

Josiah Renews the Covenant

Key Verse: *“The king stood in his place, 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 with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book.”*
—II Chronicles 34:31

Selected Scripture:
II Chronicles 34

FOLLOWING THE GLORY

and devotion to God that Israel enjoyed under the reign of Solomon, Israel fell into troubled times. There was much infighting amongst the people and rulers, and “when Rehoboam had established the kingdom, . . . he forsook the law of the LORD, and all Israel with him.” (II Chron. 12:1) Idolatry became widespread, and the people forsook many of the promises that God had made to them. The difficulties continued for many years; the ten tribes separated from the two tribes, becoming Israel and Judah. The division of the kingdom worked to the advantage of the two-tribe kingdom whose worship of the LORD was centered in Jerusalem.

Fenced cities were built to protect the people from their many enemies, and they had no rest from their enemies. (chap. 14:5-7) This allowed the tribes of Benjamin and Judah to be more humble, and more zealous of the true worship of God and eventually able to resist

idolatry. From this beginning, and after many years of struggle, the faithful Israelites would be gathered out of the ten-tribe kingdom into the two-tribe kingdom. "Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the pass-over unto the LORD God of Israel."—chap. 30:1

In conjunction with Josiah's reformation and cleansing of the Temple, a copy of the book of the Law was found. The long period of idolatry preceding Josiah's work had caused the kings, and subsequently most of the people, to forget the testimony and Word of God. It detailed what blessings would come upon the nation of Israel if they were obedient to God. It also detailed the penalties that would come to them if they neglected the proper service to God and his laws, and became subject to idolatry. In the book of Deuteronomy is a clear statement of this penalty. (Deut. 28) Divine judgments were due which had not yet come to them. In an effort to offset the impending trouble, he desired to make an inquiry on the subject.—II Chron. 34:14-19

The inquiry came to Huldah, a prophetess who gave the LORD'S answer. All of the trouble told in the Law would come to pass because of the idolatrous course that the nation had followed. But the message declared to him that this trouble would not come in his day because of his sincere sorrow concerning the matter as soon as he heard about it.—vss. 21-28

The king did all in his power to bring the nation back into harmony with their God. He proclaimed a general meeting at the Temple, attended it in person, and had the book of the Law read. He desired to point out their shortcomings, and what they should expect. He continued to carry out the work of purging the nation from idolatry. (vss. 29-33) Josiah truly reflected the attitude as expressed by a past king, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."—Ps. 119:11 ■