

Jeremiah Did Not Support King Josiah's Reform

Written by Administrator
Tuesday, 15 April 2014 09:05 -

Jeremiah began his prophetic ministry in the thirteenth year of king Josiah's reign. A year earlier king Josiah implemented a great religious reform in ancient kingdom of Judah. In 2 Chronicles 34 we are told how he destroyed places of worship and all idols and images of foreign gods and goddesses that were rampant in ancient Judah. In the eighteenth year of his reign, a high priest discovered a Book of the Law in the temple which they were to renovate. When the book was read to king Josiah, he rent his clothes and said that neither he nor his ancestors served their God in accordance with what was written in that book. As a result of the discovery, Josiah implemented one place of worship in Jerusalem and he destroyed the places of worship even in other tribes of Israel and made his subjects observe the Passover in a manner that was not observed since the time of Samuel. King Josiah made a covenant with God and the people and we are told that all served God all the days of Josiah. In 2 Chronicles 34:31-33 we are explicitly told the following:

"Then the king stood in his place and made a covenant before the LORD, to follow the LORD, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book. And he made all who were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin take their stand for it. So the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. Thus Josiah removed all the abominations from all the country that belonged to the children of Israel, and made all who were present in Israel diligently serve the LORD their God. *All his days they did not depart from following the LORD God of their fathers*" [New King James Bible].

In 2 Kings 23:24-25 we are given this pertinent information:

"Moreover Josiah put away those who consulted mediums and spiritists, the household gods and idols, all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD. Now before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to the Law of Moses; nor after him did any arise like him" [New King James Bible].

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On the basis of the stories given in 2 Chronicles and 2 Kings, the Judaists and all traditional Christians regard king Josiah as a hero of faith and a great reformer and restorer of the true religion which was based on the lost book of Moses. But prophet Jeremiah gives a completely different version and he shows that Josiah was not and could not have been a reformer of the true religion nor could have the Book of the Law discovered have been the true and genuine book of Moses. Remember, Jeremiah began his ministry one year after Josiah already implemented most of his reform and by the fifth year of Jeremiah's ministry the reform was complete. So if Josiah's reform was based on the true Law why did Jeremiah regard the Book of the Law that Hilkiah discovered as a forgery? In Jeremiah 8:8 we read the following:

"How can you say, we are wise, for we have the law of the LORD, when actually the lying pen of the scribes has handled it wrongly" [New International Version].

The Good News Bible:

"How can you say that you are wise and that you know my laws? Look, the laws have been changed by dishonest scribes."

The Moffat Bible:

"What! you say, we are wise, we do have his directions - when lo your scribes have written them wrong, and falsified them."

The Jerusalem Bible:

"How dare you say: we are wise, and we possess the Law of Yahweh? But look how it has been falsified by the lying pen of the scribes."

The New American Catholic Bible:

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"How can you say we are wise, we have the law of the LORD? Why, that has been changed into falsehood by the lying pen of the scribes."

The Revised Standard Version:

"How can you say, we are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us? But, behold, the false pen of the scribes has made it into a lie."

Jeremiah did not and could not accept the reform of Josiah nor the Book of the Law on which he based his reform because he regarded that Book of the Law as forgery. It is impossible to miss this point from the book of Jeremiah. Let's face it. If Jeremiah accepted the reform of Josiah and if all Jerusalemites and the people of Judah followed their God ALL THE DAYS OF JOSIAH - as we are told in 2 Chronicles 34:31-33 - then why was Jeremiah despised and ridiculed and even persecuted throughout the reign of Josiah? Why did he say that throughout the reign of Josiah the people continued to worship other gods and idols and refused to listen to Jeremiah and other prophets God was sending to rebuke the people? Please read this passage very carefully as it stands in Jeremiah 25:1-7:

"In the fourth year that Jehoiakim son of Josiah was king of Judah, I received a message from the LORD concerning all the people of Judah. [This was the first year that Nebuchadnezzar was king of Babylonia]. I said to *all the people of Judah and of Jerusalem*, FOR TWENTY THREE YEARS, FROM THE THIRTEENTH YEAR THAT JOSIAH SON OF AMON WAS KING OF JUDAH UNTIL THIS VERY DAY, the LORD has spoken to me, and I have never failed to tell you what he said. BUT YOU HAVE PAID NO ATTENTION. YOU WOULD NOT LISTEN OR PAY ATTENTION, even though the LORD has continued to send you his servants the prophets. They told you to TURN FROM YOUR WICKED WAY OF LIFE AND FROM THE EVIL THINGS YOU ARE DOING, so that you could go on living in the land that the LORD gave you and your ancestors as a permanent possession. They told you not to worship and serve other gods and not to make the LORD angry by worshipping the idols you have made. If you had obeyed the LORD, then he would not have punished you. But the LORD HIMSELF SAYS THAT YOU REFUSED TO LISTEN TO HIM. INSTEAD, YOU MADE HIM ANGRY WITH YOUR IDOLS and have brought his punishment on yourselves" [Good News Bible].

Jeremiah says that from the very first year of his prophetic ministry - which was the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign and one year after he began his reform - his message was rejected and the prophets sent to them were rejected and the people continued throughout the reign of

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Josiah to serve and worship other gods and idols. In fact, God testified to Jeremiah that there was not even one person in the whole city of Jerusalem - after Josiah's reform - who actually served the true God and who actually did right. Please note Jeremiah 5:1:

"Go up and down the streets of Jerusalem, look around and consider, search through her squares. If you can find but one person who deals honestly and seeks the truth, I will forgive this city" [New International Version].

This message was given after Josiah's reform. The book of Jeremiah clearly shows that Jerusalemites were evil and that they worshipped foreign gods and continued in all evils of the previous kings throughout Josiah's reform. The prophet Jeremiah was not only a prophet but also a priest. But he was not recognised as priest by the official priesthood of his day because he was not a priest from the Zadokite lineage and therefore a descendant of Phinehas, Aaron's son but rather from the lineage of Eli and therefore a descendant of Ithamar, Aaron's youngest son who was the brother of Phinehas. To understand the problem before us and to see why there was a controversy regarding the priesthood and why Jeremiah was rejected we need to take a close look at the original high priesthood.

Aaron, the brother of Moses was appointed HIGH PRIEST among his brothers [Leviticus 21:10]. His position was distinguished by special robes he wore [Exodus 28:4, 6-39; Leviticus 8:7-9]. After his death his position and robes were transferred to ELEAZAR his son [Numbers 20:25-28]. Eleazar was followed by his son PHINEHAS who continued as the High Priest well into the time of Judges. The New Unger's Bible Dictionary on page 1005 gives us the following information on Phinehas:

"The grandson of Aaron and son of Eleazar...He first appears in biblical history at the time of the licentious idolatry, where his zeal and action secured the end of the plague that was destroying the nation...For this he was rewarded by the special praise of Jehovah and by a PROMISE that the PRIESTHOOD SHOULD REMAIN IN HIS FAMILY FOREVER".

Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary on page 989 states in regards to Phinehas the following:

"For such zeal [killing of Zimri and a Midianite woman] Phinehas and his descendants were

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promised a PERMANENT PRIESTHOOD”.

Matthew Henry in his Commentary on the Whole Bible on page 226 states:

“The priesthood is entailed by covenant upon his family. It was designed him before, but now it was CONFIRMED to him...It is here [Numbers 25] called AN EVERLASTING PRIESTHOOD, because it should continue to the period of the Old Testament dispensation, and should then have its perfection and perpetuity in the unchangeable priesthood of Christ”.

Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary, Vol. 1. on page 219 makes the following remark:

“The zeal of Phinehas for the honor of the Lord became the occasion for the Lord’s COVENANTING with him and HIS DESCENDANTS as God’s true priests...The Lord now institutes his covenant with the priests through Phinehas. *He was priest by DIVINE RIGHT* being descended from the right family in an immediate line...He is now *confirmed priest by the rite of the divine covenant*”.

All these commentaries are based on Numbers 25:11-13. In this chapter we are told how the Israelites performed abominable rites of the Midianites. A certain chief by the name of Zimri had illicit public relations with a Midianite woman named Cozbi. While thousands of Israelites were being killed by God because of gross idolatry and sexual perversion - it is said that Phinehas did the following:

“Now when Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand; and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her body. So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel” [Numbers 25:7-8].

For this act we are told that God said the following:

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“Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back my wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous with my zeal among them, so that I did not consume the children of Israel in my zeal...Behold *I give to him AND HIS DESCENDANTS AFTER HIM a COVENANT OF AN EVERLASTING PRIESTHOOD*, because he was zealous” [Numbers 25:11-13].

From this text it is very apparent that God confirmed Phinehas as the High Priest. It is also equally apparent that HIS descendants alone will have the privilege to administer the office of HIGH PRIESTHOOD. Other Levites had the right to general priesthood if they were descended from Aaron but only those of Phinehas' lineage were entitled to be “chiefs of their brethren” - that is, HIGH PRIESTS.

When Samuel was born Eli was the High Priest officiating at the temple in SHILOH. Now Eli was not a descendant of Phinehas or Eleazar. He was a descendant of ITHAMAR the brother of Eleazar. Aaron had four sons: Nadab, Abihu, Ithamar and Eleazar [Exodus 6:23]. Nadab and Abihu were killed and only Eleazar and Ithamar survived [Leviticus 10:1-2, 12]. That Eli was the descendant of Ithamar the brother of Eleazar and uncle of Phinehas is very simple to establish.

Abiathar the High Priest was of the house of ELI [1 Kings 2:27]. Abiathar was the son of Ahimelech who was said to be a descendant of ITHAMAR [1 Chronicles 24:3]. Ahimelech was the son of Ahitub [1 Samuel 22:9,11-12]. Ahitub was the son of Phinehas. Phinehas was the son of Eli [1 Samuel 1:3; 4:11]. Since Ahimelech who was a descendant of Eli is said to have been from the lineage of ITHAMAR the son of Aaron and the brother of Eleazar, it follows then that Eli himself was of the lineage of ITHAMAR. We have

already seen that Phinehas [do not confuse him with Eli's son who had the same name] the son of Eleazar and all his descendants were given the right to HIGH PRIESTHOOD. This fact was acknowledged even centuries later. In the book of Sirach [Ecclesiasticus] 45:23-24 we read:

“Phinehas son of Eleazar is third in glory because his zeal in the fear of the Lord, because he stood firm when the people revolted, with a staunch and courageous heart; and in this way atoned for Israel. Hence a covenant of peace was sealed with him, making him governor of both sanctuary and people, and securing to him AND HIS DESCENDANTS the HIGH PRIESTLY dignity forever”.

In 1 Maccabees 2:54 we are told:

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“Phinehas, our father, in return for his burning fervour received a covenant of EVERLASTING PRIESTHOOD”.

Since God allegedly made an eternal covenant with Phinehas the son of Eleazar and the grandson of Aaron that the High Priesthood would be his and his descendants FOREVER - how then could Eli who was not of the lineage of Phinehas but rather of ITHAMAR had been the High Priest in the days of Samuel? How could have his descendants [Ahitub, Ahiah, Ahimelech and Abiathar] rather than the descendants of Eleazar have been the High Priests? The answer is simple. God never promised Eleazar what is commonly believed. In fact, there is a variant version in the bible which shows that Ithamar's descendants would be chiefs of their brothers. In 1 Samuel 2:27-36 we are given this pertinent information:

"Now a man of God came to Eli and said to him, "This is what the LORD says: 'Did I not clearly reveal myself to your father's house when they were in Egypt under Pharaoh?

I chose

your father out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to my altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod

in my presence. I also gave your father's house all the offerings

made with fire by the Israelites. Why do you

scorn my sacrifice and offering

that I prescribed for my dwelling?

Why do you honor your sons more than me by fattening yourselves on the choice parts of every offering made by my people Israel?' "Therefore the LORD, the God of Israel, declares: 'I promised that your house and your father's house would minister before me forever.

' But now the LORD declares: 'Far be it from me! Those who honor me I will honor,

but those who despise

me will be despised.

The time is coming when I will cut short your strength and the strength of your father's house, so that there will not be an old man in your family line

and you will see distress

in my dwelling. Although good will be done to Israel, in your family line there will never be an old man.

Every one of you that I do not cut off from my altar will be spared only to blind your eyes with tears and to grieve your heart, and all your descendants

will die in the prime of life. " 'And what happens to your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, will be a sign

to you--they will both die

on the same day.

I will raise up for myself a faithful priest,

who will do according to what is in my heart and mind. I will firmly establish his house, and he will minister before me.

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one always.

Then everyone left in your family line will come and bow down before him for a piece of silver and a crust of bread and plead,

"Appoint me to some priestly office so I can have food to eat"
" [New International Version].

The Tent of Meeting was erected on the first of the first month - a year after the exodus from Egypt. Aaron was appointed a High Priest and his sons as priests shortly after. Before them there were supposedly no priests. However, in Exodus 19 we are told that for three days the people were to be sanctified because on the third day Moses was to receive the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. This was just under two months after they left Egypt [19:1]. In verses 22 and 24 we read:

"Even the priests who come near must purify themselves, or I will punish them...Go down and bring Aaron back with you. But the priests and the people must not cross the boundary to come up to me" [Good News Bible].

What priests? There were none according to normative Judaism and traditional Christianity. They were appointed about ten months later. But according to the statement in 1 Samuel - as we have seen - God chose Aaron to be a High Priest while they were still in Egypt. Eli's house and his father's house [Aaron's] was to serve as priests forever. The priests were Ithamar and his sons. Aaron as a High Priest at the time was permitted to ascend the mountain with Moses. Jeremiah was from among the priests from Anathoth [Jeremiah 1:1]. These priests were descendants of Abiathar the High Priest who was expelled by Solomon from Jerusalem. But this is a long story and I cannot deal with it here. My sole purpose in writing this article was to demonstrate that Jeremiah did not and could not have supported Josiah's reform - since throughout his reign - he was persecuted and the people did not follow the true God but were steeped in idolatry, as I have plainly shown.