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“The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2)

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THE LOST BOOK

Josiah was one of the youngest kings to rule Judah. He was a good king and only 26 years of age when an important discovery took place during his reign. This is recorded in the 22nd chapter of 2 Kings and also in the 34th chapter of 2 Chronicles. Josiah had sent Shaphan, his personal secretary, to the house of the Lord with this message to Hilkiah, the high priest: take the money which is collected in the house of the Lord and use it to hire men to repair the house (2 Kings 22:4-5). Obviously the temple was in need of fixing. During these repairs, Hilkiah came upon the book of the law which had

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been neglected and unnoticed for too many years. He then handed this book over to Shaphan.

Now Shaphan was a scribe whose job dealt with writing and copying of the law. Realizing the significance of this discovery, Shaphan quickly took the book to king Josiah and read it to him. Upon hearing the words and the prophecy concerning the children of Israel, the young king was so heartbroken and ashamed that he tore his clothes in anguish. His nation had forsaken the Lord and neglected the commandments of their God. It was predicted that for such action, the Lord would bring a curse and desolation to that place. However, due to Josiah's tender heart and humbleness, he was personally spared the agony of seeing this destruction with his own eyes.

Imagine the idea of losing the Book of the Law! And in the house of the Lord, of all places! It sounds so ironic. Yet, the same thing has been happening for centuries and even today! We are usually amused when we see the picture of the old woman who searches the entire house for her eye glasses. Later she finds them in the last place she looks -- right there perched above her forehead! Perhaps we are really laughing at ourselves.

Consider the person who owns a Bible but rarely uses it. It may be stuck in the closet or sitting on the shelf collecting dust. What makes this all the more absurd is if this person is a member of the church. Though it is sad to admit, we can all agree that there are such cases. There are church members who truly do not use and study the Word of God like they should. It's like losing the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord.

What can we do? First, there must be a realization of the power of God's word.

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow,

and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Heb. 4:12)

Do we really believe all this? Do we believe that *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works”* (2 Tim. 3:16-17)?

Then when was the last time we actually READ the Bible? Last week? Last month? Last year???

Second, we have to learn what the Bible is about. That means we have to put an intensive and intellectual effort into it. I know I can study God’s word more than I do now. It sure would not hurt me to do so. *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”* (2 Tim. 2:15). I am ashamed at the feeble efforts I put into the most important words in my life. I should think about God’s message more often. *“Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all”* (1 Tim. 4:15).

Finally, let us put God’s word to work. What I mean is that the scriptures will do nobody any good as long as the printed words stay on the page. The Bible has to be opened and the message has to be spread. *“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine”* (2 Tim. 4:2).

This is the only way that anybody outside of Christ can obey the gospel!

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For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? (Rom. 10:13-14)

Of course, this does not apply only to those men who get behind the pulpit, but to every single Christian!

Where is my Bible right now? Would I recognize it if I saw it? Or has it been lost in the house of the Lord? Isn't it high time that all members of the Lord's church become familiar with the Book of all books? Peter advised the early Christians to "*add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge*" (2 Pet. 1:5). I am afraid that we have too many members now who believe that after baptism there is no longer a need to pick up a Bible.

It has been speculated that Josiah rent his clothes when the passage of Deuteronomy 17:18-20 was read to him. This seemed to really point the finger at him. Let us conclude with a special look at verse 19:

And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: (Deu. 17:19)

What have we learned so far?

RAY MCMANUS

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SEEK FIRST

What are your priorities in life? I'm sure that you want the basic necessities in life such as food, clothing, and shelter. Everyone needs these things. Apparently, some people in the time of Jesus were struggling to obtain these basic necessities. Jesus taught in Matthew 6:31-33,

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. (Mat. 6:31-33)

Whether it is your basic necessities or other desires and needs, seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness should be your number one priority.

What does it mean to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness? The kingdom of God on earth is made up of all true Christians. It is the church. Jesus gave parables about seeking the kingdom.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. (Mat. 13:44-46)

These parables teach that obtaining the kingdom of God should be your number one priority, your number one joy and desire.

God's righteousness is the righteousness which He gives you based on your faith in Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul described his priority in life in Philippians 3:7-9:

But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the

righteousness which is of God by faith:

It is also the righteousness that He wants you to demonstrate in your life.

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. (1 Pet. 2:24)

Make it your number one priority to be right before God.

God wants you to seek Him.

And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: (Jer. 29:13-14a)

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. (Heb. 11:6)

As Christians, we seek Him through prayer, scripture reading and study, worship, fellowship, and living as He wants us to live.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. (Col. 3:1-4)

The glory that awaits you is worth seeking God as your priority in life.

Jesus said that when you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, He would supply your needs. I believe He will also bless you with many blessings. If you seek your earthly needs and desires first, you will not find room for the things of God. Try this. Take a large jar and fill it about three fourths full with rice. Then take about the same volume of large nuts in their shell, like walnuts, and try to add them to

the jar. You can add a few nuts, but there will not be enough room for all of them. Then empty the jar and try again. This time, put the large nuts in first and add the rice afterwards. It might take a little shaking, but you should be able to fill the jar with both the nuts and the rice. The rice fills the voids around the nuts. I hope you get the picture. The jar represents your life. The rice is the less important activities in life. The large nuts are the important things of God in your life. While this is not a perfect analogy, it illustrates the principle of putting the things of God first in your life because there will still be room for many of the less important things, for your needs and desires. But if you first try to take care of all of the less important things in life, there won't be room for God. Jesus said to first seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Nothing is more important than the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Being a part of the kingdom of God leads to eternal life. Nothing is more important than that!

Where do you primarily spend your energies? Is all your time and money spent on goods and activities that will certainly perish, or do you spend them in the service of God? You are to seek the things of God as a priority over the things of the world. Primarily, it means we are to seek the salvation that is inherent in the kingdom of God because it is of greater value than all the world's riches. Does this mean that you should neglect the normal duties that help sustain your life? Certainly not. But for the Christian, there should be a difference in attitude toward them. If we are taking care of God's business as a priority—seeking His salvation, living in obedience to Him, and sharing the good news of the kingdom with others—then He will bless us as He promised. *“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus”* (Php. 4:19).

My encouragement is to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness first in your life.

ED ANDERSON
Sierra Vista, AZ USA

GOSPEL MEETINGS

DATES	PLACE	SPEAKER
November 2 - 3	Freefield Stateline, MS	Ben McManus (Moody, AL)

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. How does the Bible describe the location of the Garden of Eden?
2. What was the name of Ruth's great-grandson?
3. In which book of the Bible do we find Nebuchadnezzar's golden image?
4. Who did Mary Magdalene suppose Jesus to be at first after the resurrection?
5. Who said, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things"?

...ANSWERS NEXT MONTH

And remember last month's questions?

1. What was the first bird released from the ark?
A RAVEN (Gen. 8:7)
2. Seven fat and seven thin of what type of animal appeared to Pharaoh in a dream? CATTLE (KINE) (Gen. 41:1-4)
3. Which direction did the scorching wind upon Jonah come from? EAST (Jon. 4:8)
4. In the Parable of the Sower, what does the seed represent?
THE WORD OF GOD (Luke 8:11)
5. Who was appointed to replace Judas Iscariot as a disciple?
MATTHIAS (Acts 1:26)

**SWALLOWING YOUR PRIDE
SELDOM LEADS TO INDIGESTION**