

Jeremiah: A Tale of Two Kings

Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account. ([Hebrews 4:12-13](#))

Before we get into a fairly thorough study of the life and witness of Jeremiah, let's consider the king who reigned over Judah (the Southern Kingdom) when Jeremiah was born and began his work as a prophet, and the king who would follow and reign 11 years of Jeremiah's 40 year plus ministry.

King Josiah reigned a total of 31 years in Judah and is described as one who, "did what was right in the sight of the LORD." (2 Kings 22:2a)

Reading the story that follows from [2 Kings 22:3](#) through [23:1-3](#), it is clear that Josiah had a right response to the discovery of "the book of the law", and the hearing of God's word as it was read to him and then to all the people.

Reflect: What stands out to you concerning the response of King Josiah?

King Jehoiakim was a son of King Josiah but was described as one "who did evil in the sight of the LORD." ([2 Kings 23:37a](#)) This king had no commitment to his father's attempt to follow "the book of the covenant" and preserve Judah for the glory of Yahweh, the one true God. In addition, the foreign policy of Jehoiakim was not in any way about honoring God with justice and righteousness in Judah, but rather it was about expediency regarding the king's own personal gain. He exploited the poor and extorted the rich that he might become richer. In addition, he would not hear the words of the LORD as communicated through the prophet. See Jeremiah [36:1-3, 20-26](#). ***Yet neither the king, nor any of his servants who heard all these words, was alarmed, not did they tear their garments.*** (v. 24)

Reflect: What should our response be to hearing the word of the Lord?

Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way. ([Psalm 119:104](#))