

Significant Lessons From The Seemingly Insignificant

#15 Revival & Passover With Hezekiah

Joshua led the Israelites for about 28 years. The only Passover mentioned is the one observed when they first entered the Promised Land and observed Passover at Gilgal.

For about 3 centuries after the death of Joshua, anarchical conditions loomed as a result of lack of leadership and constant harassment by hostile neighbors.

Judges 21:25 In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

During this time, Passover is not mentioned in the life of the nation of Israel.

I Sam. 2:35a And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind:

Samuel's [bridge between Judges and the Kings] arrival in the 11th century BC at the end of the period of the Judges brought about a Religious Revival. From the time Samuel was born the Philistines had been dominating and harassing the Israelites.

God gave Samuel the task of gathering an army to rout the Philistines in a major battle

I Sam. 7:1-2 And the men of Kirjathjearim came, and fetched up the ark of the LORD, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the LORD. ² And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjathjearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.

Consider: Sorrow gripped Israel for 20 years. "The Ark [symbol of God's Presence] was put away like an unwanted box in an attic." It seemed like the LORD had abandoned His people.

As a prophet, Samuel was the first person in Israel since Moses to publicly declare repentance. The people had to return their loyalty and allegiance back to God to be successful in battle.

I Sam. 7:3-4 Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying,

- "IF you return to the LORD with all your hearts,
- then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths from among you, and
- Prepare Your Hearts For The LORD, and Serve Him Only;
["He who fails to prepare, prepares to fail."] and
- He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines."

⁴ So the children of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtoreths and served the LORD only.

I Sam. 7:5-6 And Samuel said, "Gather all Israel to Mizpah, and I will pray to the LORD for you." So they gathered together at Mizpah, drew water, and poured it out before the LORD.

[Sign of repentance for sin, turning from idols and determining to obey the LORD alone]

And they fasted that day, and said there, "We have sinned against the LORD."

And Samuel judged the children of Israel at Mizpah.

I Sam. 7:7-8 Now when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel had gathered together at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard of it, they were afraid of the Philistines. ⁸ So the children of Israel said to Samuel, "Do not cease to cry out to the LORD our God for us, that He may save us from the hand of the Philistines."

I Sam. 7:9-13 And Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the LORD. Then Samuel cried out to the LORD for Israel, and the LORD answered him. ¹⁰ Now as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel. But the LORD thundered with a loud thunder upon the Philistines that day, and so confused them that they were overcome before Israel. ¹¹ And the men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines and drove them back as far as below Beth Car. ¹² Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen, and called its name Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far the LORD has helped us." So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. Samuel died in 1012 BC. King Hezekiah began his reign over Judah in 715 BC = 297 Years

Passover #4 - King Hezekiah Keeps Passover - II Chronicles 29-31

Hezekiah [the Lord strengthens] ranks as one of the best of the kings of Judah.

II Kings 18:5-6 "He trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him. For he clave to the LORD, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses."

II Chron. 31:20-21 And thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah and wrought that which was good and right and truth before the LORD his God. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered.

II Chron. 29:1-2 Hezekiah became king *when he was twenty-five years old*, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. ... And he did *what was right* in the sight of the LORD,

1. Hezekiah Cleanses the Temple - II Chron. 29:3-9

After Ahaz's wicked reign, there was much work to do. Hezekiah boldly cleaned house.

- a. 1st year in the 1st month
- b. The temple in Jerusalem, whose doors had been nailed shut by Hezekiah's own father, was cleaned out and reopened. [29:3]
 - God would be the national priority again.
- c. Ahaz, who reigned 16 years, had stopped the Levitical ministry. Many of the Levites had never served in the Temple, even though they were from the priestly tribe.
- d. He brought in the priests and the Levites, assembled them in the East Square.
- e. "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*. [29:5]
- f. You **MUST** cleanse yourselves first before you can cleanse the temple and restore worship.
- g. 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*. [29:6]
- h. 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. [29:7]

- i. Therefore the wrath of the LORD fell upon Judah and Jerusalem [29:8a]
- j. There had been invasions by Syria, Edom and Philistia.
- k. He has given them up to trouble, to desolation and to jeering as you see with your eyes.
- l. For indeed, because of this our fathers have fallen by the sword; and our sons, our daughters, and our wives are in captivity. [29:9]

Note: From II Kings, we learn King Hezekiah destroyed the bronze serpent made by Moses. The bronze serpent was a religious relic that had reached the status of an idol. It is so easy for man to want to honor religious relics that have no power. Hezekiah was a man of faith who trusted the living God. He did not want the people worshipping a dead, useless image.

2. Hezekiah's Desire: II Chron. 29:10-11 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. 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."

- Hezekiah's 1st priority in the face of a national crisis:
Call the Nation & Leaders Back To The Proper Commitment To God

3. Action of the Levites: II Chron. 29:15-16 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.

Recall: There were at least 3 cleansings of the Temple & Jerusalem rooftops during the divided Kingdom. They removed the idols and altars to idols during a time of spiritual backsliding.

4. Timetable To Cleanse The Temple: II Chron. 29:17 Now they began to sanctify on the first day of the first month, [day they dedicated the Tabernacle at Mt. Sinai] and on the eighth day of the month they came to the vestibule of the LORD. [The porch was home to a pagan altar Ahaz had built. They destroyed it and put the altar to the LORD back where it belonged.] So they sanctified the house of the LORD in eight days, and on the sixteenth day of the first month they finished.

5. Hezekiah Restores Temple Worship - II Chron. 29:20-21

Then King Hezekiah rose early, gathered the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of the LORD. ²¹ And they brought 7 bulls, 7 rams, 7 lambs, and 7 male goats for a Sin Offering [atone for sins of people] 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.

II Chron. 29:24 And the priests killed them, and they made reconciliation with their blood upon the altar, to make an atonement for ALL Israel: for the king commanded that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for all Israel.

29:27b-29 And when the Burnt Offering [symbolized total dedication to the LORD] Began,

- the song of the LORD began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David king of Israel. [trumpets, cymbals, harps and lyres]
- And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded: and all this continued until the burnt offering was finished.
- And when they had made an end of offering, the king and all that were present with him bowed themselves and worshipped.

29:30b-31 And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped.

Then Hezekiah answered and said, Now ye have consecrated yourselves unto the LORD,

- come near and bring sacrifices and thank offerings into the house of the LORD.
- The congregation brought in sacrifices & thank offerings;
- and as many as were of a willing heart burnt offerings. [= total complete sacrifice]

II Chron. 29:32-33 And the number of the burnt offerings, which the congregation brought, was threescore and ten bullocks, an hundred rams, and two hundred lambs: all these were for a burnt offering to the LORD.

³³ And the consecrated things were six hundred oxen and three thousand sheep.

II Chron. 29:34-36 But the priests were too few, so that they could not flay all the burnt offerings: wherefore their brethren the Levites did help them, till the work was ended, and until the other priests had sanctified themselves:

for the Levites were more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests.

³⁵ And also the burnt offerings were in abundance, with the fat of the peace offerings, and the drink offerings for every burnt offering. So the service of the house of the LORD was set in order.³⁶ And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people: for the thing was done suddenly.

6. Hezekiah Celebrates Passover [1st Passover after Temple was built.]

II Chron. 30:1 And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover unto the LORD God of Israel.

II Chron. 30:2-3, 5 For the king had taken counsel, and his princes, and all the congregation in Jerusalem, to keep the Passover in the second month. [Iyar]

³ For they could not keep it at that time, [14th Nisan] because the priests had not sanctified themselves sufficiently, neither had the people gathered themselves together to Jerusalem.

⁵ So they established a decree to make proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba even to Dan, that they should come to keep the Passover unto the LORD God of Israel at Jerusalem: for they had not done it of a long time in such sort as it was written.

7. The Decree & Message:

II Chron. 30:6 So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah, as the king commanded, saying, O Israelites,

- Return To The Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, that He may return to those left of you who escaped out of the hands of the kings of Assyria.

30:7-9 And be not ye like your fathers, and like your brethren, which trespassed against the LORD God of their fathers, who therefore gave them up to desolation, as ye see.

⁸ Now be ye not stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but

- Yield Yourselves Unto The LORD, and
- Enter Into His Sanctuary, which He hath sanctified forever: and
- Serve The LORD Your God, that the fierceness of His wrath may turn away from you.

⁹ For If Ye Turn Again Unto The LORD, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land: for the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and Will Not Turn Away His Face From You, If Ye Return Unto Him.

8. Their Reaction: Some Mocked & Ridiculed: II Chronicles 30:10-11 So the posts passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh even unto Zebulun: but they laughed them to scorn and mocked them.

- Much of the remnant in bondage to Assyria was just as stiff-necked as their ancestors were when God dealt with them in the wilderness.
- They have an opportunity to make a new beginning and seeking God's compassion, grace and mercy.

¹¹ Some of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun Humbled Themselves and Came To Jerusalem. II Chron. 30:12-13 The hand of God was also on Judah to give them one heart to do what the king and the princes commanded by the word of the LORD. And there assembled at Jerusalem much people to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month, a very great congregation.

9. Preparing For Passover - II Chron. 30:14-20

- a. First act of preparation
 - Remove the idolatrous altars which King Ahaz had erected in each of the 4 corners of Jerusalem [II Chron. 28:24].
 - Took all the altars for incense away and cast ALL into the brook Kidron where they would be washed away by the flowing stream.
 - Then they killed the Passover on the 14th day of the 2nd month [Iyar].
 - The priests and the Levites were ashamed they had allowed themselves to become ceremonially unclean. Before they began offering the animals of Passover, they performed their own cleansing rituals and offered the burnt offerings prescribed by law.
 - Thus cleansed, they performed the ceremonial sprinkling of the Passover blood.

- There were many in the congregation, mainly from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar & Zebulun, who had not cleansed themselves prior to Passover, yet they participated in the feast. [It had been so long they may not have known the requirements.]
- Rather than berating them for disobedience of the law requirements, Hezekiah prayed for them, for those who would prepare their hearts to seek after God. The word pardon = kophar = to cover or atone; an official removing of the guilt of the sin committed.
- The LORD hearkened to Hezekiah and healed the uncleanness of all who sought to learn and do His will.
- It is our heart that God wants and not mere religious ritual.

10. The Feast of Unleavened Bread—II Chron. 30: 21-27

And the children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem kept the Feast Of Unleavened Bread 7 days with great gladness: and the Levites and the priests praised the LORD day by day, singing with loud instruments unto the LORD. And Hezekiah spoke comfortably unto all the Levites that taught the good knowledge of the LORD: they did eat throughout the feast 7 days, offering peace offerings, and making confession to the LORD God of their fathers. The whole assembly took counsel to keep other 7 days: and They Kept Other 7 Days With Gladness.

For Hezekiah king of Judah did give to the congregation 1,000 bullocks and 7,000 sheep; and the princes gave to the congregation 1,000 bullocks and 10,000 sheep: and a great number of priests sanctified themselves. And all the congregation of Judah, with the priests and the Levites, and all the congregation that came out of Israel, and the strangers that came out of the land of Israel, and that dwelt in Judah, rejoiced.

So there was great joy in Jerusalem: for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem. Then the priests the Levites arose and blessed the people: and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy dwelling place, even unto heaven.

11. Hezekiah Organized The Temple Ministry -II Chron. 31:1-21

Following the Passover sacrifice, the nation, in a renewed spirit of dedication, destroyed the idols throughout the land.

"Now when all this was finished, all Israel that were present went out to the cities of Judah, and brake the images in pieces, and cut down the groves [asherah poles], and threw down the high places and the altars out of all Judah and Benjamin, in Ephraim also and Manasseh, until they had utterly destroyed them all. Then all the children of Israel returned, every man to his possession, into their own cities."

- Hezekiah knew the blessings of the Passover wouldn't continue unless the people could participate in the regular ministry at the temple.
- He followed David's instructions [I Chron. 23-26] and organized the priests and Levites for ministry at the temple.
- He set a good example by providing from his own flocks and herds the sacrifices needed day by day and month by month.

- He sought the LORD and did everything for Him from his heart. [31:21]
- He admonished the people to bring their tithes and offerings to the temple to support the priests and Levites.
- He allocated special chambers in the temple for storing the gifts.
- He appointed faithful men to oversee the distribution of food.
- In the 3rd month, the time of grain harvest, the people brought the grain and the priests and Levites heaped it up!
- During the 7th month when the orchard and vineyard harvests came in, the gifts of fruit and wine were added to the store.
- The tithes and offerings brought to the newly consecrated temple were far more than the king expected.
- A worshiping people will always be a generous people.

Spiritual Renewal In Me

Ps. 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

Eph. 4:23-24 Be renewed in the spirit of your mind. And that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Spiritual Renewal Comes Through Commitment & Cleansing.

It Will Express Itself in Celebration, Worship & Praise.

"The normal Christian life begins with faith in Christ and should continue in an ever-growing commitment to the Lord."

I. Spiritual Renewal Comes Through Commitment To The Lord

Consider: Hezekiah could have looked at his circumstances and thought:

1. Things are so grim. My father shut down the Temple. Idolatry is rampant.
2. We have lost so much to the enemy who seems to be oppressing us.
3. He could have grown depressed and been paralyzed into doing nothing.
4. BUT he committed himself to follow the Lord.

Truth: Commitment To God Is The Most Pressing Need In Time Of Pressing Need

1. Only AFTER we have committed to Him are we free to seek Him working in our need.
2. Often the very reason God sends the problem is to get us to stop and get our priorities back in line.
3. THEN, He often deals with the problem in ways we never could have --- even if we had put all our efforts into solving it.

A. Commitment To God Brings Hope Into The Darkest Situations

Truth: When God breaks into any situation, the darkness is dispelled by the light of His presence.

We all have been in hopeless, discouraging situations. Are you there now? You have given every effort to deal with it ---to no avail. Is there any problem too big for God?

Jer. 32:27 Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for me?

Consider: Adoniram Judson, great pioneer missionary to Burma, was suffering from fever in a stinking, rat-infested prison. He had seen little fruit for his years of hard work and sacrifice. He had gone through many setbacks and hardships. A letter from a friend arrived which asked, "Judson, how's the outlook?" He replied, "The outlook is as bright as the promises of God."

- Commitment to God brings hope into the darkest of situations.

B. Commitment To God Always Involves A Radical Commitment To His Word

- Willing to obey what God's Word says and how we are to live

Every day the world, the flesh and the devil seek to pull us back into a spiritual lethargy that chokes the new life we received when we were born again. "Like silver exposed to the elements, we grow tarnished and dull spiritually." We constantly need renewal or revival.

- Spiritual renewal is always centered on the renewal of the authority of God's Word
- A renewed commitment to God and His Word always reveals areas of our lives that have been displeasing to Him.

Ps. 119:130 The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.

II. Spiritual Renewal Comes Through Cleansing

Ps. 119:23-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:

²⁴ And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

- God cannot use you to impact others for Christ until you cleanse yourself from defilement.
- These priests had a lot to deal with - took 16 days to haul out all the idols and trash.
- Thank God - - He will restore us and use us again for His purpose!
- When the cleansing was done, they worshiped and offered 3 kinds of sacrifices.
 - Sin Offering = Substitution
 - Burnt Offering = Consecration = Offered TOTALLY to the LORD
Worshiper did not eat any of it = complete surrender & holiness = Rom. 12:1-2
 - Thank Offering = Devotion = voluntary offering expressing love and gratitude for God's many blessings
 - Col. 2:7 - We are to be "overflowing with gratitude."

III. Spiritual Renewal Expresses Itself In Celebration & Worship

- Sing praises with joy - When you realize how God has moved in your heart to reveal Jesus Christ, you cannot mumble through a song with no joy!

Ps. 100 Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands.

² Serve the LORD with gladness: come before His presence with singing.

³ Know ye that the LORD He is God: it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.

⁴ Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and bless His name.

⁵ For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting; and His truth endureth to all generations.