use the newspaper as their text, or the Bible?
 - c. did they teach the short-lived theories of man or the unchanging counsel of God?

C. *Today*

1. Our text today recounts one of the most interesting and insightful events in the entire OT

2. And I believe that what we find here is extremely informative for us today

II. TEXT

A. *Set The Scene*

1. We are at the very end of the history of the kingdom of Judah
2. Her most wicked king, a man named Manasseh, had reigned for 55 years
 - a. during his time on the throne, he took the nation into the very depths of depravity
 - b. it seems he coldly calculated *how* to break each of God's commands
 - c. he filled Jerusalem and the temple with pagan idols and altars
 - d. and he filled the city with innocent blood
3. The king and the people were so utterly corrupt that God said they had far exceeded the perversions of the Canaanites who lived there before them, and who had been judged for their wickedness
4. The scale of justice had been irreparably tipped to judgment and it would only be a matter of time till the Babylonians came and destroyed the nation, her capital, the temple, and carry away the people into exile
5. After Manasseh died, his son Amon reigned for a short time, being assassinated in a royal coup
6. Then his son Josiah became King
 - a. he was only 8 when his reign began
 - b. but from the beginning, he had a heart to serve God
 - c. once his grip on the throne became secure, he moved to undo the perversions of his grandfather and father
7. In the 18th year of his reign, he gave orders that the temple was to be repaired
 - a. years of abuse and neglect had resulted in much damage
 - b. and Josiah was diligent to make sure the house of God was restored
 - c. so he sent a delegation of royal officials to the high priest with orders for workers to begin repairs

B. *Vs. 8-10*

{8} Then Hilkiyah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, "I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD." And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it.

{9} 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."

{10} Then Shaphan the scribe showed the king, saying, "Hilkiyah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read it before the king.

1. Shaphan was the head of the delegation of officials who went to the temple with Josiah's order
2. They stayed for a short time to make sure the work had begun so they could return with a full report to the king
3. But it wasn't long after the repairs had started that Hilkiyah, the high priest,

- came to Shaphan with an urgent message
- a. the Book of the Law, meaning the Bible, had been discovered, either by one of the priests or one of the workmen
 - b. he turned it over to Shaphan, who immediately opened the scroll and began to read
4. He returned to Josiah with news that the repairs were well underway, and that the long lost Book of the Law had been found
 5. Then he read it to the king
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6. What do you suppose was Josiah's reaction?
 7. What Shaphan had was the Torah, the first five books of the bible, the books Moses had written
 - a. they recorded the origin of Israel and their early history
 - b. they told of God's great power in delivering them from Egypt and bringing them in to the land of promise
 - c. but they also spoke of God's law
 - 1) they declared great blessings on obedience
 - 2) and terrible judgment on rebellion
 8. As Josiah listened to Shaphan read the horrific curses on disobedience, his heart had to begin to quail with fear
 - a. all he had to do was look around Jerusalem and Judah to see the evidences of nearly 75 years of the worst evil imaginable
 - b. there was idolatry everywhere
 - c. pagan altars filled the temple grounds and streets of the city
 - d. the accursed high places his great grandfather Hezekiah had dismantled had been rebuilt by Manasseh
 - e. everywhere he looked was evil
 9. What would his reaction be?

C. Vs. 11-13

{11} Now it happened, when the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, that he tore his clothes.

{12} Then the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Achbor the son of Michaiah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king, saying,

{13} "Go, inquire of the LORD for me, for the people and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found; for great is the wrath of the LORD that is aroused against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us."

1. People tore their clothes only under cases of extreme grief, as when they lost a close loved one
2. Because the king was the person of highest rank, he was not supposed to tear his clothes unless it was a case of *ultra* extreme grief
 - a. when Josiah rent his royal robes, it was a sign of profound emotion
 - b. he knew Judah was in a dangerous predicament
 - c. he knew the blasphemies of the previous kings and the people were more than enough to result in the complete annihilation of the nation
3. So he quickly sent another delegation to find out if the judgment proclaimed in the Law was soon in coming and if there was any way to

divert it before it was too late

D. Vs. 14-20

{14} So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. (She dwelt in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter.) And they spoke with her.

{15} Then she said to them, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'Tell the man who sent you to Me,

{16} "Thus says the LORD: 'Behold, I will bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants; all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read;

{17} 'because they have forsaken Me and burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands. Therefore My wrath shall be aroused against this place and shall not be quenched.'"

{18} "But as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, in this manner you shall speak to him, 'Thus says the LORD God of Israel: "*Concerning* the words which you have heard;

{19} "because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, that they would become a desolation and a curse, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard *you*," says the LORD.

{20} "Surely, therefore, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; and your eyes shall not see all the calamity which I will bring on this place." ' ' So they brought back word to the king.

1. Huldah was a godly woman known to speak for God
2. The king's delegation went to her with Josiah's request
3. Her message was not very encouraging
4. The scales of justice had been tipped to judgment; It was too late to turn aside God's wrath
5. All that had been foretold in the Book of the Law would come to pass and Judah's rebellion would be punished
6. The only word of comfort was that because Josiah had shown such remarkable repentance and sorrow before God for the sins of his fathers and people, the judgment would not come till after he was gone

E. Josiah's Reforms

1. Even though Huldah said that judgment would come, Josiah determined to do what was right in his own day
2. Ch. 23 tells us of the marvelous and sweeping reforms he made to Jerusalem, the temple, the priesthood, and the entire nation
3. He was a man whose heart was truly given to the Lord and did what was right in the sight of God, even if it was not popular with the people

F. The Book In The House

1. But what is striking about this passage is the revelation that the Book of the Law had been lost, of all places, in the house of the Lord
2. Their Bible, the books of Moses, the record of God's covenant with His people, His commandments, His counsel, the record of His love, power,

- and truth, had been missing for generations
3. Yet, and mark this well; the priests still went about their religious duties
 - a. the offerings and sacrifices were still made
 - b. the rituals were dutifully performed
 - c. the horns were blown, the lamps were lit
 - d. the show went on
 4. **BUT NO ONE KNEW WHY OR WHAT FOR!!!**
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5. One of the most important roles of the ministry of the priest was the task of teaching
 - a. not only were they to *officiate* at the temple—
 - b. they were also supposed to *instruct* the people out of the law
 - c. it was part of their solemn charge to not only represent the people to God
 - d. but to represent God to the people
 - e. and the primary way to do that was to read *from* and instruct them *in* the law
 - f. they were to tell the people of their godly heritage
 - 1) they were to remind them of God's love and power demonstrated in their history
 - 2) they were to carefully show them the way of life through obedience to the covenant He made with them at Sinai
 - g. they had the wonderful privilege of bringing people into a relationship with God by showing them God's revelation of Himself
 6. But they had neglected this most vital part of their ministry
 7. They neglected the teaching of the Word of God and turned to something easier and more exciting - temple service
 8. And eventually, the Bible was lost in the house of God
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9. Has the bible been lost in the church today?
 10. In many, it seems to be missing
 - a. how many churches are nothing more than an empty show?
 - b. how many base their ministry on a feel-good brand of religious sentiment?
 - b. how many cater to the consumer mentality?
 - c. how many spend more time and energy on getting the people in and entertaining them than teaching them God's Word?
 11. The sad fact is, the bible *has* been lost in the house of God
 - a. instead of teaching God's word, the latest theories of man are being expounded
 - b. instead of faithfully sharing the scriptures, a lively show is staged to bedazzle the crowd
 12. The central place the Bible used to hold in Church life has been replaced by a multitude of lesser things
 13. And the state of biblical knowledge among Christians has gone so low, it is appalling
 14. As is evidenced by this story:
 15. A man applied for membership in a church where prospective members

were required to appear before a board to make sure they met the requirements of the church

- a. they asked him what his favorite passage of Scripture was; he said it was the *Book of Parables*
- b. they then asked him to tell them one of his favorite parables; he said .

Once upon a time, a man went down to Jericho and fell among thorns. Then the thorns grew up and choked that him. But laying aside that weight and the thorns that had ensnared him, he went on and met the Queen of Sheba and she gave him a thousand talents of silver and gold and a hundred changes of raiment. And he got in his chariot and drove furiously. And 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. And he hung there many days and many nights. Then the ravens brought him food to eat and water to drink. And 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. And he hid himself in a cave. Then he went and met a man who said, "Take sup with me." He said, "But I cannot, for I have married a wife and I must go try her out." And 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 basket fulls. Now, whose wife will she be in the Day of Judgment?

- c. there was no one on the membership board who was qualified in their grasp of scripture to say he wasn't right, so they accepted his application and put him in charge of their Sunday school
16. Seriously, according to recent poles the state of biblical literacy in the land is pretty appalling
- a. a few years ago, a test of Bible knowledge was given to five classes of high school seniors.
 - b. most of them failed the exam completely!
 - c. some were so confused that they thought Sodom and Gomorrah were lovers,
 - d. that the gospels were written by Matthew, Mark, Luther, and John.
 - e. others said that Eve was created from an apple, and that the stories Jesus used in teaching were called parodies.
 - f. more than 80 percent of the pupils could not complete such familiar quotations as "Many are called but few are (chosen)"; or "a soft answer turns away (wrath)."

G. The Church's Task

1. I have come to believe that the single greatest reason for the trouble we are experiencing *today* is because after modern liberal scholarship stripped many ministers of their confidence in the scriptures at the turn of the century, they stopped teaching the bible in their churches

- a. I recently heard that at the turn of the century, 85% of the people in Great Britain attended a church weekly - not all Christians, but they went to a place of Christian worship
 - b. now, less than 2% do
 - c. in England, there are now more Muslims than Methodists, more Buddhists than Baptists
2. Why were the people of Manasseh's day so ready and willing to follow and support him in his evil and wicked schemes?
 3. Because the priests had stopped holding forth the word and counsel of God
 4. Slowly but surely, over time, less and less of them spent time in work of study
 - a. fewer of them took the time or effort to wrestle with the text and seek God for inspiration
 - b. they took the easier route of just seeking to please the people and meet their expectations
 - c. after all, they were supported by their offerings, so give the people what they want to hear
 5. They didn't just decide one day to chuck the bible
 - a. it was a slow process of mixing the word of God with the opinions and comments of man
 - b. then it was *more* the opinions of the experts and the bible was used to support these opinions
 - c. then the bible was gently closed and set aside
 - d. and finally, it was forgotten altogether
 - e. when men like Ahab and Manasseh came to power there was no moral direction or counsel for the people to draw from; and they became easy bait for the sinister forces of hell
 6. Why so much trouble today? Why so much evil?
 - a. because those entrusted with the duty and task of study and teaching have forsaken their calling
 - b. they are listening more to the experts on church growth than they are to the Spirit of God
 - c. they are chasing after the idol of success and have cast the scriptures aside
 - d. Skip Heitzig, pastor at Calvary Chapel in Albuquerque was interviewing J. Vernon Magee and asked him why more pastors didn't teach through the bible systematically
 - e. Magee simply said, "They're lazy preachers."
 - 1) you have to be a diligent student if you're going to teach the bible
 - 2) and many men are just simply too lazy to spend the time and effort it takes to study the text and prepare a healthy meal for the flock of God
 - 3) it's easier to subscribe to a sermon preparation service which will send you a month's worth of sermons to preach filled with interesting anecdotes, stories, and relevant statistics
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7. Ultimately, all philosophy of church growth can be broken down into 3 categories
8. The first is *Sensationalism*:
 - a. man has a natural curiosity toward the supernatural
 - b. tabloid magazines make a fortune appealing to this curiosity
 - c. so there a number of churches who take advantage of this curiosity and pattern their ministry after the spectacular
 - d. and several of these churches boast all manner of strange things, from oil dripping from their palms to levitation and appearances of Jesus
 - e. the benefit of *sensationalism* is you can get a big crowd in a hurry
 - f. word spreads quickly that something miraculous is happening and people turn out in droves
 - g. but there are serious problems
 - 1)the crowd you draw has no depth
 - 2) as soon as the spectacular is more notable some place else, they'll be gone
 - 3) once you draw a crowd with the sensational, you have to keep them by increasing the level of the sensational; if curiosity is what drew them, you have to keep offering new incentives to that curiosity
 - 4) things that at one time were spectacular become common
 - 5) and since you will eventually run out of acceptable phenomena, things get down right bizarre
 - h. we have seen this turn of events in the last two years in a good portion of the charismatic movement
9. The second method of church growth is *programming*
 - a. you can either do it yourself or hire a group to do it
 - b. do a demographic study of your area and find out what the people's interest and needs are
 - c. and then design a program that will fit the needs of your community
 - d. one effective program many use is *competition*
 - 1) divide up the church into groups and have them compete over which group can bring the most new people to church
 - 2) put your little thermometers up at the front of the church and color in the level of visitors each team has brought
 - 3) or string up a couple wires from the back to the front of the church and hang little rockets from them and move them forward
 - e. these things will bring people into the church
 - f. but then, what are you going to do with them once they are there?
 - g. well, recruit them for the next program, of course
 - h. Pastor Chuck tells the story of a friend of his who went all out for one of the programs
 - 1) some time later Church asked him how things went
 - 2) the man told him they had calculated that a total of 2500 man hours had been spent in the various activities of the competition
 - 3) but after 6 months, the only fruit of the program was one 85 year old deaf man who lived 25 miles away who they had to go and pick up every Sunday

- 4) and the only reason he came was because he liked the ride into town
- 5) how much better it would have been for that 2500 hours to have been spent in prayer!
- i. when you strive to *attain*, you have to strive to *maintain*
- 10. The third method of church growth is *teaching God's Word*
 - a. Jesus didn't tell Peter, "*Thrill My sheep*," or "*Entertain My sheep*."
 - b. nor did He say, "*Gather My sheep*."
 - c. He said, "*Feed My Sheep*."
 - d. the basic function of the pastor is to feed the flock of God
 - e. if he doesn't do this, how can he do anything else?
- 11. Evangelism is the natural byproduct of a healthy body
- 12. The pastor's duty is to make the body healthy by giving it a good, steady diet of the bread of life

III. CONCLUSION

A. Calvary

- 1. I hope you know that Calvary will always be devoted to one philosophy of ministry:
 - 2. To faithfully and consistently teach the Word of God
 - 3. This is our only *program*, and I think it's pretty *sensational!*
 - 4. Because I have seen the dramatic effects God's word has on His people
 - 5. Teaching the Word will not result in *explosive* growth
 - 6. But that's okay because we're not interested in growth for the sake of numbers
 - 7. Consistent, expository teaching of the Bible will result in changed lives
 - 8. And changed lives are the only advertisement we want
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- 9. Now, we need to understand that this course will not come without opposition from others
 - 10. In 2 Timothy we read these words (4:1-4)
 - {1} I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:**
 - {2} Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.**
 - {3} For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;**
 - {4} and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.**

B. Olympics

- 1. There was a television program before the 1988 Winter Olympics that featured blind skiers being trained for the slalom
- 2. Paired with sighted skiers, they were first taught to turn on gentle slopes
- 3. Then they were taken up on to the slalom course and with their sighted partners behind them, they slowly worked their way down the slope, turning to pass each gate as the guides told them, "Left" then "Right"
- 4. With a few runs, they grew accustomed to the routine, and it wasn't long

- before they were moving down the course with great confidence
5. But the critical issue was this; the blind skier had to place complete trust in the directions of the one who could see and follow their directions
 6. This is a vivid picture of the Christian life
 - a. in this world, we are in reality blind about what course to take
 - b. we must rely solely on the Word of the Only One who is truly sighted—
God Himself
 - c. His word gives us the direction we need to finish the course

C. *The House*

1. Just as we commit to the Lord to never let the Bible get lost at Calvary
2. You need to commit to Him that it will never get lost at your house