

Where Are We?

2 Kings 22:1 through 2 Kings 22:13 (NKJV)

¹Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. ²And he did *what was* right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.

³Now it came to pass, in the eighteenth year of King Josiah, *that* the king sent Shaphan the scribe, the son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, to the house of the LORD, saying: ⁴"Go up to Hilkiyah the high priest, that he may count the money which has been brought into the house of the LORD, which the doorkeepers have gathered from the people. ⁵And let them deliver it into the hand of those doing the work, who are the overseers in the house of the LORD; let them give it to those who *are* in the house of the LORD doing the work, to repair the damages of the house—⁶to carpenters and builders and masons—and to buy timber and hewn stone to repair the house.

⁷However there need be no accounting made with them of the money delivered into their hand, because they deal faithfully."

⁸Then Hilkiyah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, "I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD." And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. ⁹So Shaphan the scribe went to the king, bringing the king word, saying, "Your servants have gathered the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of those who do the work, who oversee the house of the LORD." ¹⁰Then Shaphan the scribe showed the king, saying, "Hilkiyah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read it before the king.

¹¹Now it happened, when the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, that he tore his clothes. ¹²Then the king commanded Hilkiyah the priest, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Achbor the son of Michaiah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king, saying, ¹³"Go, inquire of the LORD for me, for the people and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found; for great *is* the wrath of the LORD that is aroused against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us."

Introduction

Two years ago, we had a series of discussions in Bible Study on "revival" where we studied two of the greatest revivals in the Old Testament. During that time we examined the revivals under the leadership of Nehemiah and King Josiah. The purpose of that study was to understand the elements of a true revival among God's people. What we have done in our revival services down through the years has been a blessing to the church. Souls have been saved and people have been spiritually refreshed. We could all use some good singing and preaching.

Our revivals are good but these biblical examples give us an opportunity to probe deeper into the concept of revival. What we found was these periods of revival were a lot more involved than our traditional revivals. These revivals took months and years instead of a week or a few days. These revivals affected every area of life: social, economic, moral, and spiritual.

Right now, Greater Friendship is in revival. We have been in revival for more than a year now. How do we know?

If you read the story of Josiah's life and that of Nehemiah, you will see parallels between them and the ministry that God has established at this church. We are striving to do the will of God like Josiah. We are working to build spiritual walls like Nehemiah. We are tearing down idols like Josiah. We are equipping people like Nehemiah.

We are deliberately, consciously, and prayerfully setting out to resuscitate the body of Christ in accordance with God's word. But this message today isn't so much about reviving the church as it is about reviving our own lives. To do this, we must revisit the beginning of Josiah's revival and identify our own spiritual conditions.

We want to ask three very important questions and conclude for the day. Those questions are: Are we going through the motions? Are we seeking the Lord? Are we where God wants us to be?

Are we going through the motions?

Religion, ritual and relationship are all different things. Religion refers to those things God does through us in the world.

James 1:26 through James 1:27 (NKJV)

²⁶If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion *is* useless. ²⁷Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

Religion involves visiting the orphans, the widows, the sick, the bereaved and anyone in trouble or in need. We are exercising our religion when we go out and evangelize the community. At the same time, James says it is also to keep ourselves unspotted from the world.

Ritual refers to a set of actions we perform in ceremony or sacraments. When we observe the Lord's Supper it may be seen as a ritual. Baptisms, prayers, and

responsive readings may be categorized as rituals. Wearing white at certain services is a form of ritual. Here is where we have our challenge: It only takes a few conversations and a few Sundays to learn the rituals. It only takes a few months to see our religion. But relationship takes a lifetime.

When we hear about the special services and opportunities to evangelize or volunteer for other acts of our religion, some of us will select in every once in a while. Some of us will select out.

Each week we give you a directory that tells you how to perform the rituals. It's the order of service. In two visits, all of us know when to stand, when to sit, when to read, and when to pray. After about a month, many of us believe we've got it down. We have mastered this "church" thing.

At the moment we feel like we've got it down, we cease to grow in our relationships with God. We end up going through the motions. If you want to see an extreme case of going through the motions, take a look at Israel at the beginning of Josiah's reign. The priest still went to the temple every day. They still took up collection. They may have even had a good choir and worship. They probably still had a few special days and made some burnt offerings. They were doing "church", but they were complacent.

They didn't even have a bible to read from. How they got a word from the Lord without the Word of the Lord is a mystery to me. The people were there physically but were disconnected spiritually. The temple was something they went to. They took no personal interest in the temple. It was falling apart around them. The assembly of the congregation was something they were a part of, but it wasn't who they were. They had their rituals, and their religion, but no clear relationship with God.

Relationship is something more. Relationship is at the core of our religion and it is the foundation of our rituals. Without it our religion and rituals are empty. Without the intimacy and passion of our faith, we are just like Israel in this text. Every thing we do as believers stems from our relationship with God. Each of us must examine ourselves to discern whether or not, we are acting out of love for God or just going through the motions.

When we pray, are we going through the motions? Or are we really talking with God? When we worship, are we going through the motions? There is a difference between putting money in the collection basket and honoring God with our substance. When we read his word, are we going through the motions? If the only time you read his word is on Sunday during the responsive reading, you are probably going through the motions.

But understand, this goes beyond Sunday mornings. Having purpose in our faith reaches to every part of our lives. We need to ask ourselves; Why do we go to work? Why does God want us to go to work? Why do we get paid? Why does God want us to get paid? Why do you go to school? What is God's plan for your education? Why are we married? Why does God want us to be married?

Why are we at church? Why does God want us to be at church? Why are you in the choir? Why are you not in the choir? Why do you usher? Why won't you usher? Why won't you work with the Missionaries? Why won't you teach Sunday School? Why don't you come for second services? All of these questions are designed to make us think about our relationship with God, which leads to our second question of the day ...

Are we seeking the Lord?

We are told to seek the Lord while he may be found and call upon him while he is near. Seek and we shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto us. We are told to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness. We are also told that God is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him.

Seeking is a vital part of our faith. The question is; are we seeking God? How do we know if we are seeking? It is revealed in how we avail ourselves of opportunities. How many of you own your own bible? How often do you read it?

I know that some will say the word is hard to understand. Others will say they can never find anything they need in the word. But I want to know what have you done about it? When we really want something, we go out of our way to seek and find it.

We will spend a full day driving from store to store just to find the right pair of shoes. We will shop around all day to find the right television. We will ask our friends and family for their opinions. We will look things up on the internet. We will call around to various shops and compare prices and features for whatever we want to buy.

But we spend less than 15 minutes when we go to purchase a Bible. Then we blame the book because we can't understand it. We didn't shop to find one that was easier to read. We didn't ask for advice from the pastor, or ministers. We didn't compare one Bible from another. Then on top of that, we didn't take time to avail ourselves of the opportunities to be taught what the word says. The scriptures are being expounded on each week but we aren't always showing up here eager and ready to learn?

Everything we need for our lives is found in this book. It has everything we need to know about managing money, starting a family, ethical practices at work, the value of education, examples of how to come out of bondage, and so much more. This book

will help us deal with issues of sin so we can be better and be right with God. This book will reveal to us how much God wants you to be in his family. It will explain the proper way to worship God. It will tell us how to function as a church. If we have not found any of those things, then it's not because God didn't provide. It's because we didn't seek him.

We have a God who is in control of everything that happens in our lives. He also wants to talk to us about our lives. He wants to hear our cares and our concerns. He wants to speak to us and reveal his plan and his will for our lives. Do we seek him in prayer?

God has ways that are not like ours. But he still commands us to be holy like he is holy. He reveals to us what it takes to be holy. He empowers us to become holy by filling us with his holy spirit. Are we seeking his holiness?

Josiah recognized how important it was to seek the Lord. He was in the process of trying to provide an adequate place for the people to seek the Lord. God is still providing the resources. We need to just utilize what we have been given.

In this church alone, we have a full time pastor, a willing and capable associate, video taped services that you can request copies of, services posted on the internet, sermon notes, Bible Study with handouts, ministry leaders to help with every area of the church, five choirs and a praise team, our own means of transportation to visit other places to be blessed or gain resources.

God has provided more than that but we just can't get some of you to serve. It's no secret that some of you have skills and gifts that could be used to uplift the body of Christ. Let me say this; some of us never get anything out of the church because we never put anything in. We don't sow and we don't reap. I'm not talking about money.

We don't sow service to others and we are never around. So when we need to be served we can't find help. We don't spend time with each other building each other up, so we don't get built up when our worlds come crashing down. We don't have friends in church because we haven't shown ourselves friendly. We don't minister to people and don't know how to receive when others try to minister to us.

Seek and ye shall find! Understand, what you may find is not always what you want, but it will always be what you need. When the Israelites went seeking, they found the word of God. As they read it, they found that it wasn't sweet. But even though it told of judgment, it turned out to be the biggest blessing of Josiah's reign. That leads us into our final question:

Are we where God wants us to be?

When the word was read before king Josiah, he was open and willing to connect with the message. When he realized where he was in the spirit, he rent his clothes. He took it seriously. He mourned. He realized his place in eternity. He realized how he really sat with God.

When we ask; are we where God wants us to be, we are not talking about a physical location, status, or place in life. This is a question of spiritual placement. Have we been positioned in the body by God? Have we been groomed for Christian service? Are we in good standing with God?

If we do not know, we could suffer from Character Creep. Character Creep is what happens when we slowly lower our standards in small steps. One inch at a time, we begin to compromise our faith until we look up one day and find ourselves out of fellowship with God.

1 Timothy 4:1 through 1 Timothy 4:2 (NKJV)

¹Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, ²speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,

Over time, Character Creep will lead to a type of conscience that is seared with a hot iron. The imagery here is one of a body part that has been seared to cause it to callous and lose its feeling.

We can become numb to God. We can become deadened in the spirit. One sip at a time we slip into alcoholism. One inappropriate conversation at a time, we creep into adultery. One demonic influence at a time and we creep away from God. One song at a time, we get closer to the world. One story at a time, and we creep into gossip. And when nothing happens, we believe we are okay.

Just because the sky doesn't crack open and lightening doesn't consume a person doesn't mean they are automatically alright with God. He hasn't dealt with us according to our iniquities and is plentiful in mercy but he will not always chide. He won't hold back his wrath forever. At some point the balance between grace, mercy, justice and wrath will tip over.

2 Kings 22:14 through 2 Kings 22:20 (NKJV)

¹⁴So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. (She dwelt in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter.) And they spoke with her.

¹⁵Then she said to them, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'Tell the man who sent you to Me, ¹⁶"Thus says the LORD: 'Behold, I will bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants—all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read—¹⁷because they have forsaken Me and burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands. Therefore My wrath shall be aroused against this place and shall not be quenched.'"¹⁸But as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, in this manner you shall speak to him, 'Thus says the LORD God of Israel: "*Concerning* the words which you have heard—¹⁹because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, that they would become a desolation and a curse, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard *you*," says the LORD. ²⁰Surely, therefore, 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 calamity which I will bring on this place.'"²¹ So they brought back word to the king.

Josiah heard the words and recognized his position with God. Then he sought the Lord. God basically said Judah was going to be judged and didn't even know it. God had already set Babylon in motion to conquer them. But because Josiah acknowledged his position, accepted the word, desired to be a doer and not a hearer, God spared the kingdom under his rule.

We can come to church each week and still be out of place with God. We could give money in the church and still be in trouble with God. We can serve in the church and still be guilty of his wrath. We can have our names on the role for years and still have God's anger against us.

If I were to look at our church in light of the reign of Josiah, I would want two things for our church.

1. I would want every member to become the Christians God wants us to be.
2. I want us as a church to reach the fullness of the stature of Jesus Christ.

Are we where God wants us to be? Are you where God wants you to be?