

The Sufficiency of Scripture

2 Kings 22: 8–11 (and other texts)ⁱ

How Did THAT Get There?

I remember talking with someone out where we used to live about a morning when he came out to his truck, which was closed up tight, windows and doors, only to find a cat standing on the seat, paws balanced on the window ledge, looking out at him through the window. His first thought? “How did that get in there?”

Evidently, Josiah had a similar reaction. Installed as king at the tender age of 8, he was just 16 years old when “he began to seek the God of David his father,” and, seeing the inconsistencies in the land around him, his reaction was quick and severe. Verses 4 and 5 of 2nd Chronicles 34 tell us that,

⁴ ...they chopped down the altars of the Baals in his presence, and he cut down the incense altars that stood above them. And he broke in pieces the Asherim and the carved and the metal images, and he made dust of them and scattered it over the graves of those who had sacrificed to them. ⁵ He also burned the bones of the priests on their altars and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem. ² Chronicles 34:4–5 ESV

It was the right thing to do, and Josiah did not let the fact that he was only 16 keep him from it. As the apostle Paul once wrote to Timothy,

¹² Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. ¹ Timothy 4:12 ESV

and even as a boy, Josiah seems to have realized that being faithful to God in all things was far more important than bowing to the culture around, and doing what might have been far more convenient. But if even a youth could see that there was a problem. What about everyone else? What about all the adults who had heard the words of the prophets for themselves? Why couldn't they see the evil of the prevailing idolatry?

The Book of the Covenant.

Of course, the answer to the question, “How did THAT get in here?” may be fairly obvious in the light of 2nd Kings 22, verse 8. It seems that as Josiah's reforms spread outward from Jerusalem to parts of what had traditionally belonged to the Northern Kingdom, the king also began to deal with the rot at the heart center, and as they began to cleanse and repair the Temple, there came a day when

⁸ ...Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the secretary, “I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD.”... ² Kings 22:8 ESV

And we have to wonder, how did it get lost in the first place? More still, just what had been going on in the Temple for all the years that it was missing? Evidently, the priests were doing something in there, but when there's an altar to Baal in the Temple of the Lord, things have clearly been forgotten that ought to have been remembered. So, the answer to the question,

“How did **that** get in here?” is arguably that the book of the Covenant, the instruction manual and job description for the whole establishment had somehow been lost.

And we can only speculate about how such a thing came to be, Maybe one of the younger priests had tucked it away for safe keeping during the days of Amon, when the idols and the cult prostitutes were finding their way back into the temple. Maybe it was lost in plain sight, abandoned and simply unused in the very cabinet where the sacred scrolls were traditionally kept. Maybe, over the years, doing the same things again and again, day after day, the priests fell into a rhythm in which they imagined they didn’t need the book anymore—they had read it through a couple of times, and that was enough.

We’re not told, but I still think there’s something important here for us, because even though many of us have more Bibles in our homes than we have people to use them, and even though the pew racks in front of you are full, and even though Sola Scriptura was one of the guiding principles of the Reformation, it’s actually pretty easy, as we see in our text, to misplace the Word of God. It may be lost in a flurry of innovation, or buried under a mountain of tradition, either way the church has a problem when the Word is not at the very center of who we are and what we do.

It’s in the Word that God meets us. It’s in the Word that he speaks to guide and give wisdom. It’s in the Word that He reveals himself, and the way in which we are to live for his glory. This is why we are taught in the Belgic Confession, article 7 that

...this Holy Scripture contains the will of God completely and that everything one must believe to be saved is sufficiently taught in it.¹⁰

The Requisite Response.

But what I want to particularly call to your attention this morning is the response required by the Word. See, when my friend found the cat in the truck, it didn’t really matter how it got there. It had been there for a while, and he had a mess that needed to be cleaned up. It was the same for Josiah. The book of the law was found when he was 26. He had been diligently seeking the Lord for 10 years by that time, and actively working for reformation for the last 6 of those years. Much had already been done, more, in fact, than was accomplished by many or even any of his predecessors. You might imagine that Josiah, being given the Book of the Law at this point might sit back and think, “Well, good. Clearly we’re on the right track.”

But when Josiah is given the book, he is cut to the heart. Verses 10 and 11:

¹⁰ Then Shaphan the secretary told the king, “Hilkiah the priest has given me a book.” And Shaphan read it before the king.

And

¹¹ When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes. ^{2 Kings 22:10–11 ESV}

In other words, far from resting on his achievements, far from feeling justified by the work that had already been done, Josiah, after hearing the Word, was overwhelmed by the holiness of

God, and the desire to truly honor Him by living accordingly. So he sent his advisors to Huldah, the prophetess, to inquire of the Lord.

And God said, “Wow Josiah. You’re awesome. You’re enough. You’ve done so much for me already, and at such a young age. Take some time for yourself now. Find a girl. Get married. Have kids. Life is short, and you only have this one opportunity so enjoy it while you can.” Actually, not so much (not at all). In fact, Huldah responded to the messengers,

¹⁶ Thus says the LORD, Behold, I will bring disaster upon this place and upon its inhabitants, all the words of the book that the king of Judah has read. ¹⁷ Because they have forsaken me and have made offerings to other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the work of their hands, therefore my wrath will be kindled against this place, and it will not be quenched. ^{2 Kings 22:16–17} ESV

And then, the rest of the story,

¹⁸ But to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, thus shall you say to him, Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Regarding the words that you have heard, ¹⁹ because your heart was penitent, and you humbled yourself before the LORD, when you heard how I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and you have torn your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you, declares the LORD. ²⁰ Therefore, behold, 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 disaster that I will bring upon this place.” ... ^{2 Kings 22:18–20} ESV

And when Josiah heard these words from the prophetess, he decided that his own personal repentance was not nearly enough, so he called the people together,

² ...all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the priests and the prophets, all the people, both small and great. And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant that had been found in the house of the LORD. ^{2 Kings 23:2} ESV

Because good news is for sharing,

³ And the king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. **And all the people joined in the covenant.** ^{2 Kings 23:3} ESV

So, when the book was first found and given to the king, it came with heart (and clothes) rending conviction, then he shared it with the people and they too joined in the covenant, determining to repent, and walk in the way of the Lord.

Some 500 years later the apostle Peter would again call the people of Jerusalem to repentance, saying,

³⁶ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified” ^{Acts 2:36} ESV

they too were cut to the heart, and for the same reason. In Josiah's day, they had let the word go to the point that they were worshiping Baal, and Asherah, and all the starry host. By Peter's day, the slide had continued to the point that they failed to recognize, and then crucified, the Messiah they had longed for. But in both cases it is the Word of God, spoken and heard, that cuts and wounds, and brings them to repentance and faith by the grace of God. Because when the men of Jerusalem were cut to the heart, and asked Peter, "What shall we do?"

³⁸ ...Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins..." Acts 2:38 ESV

The Power of God for Salvation.

And to this day, it's the same message from the same book, because the Gospel is, as the Apostle Paul wrote,

¹⁶ ...the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes... Romans 1:16 ESV

It is the inspired, infallible, authoritative, and sufficient Word of God. This is the word that was spoken by the Lord, and then given to us through prophets, priests, and apostles; the word of the gospel—the good news—that first convicts us of our sin, and then sets us free from that sin as we hear, believe, and turn to the Living God through faith in his Son, Jesus Christ. This is the Word that assures us that the price has been paid, and we have been set free, once and for all, by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Therefore we must not consider human writings—no matter how holy their authors may have been—equal to the divine writings; nor may we put custom, nor the majority, nor age, nor the passage of time or persons, nor councils, decrees, or official decisions above the truth of God, for truth is above everything else.ⁱⁱⁱ

And this is the Word of faith—the truth—that we proclaim,

⁹ ...because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. ¹³ For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:9–13
ESV

Even so, may God give us ears to hear and hearts to believe all that He has revealed in His Word, and may we hold fast, and proclaim to the world the holy Scriptures which alone are able, and sufficient to make us wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. For,

¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. ² Timothy 3:16–17 ESV

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- i All Scripture citations unless otherwise noted, *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016).
 - ii Christian Reformed Church (CRCNA), "The Belgic Confession, Article 7", *Ecumenical Creeds and Reformed Confessions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Faith Alive Publications, 1988) 82.
 - iii CRCNA, "The Belgic Confession, Article 7", *Ecumenical Creeds*, 82.