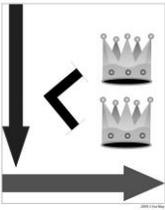


Week Thirty-one: A King Experiences Revival - 2 Chronicles 34-35



Overview

Moses promotes Bible literacy throughout the book of Deuteronomy. Throughout Israel's history their spiritual health rises and falls on the level of Bible literacy—their knowledge of the Word—and their obedience to that Word as individuals and a nation.

Judah experiences five brief periods of revival during its 345-year history.

King Asa removes the idols from Jerusalem and restores the temple altar (2 Chron. 15); King Jehoshaphat removes idols and restores the public reading of the Book of the Law (2 Chron. 17); King Joash repairs the temple, but very little reform takes place (2 Chron. 23-24); King Hezekiah cleanses, repairs the temple, and reestablishes public worship and the Passover celebration (2 Chron. 29-31); King Josiah's revival, however, is more comprehensive than those of the kings who preceded him. Today's lesson focuses on the effect reading the Book of the Law has on King Josiah and all the people.

Lesson Objective:

At the conclusion of this lesson, students will understand the parallels between Bible literacy and the spiritual health of God's people.

Key Truths

Moral failure, idol worship, and community discord accompany the lack of Bible literacy.

Faith and obedience thrive in the hearts of those who are biblically literate; therefore, God's Word must be made available to all peoples.

Spiritual leaders who neglect the Word of God and spend all their time doing other things soon find themselves tolerating sin and idolatry.

The spiritual vitality of the community is inseparable from the Bible literacy and spiritual strength of its leaders.

Lesson Outline (2 Chronicles 34)

Josiah is eight years old when he begins to reign in Judah. At the age of 16 he sets his heart to seek the LORD, and at age 20 he begins to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places and idols in their midst (34:1-7). At the age of 26 Josiah sends money and five officers to Hilkiah, the high priest, to organize the cleansing and repairing of the temple. To their surprise, they discover the Book of the Law hidden in the very place where it ought to be elevated (34:8-18). Reading the Book of the Law produces faith and power to accomplish two outcomes in the lives of the people of God—conviction of sin and renewal of righteousness.

1. The Power of God’s Word to Convict Israel of Sin - 2 Chronicles 34:19-28

Though the text does not say specifically which book is found, the men cleaning the temple find the “book of the Law” (15). This could be the Torah--a collection of the first five books of the Bible--or it could be the book of Deuteronomy. The Book of Deuteronomy teaches the Ten Commandments; addresses the need for Bible literacy in families, in the community, and in the king’s own house (you may find it helpful to review the lesson in Week Twelve on Bible literacy); warns about intermarriage with Canaanites and commands the destruction of their altars, idols, and images; gives various instructions to protect the community; and explains the blessings of obedience and cursings of disobedience.

When Josiah responds to hearing the words of the Law:

- He tears his clothes. The tearing or rending of clothes was an outward sign of grief and distress over some disaster or calamity. Josiah immediately understands how perilously close to God’s wrath both he and Judah stand, how short he has fallen as a king, and how Judah has fallen as a nation. He is deeply grieved by what he understands (19).
- He takes personal ownership of the situation. He sends a delegation to enquire of the Lord (20-21).
- He respects and receives the word of Huldah, the prophetess (22-28).
- He gathers the elders of Judah and Jerusalem and reads “in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant” (29-30). He dedicates himself “to follow 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 the covenant that were written in this book” publicly (31). On top of that, he calls everyone to commit themselves to follow in his footsteps (32-33). In all probability, this finding of the Word affects the prophet Jeremiah so that he is open to the call of God and begins to live by the Word of God (Jer. 15:16).

2. The Power of God’s Word to Restore Honorable Living before God and Others - 2 Chronicles 35:18

Josiah and all Judah celebrate the Passover, which God had commanded them to celebrate yearly in Exodus 12:14-27. The writer of 2 Chronicles summarizes Josiah’s obedience: “There had been no Passover kept in Israel like that since the days of

Samuel the prophet; and none of the kings of Israel had kept such a Passover as Josiah kept, with the priests and the Levites, all Judah and Israel who were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem” (35:18).

Application - What does this lesson teach about God? Man? Sin? Redemption?

Without Bible literacy people drift into sin, idol worship, and the judgment of God.

Strong, biblically literate leaders aren't afraid to acknowledge sin and grieve publicly.

Just as Hilkiah and the Levite priests lived lives without purpose and power in Josiah's day, so ministers and other leaders struggle with purpose and powerlessness today.

Often the Bible is hidden in the place in which it should have prominence.

People often stop short of genuine revival when they settle only for putting away the sin and idols that sully their lives; people need to understand and obey God's Word. Bible literacy promotes spiritual vitality.

Summary

God speaks through the written Word and communicates His character, man's sin, and the message of redemption and judgment.

God acts to preserve the Word of God so that it is found by those who seek Him.

God reveals the power of His Word to revive His people (Heb. 4:12-13).

Discussion Questions

In Josiah's day, the rubbish in the Temple hid the book of the Law from the people. What keeps people from hearing and obeying God's Word today?

How could true reform take place in our churches today? What keeps such reform from taking place? What would our churches look like if true reform took place?

Do you take your Bible for granted? What if you had to copy your own version, or each church had only one copy for reading aloud? Would you appreciate your Bible more if you did not have so many copies?