

A REVIVAL IN JERUSALEM

BIBLE TEXT : II Chronicles 30:1-27; 31:1-21

LESSON 340 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness" (Psalm 29:2).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

2 Chronicles 30:1-27

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.

² For the king had taken counsel, and his princes, and all the congregation in Jerusalem, to keep the passover in the second month.

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

⁴ And the thing pleased the king and all the congregation.

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.

⁶ So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah, and according to the commandment of the king, saying, Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and he will return to the remnant of you, that are escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria.

⁷ 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 stiffnecked, as your fathers *were*, *but* yield yourselves unto the LORD, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever: 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

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

A Reminder

On that great day when the Children of Israel left Egypt forever, God instituted a feast called the Passover. This feast was to be observed once a year to remind the Israelites of God's goodness to them in bringing them out of slavery.

Many years had passed since that day, and the Israelites were not keeping the feast. Not only had they forgotten the great deliverance, but they had forgotten God Himself. Instead of worshiping God, they worshiped idols; and because of their sins God had left terrible judgments come upon them.

Foreign nations had come into Canaan and had taken captive much of Israel. Moses had warned their forefathers that this would happen if they turned their back upon God. Moses had listed a great many blessings they could enjoy if they obeyed God; but he also added the curses they would suffer if they disobeyed (Deuteronomy 28). No one can disobey the laws of God without suffering. Punishment may not come right away, but be sure your sins will find you out.

Israel had disregarded all the warnings, had worshiped other gods, and the curse of being carried into captivity had come upon them. God had warned: "The LORD shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them: and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth" (Deuteronomy 28:25). This happened to them a little at a time, until today we find their descendants in all the nations of the world.

God's Mercy

God's mercy has followed His people in their trouble. When Israel was at the peak of her glory during the reign of Solomon, God had promised that though the people turned from Him so that he would have to punish them, yet if they would humble themselves and pray, and repent, He would forgive: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (II Chronicles 7:14).

Notice that He said they must turn from their wicked ways if they wanted to enjoy the blessings of God. Too many people today think they can be Christians and go on committing sins. Jesus said, "Go, and sin no more." If anyone wants to enjoy the blessings of God, he must repent and turn from his sins. God loves to hear a person say, "Forgive me," if those words are meant from the heart.

Hezekiah's Righteousness

Wicked kings had caused Israel and Judah to sin. From the time the nation was divided there had been no good kings in Israel. Judah, however, had enjoyed a few good kings. When Hezekiah began to rule in Judah, "He did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done" (II Chronicles 29:2). What a change that made in Judah! The Temple was cleaned up and the true worship of God again established. All this made the people very happy.

him.

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ Nevertheless divers of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem.

¹² Also in Judah the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king and of the princes, by the word of the LORD.

¹³ And there assembled at Jerusalem much people to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month, a very great congregation.

¹⁴ And they arose and took away the altars that *were* in Jerusalem, and all the altars for incense took they away, and cast *them* into the brook Kidron.

¹⁵ Then they killed the passover on the fourteenth *day* of the second month: and the priests and the Levites were ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought in the burnt offerings into the house of the LORD.

¹⁶ And they stood in their place after their manner, according to the law of Moses the man of God: the priests sprinkled the blood, *which they received* of the hand of the Levites.

¹⁷ For *there were* many in the congregation that were not sanctified: therefore the Levites had the charge of the killing of the passovers for every one *that was* not clean, to sanctify *them* unto the LORD.

¹⁸ For a multitude of the people, *even* many of Ephraim, and Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good LORD pardon every one

¹⁹ *That* prepareth his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though *he be* not *cleansed* according to the purification of the sanctuary.

²⁰ And the LORD hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people.

²¹ And the children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness: and the Levites and the priests praised the LORD day by day, *singing* with loud instruments unto the LORD.

²² And Hezekiah spake comfortably unto all the Levites that taught the good knowledge of the LORD: and they did eat throughout the feast seven days, offering

Hezekiah knew about the law of the Passover, which had been given almost eight hundred years before. He was sorry that the feast had not been kept all through the years. He wanted to do what God had commanded, so he sent letters not only to the tribe of Judah over which he ruled, but to all Israel as well, asking them to come to Jerusalem to observe the feast of the Passover.

Hezekiah did not ask the people of Israel to join in his kingdom, and swear allegiance to him. The government was not so important to him as the business of serving God. He wanted those people to be saved, so they could go to Heaven and have eternal life. Our life here is very short, and it is important that we use our time to prepare for eternity.

The Date of the Feast

The commandment to Moses had been that the feast was to be held in the first month, beginning the fourteenth day. The lambs for the sacrifice were to be selected early so that any imperfections could be observed during those two weeks.

Cleaning the Temple and purifying the priests had to be done on such short notice that there was not time to make all the preparations. Moses had also said that if for some reason the feast could not be held in the first month, it could be held in the second. Hezekiah talked it over with the princes and some members of the congregation, and it was decided to hold the feast in the second month. They wanted to be sure that when they came before God to worship, they would be in such a condition that he could bless them. They not only needed to clean the Temple, but they needed a change of heart.

This was to be a great event. With the invitation to the feast went an earnest request that the people turn from their sins and turn to God. They would not enjoy the Passover if they were sinners. This was to be more than a picnic where old friends could meet and talk about other days. This was to be a worship service in which people would come to enjoy the blessings of God and communion with Him.

When we come together for a camp meeting or convention, we receive the greatest blessings if we pray ahead of time and ask God to work in our midst. When we prepare our hearts for a spiritual feast by talking with God, we become a blessing to others and go away strengthened ourselves.

Happy in Doing These Things

When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, which we observe instead of the Passover, He said, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." Happiness comes when we do God's bidding in His way. The Apostle Paul warned the people not to eat the Lord's Supper if they were sinners. That would bring punishment upon them. But when a child of God comes to the Lord's table and thinks about the night that Jesus was betrayed, he receives a rich blessing. We look not only back to Christ's sacrifice, but we also look forward to the day when we shall eat with Him in His Kingdom.

Hezekiah reminded the people of the promises God had made to them if they would repent. Many of the Israelites were now in captivity. If those who were left would seek God with all their heart, He would bring back their loved ones.

You would think that everyone would have begun to repent and pray when he received such a letter. Here was hope that God was going to help them. But instead, the people mocked those who brought the messages, and "laughed them to scorn." Are not sinners doing the same thing today?

The world has never wanted to hear the message of the Gospel. The heart of man seems to be only evil continually; and

peace offerings, and making confession to the LORD God of their fathers.

²³ And the whole assembly took counsel to keep other seven days: and they kept *other* seven days with gladness.

²⁴ For Hezekiah king of Judah did give to the congregation a thousand bullocks and seven thousand sheep; and the princes gave to the congregation a thousand bullocks and ten thousand sheep: and a great number of priests sanctified themselves.

²⁵ 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.

²⁶ 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.

²⁷ 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.

2 Chronicles 31:1-21

¹ 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, 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.

² And Hezekiah appointed the courses of the priests and the Levites after their courses, every man according to his service, the priests and Levites for burnt offerings and for peace offerings, to minister, and to give thanks, and to praise in the gates of the tents of the LORD.

³ *He appointed* also the king's portion of his substance for the burnt offerings, *to wit*, for the morning and evening burnt offerings, and the burnt offerings for the sabbaths, and for the new moons, and for the set feasts, as *it is* written in the law of the LORD.

⁴ Moreover he commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and the Levites, that they might be encouraged in the law of the LORD.

⁵ And as soon as the commandment came abroad, the children of Israel brought in abundance the firstfruits of corn, wine, and oil, and honey, and of all the increase of the field; and the tithe of

there are very few who are seeking to be saved. How happy we are who have given our hearts to the Lord and know that Heaven is awaiting our coming! And what joy we have in seeing others saved!

There have always been a few who have responded to the Gospel message. Some of those in Israel who received the letters were willing to obey God and come to Jerusalem to observe the Passover.

The tribe of Judah was more responsive to the message. Many of them came to Jerusalem and helped to clean out the rest of the altars to the idols and destroy them.

Worship from the Heart

Not only must the altars of the idols be torn down and the Temple cleansed, but the people, too, must cleanse themselves for the feast of the Passover. However, there was not time to go through all the outward cleansing ceremonies and some of the people must have suffered a plague for eating the Passover without this cleansing. Hezekiah prayed that God might pardon the lack of these outward acts, and heal the people. God heard his prayer because the hearts of the people were turned to God, and that was more important than ceremony. It is the worship from the heart that God wants.

There came a time later in the history of Israel when they diligently kept all the feasts and ceremonies, but their hearts were far from God. God said at that time: "Bring no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with" (Isaiah 1:13, 14). Those people were trying to serve God with sin in their hearts. But God wanted them to be holy. "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well" (Isaiah 1:16, 17).

Rejoicing in the Lord

God heard the prayer of Hezekiah, saw that the people were honest, and rained down His blessings on those who had prepared their heart to seek Him. For seven days they confessed their sins and enjoyed the blessings, which came from the Lord. They kept the feast of unleavened bread "with great gladness: and the Levites and the priests praised the LORD day by day, singing with loud instruments unto the LORD." And the Levites taught the people "the good knowledge of the LORD." "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgment, and his ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33).

Never since the time of Solomon had the Israelites been so happy! They had turned to God and were worshiping Him according to His command. That brought true happiness. After seven days, they decided to stay seven more. Everyone rejoiced, even the strangers who happened to be in Jerusalem.

Finally the great feast ended and all the people went home. Think what they had gained by coming! They were united again, worshiping God in the unity of the faith. They had a greater purpose than ever before to hold up the true religion; and wherever they saw idols and their altars, they tore them down.

They were happy because they had fulfilled the will of God. God blesses when we give all to Him.

The revival was only the beginning of a new era of true worship in Jerusalem. Hezekiah established the church, the courses of the priests, the support of the priests by tithes, and all that needed to be done to worship God in an acceptable way. All that Hezekiah did, he did with all his heart, and God prospered him and the Children of Israel.

all *things* brought they in abundantly.

⁶ And *concerning* the children of Israel and Judah, that dwelt in the cities of Judah, they also brought in the tithe of oxen and sheep, and the tithe of holy things which were consecrated unto the LORD their God, and laid *them* by heaps.

⁷ In the third month they began to lay the foundation of the heaps, and finished *them* in the seventh month.

⁸ And when Hezekiah and the princes came and saw the heaps, they blessed the LORD, and his people Israel.

⁹ Then Hezekiah questioned with the priests and the Levites concerning the heaps.

¹⁰ And Azariah the chief priest of the house of Zadok answered him, and said, Since *the people* began to bring the offerings into the house of the LORD, we have had enough to eat, and have left plenty: for the LORD hath blessed his people; and that which is left *is* this great store.

¹¹ Then Hezekiah commanded to prepare chambers in the house of the LORD; and they prepared *them*,

¹² And brought in the offerings and the tithes and the dedicated *things* faithfully: over which Cononiah the Levite *was* ruler, and Shimei his brother *was* the next.

¹³ And Jehiel, and Azariah, and Nahath, and Asahel, and Jerimoth, and Jozabad, and Eliel, and Ismachiah, and Mahath, and Benaiah, *were* overseers under the hand of Cononiah and Shimei his brother, at the commandment of Hezekiah the king, and Azariah the ruler of the house of God.

¹⁴ And Kore the son of Imnah the Levite, the porter toward the east, *was* over the freewill offerings of God, to distribute the oblations of the LORD, and the most holy things.

¹⁵ And next him *were* Eden, and Miniamin, and Jeshua, and Shemaiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah, in the cities of the priests, in *their* set office, to give to their brethren by courses, as well to the great as to the small:

¹⁶ Beside their genealogy of males, from three years old and upward, *even* unto every one that entereth into the house of the LORD, his daily portion for their service in their charges according to their courses;

¹⁷ Both to the genealogy of the priests by the house of their fathers, and the Levites from twenty years old and upward, in their charges by their courses;

¹⁸ And to the genealogy of all their little

QUESTIONS

1. What feast did Hezekiah wish to hold in Jerusalem?
2. When was this feast first established?
3. How long had it been since it was observed?
4. What did the Israelites do to prepare for the feast?
5. How was the news received in Israel and Judah?
6. What happened at the feast?
7. How long did the feast last?
8. What kind of worship is acceptable to God?
9. What did Hezekiah do after the feast?

ones, their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, through all the congregation: for in their set office they sanctified themselves in holiness:

¹⁹ Also of the sons of Aaron the priests, *which were* in the fields of the suburbs of their cities, in every several city, the men that were expressed by name, to give portions to all the males among the priests, and to all that were reckoned by genealogies among the Levites.

²⁰ And thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought *that which was* good and right and truth before the LORD his God.

²¹ 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.