

NOVEMBER 4, 1990

SEEKING ANSWERS

Have you ever been in a situation where you thought everything was going pretty good and then suddenly discover that you have really messed up because you just didn't know what was expected. I have had bad dreams about being in college and discovering toward the end of the semester that I had not attended any of the classes for a particular course. This might be like suddenly realizing that you hadn't filed your income tax for the past five year and that you were in deep trouble. Sometimes we just don't know how important certain things are simply because we have not been made aware of them.

Such a discovery was made by young king Josiah of Judah. Josiah's great grandfather was Hezekiah and Hezekiah was a good king that sought God's help and led the nation well. Hezekiah's son Manasseh was just the opposite. He was probably the most wicked king that Judah had ever had. His reign lasted 45 years and he led the nation into idol worship and paganism. After he died his son Amon took over the throne and it was apparent that he was no better than Manasseh. Some of the people of Judah realized that they need to do something, so they assassinated Amon and took his eight-year-old son Josiah made him king. Those that did away with Amon actually ruled the country during the early years because an eight-year-old child was not capable of doing so. These people were intent on restoring the proper religious influence to the nation. They began reforms that impacted on the political as well as the social and religious aspects of life in Judah. As Josiah became older he started having his own influence and agenda which was greatly influenced by the reform movement that he had watch develop as he grew up. He was known as one of the best kings to ever rule Judah. One of the projects that Josiah started was the renovation of the temple. During the long reign of his grandfather (Manasseh) the temple had been neglected. One of the key political official was put in charge of this operation and he was to work with the high priest Hilkiah to get the job done.

While the work was underway, the workmen found a copy of the law. It is unclear whether this was the first five books (of Moses) or just a portion of these. Nevertheless, it was a significant discovery. I get the impression that for years they did not have access to the Scriptures and really did not know what was contained in the law. The workmen gave the writings to Hilkiah, the priest and he passed it along to Shaphan the official in charge of the restoration of the temple. Shaphan took the writings to Josiah and read it to him. It is not clear exactly what part of the Scriptures were read to the king; however, many think that it was such passages as Deut. 28. [Read selected verses from the 28th chapter of Deut.] When Josiah heard these words, he tore his robe as a sign of deep anguish and remorse and immediately sought help in finding out what could be done to change the situation.

II KINGS 22:12-13 Josiah called together some of the most influential people in the nation to look into the problem. Today we might refer to such a group as a "blue-ribbon panel". Their assignment was to find out what God intended to do to the nation since they had obviously done the things that God said would bring a curse on the people and the land. Josiah was astute enough to realize that the nation was in big trouble because they had ignored what God required. They had done the very things that God said was abominable to Him and Josiah was suddenly confronted with the facts. He was afraid for himself and for the people.

II KINGS 22:14-17 The delegation went to a prophetess named Huldah. She lived in Jerusalem and they talked with her regarding what had happened. She didn't have any trouble telling

them what would happen. It was going to happen exactly as the Scriptures had said it would. God is faithful to His word. In the words she used "all the words of the book which the king read" would come true. We can count on that for all of the Bible. All of God's word will come true. There were many evil things that had happened and were still happening in Judah even though Josiah's adviser had started reform. There were many injustices that had been and were still going on in the nation. Notice that God did not mention these since they were merely symptoms of the real problem. The real problem was that the people had forsaken God and had worshiped idols. The idols were described as works of their hands. We have a great tendency to rely on what we have done, what we have saved, our insurance, our savings, our retirement plan, our government, the military -- all the things we as individuals or as a nation have put together (the works of our hands). Once they lost sight of fact of God and that he is a righteous God and has demands on us, then they were left open to other value systems and other standards of practice for their lives. It was this that lead to deterioration of the moral fabric of their society and it is what is tearing us down as a nation.

From the message that God gave through the prophetess, it would appear that a society can go so far that drastic action in the form of punishment of discipline is necessary to purge the rottenness away. Judah had gone that far and I see that our nation getting to that point. Lewdness, greed, injustice and lack of compassion seem to be more and more accepted in our society and unless a spiritual revival sweeps our land, we will go the way of others into ineffectiveness and being at the mercy or lack of mercy of ruthless people in the world. Nevertheless, God does take note of the godly elements in a nation and makes provision for them.

II KINGS 22:18-20 God saw what was in the heart of Josiah. He saw the concern and the sorry that Josiah had because of the sins of the people. He saw the tears and the tenderness of heart and God was moved by that. I wonder what would happen today if the church were to see the sins of our nation and would have the sorry and tears and concern of Josiah. Could we make a difference in the outcome of the United States? Might we not make a difference in the life of even one person? Is there someone you know that needs to know the truth of the word of God concerning their relationship to God and the effect that relationship has on where they will spend eternity? Because of Josiah's concern God's judgement did not come to pass until Josiah had died. Then judgement came on Judah. Perhaps it is not too late for our nation -- perhaps we should inquire of the Lord even as Josiah did.