



"I HAVE FOUND THE BOOK..."

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Welcome to Let the Bible Speak and thank you for joining me to study the bible. I want us to go back to about 630 BC when a very young king named Josiah assumed the throne of Judah. The nation was in sorry shape. Josiah's grandfather, Manasseh, had been a wicked king and had led the people into sin and idolatry. When Manasseh died, his son Amon took the throne, but he didn't do any better. He was killed and his son Josiah was made king. Unlike his grandfather and his father, Josiah had a pure and tender heart that wanted to do what was right in God's sight.

Josiah became king when he was only 8-years old, and he set out with a youthful zeal to reform the nation and bring it back to God. He commissioned his people to repair the temple. As the work was being done, Hilkiyah the High Priest came across a dusty old scroll in one of the storage areas of the temple and brought it to Shaphan the scribe. Their conversation and the events that followed are recorded in **2 Kings 22:8-13**. The record says: *"Then 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. So 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." Then Shaphan the scribe showed the king, saying, "Hilkiyah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read it before the king. Now it happened, when the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, that he tore his clothes. Then 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, "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."*

It may seem incredible that the priests were trying to worship God and did not even have a copy of the law which prescribed their worship. But it's not so unusual when you consider that much of the religion in our world today doesn't seem to depend upon God's written word either. When the book of the law

was brought to King Josiah and he heard it read, Josiah was distressed to learn just how far away from God the nation had drifted. He saw the need for a great restoration. And that need exists today as well. I want to use as the basis for our study today: **I HAVE FOUND THE BOOK**. What will happen when we find, read, and apply the word of God to the church today?

Renovations can lead to some incredible discoveries. A few years ago, a family in Pennsylvania tore out a wall of their old family home which had sat empty for 20-years. They found \$200,000 worth of old coins. In 2006, a man tore down a false wall in his home and found an original painting by Norman Rockwell worth \$5 million. And in 1990, a man was going through an attic and found an old trunk. Inside was the missing hand-written manuscript of 'The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn', Mark Twain's famous novel first published in 1884. How excited all these people must have been when they uncovered those treasures.

But it wasn't just excitement; there was a shocking realization when, during temple repairs, the High Priest Hilkiah came across the Book of the Law in one of the rooms of the Lord's house. He found a dusty old scroll containing the Law of Moses. When he sent it to King Josiah and a scribe read it aloud, the king immediately recognized that he and his people were not living and worshipping according to its precepts. They had violated their part of the covenant, and this distressed Josiah. He 'tore his clothes' and said "...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." (2 Kings 22:13) He realized when God's written law was lost -- the people lost their way. That's what always happens when we set aside God's word and begin worshipping and living according to our own ideas and traditions. The remedy is to take out the book, read it, see where we are failing to follow it, and make the necessary changes. That sounds simple enough, but few of us seem to have the virtue and determination to do so.

Josiah was a reformer and a restorationist. He led perhaps the last movement in Old Testament times to restore the law to its rightful place of governance over the temple and the lives of the people. Just as in the days of Josiah, a restoration of God's word and God's ways is in order today. While we no longer live under the Old Testament law as the people of Judah did long ago, Christ Jesus did establish His church (Matthew 16:18); became the head of it (Colossians 1:18); and through His apostles gave it His word to guide it (John 14:26; 1 Corinthians 14:37).

Just as the Book of the Law was lost to the people in the time leading up to Josiah, so the word of Christ and His apostles has largely been lost to the religious world today. Oh, we have copies of the New Testament in abundance, but the fact is its commandments and apostolic examples have been buried by thousands of years of human tradition and doctrines of men. What we need today is to be like Josiah who opened his ears and his heart to the book of God's law and who recognize how far adrift we are from what it says and determine to return and restore what was originally authored and instituted by Christ.

Let's imagine that we've just uncovered the New Testament and opened its pages for the first time in many generations. Would the things we read shock us as they did Josiah long ago and prompt us to make changes to restore the bible order of things?

When we find and open the book, we'll learn about the ORIGIN of the Christian faith and of the church. The church that Jesus established began on the Day of Pentecost in the city of Jerusalem after the resurrection and ascension of Christ. It is an ancient institution that was founded by Christ Himself and was made complete by and in Him. It was not established by Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Smith, Wesley,

Campbell, Eddy, or any other theologian or some professing prophet. It was built by Christ. Jesus said to Peter and the apostles "...on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." The religious landscape is dotted with a dizzying number of denominations and divisions today that are the result of the doctrines of men and not the teaching of Christ. No man or woman has any right to build a church. Christ did that. And then, that book will tell us that Christ only built ONE church and desired for it to remain one. He prayed that those who would believe on Him through the word of the apostles would be one just as He and His Father in heaven are one. Yet, today, we not only have a maze of denominations and sects, but we also justify such and claim that such is somehow the will of God. I've heard people express thanks for the many denominations that represent such diversity of belief and practice and extoll the virtue of such a system. Religious division has been the norm for so long until we take it for granted and believe that one church is as good as another, and one can be saved no matter what he professes and practices in religion today. Find and open the book and you'll discover that such was not only not the case in the first century, but it is contrary to everything Christ and His apostles taught while they were on earth. Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you.

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:10-13 "Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" Christ never willed there to be hundreds of contrary and opposing institutions all claiming to be His church.

And then, when the book is found and read, we'll read what that church was called and how it was described. It bears the name of its builder and its head, Christ Jesus. It's called 'the body of Christ' (Ephesians 1:22). It's called the church of Christ (Romans 16:16). It's called the church of first-born (which refers to Christ) in Hebrews 12:23. It's called the bride of Christ (Revelation 21:9). It is the church of the living God (1 Timothy 3:15). It's referred to as the church of God which He (Christ – God the Son) has purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28). We never read of it being Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, Mormon, Seventh-Day Adventist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Episcopal, Catholic, or any other such description of name. The church revealed in the book was founded by Christ, headed by Christ, one in Christ, and described as belonging to Christ. Do you suppose the religious world forgot that many years ago?

When we find and read the book, we'll also learn how people become part of that church. We won't read that people we're voted in by the church. We do not read where they signed a card or even where they joined it. What we will read is that when men and women heard the gospel, believed it, repented of their sins, and were baptized for the forgiveness of their sins, that the Lord added them to it. The Lord considered them a member of His church the moment they were saved when they obeyed the teaching of the gospel. Look at Acts 2. The people on the Day of Pentecost heard Peter's convicting sermon and wanted to be saved. They asked Peter, "what shall we do? Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Verse 41 says: "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them." Added to what? Look at verse 47: "praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." When preachers suggest that you can join the church through baptism or any other means at some point after you've been saved, friend, they've lost the book of the law. They've departed from the biblical pattern. For that matter, when they tell you that you can be saved by only believing or by

praying a prayer you read nothing about in the early church, that ought to tell you that they have drifted away from the book. In the New Testament, people were saved and added by the Lord to the church at the same time when they in faith and repentance, obeyed the Lord in baptism for the remission of their sins.

And then, what will we find when it comes to the worship of the church? If we, like Josiah, suddenly found the lost word of God and opened it afresh, we would find many things being practiced that are contrary to the commands and examples of scripture. We would, for example, find where Paul forbade women from becoming preachers and teachers in public. “Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says.” (1 Corinthians 14:34) Or “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.” (1 Timothy 2:12) Today, women preachers, pastors, and evangelists are becoming more and more commonplace and as the practice is more accepted and normalized, the farther those who claim to be the Lord’s church will drift from the sacred scriptures. When we find and open the New Testament scriptures, we will only read of the church singing praise to God. You must go forward several hundred years in church history to find the introduction of instrumental music into Christian worship. Most religious bodies, including a vast number of churches of Christ, began using multiple loaves and individual communion cups several generations ago. But neither will you find in God’s law for the record plainly tells us in all four accounts of the institution of the Lord’s Supper that Jesus took a loaf (*‘artos’* in the Greek) of unleavened bread and ate it with His disciples, and He took, blessed, and gave to them a cup containing fruit of the vine telling them all to drink of it. And He gave each item memorial significance as He instituted the feast. If Josiah lived today and found the New Testament, what would he say of such practices?

Now then, some will say that none of these things matters because Christianity was meant to evolve and change with the passing of time. They contend that the New Testament contains no instructions or pattern for the church that is meant to be followed until the end of time. They argue that the plea for restoration of first-century apostolic Christianity by carefully following the teachings and examples of the primitive church is unreasonable and irrelevant. Friend, if that be the case, I want to sincerely ask a question: where do you draw the line? At what point do we stop and say that this is one change too much. Or is there such a line where you are concerned? How far are we willing to go along with all the change and innovation that has occurred and continues to occur?

I contend that the plea to restore apostolic Christianity is very much valid and that’s it’s called for today. I contend that such a plea is always appropriate when men depart from a ‘thus says the Lord’ to follow their own traditions. It was a worthy plea during the days of Jeroboam – the first king of northern Israel. His apostasy is outlined in 1 Kings 13. Instead of keeping the worship of God pure and free of graven images, he set up golden calves through which to worship. Instead of the temple in Jerusalem, he substituted the cities of Bethel and Dan as centers of Israelite worship. He made it ‘more convenient or expedient’ in other words. He decided that the priests no longer had to be taken from the tribe of Levi but instead opened the priesthood to all. Then he changed the day of the feast of tabernacles to a different day. Now, much of that would seem minor and insignificant to people today but what did God think? Twenty-one times, the Old Testament says that Jeroboam made the people to sin.

Now, that was under the Old Testament law. Does the principle apply today? Well, the early church was commended for continuing “steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine.” (Acts 2:42) Paul later taught the church at Corinth that were not to “think (or ‘go beyond’ as the American Standard Version puts it) the things that were written.” (1 Corinthians 4:6) And John declares that “Whoever transgresses (goes

beyond) and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.” (2 John 9)

The idea of an evolutionary faith that changes and adjusts to the times is simply not found in the word of God. We are to apply God’s unchanging word to our times and circumstances and not the other way around! Now, you see, Josiah understood this. When the book of the law was found, and he saw that he and his people were not seeking God after the due order – that they were adrift from the pattern that Moses originally gave – he was grieved, and he saw the immediate need to reform the nation and restore the divine order of things. That’s because he had a heart to want to please God and not the people. For the scripture says of him in 2 Kings 23:25, “Now before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him did any arise like him.” May God give us the heart of young Josiah who want to please and honor God in all our ways.

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