

2 Chronicles 30:13 -31:1

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[0 : 00] Amen. As we put it in context, we understand that we are in the early days of Hezekiah's reign.

We are in the days which the book of 2 Kings doesn't devote much time and attention to, but the book of 2 Chronicles does. The reasoning is because 2 Kings tells us much of what transpired politically during the reign of Hezekiah, while 2 Chronicles focuses its attention on what happens spiritually.

And we understand that we cannot really separate the two because the boldness they had politically when the enemy surrounded the gates that we find recorded for us later on is really rooted in what happens spiritually, not only among the courtroom of Hezekiah, but among the people of Judah.

The chapter that we are in, in 30th chapter, we know that they are getting ready to celebrate the Passover feast. We'll see that in just a moment. It will be the first time that they have done so since the days of King Solomon.

So a multitude of years have passed by since then. We know that it is also not just a divided, segregated event. It is not one just of the kingdom of Judah because Hezekiah has sent his couriers throughout all the land of Israel.

[1 : 48] He has invited the people from the northern kingdom and even the people on the Transjordan area, on the other side of the Jordan River. And He is inviting them to come not to the courtroom of the king, but to the temple of the Lord, that they may gather together and worship corporately as the people of God.

And He is doing so with the reality that the northern kingdom has already fallen to the Assyrians. Many of them have been carried away. There's still some little form of government there.

But the remnant that remains, He's calling them back to the Lord. Now, many of them, we know, laugh them to scorn and deride them and say they want nothing to do with that.

But there were a few, there were some, that humbled their hearts and made the trip to go to Jerusalem. And we saw last time we were gathered together this past Wednesday night that it takes humility and humbleness to come before the Lord in worship.

But I want you to see this evening an outcome of corporate worship. What is an outcome of corporate worship as we have recorded here? Because the gathering of the people of the Lord to celebrate this Feast of Unleavened Bread and this Passover event, there is something that we can expect and something that we see taking place as a result of this corporate worship.

[3 : 04] For when the people of the Lord gather together, then there ought to be an expectation and even an anticipation of an outcome. We don't just come and say, Well, we met with the Lord and we leave and nothing changes.

Because that's really astounding just to think about that you had an encounter with the Lord God Almighty and left unchanged. Everything was the same as it was when you gathered together.

That seems to be absurd almost. So we find it here starting in the 13th verse. This is how many people were gathered at Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the second month.

If you remember, they couldn't do it in the first month because they weren't prepared and God graciously allowed them to do it in the second month. In the second month, a very large assembly, they arose and removed the altars which were in Jerusalem.

They also removed all the incense altars and cast them into the brook Kidron. Then they slaughtered the Passover lambs on the 14th of the second month and the priests and the Levites were ashamed of themselves and consecrated themselves and brought burnt offerings to the house of the Lord.

[4 : 08] They stood at their stations after their custom according to the law of Moses, the man of God. The priests sprinkled the blood which they received from the hand of the Levites for there were many in the assembly who had not consecrated themselves.

Therefore, the Levites were over the slaughter of the Passover lambs for everyone who was unclean in order to consecrate them to the Lord. For a multitude of people, even many from Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun, had not purified themselves, yet they ate the Passover otherwise than prescribed.

For Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, May the good Lord pardon everyone who prepares his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though not according to the purification rules of the sanctuary.

So the Lord heard Hezekiah and healed the people. The sons of Israel present in Jerusalem celebrated the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days with great joy.

And the Levites and the priests praised the Lord day after day with loud instruments to the Lord. Then Hezekiah spoke encouragingly to all the Levites who showed good insight in the things of the Lord.

[5 : 15] So they ate for the appointed seven days, sacrificing peace offerings, and giving thanks to the Lord God of their fathers. Then the whole assembly decided to celebrate the feast another seven days.

So they celebrated the seven days with joy. For Hezekiah, king of Judah, had contributed to the assembly 1,000 bulls and 7,000 sheep. And the princes had contributed to the assembly 1,000 bulls and 10,000 sheep.

And a large number of priests consecrated themselves. All the assembly of Judah rejoiced with the priests and the Levites and all the assembly that came from Israel, both the sojourners who came from the land of Israel and those living in Judah.

So there was great joy in Jerusalem because there was nothing like this in Jerusalem since the days of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel. Then the Levitical priest arose and blessed the people and their voice was heard and their prayer came to His holy dwelling place in heaven.

Now when all this was finished, all Israel who were present went out to the cities of Judah, broke the pillars in pieces, cut down the ashram, and pulled down the high places and the altars throughout all Judah and Benjamin, as well as in Ephraim and Manasseh, until they had destroyed them all.

[6 : 32] Then all the sons of Israel returned to their cities, each to his possession. I want you to see this evening an outcome of corporate worship. When the people of the Lord decided to go meet with the Lord God Almighty and responded humbly to the invitation sent out by Hezekiah, it was an invitation to come gather together and worship.

God's laws to His people had decreed that there were feasts throughout the year that every male was supposed to attend within Israel's territory and the families were supposed to join them at certain points.

And it wasn't a legalistic matter, rather it was the Lord declaring to the people, come and meet with me so that we may maintain this relationship. And there were outcomes to be expected from that worship.

Their worship of the Lord God Almighty, according to His prescribed means, were to be the guarantees of harvest and of rain and of even their animals' fertility and their own fertility and their victories in battle.

And when we see that they failed to do so, then the things, the curses were that these matters did not come. But yet here we have seen, Scripture is rampant with details of when God's people do come before Him, then there are mighty things that take place.

[7 : 49] So what is this outcome, or what are these outcomes of this corporate worship? What takes place here? The first thing that we notice is when they come to worship together corporately, and they meet with the Lord God as He has described, even with hearts prepared, because there is the emphasis here on the reality that these are the ones who prepare their hearts.

The first thing that we notice is that these people have a changed heart. There is a changed heart. And we notice it because it says that these many people gathered together, they came to celebrate this, but the first thing they did, even before they sacrificed the Passover lambs, and don't lose this, they arose and removed the altars which were in Jerusalem.

And they also removed all the incense altars and cast them into the brook Kidron. This was not Hezekiah. This was not the courts of the princess. It was the people who came together to worship decided that they needed to consecrate the area in which they were worshipping.

So they began to remove the high places and the incense altars and all the multitude of foreign objects of worship that were in the city. And then the reason we read the first verse in the 31st chapter is because we see even following this worship that they went beyond the confines of the city of Judah and they went through all the land.

But it says all of Israel, and it is not just speaking of the southern kingdom here, all of Israel who were present, those who went to worship, went throughout the regions of Judah, tore down the high places, tore up the altars, cut down the ashram, and then they even went into some of the regions outside of the kingdom of Judah.

[9 : 35] They went to Ephraim and Manasseh. Now the reason this is so astounding is because these high places have been present since the reign of Solomon.

It was when Solomon began to marry a multitude of wives, he began to erect the high places on every hill. And he was doing so because the wives he was bringing in had their foreign gods with the lowercase g that they were worshipping.

And since that time, no matter how good the king was, no matter how much right he did in the eyes of the Lord and the ways of his father David, the thing that continued to persist was the existence of the high places.

The high places were an ongoing stumbling block to the Lord's people. They remained, though some kings would open up the doors of the temple and people would worship, yet the high places, and we would read this refrain, yet he did not remove the high places, yet he did not remove the high places.

Some kings, of course, reinforced the high places. They erected more. They made more altars to false gods, and they erected more opportunities for people to worship idolatrously. But yet, one thing that we notice is that no matter how good the king is, the high places remained until we get to this point.

[10 : 53] Now, will they be present again after this? Sure, they'll come back because the people of God, just like the book of Judges, will continue to fall away from the Lord until he brings about this disciplinary action. But yet, what we notice is leading up to this worship event and immediately following this worship event, it was not the king who ordered the destruction of the high places, but rather it was the people who gathered together who did it themselves.

Why? Because worship changes the heart the way a commandment never can. The king had made plenty of decrees, but the people still held on to their idols.

But yet we find when they come together, together before the Lord God and to worship him in the manner in which he is prescribed, it is they who take the initiative, even those people who came from outside of Judah.

Now that's amazing because they have had neither temple, nor priests, nor Levites, and the entire existence of the northern kingdom, of those outside of the regions of Judah and Benjamin.

They have been worshiping idolatrously from the very beginning of the division. They've had the golden calves, they've had different temples and different altars erected. They've worshipped the bells, they've done all these things, but now they even go into their land.

[12 : 21] Why? It is not all of the northern kingdom, but it is those who came and worshipped went. For all that were present went back and began to tear down altars.

because we understand that being in the presence of the Lord is really a great impact upon the heart. It changes the heart of the individual.

And it changed even their desires and their ambitions. Is it lasting? Well, no, it's not going to be lasting. We understand that. But we still stand amazed at the reality that for this moment, at least historically, as long as it may last, because of this event, this really, if we confine it to 14 days of worship celebration, they tear down what could not have been removed in a multitude of years of kings, good and bad.

It had a direct impact upon their hearts. And the hearts began to change what they were focusing on. No longer did they need the high places. No longer did they want to worship in any manner that they saw fit.

They only wanted to worship in the proper manner. And that's exactly what each and every one of us do. I heard a testimony this morning. Someone was sharing with me.

[13 : 43] And it's great encouragement. And I don't say this for any manner of puffing me up because you'll see why in just a moment. They were sharing that they have a friend. And they were talking with their friend. Their friend is agnostic, which means he doesn't know if there's a God or not.

So maybe there is, maybe there's not. But he's just choosing not to worship. And so they were talking with their agnostic friend and their friend said, yeah, my mother took me to church and I went to church all these years and the pastor was always pulling on our emotions or doing this matter and doing this matter.

And the one sharing with me this morning said, well, then you haven't been to the right place. You haven't been to the right place. And what I love about this is they didn't say you need to come hear our pastor.

They said what you need is you just need to find someone who just preaches the word and lets the word do the work. Now, that's the greatest encouragement that any pastor of any healthy church can ever hear.

It is not, oh, come hear this man for he is a man just like anyone else. But rather, it was the testimony when this individual shared with their friend was when I sat under the word, then the word began to deal with my emotions and the word began to bring conviction.

[14 : 51] And it was not anybody persuading me through any kind of instruments. It was just the word. And the testimony was is when I began to worship the way scripture calls us to, it changed how I saw everything else.

It changed the heart. Too often, we try to make idols in high places out of varying things that really are not the essentials.

And those things detract and distract us from genuine worship. But when we have that real encounter, when we know we've met the Lord God Almighty the way he has called us to, it changes our hearts and wants us to remove every other distraction, every other hindrance.

And it wants us to tear it down for we don't want to meet him how we see fit, but how he has called us to. There is a changed heart. Secondly, we notice that when the body worships together corporately, there is conviction of sin.

There is conviction of sin. It tells us there, when they gathered together, there were a multitude gathered together and they arose and removed the altars. Now who did this?

[16 : 03] It was the people, right? They arose and removed the altars that were in Jerusalem. They also removed all the incense altars. And then it says, then they slaughtered the Passover lambs on the 14th of the second month. But notice this, it was during the slaughter of these lambs at the right time, the right day in the wrong month.

But notice what it says, and the priests and the Levites were ashamed of themselves. And the priests and the Levites were ashamed of themselves. If you remember while there was a delay, that we could not do it in the first month on the 14th day, we had to do it on the second month on the 14th day.

It was because there were not enough priests consecrated and purified to lead the people in worship. They were a nation with priests. Now, they were intended to be a nation of priests.

By this time, historically, they were a nation with priests. And now the church is a church of priests. We're not a church with priests. We are a church of priests. It is a scriptural interpretation of the priesthood of the believers. But what we notice here is here are these people that were to be leading them.

We don't know what necessarily brought about the conviction. It could have been the fact that this was the second month. It could have been the fact that they were looking at the blood that is being spilt. But what we do know is when they began to walk in obedience, they were ashamed of themselves.

[17 : 21] That's not a judgmental decryl. Because remember, the chronicler, the one writing the book of Chronicles, whoever he is, thinks highly of three different aspects of Jewish society.

The king, from the seat of David, the temple, and the priest. priest, more than likely, the author of the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles is a Levite, possibly even a priest.

Because he speaks highly of them, but yet he speaks here of the reality, too, that during this worship, they became ashamed of themselves, for they knew when they gathered together, we have not been doing this.

We have not been leading. We have not been ushering the people into the presence of the Lord. immediately prior to this, if we just go back to the kingdom or the king prior to the king Hezekiah, we would notice that it is the priest, even the high priest at that time, who is kind of leading and aiding in the false worship by building false altars.

But now, all of a sudden, we see conviction creeping in, that this is how we are supposed to have been doing it all along. It is this reality that we have not been living as we should.

[18 : 28] And conviction leads to change, because conviction, it does not bring action, really, is just an unfortunate feeling. Conviction will always lead to an action.

So it says, they were ashamed of themselves and consecrated themselves and brought burnt offerings to the house of the Lord. So they began to set themselves apart, brought their burnt offerings, rededicated themselves.

And then I love verse 16, they stood at their stations after their custom. That is, they went back to the work that God called them to do. They were not ashamed of themselves.

There's a great case study in how to properly handle shame. And that case study is found in the disciples of Christ.

There are two who leave in a very dire moment weeping. One is Judas Iscariot. When he realized that Jesus was going to be handed over for crucifixion, went before the priest and he threw the money down and said, what have I to do with this?

[19 : 38] They said, we don't have anything to do with that. That's blood money. And he went out weeping and wailing and sorrowful. And then we know the rest of the story. He went out and hung himself. The other one who went out weeping is Peter.

Peter betrayed the Lord. He heard the rooster crow and it tells us that he went away weeping and sorrowful and broken. But Peter's restored.

Both of them sorrowful. Both of them ashamed of their actions. One waits on the Lord to restore him and then returns to his post and goes back to his post and stands as post faithful until that day when Peter is crucified later because he dies by crucifixion.

Church history tells us that Peter requested to be crucified upside down. Which sped up the asphyxiation and death process but he did it because he said he was not worthy to die in the same manner that his Lord had died.

So he said if you crucify me crucify me upside down. He stood at his post from that day forward. The other thought maybe he could go to the priest and take care of it and handle things in his own way and took matters into his own hand and went and hung himself.

[20 : 48] He said well it's because Satan entered him. Sure he did. I understand that. But he's also held responsible for his own choices. Here we find that the priests and Levites are ashamed of themselves and they don't just throw up their hands and say oh well conviction has come there's nothing I can do I've fallen and there's no help for me.

No they bring their burnt offerings they lay it back on the altar and then they return to their stations and stand. They go back to work. Every one of us fail. Every one of us at some moment in an aspect of corporate worship more than likely will come under conviction for a reality in our lives that we wish were not present.

Does that mean we throw our hands up and say oh woe is me and walk out of here and leave or do we go before the altar of the Lord and we claim that whole burnt offering who is Jesus Christ again and we cry out for mercy and forgiveness and then return back to our station and our post and stand and do what we were commanded to do.

For it says they stood at their stations after their custom according to the law of Moses the man of God. The reason that they were worshipping in the second month is because they had not been standing at their station.

They had been playing. But the shame and the conviction that came brought about a repentance within them so that they consecrated themselves again renewed themselves and returned back to the position we see the conviction of sin.

[22 : 18] Third, not only do we see changed hearts we see a conviction of sin. Third, which is a third truth that I believe that every time we gather together to worship corporately we ought to see and that is the character of God is revealed.

The more we worship, the more we gather corporately, the more of the character of God that ought to be displayed. And we see it here. We've already seen it once and that God graciously permitted them to come before him on the second month and accepted that worship.

But it goes a little deeper. Verse 18, it tells us, For a multitude of the people, even many from Ephraim and Manasseh and Issachar and Zebulun, that's people outside of Judah, for a multitude of people, even many of them had not purified themselves.

So the Lord God had said, Come before me, you ought to prepare your hearts, you ought to prepare your minds, you ought to purify yourselves. Right? There's purification laws that are respectable.

It is applicable. But they had not purified themselves, yet they ate the Passover otherwise than prescribed. Now the Pharisees in the New Testament time would have a hard time with that.

[23 : 31] Because you couldn't go eat after going out to market without purification. They had a hard time with Christ in that. But they should not be surprised because if they had just known their scripture. As a matter of fact, 2 Chronicles was the last portion of scripture they had.

It was the newest version of scripture. So if they had just paid attention here, maybe they would not have got so bent out of shape about Jesus and his disciples not adhering to all the purification laws of being out in the market.

But then again, the laws that they were talking about were laws that were formed between the time when the book of Chronicles was compiled and completed and the time of Christ, it is in that intertestamental time, that 400 years of silence when God went silent, so man got busy and man began to detail all the laws and came up with all, there were oral laws that they made written laws and as man always does, they added their own interpretation to the laws and therefore they extended even the reach of the law.

Yet we know that these people are not purified as they ought to be, yet they ate the Passover, the holiest of every meal of the Jewish people. For Hezekiah prayed for them.

Remember how we saw the reality that Hezekiah is a type of Christ? He's not perfect, but he's a type. Portraying what we see the fullness of in Jesus Christ.

[24 : 52] He extends the invitation, he introduces the worship, he makes it accessible, he offers a sacrifice that purifies each and every segment of society. That's why He brings so many, seven, He brings four different groups of seven of sin sacrifices for every different segment of people, seven being the number of completion.

He is so representative of what Christ is the fullness thereof. And now we see Him even interceding for those who worship, who had not taken the time to purify themselves, they haven't went through the law, but there's something really unique about them.

He prays for them, Hezekiah prays for them, says. And He prays for the people, may the good Lord pardon. So the first thing He does is He prays according to the character of God.

He knows that the Lord God is good. He knows that when He goes before Him with this petition, He is approaching one who is good and all that it stands for.

He says, may the good Lord pardon everyone who prepares his heart to seek God. They may not have cleansed their hands and they may not have purified their lives as much as they should, but they had prepared their heart to seek God.

[26 : 10] And Hezekiah knows that's the key. Right? It's not have they done all the laws, have they washed themselves in a proper way, but what does the heart look like? May He pardon those who've prepared his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though not according to the purification rules of the sanctuary.

Essentially what he's saying, his father, they're probably not doing it right, but they're trying. They're trying. These people who came from outside of Judah, they did not grow up around priests and Levites or even temple worship, but they humbly submitted and responded to the invitation to come to the temple.

And so Hezekiah intercedes for them. Verse 20 says, so the Lord heard Hezekiah and healed the people. He healed them. Why? Because sickness had been declared upon those who came before him in a holy manner, yet the Lord hears.

Two times in this passage, by the way, we are told that God hears the prayers here and at the end of the 30th chapter where it says that the Levites and priests arose and blessed the people and their voice ascended to the highest of heavens and he heard them.

So here we see the character of God. He is a God who is good. He is a God that is accepted. He is a God that listens and hears and responds actively to the prayers of his people.

[27 : 39] So we notice the character of God that's revealed. When we come together and we worship corporately, we ought to see more and more of the character of God being displayed among us.

Fourth and finally, we see that this worship, this corporate gathering of God's people leads to a consecrated time. The law declared that they would worship for seven days.

There would be a great celebration on the first day. There would be a great celebration at the end of those seven days on the seventh day and there would be this time in between. It says that they did that.

They worshiped for seven days. They ate. They celebrated. I mean, it's one grand fellowship meal is really what it is. Baptists are not the first ones to come up with the whole eating at church thing, right? God actually originated that.

That's what the fellowship offering is and the peace offering. I've told you that before. It's a wonderful thing, right? The men, when we had our men's day, we had a peace offering. We had an animal put on fire that we ate together.

[28 : 36] That's a peace offering. Someone looked at me and said, it's a whole lot like scripture. I said, it is really. It's just exactly what that was. You take an animal, you put it on the altar, it cooked.

I don't want to belittle the altar at all. And then it came off of the altar and you ate it with your family or friends outside the gate of the temple. It was a peace offering. That's what the peace offering was.

You shared a meal together. Told you table fellowship is important, right? And you're saying, I set this before the Lord. He consecrated it. And now I'm eating it together. In case you men think I'm joking, I prayed over that animal before I put it on the fire.

And we had a peace offering and it was pretty good. Anyway, so this is exactly what's going on. That's why it's so important. So for seven days, they're having this celebratory meal.

It's not an excess. It's just, it's coming together, not focused on kingdoms, not focused on enemies, not focused on, it's just really focusing on the Lord and worshiping and encouraging one another.

[29 : 37] And they do it for seven days. Now this is a kingdom that has been divided for years by this time. And yet when they come to the end of the seven days, all the people gathered together and they say, hey, that was amazing.

Let's do another seven. You know what happened is time began to be more precious in worshiping together than it was in everything else that needed to be done.

We like to tell ourselves, oh, well, back in those days, they didn't have as much to do. Well, back in those days, you know, they either grew it or caught it. They didn't go by it. In those days, it was a little bit harder.

I've told people before, if you ever read anything by an old theologian, last name Knox, in the 1600s, you need to read his writings.

They say, why? Because he would read scripture from Genesis to Revelation every 30 days. Every 30 days, he would read the entire Bible. John Knox was.

[30 : 41] And people were like, man, that's stunning. Yeah. They said, yeah, but time was so much slower then. And I remind them, I said, yes. And they also read by candlelight then. Every 30 days. He read it.

His writing is deep. His preaching was astounding. And he read it over and over and over and over. Why? Because they consecrated the time.

Just like here, they said, well, let's do another seven days. And so for a moment, the thing that was precious was the gathering together. It was the worshiping with one another.

It was the focus on, this is a sweet time in the presence of the Lord. This is a time of us being together.

And they wanted more of that. This morning, Miss Lynn came to me. I still don't know where it came from. She found a, there was a clock underneath the pulpit. She said, there's a clock under the pulpit. She put it there. I said, Miss Lynn.

[31 : 41] She said, well, I know that you don't have clocks in the sanctuary. I just don't know where it came from. She said, you never look at us. I know. Besides, it was only like 4 o'clock, 4 a.m. So I said, I like that way. That one tells time.

I have all kinds of time. But anyway, I know it's kind of a laughing point at times because several years ago, there were two clocks in the sanctuary in here.

There was one right in front of me that nobody could see but me. And then there was one right here beside of me that Miss Lynn kept just so she could stay on time. And I believe in timeliness.

And one thing that you'll notice about your pastor, maybe you've noticed this already. I love the Christmas decorating times of year. I love the decorating and the VBS decorating because everything gets taken down and then everything kind of gets put back up.

And there are some things that don't ever get put back up. And most people are like, oh, like six months later, like what happened to our clock? I don't know. So I took the clocks down.

[32 : 41] Or some of us did. It wasn't just me. Why? You say, well, you have a watch, right? But I don't look at it. Everybody knows that. Why? Because when we're together, I don't want to be focused.

I know me. Not for you. I'm a respecer of your time. I am. I have a, by this time, I have a pretty good understanding of how long I've went.

I don't ever want to be a disrespecter of anyone's time or a disrespecter of those working with their children in the back and their time because your time is valuable and precious. But at the same time, I also know my tendency.

When a clock is in front of me, I'm looking at it. And my focus at that moment is on the time. And I haven't really set it apart, consecrated it to be in his presence.

It really has no disrespect. I just, I know my tendencies. It was for my benefit, not yours.

[33 : 38] And if you were to go back and you were to look on the church's website, every message that is on there is about the same length. I know how long I preach.

You know how long I preach better than I do. It's not like they got longer when we took the clock down. But one thing that did happen is I didn't focus on it. I didn't focus on it anymore. What's going on here is they decide we're in the Lord's presence and we'll tarry here as long as he allows us to.

And they consecrated the time. The most important use of their time at that moment was worship. Not what do we need to do when we leave here.

And we've noticed that. Corporate worship. We've all been in those where we were going through a service and we were like, I wish it would hurry up and end. And then we've been in those where it went extended and we say, where did the time go?

So what happens is we were worshiping corporately. And time was set apart. It became precious. And the most important thing is we were meeting with the one who was outside of time.

[34 : 55] Therefore, time didn't matter. We see these as outcomes of corporate worship. Outcomes that took place here. And outcomes that we ought to pray and anticipate that would take place in our lives today as we gather together and we worship as well.

We see it recorded for us in 2 Chronicles 30, 13 through 31, 1. Thank you, guys.