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Josiah and the Battle of Megiddo

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Kretzmann, Josiah and the Battle of Megiddo

Ist die Gemeinde eine Stadt- oder Landgemeinde?

In welcher Sprache wird die Arbeit getan?

Wie oft wird gepredigt?

Ist Missionsmaterial vorhanden?

Wie steht es mit dem Besuch der Gottesdienste?

Wird Christenlehre gehalten?

Hat die Gemeinde eine Sonntagsschule?

Wie viele Kinder besuchen sie?

Wie ist es im allgemeinen mit der christlichen Erkenntnis in der Gemeinde bestellt?

Findet sich Parteilung in der Gemeinde?

Ist die Gemeinde frei von Logenliedern?

Finden sich besondere Schwierigkeiten?

Werden unsere Zeitschriften gelesen?

Wie steht es mit den Beiträgen für synodale Zwecke?

Wie sind im Durchschnitt die Vermögensverhältnisse der Glieder der Gemeinde?

Welchen Gehalt zahlt die Gemeinde

a. dem Pastor? b. dem Lehrer?

Hat die Gemeinde eine regelrechte Gemeindefschule?

Wie viele Kinder besuchen sie?

Wer steht der Schule vor: Pastor, Lehrer oder Lehrerin?

Welches sind die Namen der Lehrer, resp. Lehrerinnen?

Wie werden die Kinder unterrichtet, falls die Gemeinde keine regelrechte Gemeindefschule hat?

Besondere Bemerkungen.

Um den Visitatoren die Berichterstattung zu erleichtern, sollte dieses Formular, wo möglich, in deutscher und englischer Sprache gedruckt vorliegen und beim Präses des Distrikts zu haben sein. E. Berner.

Josiah and the Battle of Megiddo.

The boast of the Lutheran Church has ever been that it is "the Church of the open Bible," that the Holy Scriptures are given into the hands of every member, and that every Christian is urged to ransack the Bible for the truths of salvation and the revelation of God's grace and goodness in general. The Lutheran Church has ever acknowledged, in addition, that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning," Rom. 15, 4, so that, while a difference is rightly made in the relative importance of the various parts of the Bible for the way of salvation, there is no book and no chapter that does not contain some instruction of value to the believer. Hence the Lutheran Church is committed to Bible-study, a study whose base and nucleus indeed may and should be the systematic presentation of doctrinal theology, but which should extend from there into every department of knowledge set forth or even

touched upon in the Bible, including in particular also the historical data with which so many of the doctrinal parts of the Bible are connected.

Among the historical incidents of the Old Testament which have caused scholars some difficulty is that of one of the last kings of Judah, Josiah, the grandson of the wicked king Manasseh, whose conversion late in life failed to make a sufficient impression upon his son Amon, of whom it is said that he walked not in the way of the Lord, but that he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, 2 Kings 21, 20, 22. In marked contrast to the career of Manasseh and Amon we find that of Josiah described, who ascended the throne of Judah about 641—40 B. C. and died as the result of wounds received in the Battle of Megiddo in the year 609 B. C. It is this incident that has given occasion to much comment, since its connection with the history of the times does not seem quite clear.

Among the solutions of the problem which have been offered the following ones are representative. Urquhart (*New Biblical Guide*, Vol. VI, 199 ff.) has the following remarks: "Is there anything to show that Esarhaddon was aware of Manasseh's existence? An inscription found at Kouyounyik contains in its fifth column the following passage:—

'I assembled the kings of Syria and of the nations beyond the sea: Baal, King of Tyre, Manasseh, King of Judah, Kadumukh, King of Edom, Mitzuri, King of Moab. . . .'

Here Manasseh, King of Judah, is placed second on the list of the subject kings of Syria. [This was before 667 B. C., the date of Esarhaddon's death.] . . . The first sign that the day of mercy had reached its limit and that the day of judgment was about to begin, came in the cutting down of Judah's last hope. Assyria had fallen on evil times. The armies of the long-oppressed peoples were closing in upon it on every side. Necho, with the Egyptian host, was pressing onward to the Euphrates to join them [*i. e.*, the oppressed, who were trying to throw off the Assyrian yoke]. But to loyal-hearted Josiah there was an irresistible appeal in Assyria's need. He and the rest had dwelt securely under its shadow. Whatever others might do, he could not lightly cast away his oft-professed allegiance. He gathered his army together and threw himself between Necho and the Euphrates. The result was the defeat of the Jews [more correctly: the army of Judah] and the death of the king." Urquhart then quotes 2 Kings 23, 29, apparently stressing the phrase "against the king of Assyria."¹) He then criticizes Maspero (*Histoire Ancienne*, 471. 516. 538) because the latter states that the Egyptian king was marching

1) The preposition *against*, the Hebrew **כַּגֵּן**, may have the neutral sense, "in the direction of, toward," but also the negative sense, "against."

against Babylon and not against Assyria. "He seems to assume," writes Urquhart, "that Assyria had already fallen and that Babylon, under Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, had become the great power of the East. But if this were so, why should Necho advance to attack it? It had had no time as yet, though we should admit that Assyria had already fallen, to subdue, or even to threaten, the West."

Price (*Monuments of the Old Testament*, 339 f. 351 f.) contributes the following points to the discussion: "That Manasseh had been tributary to Ashurbanipal is attested by the fact that we find 'Manasseh, king of Judah,' in a list of twenty-two of his vassal kings in the Westland. It is identical with that of Esarhaddon except in two instances. . . . Assyria and Egypt, formerly enemies, were allies against Babylon and later against the combined armies of Babylon and the Medes. Nineveh was wiped out in 612 B. C., and the Assyrian capital was transferred to Harran, in Northwestern Mesopotamia. As its ally we find a formidable Egyptian army, later under Necho, the new king of Egypt. Josiah's foolhardy attempt to hold back the Egyptian army at the pass of Megiddo resulted disastrously for himself and the little kingdom of Judah (2 Kings 23, 29 f.)."

We next refer to the *Canadian Journal of Religious Thoughts* (Vol. I, 1924, 307 ff.), where we have an article on "Josiah and Gadd, Babylonian Tablet," a cuneiform tablet of the Babylonian chronicle, discussed also by Price (*l. c.*, 343 f.). The author of the article, W. T. McCree, writes: "We have this combination of circumstances, then, to study. An intense enmity on the part of Judah to Assyria, an enmity bred by the haughty, cruel policy of the empire toward its subject peoples. This finds abundant expression in the prophecies of Nahum, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Nor is the attitude to Egypt much more favorable. The fickle policy of Egypt (Is. 30) had too often proved Judah's undoing to compel consideration for that country. When the Assyrian Empire began to totter under the repeated shocks administered by the Scythians, Medes, and Babylonians, it is extremely probable that Josiah would carry into effect the policy of his great-grandfather, Hezekiah, and would enter into some kind of alliance with Babylon. This alliance would adequately explain Josiah's attempt to prevent Pharaoh Necho's marching to the Euphrates, in 608 [609] B. C. In the light of what the *Chronicle* reveals we must conclude that Pharaoh was hastening to the assistance of the Assyrians. . . . Josiah, wishing to carry out his part of the treaty, marched to intercept Necho. Perhaps he relied on the neighboring states to aid him, for it is likely that they as well as he were eager to see the power of Assyria completely crippled. Some such betrayal in the face of danger might well be the basis of the oracles against the neighboring states in Jer. 47-49. Or perhaps he

relied on Babylon, and she once again played her old game of allowing her ally to bear the brunt of the fighting, while she waited in the background to reap the results. Megiddo does not seem, however, to have been a regular, pitched battle, but rather what we would call a 'reconnaissance in force,' which was brought to a sudden close by the tragic death of Josiah."

For the sake of completeness we add here the conclusions of a German scholar, Landersdorfer (*Kultur der Babylonier and Assyrier*, 37): "Der Fall Ninives [612?] und Assyriens verschaffte der altehrwuerdigen Mardukstadt am Euphrat nochmals auf einige Jahrzehnte die leitende Stellung im vorderen Orient. Ein *neubabylonisches* Weltreich loeste das assyrische ab. Und zwar war es diesmal eine chaldaeische Dynastie, der die alte Kulturmetropole diese letzte Bluete verdankte. *Nabopalassar*, der Begruender derselben, war urspruenglich Feldherr des assyrischen Grosskoenigs; er scheint aber bereits vom letzten assyrischen Koenig den Titel eines Koenigs von Babylon erhalten zu haben. Zunaechst wird er wohl nur das Stadtgebiet von Babylon besessen haben, aber schon 609 legt er sich den Titel 'Koenig der Welt' bei. Nach der Zerstoe rung Ninives durch seine Bundesgenossen, die Meder, teilte er sich mit ihnen in die Reste des assyrischen Reiches und erhielt dabei alle Laender diesseits des Tigris, also Mesopotamien und Syrien. Zum Teil musste er sich sein Erbe freilich erst erobern; denn Necho II., der Koenig von Aegypten, machte die alten Ansprueche der Pharaonen auf Syrien von neuem geltend. Schon 607 [609] war dieser in Palaestina erschienen und, nachdem er den juedischen Koenig Josias, der ihm als treuer Vasall Assyriens entgegengetreten, bei Megiddo geschlagen, bis an den Euphrat vorgedrungen."

Since the scholars working in this field naturally draw on Josephus for some of their material, it may serve our purpose to quote the passage here concerned (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book X, chap. V, No. 1): "Now Neco, king of Egypt, raised an army and marched to the river Euphrates in order to fight with the Medes and Babylonians, who had overthrown the dominion of the Assyrians, for he had a desire to reign over Asia.² Now, when he was come to the city Mendes, which belonged to the kingdom of Josiah, he brought an army to hinder him from passing through his own country, in his expedition against the Medes." The remainder of the account of Josephus is practically that of the Bible. It is hard to tell whether

2) Whiston remarks in his edition of Josephus: "This is a remarkable passage of chronology in Josephus, that about the latter end of the reign of Josiah the Medes and Babylonians overthrow the empire of the Assyrians, or, in the words of Tobit's continuator, that 'before Tobit died, he heard of the destruction of Nineveh, which was taken by Nebuchodonosor the Babylonian and Assuerus the Mede.'"

Josephus possessed reliable information or whether he was merely quoting from hearsay, possibly from apocryphal sources.

The facts with regard to the situation in the East during the last half of the seventh century B. C. seem to be the following. When Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria, lost Egypt, he found that it took his strongest efforts to maintain his ascendancy in his southwestern possessions, especially those bordering on Egypt. The last years of this king, who died in 626 B. C., are wrapped in obscurity, which may have been due chiefly to the Scythian invasion, which rolled down through Mesopotamia, Syria, and Palestine to the very borders of Egypt. Cp. Jer. 5, 15 ff.; 6, 18 ff.; Ezek. 38. It seems that, to the menace of this Scythian invasion, was added that of the Medes, who, especially under Cyaxares, or Kyaxares, became strong enough to conquer Nineveh. It seems clear also that Nabopolassar, who became king in 625, allied himself with the rising power of the Medes, thereby throwing off the yoke of the hated Assyrian and founding the new Babylonia. After the fall of Nineveh (612 B. C.) the whole Assyrian empire west and south of the mountains fell to him. When an Assyrian noble bearing the name of Ashur-uballit escaped and proclaimed himself king of Assyria, with Harran as his capital, he was attacked by Nabopolassar and with the help of the Medes driven out of his new capital. It seems that Ashur-uballit became an ally of Pharaoh Necho II when the latter invaded Asia. This is the historical setting as it has now been pretty definitely determined.

Let us now look somewhat closely at the Bible-passages concerned in the problem before us. In 2 Kings 23, 29 f. we read: "In his [Josiah's] days Pharaoh-nechoh, king of Egypt, went up against the king of Assyria [בְּ] being used as the preposition] by the river Euphrates; and King Josiah went up against him [לְקָרְאוֹ]; and he slew him at Megiddo when he had seen him. And his servants carried him in a chariot dead from Megiddo and brought him to Jerusalem and buried him in his own sepulcher." The account in 2 Chron. 35, 20 ff. is somewhat longer: "After all this, when Josiah had prepared the Temple, Necho, king of Egypt, came up to fight against Carchemish by Euphrates, and Josiah went out against him.³⁾ But he sent ambassadors to him, saying, What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war; for God commanded me to make haste. Forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that He destroy thee not. Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself that he might fight with him and hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God and came to fight in the Valley of Megiddo. And the archers shot at

3) Preposition and verb as in the Kings passage.

King Josiah; and the king said to his servants, Have me away, for I am sore wounded. His servants therefore took him out of that chariot and put him in the second chariot that he had; and they brought him to Jerusalem. And he died and was buried in one of the sepulchers of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah; and all the singing men and the singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day and made them an ordinance in Israel; and, behold, they are written in the lamentations." Cp. Jer. 22, 10. 11. The lamentation is also referred to in Zech. 12, 11—14: "In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the Valley of Megiddon. . . ." And the final chapter of this story is alluded to in Jer. 46, 1. 2: "The word of the Lord which came to Jeremiah, the prophet, against the Gentiles, against Egypt, against the army of Pharaoh-necho, king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates in Carchemish, which Nebuchadrezzar, king of Babylon, smote in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, king of Judah." This was in the year 605, when the ascendancy of the Chaldeans or of Babylon was definitely established.

What conclusions may now be drawn from the available material concerning the campaign undertaken by Josiah in attempting to hinder the progress of Pharaoh Necho II on his way to the Euphrates? There can be no doubt of the fact that Manasseh was tributary to both Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal, for here the statements of the chronicles agree with those of Scripture. It seems just as certain that Amon remained in this state of dependency during his short reign. This condition also continued during the first decades of Josiah's reign, when he was not involved in any world politics. But Assyria was overthrown in 612 B. C., and the feeble attempts of Ashur-uballit to maintain himself, even as an ally of Necho, did not have much success. It seems that one may well assume a condition favoring Josiah and his kingdom. He evidently brought his kingdom to a position of independence at this time, a situation to be desired all the more since the Lord had constantly issued warnings against entangling alliances. Cp. Ezek. 29, 6. — On the other hand, Pharaoh Necho II might well have intended to join the conquered Assyrian forces in an attempt to crush, or at least to hold in check, the power of the new Babylonian kingdom, with Nabopolassar at its head, first of Akkad, or North Babylonia, then of the whole country. A suggestion which is of some value in solving the difficulty connected with the preposition לְ is that offered by Keil (*Kommentar, Die Bücher der Könige*, on 2 Kings 23, 27—29), when he suggests that both possibilities would agree with the text, namely, that the campaign of Pharaoh Necho might have been either against the last king of the Assyrian empire or against the king who had made himself master

of the fallen Assyrian territory, namely, Nabopolassar, the latter being the more likely solution.

The conclusion seems to be warranted that *Josiah made an attempt to safeguard the neutrality of the buffer state of which he was the head*, since he felt that this was the only course left to him in the circumstances. Keil puts his conclusions in this form: "Der Grund, welcher Josia bewog, dem Vorruecken des Aegypters an den Euphrat, ungeachtet der Versicherung Nechos, nicht wider Juda streiten zu wollen, mit Waffengewalt entgegenzutreten, ist weder darin zu suchen, dass Josia unter babylonischer Abhaengigkeit gestanden, was mit der Geschichte streitet, noch darin, dass das Reich Juda damals alle Gebiete des alten Erbes Israel in Besitz genommen hatte und Josia die ganze alte Herrlichkeit des Davidischen Hauses ueber die umliegenden Voelker herzustellen suchte . . ., sondern einzig in der Ueberzeugung Josias, dass bei dem zwischen Aegypten und Babel losbrechenden Kriege Juda nicht neutral bleiben koenne, und in der Hoffnung, durch Bekaempfung Nechos und Vereitlung seines Zuges an den Euphrat grosses Unheil von seinem Lande und Reiche abwenden zu koennen."

To this we may add the interesting excursus given by Daechsel, who writes: "Auf der *einen* Seite war es eine ganz richtige Politik Josias, dass er die von dem aegyptischen Koenig ihm angebotene Neutralitaet nicht annahm, sondern dessen Vorruecken nach dem Euphrat sich in den Weg stellte; denn es war vorauszusehen, dass Pharao Necho das Reich Juda nur fuer jetzt in Ruhe lassen wollte, bis er am Euphrat feste Stellung genommen, dann aber dasselbe desto sicherer unter seine Gewalt zu zwingen suchen wuerde; gelang ihm dagegen sein Unternehmen nicht, sondern wuerde er zurueckgeschlagen, so stand mit Gewissheit zu befuerchten, dass der Sieger in den Laendern an dem Euphrat und Tigris, mochte nun der assyrische oder der babylonische Koenig den Preis davontragen, wider Aegypten aufbrechen und unterwegs auch Palaestina seinem Reiche einverleiben wuerde. . . . Auf der *andern* Seite hingegen war Josias Politik eine voellig verfehlt; es waere besser gewesen, er haette dem aegyptischen Koenige den Durchzug durch das Gebiet des ehemaligen noerdlichen Reichs, da er in staatsrechtlicher Hinsicht nicht verantwortlich dafuer war, ohne Widerstand gestattet. Judas Zeit war naemlich nunmehr vorueber und der Tag des Gerichts ueber dasselbe nicht mehr aufzuhalten; in Jer. 15,1 ff. hoeren wir, dass der Herr kein Herz mehr hatte zu diesem Volke, und wengleich ein Moses oder Samuel Fuerbitte fuer dasselbe einlegen wollte. Und so musste Josias Vornehmen nur dazu dienen, das Wort der goettlichen Zusage in Kap. 22, 18 ff., dass er hinweggerafft werden sollte vor dem Unglueck, an ihm in Erfuellung zu bringen, in und mit ihm aber auch die letzte Mauer um das Volk her niederzureissen und den letzten

Damm wider das immer naeher rueckende Verderben zu durchbrechen. Dass er, den eigentlichen Stand der Dinge verkennend, in Pharao Nechos Wort, welches ihn zu ruhigem Gewaehrenlassen ermahnte, da er, der Koenig von Aegypten, ein goettliches Orakel fuer sich habe, das ihm den Durchzug durch Samaria gestatte, die Stimme des Herrn nicht verstand, sondern den Eingebungen seines eigenen, wenn auch noch so frommen und wohlmeinenden, Herzens folgte, das ist es, was in 2 Chron. 35, 20 ff. ihm zum Vorwurf gemacht wird." This seems to be the most satisfactory explanation in view of all attendant circumstances, also with reference to the situation on the Euphrates.

P. E. KREZTMANN.

Entwurf zu einer Silvesterpredigt über Ps. 103, 2.

Der Jahreschluss ist ein ernster Abend. Wieder ein Jahr naeher unserm Tod, dem Grab, dem Gericht, der Ewigkeit. Ps. 39, 6. 7. 12. Kehre, eleison! — Weltmenschen bedenken das nicht mit Ernst. Sie feiern Silvester in Saus und Braus, am Spieltisch, auf dem Tanzboden, oft in schändlicher Fleischelust. 5 Mos. 32, 5. 6a. Mancher von ihnen liegt binnen kurzem tot und kalt auf der Bahre. — Christen, die ja in Gottes Wegen wandeln wollen, erwägen gerade bei dieser Gelegenheit die erfahrene Schuld und Gunst des Erbarmers. Je ernstlicher sie nachdenken, desto mehr Ursache haben sie zu der Selbstermunterung:

Lobe den Herrn, meine Seele!

1. Warum?

A. Mannigfach und unzählbar sind die Wohlthaten des Herrn.

a. Ihm verdanken wir Ursprung, Leben und Dasein, den Leib mit der wunderbaren Einrichtung der Augen, Ohren und aller Gliedmaßen, die unsterbliche Seele, Vernunft und alle Sinne (Sehen, Hören, Riechen, Schmecken, Fühlen). Dazu auch unsere Erhaltung und Regierung: die Erde, auf der wir leben; die Geschöpfe, die er auf, in und über der Erde uns zu Dienst bestellt hat; alle Notdurft und Nahrung, womit er uns nun wieder versorgt hat; den Schutz in Gefahren, die Bewahrung vor vielen übeln (Krieg, Überschwemmung, Pestilenz, vulkanische Erhebungen, Hungersnot). Welch eine beglückende Fülle von Segensgütern!

b. Ihm verdanken wir, die wir von Natur als Feinde unter seinem Fluch lagen, den gnädigen Rathschluss unserer Erlösung, die Sendung des Heilandes, Christi Willigkeit zur Stellvertretung, die Erwerbung des Heils. O Ströme der Barmherzigkeit aus dem milden Heilandsherzen!

c. Ihm verdanken wir die Zueignung der Veröhnung durch Gottes rechtfertigendes Urteil, unsere Einfügung in den Bau der unsichtbaren Kirche, unsere erfolgreiche Bekämpfung der Todesfurcht, unsere Hoffnung auf ein ewiges Leben. Fürwahr, eine reichgedeckte Tafel gnädigen Erbarmens! Eph. 1, 3.