

Shaqah

*Beware lest any man
spoil you through
philosophy and vain
deceit after the tradition
of men, after the
rudiments of the world
and not after Christ.
Colossians 2:8*

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In our last segment, we started talking about the question, why did God choose to give us a written Word? With that question, we also wanted to look at the question of, why did God wait so long to give it? The answer to our secondary question really comes down to the simple facts of creation. God intended to walk with us directly and even though sin has greatly hindered that plan, it's still God's desire! God did not give us a written Word from the beginning because we did not need it in order to learn of Him; but as sin took away the Garden of Eden and chipped away at our ability to stand before God's presence with any kind of closeness, God gave us something tangible we could hold in our hands under any circumstances.

This brings us to a discussion about the history of the Children of Israel and

the temple itself. You see, God did not give us a written Word because He had given up on the idea anyone would ever be able to draw close to Him again. God gave the Word so no matter how far from or close to God we became in our lives, we would have something to look to

which would lead us ever forward and closer in

our walk with Him if we would only desire it. This

is why the basis of the written Word is not what Christians

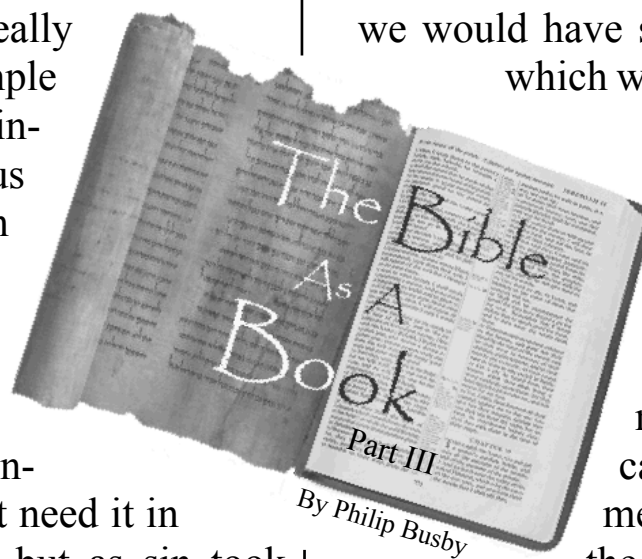
call the New Testament and the story of

the first coming of the

Messiah, nor is it the whole of what most Christians call the Old Testament.

The true core of the Word is the first five books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy! What the Jews call the "Torah." (Law)

These books not only tell us the story of how this universe and our own exis-



tence came to be, but they show us the establishment of a nation to whom God would commit His written Word. (Rom. 3:1-2) This nation would preserve the written Word, which they have done very well; and they would - for lack of a better term - enact it! What do I mean by this? Well, those first five Books to the Jews are simply, "The Law." Everything else derives from that. Even for the Children of Israel today, who through a lot of history are identified by just one of the twelve tribes names (Jews), these laws are more than just a guide for righteousness they are intended to be a literal way of life.

To understand this, there is no better example than to look at the history of the temple. Today, in Jerusalem, the Temple Mount is occupied by a structure known as, "The Dome of the Rock." This structure is believed by many to be setting on the very spot where the temple of God should be setting. However, even if you could build the temple alongside this structure, there is great political pressure which prevents the Israeli government from giving the go-ahead to build. However, this does not stop those Jews who are sincere about living the life God instructed them. Even now, all the preparation for the temple and its service are being prepared and studied. All the elements which can be put into place are being created in anticipation of a new temple being built. Why is it so important to them? Because it's what God instructed them to do over three thousand

years ago, and it's just as relevant today as it was then! Why? Well that question takes us back to the Garden of Eden!

The garden was the place where God's physical presence would be on a regular basis. One of the first things Adam and Eve understood, after eating the fruit they were told not to eat, was the fact God could be coming along any time. (Gen. 3:6-10) As we talked about last time, sin made it dangerous for this situation to exist. Thus, God cast man out of the garden and put an angel and a flaming sword to block the way to The Tree of Life. God, however, never stopped desiring to be close to man. Thus, He came and walked with those who sanctified their lives unto Him; but God wanted more than just the hope that a few men would walk with Him. (II Pet. 3:9) God desired a place where His presence would unmistakably be, and all men would know! Thus, God established a nation in order to create such a place among them; and the promise was always that when this nation made it to the land God had given to their fathers, God would eventually pick a place for the purpose of His presence! (Deut. 12:1-14) That place, which God chose to set His name throughout human existence on this planet was and is Jerusalem! (I Kings 9:1-3)

Now, just because God chose the place where His physical presence could reside, does not mean it automatically and forever was so. The same factors

which existed in the Garden of Eden still exist today. God having a place where His unmistakable presence could reside, even in Jerusalem, was still going to have to be prepared; and this would have to be done out of the freewilled choices of the human race. God can beat an elephant with a worm if He can get a wiggle out of the worm. God can do anything, but He has set up this planet to run on our free will. God needs willing vessels in order to accomplish His will on this planet. This is yet another part of why Jesus came to this earth as a man, making it clear He was to be about His Father's business. (Luke 2:49) It would be up to Israel first and foremost to be used as an instrument of God's will to see the temple built and maintained. This is why it's, of course, true that God could, at any time, clear away all obstacles to the temple being built today; but He is letting us unfold the story as we the people will.

Now, if it was up to just me, I would simple step in and give the order to build - but who am I? The reason not even the Israeli government will give the order to build, is because, it would seem that order would be the start of world war III! Which if you read what the Bible tells us, something of this nature is exactly what will eventually happen. (Matt. 24:25-31, Rev. 19:11-21) When it does, Jesus will return to take His rightful place as King of Kings and Lord of all! Against Him, no man, no army, no government will

stand or have the power to stop His will. Thus, we pray for the peace of Jerusalem and for the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! Whether Jew or non-Jew, we can all be a part of bringing about God's will on this planet. This is why Jesus instructed us to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Matthew 6:9-10 The reason we say Jesus is The Word is because God has placed all things in The Messiah's hands; (John 13:1-5) and when He returns, the physical presence of God will once more be walking this earth! (Zech. 14:1-4)

How do we put all this together? By reading the tangible Word God has given us. By looking at the history of the Children of Israel, and more specifically the temple, we can understand the nature of what is going on. In the Torah, when God first gave the commandments for the temple to be built, it was a "tabernacle." (Ex. 25:8-9) The true difference between a temple and a tabernacle is that a tabernacle is a moveable structure, and the temple is a "stay where it's placed" kind of building. Moses and the Children of Israel coming out of Egypt did not know God would eventually choose Jerusalem as the place to set His name. In fact, they were not anywhere close to Jerusalem. They had a journey of many miles and many trials before their first opportunity to even en-

ter the land of promise would come; but even so, they were instructed to build a tabernacle which could be carried with them as they traveled. God wasted no time in utilizing the nation of Israel for the purpose of His presence. He not only gave instruction about how to build the tabernacle, but He gave them instruction as to how to set up their camp around the tabernacle. He also told them just how they were to take it down for the purpose of moving it. (Num. 4:5-33)

It's at this time of the tabernacle that we really get the picture about God wanting to maintain an unmistakable physical presence on the earth. God does not lead the Children of Israel by a still, small voice. He does not sneak them through the back way and slowly build them into a nation which would quietly crowd out the other people of Canaan. No, God leads Israel with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night! (Ex. 13:21-22) God audibly spoke to them at Mt. Sinai. God had them build a tabernacle which would be in the middle of their camp and where that pillar of cloud and fire would rest until God was ready for them to move on. I don't know about you, but if I had heard of such a thing, I would have been saddling my camel to go and see that!

The Children of Israel were experiencing the presence of God in a very physical way. They were receiving God's instructions as to how to maintain that presence; and those instructions are,

to this very day, the core of God's written Word. God gave words on a page - as we would say today - and those words, when enacted, brought about something those who desired God, from Enos forward, could only hope to see! (Gen. 4:26) God's Word, when enacted by those to whom they were committed, again, created a place where God's physical presence would be; but it had to be maintained! After the journey through the wilderness, the tabernacle was not always maintained in a way for God's presence to reside. However, as bad as that was, the fact there was a written Word of God meant there was never any reason to doubt just how to go about getting it back. At the time of the prophet Samuel's birth, the Bible records there was no open vision. (I Sam. 3:1) Even in God's chosen nation, God's presence was not openly felt, seen, or heard from. Samuel would begin to change that. They were not maintaining the instructions God had given them. Samuel was the prophet who was sent to anoint David, king of Israel when David was just a boy. (I Sam. 16:11-13) David would grow up to be the king who desired to see not just the ark of the covenant brought to the capital city he had established, but a temple built which would re-establish God's presence among Israel. God had made David a mighty conqueror, which made him the wrong man for this task; but God promised him that his son would get to build the temple! (II Sam. 7:1-17)

The Bible As A Book continued on pg. 13

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip Busby

Last time, we ended by talking about Genesis chapter 7 verse 23, not just because we did not make it to verse 24, which is the last verse in the chapter, but because our discussion was truly focused on the forty days and forty nights sequence. The verses which talk about the forty days cover the destruction of the dry land and all that lived upon it, but verse 24 is showing us another aspect of the flood which would have done further damage and had a great affect even on those things which did not die in just those first forty days.

Verse 24 uses that word “prevailed,” again. Earlier verses told us the water “prevailed,” and then “exceedingly prevailed” until it covered the highest mountain, but as destructive as that was, it was not the end. Verse 24 records that the water prevailed over the earth for 150 days. What this means is that the water did not just rise and then begin to recede. The water had retaken the land much in the way it was in Genesis 1 before God ever commanded it to let the dry land appear. Thus, the condition of the water in verse 24, here in chapter 7, was not going to change without God’s intervention, and that did not happen for 150 days!

Now, if you have ever seen water flow, you know it can move things with force. It can change the topography of ground and wash away things in its path. However, once the water goes away, there is an immediate cycle of restoration which begins. The water starts to evaporate, be absorbed by plant roots or simply leach into the ground until the ground is dry again. If given enough time, plants will sprout again and wind, animals, as well as humans will do their own reconfiguring; but if water prevails, it’s a different story altogether.

If you have ever looked at the bottom of a lake or stream or even just a puddle which has lasted for a fair amount of time, you find things are quite different than they are on dry land. Algae and other plant life which cannot survive out of water begins to form and animals such a mosquitos begin using it as a breeding ground. The dirt under water is no longer what we call dirt, it’s mud, or we may refer to it as muck. The continued presence of water makes for a very different environment, and it doesn’t take long for it to begin to form. This is why when we desire to keep a standing pool of water to swim in, it’s imperative that

we treat it with chemicals such as chlorine so that those undesirable elements do not begin to grow so quickly. We also have to put a consistent effort into filtering particles out of the water and cleaning its surface. In the end, it's a lot of work just for a cool dip on a hot day.

All these things should be considered when we read verse 24. Just think about it, 150 days is not just the world getting wet, it's the world being totally re-configured from being a place with dry land and sea to being just one big ocean! As we have talked about before, the oceans were affected those first forty days but they were more affected by the longevity of the flood. One thought brings us again to a point which we are not clear on because we do not have surviving records, and that is the fact we don't really know how salty the sea was before the flood. Our explanation today for the saltiness of the oceans is that so called fresh water runs over the earth's surface and picks up minerals on its way. These minerals eventually get washed out into the ocean where the process of evaporation is the only thing which takes water away. This leaves a higher and higher concentration of minerals in the oceans along with the minerals the water already churned up for itself. However, this would seem to take a long time to develop, especially in light of the fact we do not see oceans getting signifi-

cantly saltier year by year of modern observation. God may have created the oceans very salty, but it's also a reasonable thought that the flood may have a lot to do with why the sea is as salty as it is today. As the flood waters receded, there would have been a large amount of the earth's surface which would have been washed along with it.

One of the reasons we dig up the bones of much larger animals than we have living on land today is because the earth, post-flood, simply could not support; thus, it did not need such large animals mowing its fields and forests. Similar things are true about the oceans and all bodies of water. The population of water animals would have been greatly mixed-up. As we understand it today, there are freshwater fish and salt-water fish. What this was like before the flood is not clear, but there had to be a great number of animals which did not survive the mixing of the waters. The flood would have destroyed a great number of water animals in the process of mixing together, and where different animals lived would have been greatly disturbed. We can't be sure just how diverse the fish population was before the flood, but no doubt many groups of fish died because they could not withstand the new circumstances they found themselves in. All fish life may not have died during the flood like their dry-land counterparts,

but there is simply no telling how many species did not survive the flood for one reason or another! Also, we are not going to find the evidence of most of these animals like we do on dry land. In the dirt, we find bones preserved for thousands of years; but in the ocean, we again see that difference of things being subjected to water. The remains of animals which lived in the water would be broke up quite quickly, and if you have ever observed a dead fish in water, it's easy to see why a body in water would not last nearly as long as it does on land.

Thus, as we look at the flood, we must understand there was a short-term destruction and a longer term destruction which the water caused. By no means was this a small localized event; it was a truly earth changing event! As we move on to chapter 8 verse 1, we see the breaking point in the time line. This is not where the destructive quality of the flood ends, but it's where we go from being on the side of rising destruction to recovery, no matter how much the recovery may still be changing things.

Chapter 8 verse 1 says, God "remembered" Noah and those living things which were with him on that ark. God had determined to wipe the world clean. That task had been done,

and now the task of returning the planet to "habitability for humans" condition was ready to begin. Just as God put everything in place during creation and then created Adam - for which it had all been created in preparation for - so too, here the process of restoring the earth begins with the fact Noah is out there on the face of the water bobbing along, trusting in God that the earth will be livable once more. Telling us God "remembered" Noah is not a way of confirming that God, by virtue of doing other things might have somehow forgot He spared a man, his family, and many animals. It is about making it clear that what came next was all part of God's plan. God did not just walk away and let nature take its course. God had a plan for Noah, his family, and future generations of humans, as well as those animals with them on the ark. The rain had come for forty days and nights. The water had prevailed for 150 days. The flood had accomplished its task; and even though God was not going to create again as He had in the beginning, He was going to direct the outcome of the world which would be available for Noah to step out into! Again, showing us that this was not just God giving Noah a survival plan, but working with Noah to preserve him and all those who would listen to the voice of God.

This is why man needs to look at what the Bible tells us about creation and everything else if we are going to get our story right. God has always been with us, He has never left us nor forsaken us. The flood changed the world and reconfigured the world greatly, but Noah and his family was still going to step out into a world of God's making. I believe this brings up an interesting discussion about the creation stories people of the world attempt to tell. You see, most people do not want to acknowledge that God created us, and He has the right to judge us. They do not want to hear that continuance and longevity of life on this planet is not as important as each individual's faith in God. Instead, they want to talk about this planet as a place of our own making where no moral values need to stand in the way of our continual "advancement." For this purpose, post-flood man has often confused this new beginning at the time of the flood with the account of our actual creation. This fact shows up in man's religions and storytelling all the time.

There is an understanding in the mind of man whether he realizes it or not, that he is living in a time after time! What I mean by that is that even men who claim not to believe in the Bible seem to understand the world is not exactly what it started out to be. There is a curtain in our past we just don't seem to be able to open. Some people will put that curtain at thousands of years and some will put it at millions; but in any case, there is an understanding we came from a time or source which is like now, but different somehow. In spite of this nagging feeling, we don't want to talk about what we were created for, we just want to think about survival. This is why the worship of fertility is so large in false religion.

Eve gets mixed up all the time in pagan religion with Noah's wife or the simple fact four women got off the ark. Pagans don't seem to be able to decide if there was a woman or women which "started" it all. Fertility worship is why the Catholics worship Mary as the

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mother of Jesus. This is the fertility issue, as well as the worship of the first woman, as it relates to the idea that people in pagan religious groups often think of themselves as a superior or specific group which had some great origin. This is easier to believe if all life just came from some other life in the first place. In Christianity, there is a feeling that Christians are a specific group which, at the very least, are predestinated to be God's children, thus, replacing the Jews. Down through the centuries, this paganistic thought pattern has caused much anti-Semitism among the very people who should be the most supportive of the Jewish people. It can be very complicated, but what Catholicism is trying to ignore is that God gave Mary a husband so that Jesus - though not of either His father or mother's flesh - would be the son of David. This is one of the most important facts about Jesus even having human parents. (Luke 2:1-5) They also are attempting to ignore the fact Abraham is not the father of a nation but many nations. (Gen. 17:5) The Bible emphasizes father, not mother, because our beginning does not lay in the fact we were born, but on the choices we make as we walk this life. No matter how, by whom, or where we were born, each of us stands before God (who is our true Father) as individuals who will have to give account for our decisions and actions.

(Matt. 23:9, Rev. 20:12) A Jew by faith; a Gentile through faith. (Rom. 3:30) All those who are true believers in God are not - spiritually speaking or otherwise - the birthed children of Mary. We are the sons and daughters of Abraham because he was an example to us all in that he believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. (Rom. 4:1-13)

The world does not care about righteousness; it cares about continuance; and fertility worship is all about continuance! Now continuance is a fine subject to talk about when it comes to those plants and animals destroyed in the flood; but in the case of humans, each individual is just as important as the next. The true tragedy of the flood was the large number of humans killed in it because they refused to hear the voice of God. However, the reason those who would not hear the voice of God were destroyed by a flood, was so their corrupt thought patterns would not continue to poison generation after generation of future humans. Because man thinks about continuance more than individual human life, it's easy for him to worship the simple fact man survived the flood, and that is a victory of sorts in human thinking. So, it makes perfect sense in many ways that man would intentionally confuse the flood story with the actual story of creation. In doing this, they find them-

selves telling creation stories which include humans or something very human like, creating or - in many stories - giving birth to “modern man.”

There are many ancient legends which come from earlier tribes of people that tell stories of some figure - which it seems more often than not is a dark character - granting life and/or fertility to the first humans. There are also plenty of stories where the human race began from some couple, group, or individual which came riding along in a canoe or other kind of boat. In these stories, man is not something new, formed and specifically given life by the breath of a creator, but something derived from something physical which already existed. In some cases, humans even receive life by being cunning - in some way tricking a higher power into releasing them, or granting them life.

The most prominent stories are obviously talking about the ark. Most human “creation” stories tell the tale of a giant egg which has no explanation for its origin. It simply exists, or it may come from a bird which has no explanation for its origin. One day, it’s said this egg hatched and out came all the plants, animals, and humans needed to spring life on this planet. In fact, this is very much the same story told to us by

“so called” science today. If you go back as far as those who believe in evolution dare to go back, you will find not an egg, but a very compacted particle of matter which contains all the ingredients for life. I guess calling it an egg doesn’t sound scientific enough. Anyway, this particle or speck or dot at some point in time - and to say “in time” also has very deep implications to the fact they are not going all the way back to true creation - just blew up in what is simply called, “The Big Bang.” Then, we are told the matter and energy released into space accidentally forms itself into a working universe with laws which govern its physical properties. Then, to top that, life somehow begins. I don’t know about you, but I think I would take the egg thing if I had to choose!

The point is, all these stories rely on something physical existing before what we know today came into existence, and even the evolutionist theory about human life has to do with coming from pre-existing life. For most people, this may not seem to be an attempt to deny the existence of a God who is something so much greater than anything physical, that He could simply speak physicality into existence; but in any case, they are simply not considering for themselves, the whole of what the Bible has to say. Instead,

they are believing in stories about human existence which only go back to Genesis chapter 8 verse 1, where God began to turn from destroying the old world to preparing for the next. In the end, what we see is not man coming up with answers which prove there is no God, but simply denying or failing to take into consideration certain facts the Word of God gives us!

Man knows he lost something at the Garden of Eden, but he doesn't want to admit it. He doesn't want to accept what God tells him because the Bible tells us the way to the Tree Of Life is guarded by an angel and a flaming sword. We can't return to The Tree of Life. In spite of being the one righteous man who survived the great flood, even Noah died some years after; but these facts don't stop man from going off looking for things such as The Fountain of Youth. In times past, it may have been mostly physical quests to far-off lands; but it's still going on today in labs all over the world. The quest continues today with people who have no morals and are even willing to kill innocent children because their cells may be useful in prolonging another human's life. If that doesn't go hand in hand with the worship of fertility, I don't know what does! The idea that the beginnings of one human life might be the cure to another's diseases, or even death itself,

is an answer many generations of pagan worshipers would agree with!

Man also knows he lost something through the flood. As great as fleshly human existence was/is, it could not, in anyway, survive the determination of God that the end of all flesh had come before Him, without His help. However, man just keeps trying to live without God. Basing his efforts on false stories, he thinks he can find the origin of our existence. That Eve, those women who survived the flood, or even Mary hold the key to regaining immortality. Some believe we can fly to the stars and find that species of origin, or original seeds of life, and overcome immortality and limitations. There is also the thought out there that if there is an original species or more powerful being, maybe man can learn to ascend to their level or evolve into the greater thing that they/it are. Man does not want to accept the fact that none of what sin has cost us can be reclaimed in this universe. That ship has truly sailed!

The true facts are that a 600 year old man boarded an ark with his family and the basis of animal diversity needed to repopulate the planet. They survived even this great physical catastrophe by the same means we were created - that being the power of God. That power is also the only an-

swer to any of us overcoming the fate all humans face, which is the death of our physical form. Our only hope is to walk with God so we can be remembered in the end. Otherwise, we will be told to depart, for we were never known! (Luke 13:23-30) The devil knows it's very important that man not accept the fact God created him in the first place, because if people would really take the time to sit down and contemplate that fact, it would change their thinking. The reason man does not want to trust God, the reason Eve took of the fruit in the very beginning of it all, is because we believe the lie Satan told in the garden. That lie was/is that God is holding out on us; that God, not sin, is limiting us from having everything we can have and be, but that makes no sense to the one who looks at it objectively.

The question Eve should have asked herself about what the devil had told her is, if God told us not to take of the fruit of this tree because He did not want us to gain something greater and become more powerful like Him, why did He put the tree within our physical reach? A very related question is something we should be asking today. If it is true that God is holding out on us or that God doesn't want us to obtain some greater life or power for our existence, why did He give us a free will in

the first place? Why would a God who can do anything, create a freewilled being and then attempt to guide him down a path of mediocrity. It simply makes no sense! However, if a Pure and Holy God is not fully responsible for our existence, and how we were made, then maybe he had no choice in giving us the potential which comes with a free will. Maybe he is simply trying to hold us back because he does not want us to accomplish what he couldn't or obtain a place he couldn't. If you believe that, then the Bible makes it amply clear whose stories you are actually listening to, and if you don't know what I'm talking about, you can find the answer by looking up the following Scripture references. (Isa. 14:12-15, II Cor. 11:14, Rev. 12)

Until next time, Shalom!

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The Bible As A Book continued from pg. 4

When David's son Solomon became king, the temple in Jerusalem was built; but how did they know how to build such a structure? Simple, the pattern given for the tabernacle was used to build the temple in Jerusalem. There was no longer a need to fold up a tent and carry it along, but the concept of how to use the structure had not changed!

When Solomon finished the building, he prayed a prayer of dedication; and when he finished that prayer, the presence of God descended on the new temple in such a powerful physical way that the priests could not enter the house, and fire came down on the altar in much the same way God's presence had done when the tabernacle was dedicated in the wilderness centuries before! (II Chron. 7:1-4, Lev. 9:23-24) This temple would stand for many, many years, but even during its existence there would be times when it would fall into disuse and need of repair because the people and/or the king did not care enough to maintain it. In many cases, it came to this state because the people and/or the king had chosen to follow other gods instead of The One True God; but the story, I believe, that has significant relevance to our study is the one found in II Chronicles 34. In about 623 B.C., a priest named Hilkiyah "...found a book of the law of the Lord given by Moses." II Chronicles 34:14 Hilkiyah then gave the Book to Shaphan (who was a scribe) and Shaphan brought

the Book to King Josiah and read it to him. By the time the king had finished hearing "...the words of the law,..." he was so moved by how far Israel had strayed from what God had commanded, "...that he rent his clothes." II Chronicles 34:19 Then the king ordered that the priests enquire of the Lord concerning the words, "...for great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord, to do after all that is written in this book." II Chronicles 34:21

King Josiah was already in the process of cleansing the land of false religion and repairing the Temple of God. In fact, it's when the money the king had collected to repair the temple was delivered to the priest that the "Book" which was found was delivered back to the king. However good Josiah's intentions and actions had been up to that point, the Words in that Book still caused him to be very concerned about the condition the nation was in. It was by the hearing of the Law that the king realized just what they needed to do and just how far short their efforts at that time had fallen. God was not attempting to discourage the king; God used His written Word to direct the king further down a path of righteousness, he, up to that point, had only been guessing at. God was not going to leave Josiah's desire to serve God and bring God's presence back to Jerusalem setting in the dark. God used His Word no matter how long forgotten and lost, to show Josiah just what he needed to do!

This story is a great example of why God gave us a written Word! Josiah was the king of the chosen people of God, yet he had grown up in a society where the things of God had been forgotten. Even The Word of God, written down in ink, had been lost. It's really hard to say just what Josiah did and did not understand about God; but one thing is for sure, no matter how great his desire, Josiah was a long way from returning the presence of God to Jerusalem. Then a scroll was found! No doubt, covered with enough dust to plant barley in, and suddenly everything changed! There is no telling just how long it would have taken Josiah to understand what, in a very short time, he was able to understand just by hearing the Law read to him.

Now, one of the things, which has been a stumbling block for Israel for a very long time, is the fact they have had trouble with the concept that God, in the Law, never intended them to have a king. God knew there would be a day when they would desire such a thing because all the other nations had one; (Deut. 17:6-20) but it was not until the people became insistent about it that God allowed and established a kingship in Israel. (I Sam. 8:4-22) The shorthand point of all this is that God was to be their King; and every person in Israel, whether rich or poor, was to serve God directly with the Law as their guide. This is another reason the Word was given. As we talked about

earlier, just because there are those who desire to rebuild the temple doesn't mean it's going to happen. In Israel, at those times when the temple was in disrepair, there were those who desired to repair it, but it took a national effort lead by, or at the very least not hindered by, the current king in order to accomplish it. Bottom line is, a king who serves God, such as Josiah, can be a good thing; but a king who doesn't desire God's ways, can be a bad thing. However, no matter who the king was, there was and is no reason for each individual not to find and study the written Word for themselves. In fact, through the centuries since the last temple stood, leading right up to today, almost because they lacked a temple, Jews have done exactly what Christians have continually failed to maintain, and that is focus on the Word! Even without a temple, the Jewish people are showing us what is important in this world, and setting the righteous example of making God's Word the center of their lives.

Knowing the Word for yourself as an individual is still the first and foremost thing anyone can do, and it makes no difference whether you are Jew or non-Jew because the world just keeps shifting. No individual can control what the rest of the world does around them. Different times bring different seasons. You can make the argument that things like the temple and its sacrifices are not for

you to enact if you are non-Jewish, but how does that currently make you any different from a Jew if you desire the things of God? The Jew does not currently have a temple to sacrifice at! The Jew cannot enact certain things in the Law; therefore, the non-Jew cannot observe all the Law being enacted. However, the same Words which enable the Jew to understand what it is he would be doing if there were a temple, are the same Words available to show us what the Jews would be doing. What is clear is that we all can and should be reading the Words Josiah heard, and through them, gaining an understanding of what it is God wants out of each of us as individuals!

We also find, by reading our Bibles, that non-Jews can and do play a part in supporting or hindering what Israel does. This can be complicated; but if we want to be on the right side of this dynamic, we must all seek to follow the Words of God. If we move from the story of Josiah and go down the line of kings, we come to the second son of Josiah who reigned over Judah. His name was Jehoiakim; and because Israel did not keep the ordinances of God, this king of Judah was put on the throne by the Pharaoh of Egypt after Pharaoh had dethroned his brother. (II Kings 23:31-34) Not long after he was placed on the throne, God would allow Judah to become subject to the Babylonian Empire. The prophet Jeremiah was sent to King Jehoiakim to tell him that this was in God's plan and the king

should not fight against it. The words prophesied to the king were that God created the world and He can give it to whomever He pleases. God was giving it into the hand of the king of Babylon, and even the king of Judah should serve him. (Jer. 27:1-11) It was not important that Israel have a king which ruled in sovereignty over the land. What was important is that Israel have the freedom to serve God and show forth His Law to the rest of the world! Jehoiakim did not listen to God, neither did those short-lived kings God gave a chance to after him. Because of this, eventually Jerusalem, along with the temple, was completely destroyed and almost all of Judah was carried away captive. (II Chron. 36:11-21)

Even after this, God sent word again to the remnant, which was left in the land, and instructed them to serve the king of Babylon and enjoy the freedom to do God's will. (II Kings 25:24) The people did not listen and eventually went down into Egypt and served false gods there. The temple would not stand again for over seventy years; and instead of being built by those Jews who had been blessed enough to remain in the promised land, it would be built by returning Jewish captives which had been taken to Babylon by the king who originally destroyed Jerusalem. Also, we see that the order to build Jerusalem and the second temple came from the king of the next empire to rule the land. However, this second temple would still be built under duress. It would be hindered by those

who had come to live in the land of Israel during the Jew's absence. (Ezra, Nehemiah) The second temple would eventually be completed, but political circumstances would continue to affect the temple and its existence as time moved forward. Many years later, this second temple would be built over the top of, and dismantled inside of, a much bigger temple. This bigger temple is known to most of us as, "Herod's Temple." This bigger temple which was standing at the time of the Messiah's first coming was not really built by those following the Word of God at all. Instead, it was built by a ruler put into place by yet another empire who ruled the land. Essentially, Herod rebuilt the second temple in an attempt to gain style points with his Roman overlords as well as the Jews. This temple would stand a few decades past the first coming of The Messiah; but in spite of its Romanesque style and grandeur, it was destroyed during a battle between the Jewish resistance and the Romans!

Time and time again the tabernacle or the temple was destroyed or neglected, but as sad as that is, it really only stands as an example of human will at work. Sometimes, people were passionate about creating a place for God's presence and sometimes they were/are not. Sometimes passionate people were in a position to make it happen and often they have not been. Sometimes the temple stood as the jewel of Jerusalem and

sometimes it was a simple structure. Sometimes the temple was built strictly by Jews under the purest of circumstances, and sometimes it was built under the auspices of a non-Jewish ruler. What we can physically have or not have on this planet is often dictated by the circumstances we find ourselves in; but what never ceases to be important and can never be taken from us, is our personal desire to have a relationship with God! Temple or no temple, faith is always going to be "...the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Hebrews 11:1 All those who desire the things of God know, or will eventually learn, that this world offers very little, and seeking to build something here has no point if it does not direct others to the saving knowledge of The Lamb only God could provide! (Gen. 22:8) The ultimate lesson the Word was written to confirm to us is that we must not seek this world and all it has to offer. (I John 2:15) All through the ages, those who truly desire God's presence in their lives, in reality, "...desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." Hebrews 11:16

Let's stay in God's Word!