

Forward

Lesson #1

Discovering Our Destiny

Few things cry louder from the human heart than the desire for identity and purpose.

Emptiness

I grew up with Christian influence and, though I believed in Jesus Christ from a young age, I had not surrendered to Jesus and He was not my Lord. There came a time as a teenager when the lure of worldliness overcame religious influence and I consciously rebelled against the values I had been taught - and God Himself. Rebellion, though it looked fun and exciting, led me into the most confusing period of my life.

As is commonly the case, my pursuit of worldliness also involved a peer group of like-minded individuals that served as a kind of support group which rationalized and encouraged the path of worldliness I was traveling. Though I was unaware of it at the time, it is painfully clear in hindsight just how pathetic I was. Blinded by the insecure desire to fit into my peer group, I had no conviction of my own. I was not being myself. I was a chameleon trying to change myself into whatever seemed to be “cool.” There is nothing so pathetic as the person who does not know who they are.

I found myself pushing the limits of my own moral boundaries, and often doing things that I really did not want to do. I drank beer even though I didn't like the taste of it. I used foul language, even though I would often feel repulsed by the ugliness of it. I would lie to my parents about where I was going and what I was doing, all the while watching the heartbreak in their eyes.

I remember a time, while attending a party, that I caught a glimpse of what I had become. I was washing my hands in the restroom and paused briefly to stare at the person in the mirror. I did not like who I saw and quickly looked away. But in that moment, I saw the truth about myself. I was phony trying to be someone I was not. I did not know who I was and I had no direction or purpose for my life.

It was God's mercy that He allowed me to see my pathetic self and it was the beginning of a series of divinely orchestrated events that would bring me to a place of surrender. By grace through faith Jesus saved me, and as Ephesians 2:10 points out, it was for a purpose. God Allowed me to see that I had a destiny.

Another Young Boy Discovers His Destiny!

Josiah's story is a classic story of destiny. He became King of Judah at the ripe old age of eight. His great grandfather did right in the sight of the Lord, but his father (Amon) and grandfather (Manasseh) both did evil. As a result, Josiah had little to no training regarding the things of God from his forefathers. But the scriptures tell us that, at the age of sixteen, after being king for eight years, Josiah began to seek the God of his father David (2 Chron 34:3). And in the twelfth year of his reign, after seeking God for four years, Josiah began a six-year campaign to purge the land of Judah and Jerusalem of the idols set up by his forefathers and their places of false worship. He even burned the bones of the false priests who had participated in idol worship before him (see 2 Chronicles 34:3:7), fulfilling that which was spoken about him 250 years before he was born!

250 Years Earlier

King Solomon was known for his wisdom and for building a house of for the Lord in Jerusalem which became known as Solomon's Temple. He was also known for his riches, which he used to create a lavish system of public services. Jerusalem was the envy of all nations, and in some ways, it was the ancient equivalent of today's "big government."

Solomon began his reign as king doing what was right in God's sight, but later in life, he drifted away from God, worshiped false gods and did evil. Because of this, God chose a man, Jeroboam, and sent a prophet to tell him he would become king over 10 tribes of Israel and have a secure kingdom while Solomon's legacy would be reduced. Upon learning of this, Solomon felt threatened and sought to kill Jeroboam, who fled to Egypt and remained there as an exile until Solomon's death.

After Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam assumed the throne. But many of the people were seeking relief from the burden of high taxation that had been imposed by Solomon. Rehoboam sought council from the older leaders who had stood before Solomon. They advised him to speak kindly to the people and grant their requests, saying, "... and they will be your servants forever" (2 Chron 10:7). But the younger men who had grown up with Rehoboam and had grown accustomed to the lavish lifestyle of big government advised Rehoboam to speak harshly to the people and declare: "My little finger will be thicker than my father's waist," and "My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastize you with scourges."

Rehoboam rejected the advice of the elders and followed the advice of the young men. As a result Israel was split into two kingdoms: The northern kingdom, which was led by Jeroboam who returned after Solomon's death, consisted of 10 tribes and continued to be called Israel. The southern kingdom continued under the leadership of Rehoboam and was made up of two tribes: Judah and Benjamin. This southern kingdom was called Judah and included Jerusalem with Solomon's temple.

Israel, under Jeroboam had God's promise of security, but he feared that his people would return and reunite under the king of Judah, particularly when they made their pilgrimages to worship in the magnificence of Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem. To prevent his people from traveling to Jerusalem to worship, Jeroboam rejected God, and created a new religion, complete with alter and priests. He constructed two golden calves and located them strategically, placing one in the southern city of Bethel, so that anyone traveling to Jerusalem could conveniently worship there instead of going to Jerusalem. In doing this Jeroboam rejected the Lord and created a new national religion for Israel based on idol worship, which included alters and priests who offered sacrifices.

God saw this as very evil and sent a prophet to prophecy against what Jeroboam had done. It was this prophet that spoke of a time in the future when Josiah would burn the bones of the false prophets on this false altar.

¹ And behold, a man of God went from Judah to Bethel by the word of the LORD, and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense.

² Then he cried out against the altar by the word of the LORD, and said, "O altar, altar! Thus says the LORD: 'Behold, a child, Josiah by name, shall be born to the house of David; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and men's bones shall be burned on you.' "

1 Kings 13:1-2 (NKJV)

How Josiah Discovered His Destiny

As stated above, Josiah began seeking God at the age of 16 and it is likely that he read about himself in the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. He discovered his calling and set out to fulfill his destiny by purging the land of evil and fulfilled the prophecy about the altar in Bethel. When Josiah's purge of the land was complete, Josiah began to restore the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem which had been neglected and fallen into disrepair. It was then that the workers found the book of the law of Moses and brought it to the King. Upon hearing the book of the law, it became immediately clear to Josiah why Judah and Israel had suffered hardship. Not only had the nation been divided, but the northern kingdom of Israel was now in Syrian captivity. The wrath of the Lord had been poured out upon them. Josiah spoke to the priests saying:

"Go, inquire of the LORD for me, and for those who are left in Israel and Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found; for great *is* the wrath of the LORD that is poured out on us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do according to all that is written in this book."

-2 Chronicles 34:21

Our Destiny is Written

The Scriptures reveal that God has a specific purpose and a plan for each of us, He is no respecter of persons (see Acts 10:34). He told Jeremiah, "... before I formed you in the womb; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations." (Jer 1:5). The psalmist writes, "Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When *as yet there were* none of them." (Ps 139:16). Paul wrote to Timothy that God has, "...called *us* with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began." (2 Tim 1:9). Our calling and purpose (and the grace to do it) was given to us before time began. This purpose was hidden in Christ, but is now revealed through Jesus Christ.

We also see from Revelation 20:12 and Daniel 7:10, that there are multiple books. Daniel says, "The court was seated, and the books were opened." In Revelation, it says, "And the dead were judged according to the things written in the books." From these and other scriptures, some conclude that God has a book for each of us, possibly even books for each nation, people group, etc. Regardless of how many books there are, it is certain that God has a plan for each of us. The only question that remains is whether

we will seek out His plan, obey Him and fulfill our destiny. God has given us a free will and He has set before us blessing and cursing. Blessing if we obey and cursing if we rebel.

There is a lesson to be learned from the life of Josiah and what scripture says about God's books:
Destiny is discovered as we seek the Lord, learn His word, separate ourselves from evil, and obey.