

## LESSON 3

March 21, 2021

Unit I: Faithful Prophets

Seeking Wisdom for the Future

**DEVOTIONAL READING: Psalm 25:1-10**

**BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: 2 Kings 22**

**PRINT PASSAGE: 2 Kings 22:14-20**

**Key Verse**—Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the LORD. (2 Kings 22:19, KJV)

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““Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I have spoken against this place and its people—that they would become a curse and be laid waste—and because you tore your robes and wept in my presence, I also have heard you, declares the LORD.”” (2 Kings 22:19, NIV)

### Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Analyze the prophetess Huldah’s message from God for King Josiah.
- Reflect on Josiah’s behavior after hearing the words of the Book of the Law.
- Seek godly advice about your future.

### KEY TERMS

**Forsaken (verse 17)**—Hebrew: *azab* (aw-zab’): left; neglect; deserted.

**Huldah (verse 14)**—Hebrew: *Chuldah* (khool-daw’): an Israelite prophetess in the time of Josiah.

**The Book (verse 16)**—Hebrew: *sepher* (say-fer’): The *Book of the Law* found during Josiah’s reign was responsible for the renewal of the covenant and other reforms.

### INTRODUCTION

Historical accounts verify humans’ long-held fascination concerning the future. Divination—the forbidden practice of seeking knowledge of the future or the unknown by supernatural means—was a common practice among unbelievers in the ancient world. Inspired by demonic knowledge, pagans, witches, and unbelievers have attempted to use such things as bones, entrails, books, chickens, and even cheese to gain a glimpse of future events. In their fallen state, people all over the world have used many desperate measures to learn what lies ahead, relying on any source other

than the true source, God our Creator. Many Christians are unaware that Old and New Testament Scriptures forbid those who claim God as their Father to order their lives by trusting the occult—including astrological signs, horoscopes, and psychics—above God. It is God alone who holds the future. Jesus taught His disciples not to worry about the future but to trust God the Father to supply what we need when we need it (see Matthew 6:25-34). How, then, are we to make sense of our daily lives? God directs us to seek His wisdom and leave the future to Him (see James 1:5).

## THE BIBLICAL CONTEXT

The four Old Testament books of 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles were originally written as two books—Kings and Chronicles. Together, they record the full history of the monarchy (or kingship) in Judah and Israel, from Saul to Zedekiah. This historical record spans a period of four centuries. First Kings outlines Israel's and Judah's tragic paths to destruction caused by widespread disobedience and indifference toward God. Second Kings continues to recount the downward spiral of two wicked nations given to idolatry and corruption. Every king of Israel (nineteen in total) and the majority of Judah's kings were evil men who abandoned righteous obedience and led the people away from God. A few of Judah's kings led temporary periods of reform against the evils of their predecessors. One of these was Josiah, grandson of one of Judah's most wicked kings, Manasseh. Josiah began his reign at the age of eight and totally dedicated his life to obeying the commandments of God and seeking God's guidance as he strived to lead Judah back to God.

## ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

### A Rebellious People's Calamity (2 Kings 22:14-17)

#### KJV

**14** So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asahiah, went unto *Huldah* the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college;) and they communed with her.

**15** And she said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Tell the man that sent you to me,

**16** Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of *the book* which the king of Judah hath read:

**17** Because they have *forsaken* me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched.

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#### NIV

**14** Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Akbor, Shaphan and Asaiah went to speak to the prophet *Huldah*, who was the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. She lived in Jerusalem, in the New Quarter.

**15** She said to them, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Tell the man who sent you to me,

**16** “This is what the LORD says: I am going to bring disaster on this place and its people, according to everything written in *the book* the king of Judah has read.

**17** “Because they have *forsaken* me and burned incense to other gods and aroused my anger by all the idols their hands have made, my anger will burn against this place and will not be quenched.”

When Josiah became king of Judah, the nation was spiraling into spiritual ruin triggered by fiftyseven years of idolatrous leadership by his grandfather Manasseh, who ruled for fifty-five years, and his father, Amon, who ruled for two years. At age 26, when Josiah had served the nation for eighteen years, he sent word to Hilkiah the high priest instructing him to oversee Temple repairs following its years of abuse (verses 3-7). Hilkiah found the book of the Law, a scroll containing the Torah (Pentateuch), during the Temple renovations and gave it to the scribe Shaphan. Without delay, Shaphan returned to Josiah and read the scroll to him (verses 8-10). Josiah’s reaction was one of deep contrition and grief over the guilt of the people and God’s intended judgment (verses 11-13). The word convicted Josiah and led to an immediate response. Five of Josiah’s court officers sought out a prophetess named Huldah (verse 14). It is reasonable to assume that they chose Huldah because she was likely known by them and was held in some regard for her prophetic gift. After consulting the Lord, Huldah sent God’s message to Josiah (verse 15). The message spelled out God’s plan to judge the nation for its idolatry and disobedience (verses 16-17). Despite sporadic reforms, Judah and the majority of her kings continued to reject God in favor of other gods. The cup of God’s wrath was full and would soon be poured out on them.

Specific applicable principles stand out in these verses. One is the power of God’s Word when it is “heard” and not “heeded.” Billions of people have heard the Word of God with their ears, but not with their hearts. However, when Josiah and his court officials heard God’s word, their hearts were convicted. They felt genuine godly sorrow because the nation had sinned against God. This godly response led them to seek a deeper understanding of God’s will for the nation. Josiah’s officials sought a “word from the Lord” from one of the Lord’s anointed messengers. How often are we guilty of being “listeners” and “auditors” of His Word rather than “hearers” and “doers”? How often are our vocal “amens” translated to “actions of obedience”? God used Huldah and other prophets to warn the people to return to Him and seek His wisdom to guide their lives. Today, God still calls and inspires men and women to speak words of comfort, correction, and guidance for His people. God has placed gifted pastors, teachers, evangelists, and others in the church to build up believers spiritually, protecting them from the deception of false doctrine and evil influences (see Ephesians 4:14). Those who pray and seek the Lord with all their hearts will find Him (see Jeremiah 29:13).

### **What Do You Think?**

What is a prerequisite for being genuinely convicted by the Word of God?

**A Pious King’s Consolation** (2 Kings 22:18-20)

## **KJV**

**18 But to the king of Judah which sent you to enquire of the LORD, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, As touching the words which thou hast heard;**

**19 Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the LORD.**

**20 Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again.**

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## **NIV**

**18 “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:**

**19 “‘Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I have spoken against this place and its people—that they would become a curse and be laid waste—and because you tore your robes and wept in my presence, I also have heard you, declares the LORD.**

**20 “‘Therefore I will gather you to your ancestors, and you will be buried in peace. Your eyes will not see all the disaster I am going to bring on this place.’” So they took her answer back to the king.**

God’s message to Josiah was one of judgment tempered with mercy. God announced the impending calamities that would overtake the people in the future, but also provided a word of consolation for Josiah. Judgment was sure, but God informed Josiah that it would not come during his lifetime (verses 18-20). This promise was given because of Josiah’s tender and contrite response when he heard the scroll describing Judah’s self-imposed future destruction. Josiah had already demonstrated an open, contrite heart and a zeal for God’s glory. Because of Josiah’s faithfulness God honored him with a peaceful life; he would not have to endure the horror of Judah’s and Jerusalem’s future destruction. Josiah died four years before Nebuchadnezzar’s first attack on Jerusalem. God does not always spare us from suffering and trying circumstances. However, when we dedicate our lives totally to Him and seek His wisdom, He will always provide the strength and spiritual understanding we need to persevere and overcome.

## **What Do You Think?**

Why do you think some people prefer to order their lives by counterfeit (ungodly) sources of wisdom?

## **A CLOSING THOUGHT**

Josiah listened to God's Word and was convicted to repent on behalf of the people and to seek God's will for the nation. Ultimately, Josiah's humble response to God's Word positioned him to receive God's mercy and favor. Like Josiah, are you willing to give yourself to God, consistently obeying His will and reverencing His Word as the only source of true wisdom?

## **YOUR LIFE**

To whom do you typically turn when you need advice, especially about your future? Often we turn to family members, close friends, or other trusted persons. Josiah points us to God, the only real source of the wisdom we need to guide our lives. This week, spend time in prayer and meditating on God's written and spoken Word to navigate the path He has already ordained and walk it by faith.

## **YOUR WORLD!**

There are so many conflicting "voices" in our world designed to distract or hinder us from going to God for wisdom. Commit to focusing on God's Word as your primary source of wisdom, applying it to your life in every season.

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

Dear God, thank You for Your Word and its power to lead us to You, our source of wisdom for everything we will ever face in life. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## **CONCLUSION (Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)**

Often people blame others for the consequences of their own bad decisions and persecute those who have the courage to confront their sin and reveal it to them. Read the story of Elijah's confrontation with Ahab, king of Israel, in 1 Kings 18.

## **HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS**

**(March 22-28, 2021)**

### **Elijah: Prophet of Courage**

MONDAY, March 22: "Elijah Is with Moses and Jesus" (Mark 9:2-8)

TUESDAY, March 23: "John the Baptist, the New Elijah" (Mark 9:9-13)

WEDNESDAY, March 24: "Elijah Is Sent to King Ahab" (1 Kings 18:1-4)

THURSDAY, March 25: "Elijah Challenges Baal Prophets" (1 Kings 18:20-26, 30-33, 36-39)

FRIDAY, March 26: "Elijah in the Wilderness with God" (1 Kings 19:1-8)

SATURDAY, March 27: "God Commissions Elijah for New Work" (1 Kings 19:9b-15)

SUNDAY, March 28: "King Ahab Meets Prophet Elijah" (1 Kings 18:5-18)