

2 Chronicles 29 – Thursday, March 30th, 2017

2 Chronicles 29 -- 1 Hezekiah became king when he was twenty-five years old, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abijah the daughter of Zechariah. 2 And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done.

- The chapter begins by re-introducing us to King Hezekiah, who we first met back when we were studying the books of Kings.
- Couple of thoughts here, the first of which is that once again we have a good king coming from a very wicked man as a father.
- Namely, Ahaz, who as Hezekiah's father, did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. He was both a wicked father and king.

- This actually ties into the second thought, which has to do with what I believe was the influence of a godly mother in a son's life.
- The reason I believe his mother had a godly influence in Hezekiah's life is because her name is recorded for us in verse one.
- This speaks to the paramount importance of a mother's relationship with her son and it having more influence than the father.

G. Campbell Morgan - "His mother was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah, probably the person mentioned by the Prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 8:2) as a 'faithful witness.' This possible friendship of his mother for the prophet, combined with the certainty that up to this time he had been under the influence of Isaiah's ministry, may account for Hezekiah's action on coming to the throne."

2 Kings 18:5-8 - 5 He trusted in the LORD God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him. 6 For he held fast to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses. 7 The LORD was with him; he prospered wherever he went. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him. 8 He subdued the Philistines, as far as Gaza and its territory, from watchtower to fortified city.

- While I'm careful about referring to the secret of success given that the world has sort of hijacked this term this is the case here.
- Clearly, Hezekiah's secret to success was due to trusting in the Lord, holding fast to the Lord and not departing from the Lord.
- As such, we're told in verse seven how that the Lord was always with him, and that the Lord prospered him wherever he went.

3 In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the LORD and repaired them. 4 Then he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them in the East Square, 5 and said to them: "Hear me, Levites! Now sanctify yourselves, sanctify the house of the LORD God of your fathers, and carry out the rubbish from the holy place. 6 For our fathers have trespassed and done evil in the eyes of the LORD our God; they have forsaken Him, have turned their faces away from the dwelling place of the LORD, and turned their backs on Him. 7 They have also shut up the doors of the vestibule, put out the lamps, and have not burned incense or offered burnt offerings in the holy place to the God of Israel. 8 Therefore the wrath of the LORD fell upon Judah and Jerusalem, and He has given them up to trouble, to desolation, and to jeering, as you see with your eyes. 9 For indeed, because of this our fathers have fallen by the sword; and our sons, our daughters, and our wives are in captivity. 10 "Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with the LORD God of Israel, that His fierce wrath may turn away from us. 11 My sons, do not be negligent now, for the LORD has chosen you to stand before Him, to serve Him, and that you should minister to Him and burn incense."

- I find it rather interesting that Hezekiah, who is only 25-years old at this time, would do all of this in his first month as the king.
- It seems that this very young man and very good king is off to a very good start in that he obviously has his priorities in order.
- Specifically related to reopening and repairing the house of the Lord as well as also reestablishing worship, as we'll soon see.

- Before we move on to verse twelve, there are a couple of very interesting details here that can be easily missed at first read.
- Notice in verse six where we're told that Israel had forsaken the Lord by turning their backs, instead of their faces to the Lord.
- The reason I mention this detail is because turning your back towards God is actually the pagan practice of the Muslims today.

- The second detail, which in some ways is even more interesting, has to do with carrying out the rubbish from the holy place.
- Again, at first read, one can easily miss a very important detail, which we have recorded in the book of 2nd Kings chapter 18:4.

2 Kings 18:4 He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan.

- This is interesting for a couple of reasons, one of which is that Hezekiah broke in pieces the bronze serpent Moses had made.
- This is the same bronze serpent we learned about back when we were in our study through the book of Numbers chapter 21.
- It seems that this bronze serpent that Moses had made was preserved for about 800 years before Hezekiah finally destroys it.

- The question is why? Why would he break in pieces something representing God healing the children of Israel from serpents?
- The answer is found at the end of verse four where we're told that he called it Nehushtan because the Israelites worshipped it.
- In other words, they had made an idol out of it, such that, the children of Israel had turned it into an object of idolatrous worship.

- Lest we find ourselves being too hard on the Israelites for doing this, we would do well to consider how we're also prone to this.
- More specifically, that of our propensity in falling prey to the dangers of idolatry by making idols out of people, places, or things.
- Innate within us is this tendency to turn even the cross of Christ into idolatry, which is what the serpent on the pole, symbolized.

Numbers 21:5-10 -- 5 And the people spoke against God and against Moses: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread." 6 So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died. 7 Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD that He take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. 8 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live." 9 So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

THE SNAKE ON THE POLE	THE CHRIST ON THE CROSS
The serpent got Eve to look upon the tree.	Jesus would have us look upon a different tree.
Snakes paint for us a picture of sin.	Jesus died as payment for our sin.
Bronze is the metal of judgment.	Jesus took the judgment instead of us.
The bronze snake is put on the pole.	Jesus was judged for our sin, it put Him on the cross.
The snake was horizontal on a vertical pole.	Jesus a man (horizontal) restores us to God (vertical).
Seemed simply foolish to look at the pole.	Jesus dying on the cross looks foolish to most.
This was the only way to be healed.	Jesus is the only way to get to heaven.
It took faith in that hoped for, not yet seen.	Jesus is our faith, when we keep our eyes on Him.
It was fashioned into a symbol and an idol.	Jesus is made to be fashionable just a symbol.

- By the way, our modern day symbol for medicine actually comes from this passage describing healing from a snake on a pole.
 - This because, the medical world sees it as a symbol of healing in the sense of the physical as it relates to illness and disease.
 - It's also interesting to note that Jesus referred to this in the context of one of the most well known verses in the Bible John 3:16.

John 3:11-16 -- 11 Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. 12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? 13 No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

- There's one more thing I would like to point out here before we move on and it has to do with it taking 800 years to remove this.
 - The reason I point this out is because, up to this point, there was not even one king who had the spiritual spine to actually do it.
 - For Hezekiah to do this would have required that he stand up to powerful people under the opposition to be politically correct.

Luke 6:26 Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.

Galatians 1:10 Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Acts 5:29 Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than human beings!"

John 12:42-43 -- 42 Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not openly acknowledge their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; 43 for they loved human praise more than praise from God.

12 Then these Levites arose: Mahath the son of Amasai and Joel the son of Azariah, of the sons of the Kohathites; of the sons of Merari, Kish the son of Abdi and Azariah the son of Jehallelel; of the Gershonites, Joah the son of Zimmah and Eden the son of Joah; 13 of the sons of Elizaphan, Shimri and Jeiel; of the sons of Asaph, Zechariah and Mattaniah; 14 of the sons of Heman, Jehiel and Shimei; and of the sons of Jeduthun, Shemaiah and Uzziel. 15 And they gathered their brethren, sanctified themselves, and went according to the commandment of the king, at the words of the LORD, to cleanse the house of the LORD. 16 Then the priests went into the inner part of the house of the LORD to cleanse it, and brought out all the debris that they found in the temple of the LORD to the court of the house of the LORD. And the Levites took it out and carried it to the Brook Kidron. 17 Now they began to sanctify on the first day of the first month, and on the eighth day of the month they came to the vestibule of the LORD. So they sanctified the house of the LORD in eight days, and on the sixteenth day of the first month they finished. 18 Then they went in to King Hezekiah and said, "We have cleansed all the house of the LORD, the altar of burnt offerings with all its articles, and the table of the showbread with all its articles. 19 Moreover all the articles which King Ahaz in his reign had cast aside in his transgression we have prepared and sanctified; and there they are, before the altar of the LORD."

- If you're anything like me and I suspect that you are, you're having as hard of a time as I am wrapping your mind around all this.
 - It's really hard to imagine that it would take a total of sixteen days just to haul away all the rubbish that was there in the temple.
 - Not only had all this rubbish accumulated in the temple it was in such a state of disrepair the doors were closed to the temple.

20 Then King Hezekiah rose early, gathered the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of the LORD. 21 And they brought seven bulls, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven male goats for a sin offering for the kingdom, for the sanctuary, and for Judah. Then he commanded the priests, the sons of Aaron, to offer them on the altar of the LORD. 22 So they killed the bulls, and the priests received the blood and sprinkled it on the altar. Likewise they killed the rams and sprinkled the blood on the altar. They also killed the lambs and sprinkled the blood on the altar. 23 Then they brought out the male goats for the sin offering before the king and the assembly, and they laid their hands on them. 24 And the priests killed them; and they presented their blood on the altar as a sin offering to make an atonement for all Israel, for the king commanded that the burnt offering and the sin offering be made for all Israel. 25 And he stationed the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with stringed instruments, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, of Gad the king's seer, and of Nathan the prophet; for thus was the commandment of the LORD by his prophets. 26 The Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. 27 Then Hezekiah commanded them to offer the burnt offering on the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the LORD also began, with the trumpets and with the instruments of David king of Israel.

- Here we're told that Hezekiah reorganized the worship of the Lord and the sacrifices to the Lord in the newly reopened temple.
- I can't help but wonder what would have happened, or better said, what would have not happened, if Hezekiah didn't do this.
- In other words, it took a strong leader and a good king like Hezekiah to lead God's people in obedience to the Word of the Lord.

Of this one commentator said, "His zeal for God's glory made his obedience prompt and present, ready and speedy. He could not rest until he had reformed."

28 So all the assembly worshiped, the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded; all this continued until the burnt offering was finished. 29 And when they had finished offering, the king and all who were present with him bowed and worshiped. 30 Moreover King Hezekiah and the leaders commanded the Levites to sing praise to the LORD with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. So they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshiped.

- This is how our worship should be in the sense that we sing our praises with gladness and reverence regardless of our posture.
- Of course, this presupposes we have first, like with the temple, cleansed and reopened our hearts after taking out the rubbish.
- By that I mean, if our hearts are filled with the rubbish of this world, they will certainly not be filled with songs of praise to God.

F.B. Meyer - "This chapter contains a parable of the cleansing of the heart, meant to be a temple for God; but the doors of prayer are unopened, the lamps of testimony unlit, the burnt-offerings of self-sacrifice neglected. ...You tell me that you cannot sing the Lord's song; then I know you have gone into the strange land of backsliding. You acknowledge that for some time now you have taken no delight in god or his service; then I am sure that the temple is badly in need of renovation. ...The music of your life is still, because you are out of accord with the will of God; but when by surrender and consecration there is unison, your heart will be filled with songs without words, and love like an ocean in the fullness of her strength."

31 Then Hezekiah answered and said, "Now that you have consecrated yourselves to the LORD, come near, and bring sacrifices and thank offerings into the house of the LORD." So the assembly brought in sacrifices and thank offerings, and as many as were of a willing heart brought burnt offerings. 32 And the number of the burnt offerings which the assembly brought was seventy bulls, one hundred rams, and two hundred lambs; all these were for a burnt offering to the LORD. 33 The consecrated things were six hundred bulls and three thousand sheep. 34 But the priests were too few, so that they could not skin all the burnt offerings; therefore their brethren the Levites helped them until the work was ended and until the other priests had sanctified themselves, for the Levites were more diligent in sanctifying themselves than the priests. 35 Also the burnt offerings were in abundance, with the fat of the peace offerings and with the drink offerings for every burnt offering. So the service of the house of the LORD was set in order. 36 Then Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced that God had prepared the people, since the events took place so suddenly.

- The chapter ends with what I would argue is one of the most powerful principles found in scripture and it's in the very last verse.
- Notice in verse thirty-six where we're told all the people rejoiced that God had prepared the people as it took place suddenly.
- Here's where I'm going with this, God will often times prepare us for that which is prepared for us in order that we can handle it.

- I would suggest that this works both ways whether it's a preparation for prosperity or adversity, and whether it's sudden or slow.
- I think of Joseph who God prepared for 17 long years for that which was prepared for him in going from the pit to the pinnacle.
- Whether it's 17 days for Israel instead of 17 years like it was for Joseph, God will always prepare us for what's prepared for us.

I'd like to close with what one commentator wrote about this, as I think it sums it up perfectly, "It was, as a very great, so a sudden change, that the people, who but the other day were so ready to comply with wicked Ahaz in his idolatrous and impious prescriptions, were now so free and forward in God's service; whereby it plainly appeared to be the work of the Almighty God changing their hearts by his Holy Spirit."