

2 Chronicles 29:20-36

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[0 : 00] Amen. 2 Chronicles 29. Again, we are in the midst of the early days of Hezekiah's reign.

! The Chronicler gives a lot of attention to something that the writer of 2 Kings devotes one to maybe three verses to. When we read of the reign in 2 Kings, we read of the political advancements.

We see that the nation was striving during His reign. We read how the Assyrians come and encamp around Jerusalem. Hezekiah resists that, goes before Isaiah the prophet.

They cry out. The Lord answers that cry. But we don't read much of the reforms that are recorded for us in the book of 2 Chronicles. Most of what we read in 2 Kings is during the fourth year of His reign.

And the northern kingdom of Israel fell to the kingdom of the Assyrians. And even the king who was reigning during the days of Hezekiah's early reign was not really their own self-appointed king.

[1 : 05] It was a king that was put in place by the Assyrian Empire in the northern kingdom of Israel. So by the time Hezekiah begins to reign in the south, in Judah, the things in the north are on a downward spiral very quickly.

And that's important. You'll see why in just a moment. And then we skip ahead to the 14th year of His reign in our parallel passage in the book of 2 Kings. And we find the same people coming and trying to threaten and destroy Jerusalem.

But yet we see Hezekiah and his men resist that, not by military force, but by prayer and commitment to the Lord. And we ask ourselves the question, how did they get there?

Because Hezekiah's father was one who had shut the doors of the temple, who had ransacked the temple for anything of value and had tried to pay off the Assyrians. But we do know historically that the moment Hezekiah ascends to the throne, the very first thing he does is revolt against the Assyrian rule.

He does not ally himself with the Assyrian Empire, and he does not even continue to pay them money. And so for this reason, we want to know why in 14 years, a rather brief time, is the nation so strong?

[2 : 22] And we opened that up this Wednesday night, where we saw in the first 19 verses of this chapter, that on the first day of the first month, in the first year of his reign, Hezekiah reopened the temple.

And they cleansed the temple, and he called the Levites to come in and to do the work. They started in the most important place, in the inner portion of the temple, and worked their way out. And we looked at the reality that you may beautify the outside, but if you don't take care of what's inside, then you're really not serving the purpose. So they began cleansing the temple, with the priests going into the inner recesses of the temple, where nobody else could go.

And they began purifying it, making their way out. And it tells us in the 19th chapter that they had accomplished that work they were through. The temple has been cleansed, the articles have been restored, the foreign altar has been carried out, which a former high priest had built.

And now the only things in there are the things which the Lord God had commanded. So everything is in place. I want you to see tonight, in verses 20 through 36, Hezekiah's call to worship.

[3 : 35] Because what we have so much more is more than just Hezekiah making a commitment to the Lord, but he is calling the nation to make a commitment to the Lord. One thing that is striking about Hezekiah, he is a king who loves the Lord.

It tells us that he does what is right inside the Lord as his father David had done. And no one sought the Lord or loved the Lord greater than he who went before him or he who came after him.

It tells us in 2 Kings that he clung to the Lord and never let go of him. That he wanted to please the Lord in all he did. And one display of that is the reality that Hezekiah, when he became king, not only shattered in pieces the bronze serpent, which had been made when the nation of Israel wandered in the wilderness, because that which was to be pointing to Christ had become a deterrent from Christ.

And people had begun, began worshiping that bronze thing, as they called it. And so he shattered that. There would be no relic that would be worshiped. It also tells us that he tore down the high places.

No other king had torn down the high places. Solomon had erected some of the high places, and the kings which followed Solomon had allowed the high places to remain.

[4 : 52] Hezekiah tears them down. But there's a problem there when you tear down the high places, and there's a need to be met, a void that is left, and that is that void of worship.

And so we see that in doing that, he not only tore the high places down, he called the nation back to worship. And that's what we find for us starting in verse 20.

It says, Then King Hezekiah, because of what happened immediately before this, they came and told him the temple was ready. Then King Hezekiah rose early and assembled the princes of the city and went up to the house of the Lord.

They brought seven bulls, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven male goats. Let's just stop right there. Remember that. We'll come back to that in just a moment. For a sin offering for the kingdom, the sanctuary, and Judah.

And he ordered the priests, the sons of Aaron, and to offer them on the altar of the Lord. So they slaughtered the bulls, and the priests took the blood and sprinkled it on the altar. So they slaughtered the rams and sprinkled the blood on the altar.

[5 : 52] They slaughtered the lambs also and sprinkled the blood on the altar. Then they brought the male goats of the sin offering before the king and the assembly, and they laid their hands on them.

The priests slaughtered them and purged the altar with their blood to atone for all Israel. For the king ordered the burnt offering and the sin offering for all Israel.

He then stationed the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with harps, and with lyres, according to the command of David and of Gad the king's seer, and of Nathan the prophet.

For the command was from the Lord through his prophets. The Levites stood with the musical instruments of David and the priests with the trumpets. Then Hezekiah gave the order to offer the burnt offering on the altar.

When the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord also began with the trumpets, accompanied by the instruments of David, king of Israel. While the whole assembly worshipped, the singers also sang and the trumpets sounded.

[6 : 51] All this continued until the burnt offering was finished. Now at the completion of the burnt offerings, the king and all who were present with him bowed down and worshipped.

Moreover, king Hezekiah and the officials ordered the Levites to sing praises to the Lord with the words of David and Asaph the seer. So they sang praises with joy and bowed down and worshipped.

Then Hezekiah said, Now that you have consecrated yourselves to the Lord, come near and bring sacrifices and thank offerings to the house of the Lord.

And the assembly brought sacrifices and thank offerings, and all those who were willing brought burnt offerings. The number of burnt offerings which the assembly brought was 70 bulls, 100 rams, and 200 lambs.

All these were for a burnt offering to the Lord. The consecrated things were 600 bulls and 3,000 sheep, but the priests were too few. So they were unable to skin all the burnt offerings.

[7 : 50] Therefore their brothers, the Levites, helped them until the work was completed and until the other priests had consecrated themselves. For the Levites were more conscious to consecrate themselves than the priests.

There were also many burnt offerings with the fat of the peace offerings and with the libations for the burnt offerings. Thus the service of the house of the Lord was established again. Then Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced over what God had prepared for the people because the thing came about suddenly.

Just as we looked at last week, what happened and what transpired between the first year of his reign and the 14th year of his reign was not that Hezekiah built a greater military force. It was not even that he fortified the city and put outposts around the city. No, when the Assyrians came, they assumed that Jerusalem was just as weak as the northern kingdom. What transpired during that 14-year interval was that the people recommitted to worshipping the Lord God. They were strengthened spiritually which gave them the strength to stand before the enemy because that's what God had declared even in the book of Deuteronomy that if they would follow Him in obedience then He would deliver them from their enemy.

[9 : 04] The southern kingdom exists for some 200 years longer than the northern kingdom. We give credit to that not because they were larger because they were not.

Not because they were more powerful because they were not. We give a lot of credit to that because of the reforms that Hezekiah brought about here. Because of the return to the Lord. There were not many faithful kings. As a matter of fact, Hezekiah is one of the last faithful kings. But yet the reforms that he brings about endures for a long time because it was not a reform of just the palace but it was a reform of all the people. It was a calling of the people to worship. And so we need to look at that and see exactly what it takes to call people to worship. The first thing that we notice is that there was a representative before them.

There was a representative before them. One of the great truths that Scripture teaches us now stay with me in this is that man is naturally created to worship.

[10 : 16] It's in the heart of every man. I believe it has been rightly declared that there has never been a people group in any place at any time at any point in history that does not worship something.

God created man to worship. It is the very core of His being. It is in the depth of His soul. It tells us in the book of Ecclesiastes that He has set eternity in the heart of man. And because of that eternity that is set in the heart of man man knows innately that there's something other than himself or herself.

And they long to worship. But along with that truth we also find because of the fall of man that the very thing that man was created to worship there has been a great chasm fixed between him and it. that man cannot while he is naturally drawn to worship man cannot naturally worship the one he is intended to worship. The purpose of man if you go all the way back to the book of Genesis when God created man it is to obey the Lord their God and to serve Him to worship Him and to love Him. The very thing we were created to do we can no longer do on our own because of the rebellion of our nature. And so the scripture teaches us that God not longing to have us cast out there is forever putting a representative before us to reintroduce us into worship.

[11 : 43] God called Abram out of the land of the earth of the Chaldeans to make a great nation out of him. A nation of priests they were to be but they became a nation with priests and they were to be people who would lead all of mankind.

One of the wonderful things that we find in scripture is that God was not just picking a particular people He was picking a particular people so that all people would have someone showing them and teaching them how to worship. They were to be a light to the Gentiles. This is an Old Testament reality that the light would shine in the Gentiles and the Gentiles would respond and they would say we want to know the Lord that God. And they would be drawn to that reality. They were to be a representative. They failed in their representation so even those people who were called to be the representative then needed people to represent them. They were given judges.

We find in the early book of judges. Then they were given prophets and the prophets would serve to be the intercessors. They were given priests and the priests would stand before them and at times they were given kings that would lead them.

[12 : 42] In this chapter Hezekiah is that representative. Now we don't have to wonder who our representative is because the book of Hebrews tells us that we come boldly before the throne through the blood of Jesus Christ.

He is the trailblazer is the right word. He is the one who goes before us blazing the trail. The representative who stands daily at the right hand of the Father to make intercession for us.

We have a representative that leads us to worship. Here Hezekiah is doing that. Notice what it says. Then King Hezekiah arose early and assembled the princes of the city and went to the house of the Lord.

To Hezekiah this is a matter of great importance. The house has been cleansed a number of days. It took eight days to cleanse the house.

They tell him that everything has been taken care of and early the next morning he goes and gets the representatives and he goes to the temple. It is a matter of great importance.

[13 : 48] And he does it not for himself. We'll see in just a moment. He goes and he knowingly willingly goes and he takes with him the princes of the city and the Levites are already there.

He has already called the Levites to stand their ground. We find that in the verses which come before this. And he goes as a matter of great importance and it tells us that he brought seven of various kinds of offerings.

Now some Bible commentators will tell you this is an abnormally large amount of sacrifices for what Hezekiah is doing.

But I want to tell you that it's not an abnormally large amount of sacrifices. We know that seven is the number of completion but there has to be a reason why he chose seven of each one of these. It tells us that he brought with him seven bulls, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven male goats.

And he is coming as a representative. Now if we want to find what are the requirements of the sacrificial system we go to which book? The book of Leviticus right?

[14 : 59] And we go to those early pages of the book of Leviticus and we say well this is confusing but when we open up the third or the fourth chapter of the book of Leviticus we find the mandate for the sin offerings.

And then we also see here in this passage this is why we know the Bible says the same thing over and over again and why it's so good just to study scripture and let scripture be the greatest commentary on scripture. When he brings these it tells us that they offered the bull first and they sprinkled its blood and then they offered the rams and then they offered the lambs and then they brought the male goats before the king and the representatives with him and they laid their hands. Now here's a question. Why did they lay their hands only on the goats? And why were there four different types? It's because Hezekiah is a representative of the entire nation.

It tells us that he is there and he is offering a sin offering for all of Israel. And it tells us that when he brought these he brought them to cleanse.

It tells us a number of things an offering for the kingdom for the sanctuary and for Judah. Now in these four offerings just so you don't have to do the research you can go back and check me on this if you go to Leviticus 4 and read from there you will find that if a priest sins and a priest is made aware of his sin then a priest is to offer a bull.

[16 : 29] that's why the bull was the first one offered because the priest offering it had to atone for their sin first. And the priest had fully sinned. Seven the number of completion.

And then it tells us if we read a little bit further that if there is a person of the nation of Israel whose sins unknowingly and his sin is made aware of him then he should offer from the flock a lamb.

And surely the people had made sins that they had become aware of so there had to be the lambs given for the sins of the people. And then it tells us if we read a little bit further that if someone makes a vow and they realize after making that vow that that vow was a sin they have to offer a ram.

And surely there were people who stood in those paganistic temples and on those places on the high hills who had made vows that were sinful so the vows of sin needed to be atoned for with the ram.

So now we have the bull the lamb and the ram but they have the goats that go and the kings lay their hands on them because it tells us in the book of Leviticus that if the king sins then the king should bring a male goat.

[17 : 43] That's the only one he laid his hand on because that's the only offering that's for him. He is the representative for the entire nation standing at the temple offering the blood of atonement for each and every one of them.

And he lays his hand on the one that's for him and that's the goats and those that are with him lay their hands and they offer the goats and sprinkle the blood. Friend listen to me there is no call to worship without a representative standing in the gap.

And he atoned it says for all Israel not just the southern kingdom but for all Israel. Secondly we notice there is a restoration of means.

The temple doors have been opened. That's all well and good. The false altar that had been put in its place has been taken out. The utensils have been restored.

All the furnishings are there but that's not all that God had ordained as a means of worship. And so now after the sin offering is given it tells us that when he had stationed the Levites in the house one thing I love about Hezekiah is he's not just making sure people have an opportunity to worship he's also calling people to do what they're supposed to do.

[19 : 04] He stationed the Levites in the house and he gave them a musical instrument. He said you're supposed to be playing this and he gave them the trumpets and the instruments of David those things that had been kind of cast off to the side and he reintroduced not only the music but also the lyrics.

It says they began to sing the songs of the Lord. That's the hymns that we find in the book of Psalms. Many people believe that what they were singing and I think rightfully so are the Psalms of Ascent found in the latter book of the book of Psalms.

Those Psalms that declare how great it is to be in the house of the Lord. They worship and celebrate when they said let us go to the house of the Lord. So now he's restoring all the means. Notice there's the altar that is there. There's the right altar. There are the priests that are there. There are the Levites. There's the musicians that are playing. There are the Levites that are singing and the people now have the freedom to worship.

Friend listen to me he restored the means. They weren't just bringing in an animal because the moment the animal was laid upon the altar the musicians would start playing the singers would start singing and the people that were there would fall on their knees and worship and declare how great the Lord God was.

[20 : 22] Every hindrance every obstacle to true worship had been removed and every means necessary to garner the attention had been put in place. there was no distraction.

No thing to hinder any individual because Hezekiah ensured that not only were the offerings made but also the attention would be gathered by the music and the singing all the attitudes of worship had all been restored.

restored. What a beautiful thing these restored means. Number three not only do we see there's a representative there's a restoration of means there is the realized or realization of cleansing.

It tells us in verse 31 after Hezekiah has fallen on his face and praised the Lord and worshipped and after Hezekiah has told the officials to sing the Psalms of David and Asaph in verse 31 it says then Hezekiah said the question is who did he say this to?

Well clearly he didn't say it to the Levites and the priests he didn't say it to those leaders that were with him he said it to the multitude around him he said it to the people it says then Hezekiah says now that you have consecrated yourselves to the Lord now we know that it was Hezekiah who brought the sacrifices but what he is declaring to them now that you are set apart what set them apart?

[21 : 56] It was the blood of the sin offering the blood had been spilt for without the shedding of blood there is no remission and forgiveness of sins but God had declared in the book of Leviticus that if they were to bring that offering then their sins would be forgiven they would be clean it was the sin offering which had to precede every other offering he says now that you have been consecrated what does it say?

Come near and bring sacrifices of thank offerings to the house of the Lord he says now that you're clean you have the opportunity to come near and bring sacrifices and thank offerings all those other offerings that we find in the book of Leviticus it was necessary for the sin offering to be made first and then the rejoicing offerings of thanksgiving and the sacrifices of celebration those things came later you had to stand clean and what Hezekiah is declaring to them now that you know you're clean here's the opportunity and it tells us and the assembly brought sacrifices and thank offerings and all those who were willing brought burnt offerings not everyone realized it not everyone was willing but everyone had the opportunity because he had stood as a representative of the entire nation the sacrifice had been made and those who had a willing heart who understood their cleanliness now had the opportunity to go into the house of the Lord and to offer sacrifices they could worship and they could celebrate once again not only was the temple were the temple doors open now the throne was accessible to them as they could come and worship and they brought so

many sacrifices the Levites had to come and help the priest for there were not enough priests to skin the animals and it tells us because the Levites were a little bit more conscious of consecrating themselves than the priests and that's really astounding that the chronicler would tell us this because one of the offices that he thinks highly of is the office of priest but if we understand our scriptures accurately then we also know that it was the high priest during the reign of Hezekiah's father who had kind of led in this idolatrous worship by building a false altar so the priests were probably a little tainted but the Levites

God always has his people right they were a little bit more conscientious of their walk and they were ready for the worship that was accessible to all the people because they realized they were clean and we see now that God is moving and Hezekiah is calling the people to worship and worship they do they come and they approach the throne and they bring this multitude of sacrifices but we get to this last thing and it is the recognition of opportunity because it tells us that all those who were willing all those who were willing just because the call had been issued does not mean the entire nation will worship He had atoned for the sins of Israel the northern kingdom still falls for all that we know not very many of them came down they did not unite with them in worship we know that Hezekiah will observe the Passover we'll get to that in the very next chapter and we know that the invitation will go out to the northern kingdom and not many will respond we know that not even all of Judah responded because it tells us only those who were willing we know that inevitably they too will fall not to the Assyrians but to the Babylonians because they will not take this opportunity to commit their heart and their lives to the Lord because we know that worship while the call can be extended to all it cannot be forced on any it is given because of the representative who stands before the people it is given because every obstacle has been removed it is given because cleanness can be offered for those who will have a willing heart but it tells us in verse 36 that Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced over what God had prepared for the people now read that again

Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced over what God had prepared for the people because the thing came about suddenly the one thing that was recognized by Hezekiah and those who were willing to worship was that what was happening was not a great work of Hezekiah this call to worship might have flowed through the mouth of Hezekiah but even here where we read of Hezekiah calling the Levites back in the earlier part of the chapter it says that it was the word of the Lord through Hezekiah we read in this portion of scripture that those who were called through the seer Gad and the prophet Nathan the word of the Lord during the time of David that had called them to worship we see Hezekiah bringing great reforms but make no mistake about it man cannot provide and prove the way for other men to worship they can issue a call but the call must come from the Lord God and it tells us that though Hezekiah happens to be the instrument that God is using the work that is taking place cannot be attributed to Hezekiah because we have to be careful here for he is a man just like us he clings to the Lord and never lets go but he is also a man with sin a man with failures and a man who is separated from Lord God because of his sin naturally but what happens is that God is preparing these things for the people the most astounding thing that we must realize is that every opportunity to worship is an opportunity extended to sinful man from the Lord God Almighty Himself that no matter who He uses no matter what circumstances transpire to issue it that every call to truly worship is a call prepared by God Himself for man cannot ever ascend to the place of holy God but God can extend and prepare an opportunity for man to be welcomed into His presence the only reason Hezekiah knew what sacrifices who offered is because the Lord God had told Moses what sacrifices needed to be offered the only way the priest and prophets the priest and the Levites knew what furnishing should be in the temple was because God had declared what things should be in the temple the only way people could worship in the Old Testament is because God says you can come before me this way friend listen to me the only way we worship today is because

[29 : 11] God has declared this is how you come before me it is an opportunity presented to us and prepared by the Lord God Himself and those who recognize that are those who have that willing heart who say I want to go and worship Him as He has declared because it is not an opportunity for someone else to say would you join me in worship but rather it is God preparing the way for me to have the opportunity to worship in spite of who I am the one thing that naturally I am called to do the one thing that I long to do all men and women of all ages worship something and God Himself prepares the means and the manner in which we can come before Him we know here that He is using Hezekiah but we know the rest of Scripture right we know that He comes as the

King of Kings and Lord of Lords He dies that perfect death so that we can live that perfect life He calls us to Himself through Jesus

Christ that we may be clean He has brought about every means He gives us a new heart and a new mind He gives us the opportunity to be clean before Him that we may worship and adore Him that we can worship Him in sincerity of hearts that we can be broken over our sins and yet the realization is it is not anything that man can do for us but God Himself prepares for us God has always from the very beginning prepared a way for people to worship Him and those who realize that opportunity are those whose hearts become willing and say let me bring in today's time my sacrifice of thanksgiving and say you are worthy oh Lord you are worthy it is a call to worship that Hezekiah calls the people to and it is no wonder that is in his first year that by the time we get to his 14th year and the people come and tell the people on the outside of Jerusalem walls tell the people sitting on the walls don't trust in the Lord God nor Hezekiah for we are greater than your God those people by that time have been worshipping for 13 years and they're ready for the attack of the enemy because they responded to the call and it is the call to worship that was prepared by God in advance of the coming and approaching of the enemy let's pray Father we thank you for this day we thank you for the opportunity we have had to be together tonight Lord what a joy it is to look at the word of God with one another Lord we pray for the week before us we pray that you would help us to worship you in sincerity and truth help us to worship you alongside others help us to worship you in the stillness of our own solitude Lord help us to set our hearts and minds upon you we continue to pray for those around us that are in need we continue to pray for brother Bill we continue to pray for Miss Myrtle there's so many others in our midst that are in need of your hand to rest upon them there are those who are walking through the sorrow of lost loved ones and we ask that you would move there are those who are walking through times of decision job changes we ask that you would move there as well we pray Lord even during this season that you help us as a church to be effective that we would be a light in the community you've put us in may your word ring true and may it be for your glory and your honor and yours alone and we ask it all in Jesus name amen thank you guys very much