

HULDAH: PROPHET OF WISDOM

Bible Background – 2 KINGS 22

Printed Text – 2 KINGS 22:14-20

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.’”

-----New Living Translation

Lesson Introduction

How do we respond when God confronts us about our sin? Do we deny responsibility for our behavior by playing the blame-game? Do we justify our behavior by comparing ourselves to others that are so much “worse than we are?” Or do we humble ourselves and listen to what God would have us do? In this lesson study, we will analyze the message from God for King Josiah through the prophet Huldah. As we study, we will reflect on Josiah’s behavior on hearing God’s word and learn to seek godly advice concerning the events in our own lives.

Background: Following Hezekiah’s death (2 Kings 20:21) several kings succeeded him. Among them were: Manasseh (2 Kings 21:1); Amon (2 Kings 21:19); and Josiah (2 Kings 22:1). Josiah was eight years old when he became king of Judah. He reigned 31 years. The Bible affirms that he was one of Judah’s best kings (see 2 Kings 22:19). Peace, prosperity, and political reform highlighted his reign. In Judah, the Temple had fallen into disrepair (see 2 Kings 21:4-5, 7, 21). So, Josiah gave consent to repair the Temple by sending Shaphan, a scribe to oversee the renovations (see 2 Kings 22:3-4). While the renovation was going on Hilkiah, the high priest, found a copy of the book of the Law in the Temple (v. 8). Shaphan

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read the book of the Law to Josiah, who tore his clothes after hearing the scribe's reading (v. 11). The king was distressed because he realized that the nation of Judah was far from God in their morality, obedience, and spirituality. Therefore, Josiah called Hilkiah the priest, Shaphan, Ahikam, Shaphan's son, and Asaiah, a servant of the king to inquire of God what the people should do to get right with Him.

God's Prophet

2 Kings 22:14: Huldah is described as the wife of Shallum who was a wardrobe keeper, either of priestly vestments or royal robes. She was from the southern section of Jerusalem. It is important to note that, although not mentioned as often as men, there were women prophets mentioned in the Old Testament. God did speak to His people through women and four who are recorded in the Hebrew Text are Miriam (Exodus 15:20), Deborah (Judges 4:4), Isaiah's wife (Isaiah 8:3) and Huldah. Huldah's ministry was apparently so prominent at the time that she was consulted on behalf of King Josiah for answers concerning the future of his people.

Other prophets who are recorded to have ministered during the time of King Josiah are Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:2) and Zephaniah. Huldah apparently was one of God's prophets and a contemporary of Jeremiah and Zephaniah. The fact that she is female does not seem to play into the narrative and scripture does not indicate that consulting a female prophet was unusual for a king or a scribe. The purpose of a prophet is the same regardless of gender—to deliver God's message to the people as instructed, and Huldah did just that.

◆ *Why do you go to different advisors at different times?*

God's Condemnation

2 Kings 11:15-17: When Hilkiah, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah arrive at Huldah's she delivers a prophetic message from God. It is a message of judgment and condemnation on Jerusalem and Judah. She knew the character of God, the nature of sin and Judah's rebellion. From a place of prophetic inspiration and insight, she delivered God's message that confirmed Josiah's worst fears. The people had forsaken their God and worshiped idols in the most depraved ways. God's wrath could not be quenched and would definitely be inflicted on Judah's inhabitants.

Judah had been warned but continued to break His commandments. They neglected the warnings in the Law (Deuteronomy 12:19; 29:25-28; 31:16,17; 32:15) and sin has consequences. Even individuals who persist in sin, continue until there comes a time when judgment cannot be prevented. But God wants us to keep focus on Him so that we will not be distracted or attracted to the world's "gods" of today. Too often we can change our focus from God to ourselves, other people, or other things. But if we determine to place God first and never forsake Him, we can avoid this condemnation.

◆ *What daily practices help you remember to worship God alone rather than modern idols of work, or comfort, or success?*

God's Affirmation

2 Kings 22:18-20: The second part of Huldah's oracle dealt with the actions of Josiah in his reaction to God's judgment against the nation of Judah. When Josiah heard the word of God as it was written in the Book of the Law (vv.11-13), he was terrified of God's judgment against this disobedient nation. Thus, he sent a delegation to seek God's instructions as to what the nation should do? Since Josiah was tenderhearted to God's word, he was convicted of the nation's sin and subsequent judgment as foretold in God's message. His reaction was to humble his heart before God and to rend his garment which demonstrated his inward repentance and self-abasement. God's judgement would be sure, but perhaps not as swift, as the repentant actions of Josiah protected him from God's impending wrath against the nation.

This was the message concerning Josiah that God had for the king. Although the wrath of God would be visited upon the nation, Josiah would not witness the destruction of Judah. God was true to his word. The sieges by Nebuchadnezzar, the destruction of the Temple and the deportation of the bulk of the inhabitants did not begin until three years after Josiah's death. (2 Kings 24-25).

Josiah sincerely revered God. He found the scripture foretelling the nation's coming judgement while leading the effort to refurbish the Temple of God that had been defiled by previous kings in their worship of false idols. He also removed altars and places of idol worship throughout the land. He sought God's word from a prophet concerning the situation. Josiah was a model of a true God-fearing leader. He did all that he knew to do to bring the nation back into covenant relationship with God. We need the same models of righteousness in today's world to warn others against sin and to encourage salvation through Jesus.

◆*Where are you a leader? How should leaders use their position of power to influence those who follow them?*

Conclusion

We are so blessed today, that the word of God is not hidden in some remote place in a temple waiting to be "discovered" to reveal God's message to us. We have access to the scriptures in a vast variety of formats and translations. So, in our society, it is not difficult to "consult" God by way of His word. Likewise, it is important to study His word regularly, and like King Josiah, with a tender heart, receptive to instruction, with humility and a repentant spirit.

Sources:

- Banks, M. (Ed.). (2020). Call in the New Testament. *Precepts for Living*, 23(Spring Quarter), 329-339. The Urban Ministries, Inc. Annual Commentary 2020-2021.
- Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation, Carol Stream, Illinois.
- Mariottini, C. (2013). The Seven Prophetesses of the Old Testament. Retrieved March 2021 from <https://claudemariottini.com/2013/12/16/the-seven-prophetesses-of-the-old-testament/>

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Lesson for Next Week – March 28 – Study Guide 4

ELIJAH: PROPHET OF COURAGE

Bible Background ♦ 1 KINGS 18-19; MATTHEW 17:1-3

Printed Text ♦ 1 KINGS 18:5-18

Devotional Reading ♦ LUKE 19:28-39

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Elijah with Moses and Jesus
(Mark 9:2-8)

TUESDAY

John the Baptist, the New Elijah
(Mark 9:9-13)

WEDNESDAY

Elijah Sent to King Ahab
(1 Kings 18:1-4)

THURSDAY

Elijah Challenges Baal Prophets
(1 Kings 18:20-26, 30-33, 36-39)

FRIDAY

Elijah in the Wilderness with God
(1 Kings 19:1-8)

SATURDAY

God Commissions Elijah for New York
(1 Kings 19:9-15)

SUNDAY

King Ahab Meets Prophet Elijah
(1 Kings 18:5-18)