

## **Hezekiah's Reforms as a Picture of Individual Revival**

Hezekiah was one of the good kings of Judah, whose rule is described in 2 Chron. 29-32. What he did in the temple and in the national worship of Judah can be seen as a picture of what is done when a person, or a church, returns to God after a time of neglect and backsliding.

29:6-7 show how the people had sinned by forsaking God, turning away from him, and neglected his prescribed means of worship for a long time. The result was God's wrath and judgment on them (8-9). Hezekiah found it in his heart to renew the nation's covenant with God and so proceeded to a series of reforms.

### **1. Repairs and cleansing of the temple – 29:3-17**

In 29:3 he "opened the doors of the house of the LORD, and repaired them". Then he called together the priests and Levites to "carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place" (29:5). They sanctified themselves and did the work in eight days, dumping all the rubbish in the brook Kidron (29:16).

### **2. Sin offerings for atonement – 29:18-24**

They had cleansed the house, the altar of burnt offerings, the table of shewbread, and all the vessels. Everything that previous kings had thrown aside was brought back, cleansed and sanctified. Then Hezekiah came up to the house and they offered sin offerings for the kingdom, the sanctuary, and the nation, to make atonement for all Israel.

### **3. Praises to God – 29:25-30**

Then they set Levites in place with various instruments to worship according to the pattern set down by David, Gad, and Nathan, centuries before. The whole congregation worshipped and the singers sang with trumpets while the burnt offerings were made. Afterwards they sang the psalms of David and Asaph with gladness, bowed their heads, and worshipped (30).

### **4. Thank offerings and free will burnt offerings – 29:31-35**

Then they brought various sacrifices as thank offerings, peace offerings, and burnt offerings as it was in their hearts (31). The sacrifices were so many that there weren't enough priests to handle it, so the Levites had to help. In fact, the priests were lagging behind everyone else in their willingness to sanctify themselves to the work (34).

### **5. Restoration of Passover observance – 30**

God had commanded Israel to keep the Passover every year, but they had neglected it for so long that Hezekiah's determination to bring it back was something new (30:5). He had to send out messengers to the nation (including what had been the northern kingdom of Israel, who had already been defeated by the Assyrians) to announce that there would be a Passover celebration. Some people mocked (10), but others obeyed and so they observed it in the second month. This move of the people shamed some of the hesitant priests and Levites to "get on board" and sanctify themselves for the observance (15-17).

There was such enthusiasm for the observance that some of them ate the passover "otherwise than it was written". Evidently some fell sick because of it, but God healed them at the intercession of Hezekiah (18-20).

### **6. Breaking up of idols, tearing down the high places – 31:1**

After the passover, all the people went throughout Judah and Israel, breaking the idol images to pieces, cutting down the groves, and tearing down the high places and destroying the heathenish altars that had been used for centuries.

### **7. Restoration of the regular forms of worship – 31:2-21**

Hezekiah restored the 24 courses of priests and Levites in order to carry on the regular sacrifices and worship (morning and evening sacrifices, sabbaths, new moons, and the set feasts (Passover, Ingathering, Tabernacles, Day of Atonement). The people were to bring in tithes, to support the priests and Levites so they would be able to minister and to instruct the people (4). The people responded so enthusiastically that they had to prepare chambers on the temple to store the materials.

## **Application**

Many people would skim over this in reading, and think it is just a more or less interesting account of something that happened 2700 years ago, but it really is a blueprint, or at least a description of the various stages involved in a genuine revival, whether in the life of an individual, a church, or a nation. For the purpose of this lesson we will look just at the individual implications.

### **0. Preparation of the heart**

All the work began with what was in Hezekiah's heart, although I have to believe that God had also been awaking hearts throughout the nation so that they could heartily respond to Hezekiah's will.

So also in our own hearts – we cannot proceed to the “seven steps” below without willing hearts. Without that softening and conviction of the heart, any actions we take will be cold, perfunctory performance done merely out of unwilling obedience or a sense of duty. God prepares our hearts

### **1. Repairs and cleansing of the temple – 29:3-17**

The first step must be the ridding of our lives from the dirt and filth accumulated from long periods of neglecting God and not looking after our salvation. This means serious reflection and self-examination, and praying for God to expose all unconfessed sin in our lives.

Besides sin, it is sometimes necessary to rid ourselves of the clutter that distracts us from God, or takes up all our time and intention so that we cannot serve God effectively. By “clutter” I mean not only physical dirt or stuff, but also an abundance of daily activity that keeps us from being able to hear and serve God. These activities may not be sinful in themselves, and yet they take up our time and mental or emotional energy, and God gets pushed to the back burner.

It is interesting that they dumped the rubbish in the brook Kidron. The Kidron valley is far away and down low from the temple. The dirt and rubbish would eventually be washed away, never to be seen again. This is another of the Biblical pictures of how God removes our sins far from us (as far as east from west, in the depths of the sea, etc.)

### **2. Sin offerings for atonement – 29:18-24**

This is the necessary follow-up to recognizing and confessing sin. In the OT, God required physical sacrifices to atone for sin. Now we can look backwards and see that the perfect sacrifice, indeed, what really made all those OT sacrifices effectual at all, was the death of Christ on the cross. He is “the Lamb that taketh away the sins of the world”.

Recognizing and confessing sin is not enough, there needs to be a basis, or a grounds for forgiveness, and this God provided by Christ's death. So beyond confession, we ask God for forgiveness through Christ, and genuinely turn away from sins (stop doing them). If we confess and ask forgiveness, but have no intention of walking free of those sins in the future, we are just being religious.

### **3. Praises to God – 29:25-30**

The natural result of receiving forgiveness and redemption in Christ is to give God praise. We praise him for not leaving us ignorantly to wallow in sin; for making a way of forgiveness through the cross; for giving us repentance; for applying the blood of Christ to our lives; for accepting us into the family of God as adopted sons. This is why most church services throughout the world and history have had singing and worship as a prominent part of their meetings. Unfortunately, it is possible for people to participate in a dead and coldly religious way, not really entering into the joy of salvation. God is seeking those who will worship him in spirit

and in truth. We have no greater motivation to praise and worship than a consideration of our former sinful state, and how God has called and turned us to him in salvation.

We should not limit praise and worship to public meetings though. Our daily lives should be characterized by regular, private praise and worship.

#### **4. Thank offerings and free will burnt offerings – 29:31-35**

Besides praise and worship, or as an extension of them, we are to give abundant thanksgivings to God for his many blessings. We obviously should not limit this to an annual day, but should give thanks every day.

Heb. 13:15 – “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.”

We can also give something like the OT free will burnt offerings – we can give to the church or to the needy, or do service to God, not because it is a “tithe”, or somehow the meeting of a requirement, but simply because we love God or we see a need.

#### **5. Restoration of Passover observance – 30**

The Passover was the primary festival of Israel in showing their need of redemption. We see Christ as the perfect fulfillment of all the OT types of redemption – the skins God gave to Adam and Eve, the ram caught in the thicket, the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, forgiveness through the various types of Levitical sacrifices, etc. We must never lose sight of this in our own lives, but daily see Christ as our Passover Lamb, slain for our sins. He is “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1:29), and “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8).

But the other purpose of the Passover was remembrance. They were always to remember what God had done for them. Many of the psalms are recitations of God’s dealings with them in Egypt and the wilderness. So we also must “remember to remember” all God’s mighty works in our lives.

Dt. 4:9 – “Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy son’s sons.”

Remembering is also why we meet on Sundays, and is the motivation for keeping the communion. 1 Cor. 11:25 – “... this do ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of me”.

#### **6. Breaking up of idols, tearing down the high places – 31:1**

As we progress in Christian life, God may show us that we have set up idols in our own hearts – job, hobby, entertainments, denomination, sometimes even family. The reforms under Hezekiah showed the people the great offense that existed by the presence of actual idols and places of heathen worship throughout the land, and they destroyed them all. So when we come to recognize that something in our lives has taken the place of the true God, and is robbing him of our undiluted love and obedience, the response must be to purge those things out of our lives. This may be painful, but true freedom will only be experienced when we are free of idolatry.

#### **7. Restoration of the regular forms of worship – 31:2-21**

Usually when individuals have fallen away from a living, daily walk with Christ, they neglect the forms of Christian living – meeting together with the church, reading the Bible, private prayer, observance of the communion, putting off water baptism, etc. One sign of a genuine revival in the individual heart is a resumption of these activities with a new vigor and desire, not out of a cold sense of duty.

**So in summary**, the 7 (actually 8) lessons of Hezekiah's reforms as applying to us, are:

- Preparation of the heart
- Confession and repentance of all known sin
- Receiving forgiveness through the blood of Christ
- Praise
- Thanksgiving
- Remembrance
- Tearing down all false idols
- Walking in the regular forms of Christianity and true righteousness

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