

THE RESTORATION OF THE PASSOVER

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

LESSON 340 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "The LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him" (II Chronicles 30:9).

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.

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I Hezekiah's Proclamation Concerning the Passover

1. Following the cleansing of the Temple, Hezekiah decreed that the Passover should be kept, II Chronicles 30:1, 5;

Exodus 12:1-14

¹ And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying,

² This month *shall be* unto you the beginning of months: it *shall be* the first month of the year to you.

³ Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth *day* of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of *their* fathers, a lamb for an house:

⁴ And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take *it* according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb.

⁵ Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take *it* out from the sheep, or from the goats:

⁶ And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.

⁷ And they shall take of the blood, and strike *it* on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it.

⁸ And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; *and* with bitter *herbs* they shall eat it.

⁹ Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast *with* fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof.

¹⁰ And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire.

¹¹ And thus shall ye eat it; *with* your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it *is* the LORD'S passover.

¹² For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I *am* the LORD.

¹³ And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye *are*: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.

¹⁴ And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.

Leviticus 23:5

⁵ In the fourteenth *day* of the first month at even *is* the LORD'S passover.

2. Because of the ceremonial uncleanness of the priests and people, the Passover had to be observed in the second month, instead of the first, II Chronicles 30:2-4;

2 Chronicles 29:17

¹⁷ Now they began on the first *day* of the first month to sanctify, and on the eighth day of the month came they to the porch of the LORD: so they sanctified the house of the LORD in eight days; and in the sixteenth day of the first month they made an end.

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 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:

2 Chronicles 29:34

³⁴ 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.

Numbers 9:6-14

⁶ And there were certain men, who were defiled by the dead body of a man, that they could not keep the passover on that day: and they came before Moses and before Aaron on that day:

⁷ And those men said unto him, We *are* defiled by the dead body of a man: wherefore are we kept back, that we may not offer an offering of the LORD in his appointed season among the children of Israel?

⁸ And Moses said unto them, Stand still, and I will hear what the LORD will command concerning you.

⁹ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

¹⁰ Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If any man of you or of your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or *be* in a journey afar off, yet he shall keep the passover unto the LORD.

¹¹ The fourteenth day of the second month at even they shall keep it, *and* eat it with unleavened bread and bitter *herbs*.

¹² They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it: according to all the ordinances of the passover they shall keep it.

¹³ But the man that *is* clean, and is not in a journey, and forbeareth to keep the passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people: because he brought not the offering of the LORD in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin.

¹⁴ And if a stranger shall sojourn among you, and will keep the passover unto the LORD; according to the ordinance of the passover, and according to the manner thereof, so shall he do: ye shall have one ordinance, both for the stranger, and for him that was born in the land.

3. The feast of the Passover had been neglected for a long time, II Chronicles 30:5;

2 Chronicles 28:1-4

¹ Ahaz *was* twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: but he did not *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD, like David his father:

² For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for Baalim.

³ Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.

⁴ He sacrificed also and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.

1 Kings 12:26-28

²⁶ And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David:

²⁷ If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, *even* unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah.

²⁸ Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

4. The proclamation was sent by post-riders to all Judah and Israel, II Chronicles 30:6-9.

5. Some of the Israelites ridiculed the exhortation to godliness, II Chronicles 30:10;

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 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

2 Chronicles 36:14-16

¹⁴ Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem.

¹⁵ And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place:

¹⁶ But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till *there was* no remedy.

Nehemiah 4:1-3

¹ But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews.

² And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?

³ Now Tobiah the Ammonite *was* by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.

Zechariah 14:16-18

¹⁶ And it shall come to pass, *that* every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.

¹⁷ And it shall be, *that* whoso will not come up of *all* the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.

¹⁸ And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that *have* no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.

6. A great congregation responded to the proclamation and came from both kingdoms to obey God's command, II Chronicles 30:11, 12.

II The Observance of the Passover

1. The congregation removed all remaining idol worship, II Chronicles 30:13, 14.
2. The zeal of the people stirred the priests, and the Passover was observed according to the Law, II Chronicles 30:15, 16.
3. Hezekiah prayed for God's mercy on the earnest worshipers who were unable to fulfil all the Law's requirements, II Chronicles 30:17-20;

1 Samuel 16:7

⁷ But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for *the LORD seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

1 Chronicles 28:9

⁹ And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.

Isaiah 1:10-20

¹⁰ Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.

¹¹ To what purpose *is* the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.

¹² When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?

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.

¹³ Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; *it is* iniquity, even the solemn meeting.

¹⁴ Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear *them*.

¹⁵ And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

¹⁶ Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

¹⁷ Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

¹⁸ Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

¹⁹ If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:

²⁰ But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken *it*.

4. The feast of unleavened bread was extended because of continued great blessings from God, II Chronicles 30:21-23;

Exodus 12:15-20

¹⁵ Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel.

¹⁶ And in the first day *there shall be* an holy convocation, and in the seventh day *there shall be* an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save *that* which every man must eat, that only may be done of you.

¹⁷ And ye shall observe *the feast of* unleavened bread; for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance for ever.

¹⁸ In the first *month*, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even.

¹⁹ Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or born in the land.

²⁰ Ye shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread.

Exodus 13:6-10

⁶ Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day *shall be* a feast to the LORD.

⁷ Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters.

⁸ And thou shalt shew thy son in that day, saying, *This is done* because of that *which* the LORD did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt.

⁹ And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the LORD'S law may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath the LORD brought thee out of Egypt.

¹⁰ Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year.

Leviticus 23:5-8

⁵ In the fourteenth *day* of the first month at even *is* the LORD'S passover.

⁶ And on the fifteenth day of the same month *is* the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread.

⁷ In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.

⁸ But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto 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 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

seven days: in the seventh day *is* an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work *therein*.

III The Results of Obedience to the Law of God

1. The king encouraged the Levites in their service to God, giving his own substance for the continued feasts and offerings, II Chronicles 30:22-24.
2. Great joy and rejoicing were present in Jerusalem, II Chronicles 30:25-27.
3. Following the Passover, the people returned to their cities, destroying the places of idolatrous worship, II Chronicles 31:1.
4. Hezekiah reinstated other parts of God's worship that had been neglected, II Chronicles 31:2-19;

Numbers 18:8-32

⁸ And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Behold, I also have given thee the charge of mine heave offerings of all the hallowed things of the children of Israel; unto thee have I given them by reason of the anointing, and to thy sons, by an ordinance for ever.

⁹ This shall be thine of the most holy things, *reserved* from the fire: every oblation of theirs, every meat offering of theirs, and every sin offering of theirs, and every trespass offering of theirs, which they shall render unto me, *shall be* most holy for thee and for thy sons.

¹⁰ In the most holy *place* shalt thou eat it; every male shall eat it: it shall be holy unto thee.

¹¹ And this *is* thine; the heave offering of their gift, with all the wave offerings of the children of Israel: I have given them unto thee, and to thy sons and to thy daughters with thee, by a statute for ever: every one that is clean in thy house shall eat of it.

¹² All the best of the oil, and all the best of the wine, and of the wheat, the firstfruits of them which they shall offer unto the LORD, them have I given thee.

¹³ *And* whatsoever is first ripe in the land, which they shall bring unto the LORD, shall be thine; every one that is clean in thine house shall eat *of* it.

¹⁴ Every thing devoted in Israel shall be thine.

¹⁵ Every thing that openeth the matrix in all flesh, which they bring unto the LORD, *whether it be* of men or beasts, shall be thine: nevertheless the firstborn of man shalt thou surely redeem, and the firstling of unclean beasts shalt thou redeem.

¹⁶ And those that are to be redeemed from a month old shalt thou redeem, according to thine estimation, for the money of five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, which *is* twenty gerahs.

¹⁷ But the firstling of a cow, or the firstling of a sheep, or the firstling of a goat, thou shalt not redeem; they *are* holy: thou shalt sprinkle their blood upon the altar, and shalt burn their fat *for* an offering made by fire, for a sweet savour unto the LORD.

¹⁸ And the flesh of them shall be thine, as the wave breast and as the right shoulder are thine.

¹⁹ All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer unto the LORD, have I given thee, and thy sons and thy daughters with thee, by a statute for ever: it *is* a covenant of salt for ever before the LORD unto thee and to thy seed with thee.

²⁰ And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I *am* thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel.

²¹ And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, *even* the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.

²² Neither must the children of Israel henceforth come nigh

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 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

the tabernacle of the congregation, lest they bear sin, and die.

²³ But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they shall bear their iniquity: *it shall be* a statute for ever throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance.

²⁴ But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer *as* an heave offering unto the LORD, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.

²⁵ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

²⁶ Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave offering of it for the LORD, *even* a tenth *part* of the tithe.

²⁷ And *this* your heave offering shall be reckoned unto you, as though *it were* the corn of the threshingfloor, and as the fulness of the winepress.

²⁸ Thus ye also shall offer an heave offering unto the LORD of all your tithes, which ye receive of the children of Israel; and ye shall give thereof the LORD'S heave offering to Aaron the priest.

²⁹ Out of all your gifts ye shall offer every heave offering of the LORD, of all the best thereof, *even* the hallowed part thereof out of it.

³⁰ Therefore thou shalt say unto them, When ye have heaved the best thereof from it, then it shall be counted unto the Levites as the increase of the threshingfloor, and as the increase of the winepress.

³¹ And ye shall eat it in every place, ye and your households: for *it is* your reward for your service in the tabernacle of the congregation.

³² And ye shall bear no sin by reason of it, when ye have heaved from it the best of it: neither shall ye pollute the holy things of the children of Israel, lest ye die.

5. Hezekiah prospered because of his attitude toward God's Law, II Chronicles 31:20, 21;

2 Chronicles 29:2

² And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done.

2 Chronicles 29:10-11

¹⁰ Now *it is* in mine heart to make a covenant with the LORD God of Israel, that his fierce wrath may turn away from us.

¹¹ My sons, be not now negligent: for the LORD hath chosen you to stand before him, to serve him, and that ye should minister unto him, and burn incense.

NOTES:

Hezekiah, the Restorer of God's Worship

King Hezekiah set out to re-establish the true worship of God immediately after he ascended to the throne of Judah. In the first month of his reign he opened the doors of the House of God and encouraged the Levites and priests to reconsecrate themselves for the service to which God had called them.

The Passover

"When Israel was in Egypt land,

Let My people go.

Oppressed so hard they could not stand,

Let My people go."

In this manner, a song of our Southland begins. And songs of many other nations have, in the same manner, pointed to a great event, which took place in Egypt about 1,500 years before the birth of Christ. This event was the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, which was initiated by a feast called the Feast of the Passover. While the Israelites feasted, in accordance with the

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.

command of God, in their dwellings, the Egyptians felt the wrath of God in their homes. The death angel passed over the land and visited every home where the blood of the paschal lamb was not found on the doorposts and lintels. God had said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Exodus 12:13). The feast instituted that night was to be celebrated yearly by the Israelites after they entered the Promised Land, and it was named the Feast of the Passover because of this promise of God. In this way they were to remember the deliverance God had given them in Egypt.

Many of the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic Law have been forgotten by modern Jewry, but they still remember and celebrate the Passover. Every Orthodox Jewish home has its feast on that night; portions of the Word of God are read aloud, while other portions are chanted by the participants as they partake of the items of food that are symbolic of the original Passover feast. It is a feast that is very dear to the heart of the Jews. They have again been oppressed in recent centuries and are again looking for deliverance.

Hezekiah's Restoration of the Passover

As king of Judah, Hezekiah had a right to call his subjects together for any purpose he thought wise in connection with the kingdom of Judah. But he had another right, which he exercised over the whole of Israel – the ten tribes that were under King Hoshea as well as those that were called Judah. As king of the tribe, the right was his to call all the chosen people to the worship of God, and it could be held at no other place than Jerusalem.

Had Hezekiah not sent posts throughout the whole of Israel to call the entire nation to this observance of the Passover, he would have been derelict in his duty. Jeroboam, the first king of Israel after the division of the kingdom, had set up an idolatrous worship to substitute for the true worship so the ten tribes would not go to Jerusalem and there be reunited politically, as well as religiously, with the kingdom of Judah. Through this period of 250 years the ten tribes had not gone to Jerusalem to worship God, but had followed the evil and base practices of idolatry instead.

In the southern kingdom, things had not been much better during most of the time since the division, for "when Rehoboam had established the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the LORD, and all Israel with him" (II Chronicles 12:1). Now, when the true worship was again being observed, it was proper that the king who was responsible for that re-establishment notify all the Israelites so that they all might come and benefit from God's blessings that were bound to be present.

It was not possible for the Passover to be celebrated at the proper time because the Temple was not cleansed until after the Passover date. But Hezekiah was not willing to let another year pass without observance of this glorious feast. In the Mosaic Law, Hezekiah saw that one exception was allowed to the eating of the Passover on the 15th day of the first month. This exception was made in the event people were not ceremonially clean at the time of the Passover. Hezekiah invoked God's provision in this regard and announced that the Passover would be eaten in the second month, instead of the first.

Hezekiah's advice was good. He wrote to Israel: "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." The ten tribes of Israel were

already feeling the wrath of God, and it was only a few months after this that their captivity and dispersion was complete. Judah was not carried away into captivity until about 150 years later, which delay is directly attributable to the godliness of some of Judah's kings and the revivals that had taken place in that kingdom. Those who fear God will be protected by Him. Those who honour God will be provided for by Him. These principles apply today as well as in former centuries, to us as well as to the Israelites.

The Destruction of Idol Worship

But all the Israelites did not respond to Hezekiah's invitation to come to Jerusalem. "They laughed them to scorn, and mocked them. Nevertheless divers of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulon humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem." "And there assembled at Jerusalem much people . . . a very great congregation."

These people, whose hearts had no doubt hungered long for the opportunity to mingle with others of kindred faith and worship of the true God, had no love for the substitute religion their kings had invented. And once the true worship was established they had no time nor devotion for anything but the worship of the living God. They broke down the altars in Jerusalem, casting the rubbish into the public dumping ground at the brook Kidron. Then, after the feast was finished and they were returning to their homes, they "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."

In the heart of the true child of God there is no desire for anything less than the worship of the true God. There will be no compromising of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in that person. He will be patient and helpful to those who are weak, long-suffering and kind to those who need help and instruction, but at the same time he will hold a firm attitude toward the doctrines of the Word. Even if those who brought him the Gospel in the first place, or angels from Heaven, would come to tell him that the Gospel is no longer effective or operative, he would not receive them. He knows whom he has believed, and is persuaded that God is able to keep that which has been committed to Him until the consummation of all things.

The true child of God knows that God never changes, that His Word is forever settled in Heaven (Psalm 119:89). Therefore, the true child of God puts his confidence in that Word and promise, and remains firm no matter how many about him depart from the faith. It is this firm hope and determination that carries the Christian through every adversity, and which eventually brings him to his heavenly home. How encouraging it is to see this fidelity in the world today, in the hearts and lives of the faithful few whom God has chosen! And how wonderful to see that even in the darkest time of the ten tribes' history, that same spirit was present in the hearts of a great congregation who sent to Jerusalem to worship the God of Heaven!

The Results of the Re-establishment of True Worship

God honours obedience to His Word. Obedience is more important than sacrifices or rituals (**1 Samuel 15:22** And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.).

The blind man of Jesus' day would never have been healed had he not obeyed the words of the Master and washed the clay

QUESTIONS

1. About what important Jewish feast is our lesson concerned? How often was this feast to be celebrated? What great event did it commemorate?
2. Why was the date of this feast postponed at this particular time? Was Hezekiah right in postponing it?
3. What right did Hezekiah have, as king of Judah only, to send a decree to the people of Israel?
4. How did Hezekiah send the decree?
5. What reaction was there to the decree?
6. What did the congregation do to the places of idol worship?
7. What happened when the people obeyed the command of God and observed the Passover?
8. What other ordinances of God were obeyed after the Passover?
9. What attitude are we to take toward those who would attempt to lead us away from the true Gospel?
10. What is said in the last verses of our lesson concerning Hezekiah? How is it a good example for us?

from his eyes. Naaman the Syrian would never have been cleansed of his leprosy had he not dipped in Jordan the seven times that were specified by the man of God. The fire of God would never have fallen on the brazen altar at the establishment of the Tabernacle worship had Moses not been careful to see that all details shown him in the mount were followed. Obedience is necessary if we are to receive the blessing of God. When God commands, it is time to obey! It is wise, also, to obey instantly, and not to ponder or weigh the matter, once the will of God is clear.

Those who obeyed in Hezekiah's time were blessed. "There was great joy 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." The people obeyed God concerning the firstfruits of their harvest. They paid their tithes. They brought freewill offerings. And when they did these **things**, the Lord blessed them the more, and prospered them in every way. The priests and Levites were provided for as God had ordained, and they were able to continue the work and service of God, which was instituted for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the people. So we can see that the nation was doubly blessed by their keeping of the commands of God.

With what a wonderful statement does our lesson text close! It is written that Hezekiah "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."

Here is the key to success in every phase of life. If we do that which is "good and right and truth" before our God; if we do with all our heart every work that we begin in the service of the House of God, and in the Word of God, to seek the Lord with all diligence – if we do these things we will be spiritually blessed and we will prosper. This is the Word of God. This is the promise of God. Could any man, or group of men, promise and give us more than that? Never could God's assurances be excelled, for there is nothing greater than the blessings of God. The true child of God says:

"Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee" (Psalm 73:25).