

Women of the Bible: Huldah

Pilgrim Lutheran Church Mary/Martha Society Gathering – 2025 August 17

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- Invocation and Prayer
- Last time, March 16, 2025 (!), we discussed how God provided for a son of the prophets' widow through Elisha and how God both blessed Elisha through the Shunnamite woman and blessed the Shunnamite woman through Elisha. Today we jump both forward some 200 years in time and from the northern kingdom of "Israel" to the southern kingdom of "Judah". (See the chart on *TLSB* p.529 for an alignment of kings and prophets, and see the page on Pilgrim's website with the working chronological list of all the women whom we both have studied and will study, linking our handouts when available: www.pilgrimlc.org/bible-studies/women-of-the-bible.) We consider Huldah today in view of the Bible's two relatively-similar narratives about her: 2 Kings 22:3-20 and 2 Chronicles 34:8-28 (neither of which is used by *Lutheran Service Book's* Three-year Lectionary Series).
- 2 Kings 22:3-20—Vv.3-7: A relatively-young but faithful King Josiah sends Shaphan the secretary to Hilkiah the high priest with directions regarding the repair of the temple. There is discussion about the larger sequence of events and age of Josiah at their times. *TLSB* notes that Josiah followed procedures that his predecessor Jehoshaphat had adopted some 200 years earlier (Kretzmann mentions the temple going without repair for some 200 years). *CSSB* comments that a "secretary" presumably had duties including foreign and domestic correspondence, important record-keeping, and other administrative functions; Keil-Delitzsch refers to him as "secretary of state" (confer Kretzmann who specifically mentions the finances). Vv.8-10: Hilkiah the high priest essentially "sends" Shaphan the secretary back to the king with a re-discovered "Book of the Law" that Shaphan first read himself and then read before the king. Shaphan's visit to Hilkiah seems to be the "occasion" for Hilkiah's reporting the finding (confer Keil-Delitzsch). As *TLSB* notes, scholars debate exactly what "Law" the scroll contained (we might consider Deuteronomy 17:18-20, and we might discuss what, if any, "Gospel" the scroll might have contained [Keil-Delitzsch think of temple's copy of the whole Pentateuch {referring to Deuteronomy 31:26, though not necessarily Moses's "original" manuscript, as Kretzmann thinks} but rejects the idea there were no other copies of it in anybody else's hands prior to its rediscovery and says that Shaphan may have read only part of it for himself first and later to the king, who they say may have had some familiarity with it even before hearing it read]). Vv.11-13: The king grieves for past disobedience to the words of the book and God's resulting wrath, and he commands Shaphan, Hilkiah, and others to inquire of the Lord concerning the book. *CSSB* contrasts Josiah's reaction with that of Jehoiakim to the words of the scroll written by Jeremiah in Jeremiah 36:24. (We might ask to what extent the king saw himself as deserving the Lord's wrath.) Keil-Delitzsch say the inquiry was about what the Lord had determined concerning the king, his people, and the kingdom. Vv.14-20: The king's servants went to Huldah who gave them the word of the Lord regarding judgment on Jerusalem/Judah but sparing of the king. As *TLSB* notes, no reason is given why Jeremiah was not consulted (Keil-Delitzsch point out that Ahikam was a supporter of Jeremiah in Jeremiah 26:24); *CSSB* mentions also Zephaniah and suggests that Huldah may have been accessible in Jerusalem and the others

not (confer Keil-Deltizsch). Huldah speaks of the king's grieving, which the servants may or may not had mentioned. *TLSB* ("plagiarizing" Roehrs-Franzmann) seems to doubt that the king's reforms were making any difference in the hearts of the people, such as leading them to repent as the king essentially had done (confer and compare the covenant renewal that follows in 2 Kings 23:1-3; Roehrs-Franzmann suggests the king hoped Jerusalem's destruction might still be averted [we might think of David praying for his and Bathsheba's first son in 2 Samuel 12:16-17]). *CSSB* notes that Josiah's death in battle with Pharaoh Neco of Egypt does not contradict Huldah's words since the words regard God's final judgment on Jerusalem through Nebuchadnezzar. Keil-Delitzsch similarly discuss the "gathering to your fathers" and "your grave" in peace.

- 2 Chronicles 34:8-28—As *TLSB* notes, "The Chronicler provides more detail than the account in Kings." One example is v.9's mentioning the involvement of all Israel in the collection, suggesting the unity of the people under a faithful king (see also the mention of Israel in v.21 [confer *CSSB* on the Divinely-inspired Chronicler's concern with "all Israel", especially given the time of his writing]). Another example is v.12, where Roehrs-Franzmann says the Chronicler takes special note of the part played by the Levites. V.14 is sometimes taken as if the Book of the Law were in the money box itself. V.22 has some differences in spelling for Huldah's husband's name and his father. (A covenant renewal follows in 2 Chronicles 34:29-32 as in the account of 2 Kings.)
- Huldah is not mentioned anywhere else in either the Old Testament or the New Testament. Previously we mentioned the article about prophetesses on *TLSB* p.389, which article mentions, for example, Miriam and Deborah from the Old Testament, whom we have discussed, and Anna and Philip's daughters from the New Testament, and to some extent indirectly applies these and other examples of Holy Scripture to the matter of female "pastors". A key distinction is private counsel vs. public worship.
- Some potential topics for our further discussion include the following: repentance and remaining consequences of sin; various states of dead bodies and the state of their departed souls; the role of God's Word in the Reformation of Luther's day; and reform and avoiding disaster in our time. About what else does our consideration of Huldah raise questions or prompt discussion?
- Concluding Prayer, *LSB* 855 (stanzas 1, 3, and 4), and Benediction.
- Next time (October 19) on Esther (Esther 1:1-10:3). (If you are interested in watching the Sight & Sound show *Queen Esther*, visit the following URL: <https://www.sight-sound.tv/season-pass-queen-esther>.)