

2 Chronicles 29b-32 – Chapter Study

INTRO

I. THE REIGN OF SOLOMON CHS. 1-9

II. THE REIGN OF THE DAVIDIC DYNASTY CHS. 10-36

L. Ahaz Ch. 28

We ended the story of this incredibly wicked king at v. 15 last week.

The northern kingdom of Israel had invaded Judah and carried away a large number of captives.

When a prophet rebuked the army of Israel for making captives of a fellow tribe of Israel, they were convicted and did the right thing – they treated them well, bandaged their wounds, feed and clothed them, then escorted them safely back home.

As we saw last week – this short experience of defeat & captivity was the fulfillment of God’s warning through Moses about the consequences of turning away from him.

Both Israel & Judah ought ot have taken heed to it and mended their ways. Neither nation did, and as a result, Israel itself would soon be defeated & deported by the Assyrians.

A century and a half later, Judah would suffer the same fate at the hands of the Babylonians.

Ahaz, king of Judah, was an utter fool, as the rest of his story makes crystal . . .

¹⁶ At the same time King Ahaz sent to the kings of Assyria to help him. ¹⁷ For again the Edomites had come, attacked Judah, and carried away captives. ¹⁸ The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the lowland and of the South of Judah, and had taken Beth Shemesh, Aijalon, Gederoth, Sochoh with its villages, Timnah with its villages, and Gimzo with its villages; and they dwelt there. ¹⁹ For the LORD brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he had encouraged moral decline in Judah and had been continually unfaithful to the LORD.

We simply *cannot underestimate* the power of both a godly & ungodly leader over the fate of a nation.

David & Ahaz are 2 men who make that truth abundantly clear.

And this is one of the reasons the Apostle Paul calls us to pray for the King & all who are in authority in 1 Timothy 2:1-2

¹ Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, ² for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.

²⁰ Also Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came to him and distressed him, and did not assist him. ²¹ For Ahaz took part of the treasures from the house of the LORD, from the house of the king, and from the

leaders, and he gave *it* to the king of Assyria; but he did not help him.

Ahaz sent a massive bribe to the Assyrians to solicit their help against Judah's other enemies but the Assyrians just kept the gift & ignored him.

Now – that Ahaz was ignored was not little deal.

It's incredibly potent evidence for just how weak & despised Judah had become.

Remember that because we're going to read in a bit about how the kingdom had become the butt of jokes & mocking.

22 Now in the time of his distress King Ahaz became increasingly unfaithful to the LORD. This is *that* King Ahaz.

By the time of the writing, Ahaz's name had become synonymous with shame & scorn.

23 For he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus which had defeated him, saying, "Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, I will sacrifice to them that they may help me." But they were the ruin of him and of all Israel.

The story in 2 Kings 16 tells us how while in captivity in Syria he saw an altar he liked and had a replica made of it in Jerusalem to worship at. The guy was a complete loser!

24 So Ahaz gathered the articles of the house of God, cut in pieces the articles of the house of God, shut up the doors of the house of the LORD, and made for himself altars in every corner of Jerusalem. 25 And in every single city of Judah he made high places to burn incense to other gods, and provoked to anger the LORD God of his fathers. 26 Now the rest of his acts and all his ways, from first to last, indeed they *are* written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. 27 So Ahaz rested with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, in Jerusalem; but they did not bring him into the tombs of the kings of Israel. Then Hezekiah his son reigned in his place.

The people who were responsible for the burial of the kings remained loyal to the true God so that they kept the good & loyal kings together but separated out those who'd dishonored God.

M. Hezekiah Chs. 29-32

1. Cleansing of the temple Ch. 29

1 Hezekiah became king *when he was 25 years old*, and he reigned 29 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.*

Hezekiah is the 2nd of only 3 kings of Judah to be likened to David.

In terms of a heart for God, he's probably 2nd only to David.

We looked at ch. 29 Sunday.

The first thing Hezekiah did was to reopen the temple & renew their covenant with God.

Though the entire nation had turned to idols, they kingdom's misfortunes moved them to the realization something was deeply wrong. So when Hezekiah launched his reforms, the people were quick to respond and the revival spread quickly.

2. Hezekiah's great Passover 30:1-31:1

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

Hezekiah was a great leader in that his vision was great.

He wasn't concerned with just Judah but for all the tribes of Israel and sought to bring the blessings of renewal that had taken root in Judah into the north where things were even more spiritually far gone.

So he sent messengers up into the territory of Ephraim & Manasseh as well as all of his kingdom, calling everyone to celebrate the Passover – something that had been neglected for a very long time.

2 For the king and his leaders and all the assembly in Jerusalem had agreed to keep the Passover in the 2nd month. 3 For they could not keep it at the regular time, because a sufficient number of priests had not consecrated themselves, nor had the people gathered together at Jerusalem.

The Passover was supposed to be celebrated in the first month.

But not enough priests had been properly consecrated to perform the work of offering the lambs, so they had to delay a whole month until all the necessary elements were in place to allow for a huge national Passover.

Moses had made provision for this; in Numbers 9:10-11 by saying if someone was unable to celebrate the Passover at the set time in the 1st month, he/she could take it one month later.

This gives us a clue that Hezekiah was a student of the Word; a *mark* of all *genuine* revival.

4 And the matter pleased the king and all the assembly.

There was great excitement at the prospect of renewing this most important of Jewish holidays.

5 So they resolved to make a proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, that they should come to keep the Passover to the LORD God of Israel at Jerusalem, since they had not done *it* for a long time in the prescribed manner.

They were determined to not just make this an event for Judah but for *Israel* as well –all the tribes to once again unite to renew their covenant with God.

6 Then the runners went throughout all Israel and Judah with the letters from the king and his leaders, and spoke according to the command of the king: "Children of Israel, return to the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel; then He will return to the remnant of you who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria.

Though the final conquest of Israel by the Assyrians was yet to come, Israel had been largely reduced to an outlying province of their empire by this time – with

many of the people having already been deported.

7 And do not be like your fathers and your brethren, who trespassed against the LORD God of their fathers, so that He gave them up to desolation, as you see. 8 Now do not be stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves to the LORD; and enter His sanctuary, which He has sanctified forever, and serve the LORD your God, that the fierceness of His wrath may turn away from you. 9 For if you return to the LORD, your brethren and your children will be treated with compassion by those who lead them captive, so that they may come back to this land; for the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn His face from you if you return to Him.”

Every word of that was absolutely true. If those left in Israel had repented, God would have restored them.

10 So the runners passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, as far as Zebulun; but they laughed at them and mocked them.

Even though the evidence of God's judgment was everywhere they looked, the refused to repent because they had chosen to be blind to the real cause of their trouble.

No one is so blind as he who WILL NOT see.

11 Nevertheless some from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem.

While the majority scoffed at the call to repent, a few heard & heeded & forsook their land to go be with those who shared their faith in God.

12 Also the hand of God was on Judah to give them singleness of heart to obey the command of the king and the leaders, at the word of the LORD.

Again, may we never underestimate the impact for good of godly leaders & conversely, that for evil of ungodly leaders.

13 Now many people, a very great assembly, gathered at Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the 2nd month.

That's the feast that follows on the heels of Passover.

14 They arose and took away the altars that were in Jerusalem, and they took away all the incense altars and cast them into the Brook Kidron. 15 Then they slaughtered the Passover lambs on the 14th day of the 2nd month. The priests and the Levites were ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought the burnt offerings to the house of the LORD.

What they were ashamed about is what we saw Sunday – their reluctance to embrace their work as priests, for fear no one cared to worship God anymore. Hezekiah sensed God had been at work stirring the hearts of the people for change & encouraged the priests & Levites to their task but they'd not held much hope for revival.

When they saw it happen, they were *disgusted* with their lack of hope & faith

in God.

16 They stood in their place according to their custom, according to the Law of Moses the man of God; the priests sprinkled the blood received from the hand of the Levites. 17 For there were many in the assembly who had not sanctified themselves; therefore the Levites had charge of the slaughter of the Passover lambs for everyone who was not clean, to sanctify them to the LORD.

A number of the priests who *ought* to have been making the sacrifices had not taken the necessary steps to consecrate themselves to the task. So the Levites who had had to step in and do some of the work the priests ought to have been doing.

The lesson here is that sometimes God bypasses those we'd expect Him to use to use those who don't seem qualified.

A look at history reveals that some of His most effective servants weren't much to look at or listen to, yet they were used mightily in expanding the Kingdom.

Paul says the same in writing to the Corinthian church.

They were all hung up on image – but Paul reminds them to look at themselves: they weren't the cream of the crop or pick of the litter; they were what the world would call Losers.

But God had made them into His sons & daughters who will reign with Him forever.

The only reason these priests were barred from being able to take their place in the day's events was because of their own unbelief and laziness.

If they'd simply done what was right, what Hezekiah had called them to, they could have participated.

But now they have to stand there and watch.

18 For a multitude of the people, many from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet they ate the Passover contrary to what was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, "May the good LORD provide atonement for everyone 19 who prepares his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though he is not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary."

There were several rules for ceremonial cleanliness, not only for the priests but for the people.

Many of these rules had not been kept so that the people ought not have celebrated the Passover.

They did anyway because while they'd not technically been purified, their hearts were set on God.

Hezekiah knew this & understood it was more important for them to take part in the feast than to abstain because they hadn't jumped through some religious rituals.

In this, Hezekiah shows he really does have a heart for the Lord – he knew what pleased God.

20 And the LORD listened to Hezekiah and healed the people. 21 So the

children of Israel who 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* to the LORD, accompanied by loud instruments. ²² And Hezekiah gave encouragement to all the Levites who taught the good knowledge of the LORD; and they ate throughout the feast 7 days, offering peace offerings and making confession to the LORD God of their fathers. ²³ Then the whole assembly agreed to keep *the feast* another 7 days, and they kept it *another 7 days* with gladness.

There's one way to describe this – revival!

²⁴ For Hezekiah king of Judah gave to the assembly 1,000 bulls and 7,000 sheep, and the leaders gave to the assembly 1,000 bulls and 10,000 sheep; and a great number of priests sanctified themselves.

As soon as it became obvious revival had taken hold, the priests who'd not been consecrated began the process so by the time the 2nd week of celebration began, they were ready to dive in to their calling.

This was one major BBQ!

²⁵ The whole assembly of Judah rejoiced, also the priests and Levites, all the assembly that came from Israel, the sojourners who came from the land of Israel, and those who dwelt in Judah. ²⁶ So there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel, *there had been nothing like this* 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, to heaven.

^{31:1} Now when all this was finished, all Israel who were present went out to the cities of Judah and broke the sacred pillars in pieces, cut down the wooden images, and threw down the high places and the altars—from all Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh—until they had utterly destroyed them all. Then all the children of Israel returned to their own cities, every man to his possession.

One of the evidences of revival is a zeal for the glory of God that tolerates no competition.

This is why any movement that isn't marked by holiness and a passion for moral purity isn't really a movement of God.

Every so often we hear of some supposed "great move of God."

Lots of attention, excitement. But a few months, couple years later, the leader is caught in flagrant sin and it turns out he's been doing it for a long time.

There may be a spirit at work in that movement but it's not the HOLY Spirit!

3. Reestablishment of proper worship 31:2-21

In vs. 2-3, we read Hezekiah organized the priests & Levites so that regular daily service at the temple would be restored.

He set aside a portion of his own income to fund that service.

⁴ Moreover he commanded the people who dwelt in Jerusalem to

contribute support for the priests and the Levites, that they might devote themselves to the Law of the LORD.

Just like David, Hezekiah knew learning and living God's Word was the key to their success.

It was imperative that the priest would not only renew the daily service of the temple but give themselves to the study of God's Word so the nation could have the right counsel.

The king called for the people to contribute so that the priest, who'd had to fend for themselves under Ahaz, could devote themselves to their priestly work.

⁵ As soon as the commandment was circulated, the children of Israel brought in abundance the firstfruits of grain and wine, oil and honey, and of all the produce of the field; and they brought in abundantly the tithe of everything. ⁶ And the children of Israel and Judah, who dwelt in the cities of Judah, brought the tithe [1/10th] of oxen and sheep; also the tithe of holy things which were consecrated to the LORD their God they laid in heaps. ⁷ In the 3rd month they began laying them in heaps, and they finished in the 7th month. ⁸ And when Hezekiah and the leaders came and saw the heaps, they blessed the LORD and His people Israel.

Because they understood the abundance as another evidence of revival.

Along with holiness, a mark of genuine revival is the impact it has on our money.

Revival re-centers us so that *God* sits on the throne, *not self*.

Money becomes a tool to serve God with rather than a means of personal satisfaction & pleasure.

In vs. 9-19, is an account of how the offerings & tithes were distributed to the priests & Levites.

²⁰ Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah, and he did what was good and right and true before the LORD his God. ²¹ And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, in the law and in the commandment, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart. So he prospered.

Another reference to the king's heart – and now for the first time, we have a king who did all he did with a heart of *total devotion* to God.

4. Sennacherib's invasion 32:1-23

¹ After these deeds of faithfulness, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and entered Judah; he encamped against the fortified cities, thinking to win them over to himself.

What??? How's this? We have a great, godly guy – and so Judah's invaded – and this time by the greatest foe it's ever faced???

This just doesn't seem like the way it should go. What gives?

There's no easy answer to this – and specially not if we put ourselves into the story and don't know what's coming.

But we do know what's coming because after this chapter are several more which tell a disturbing tale about Judah.

The Revival was real and deeply impacted many – but not all.

There were an equal number of people not revived who'd gone completely over to the dark side of idolatry.

When Hez's rule morph's into his sons – Manasseh's it's the return of the same hideous evil and debauchery that marked Ahaz's reign – in some ways, it was even worse!

And Manasseh ruled for 55 year years – ht longest of the kings.

Under him the nation turned back to idols as rapidly as they had turned from them under Hez.

The roots of the apostasy were already growing in the fertile soil of Judah's unrevived part.

So God allowed the Assyrians to invade and conquer nearly all of Judah.

This trouble ought to have awakened the unrepentant to their error.

That in the end it was godly Hez's devotion to the Lord that brought an end to the Assyrian presence.

THAT ought to have been the proof of their need to come back to the Lord.

What excites historians & archaeologists about this story is the abundant evidence found in the Assyrian capital at Nineveh for Sennacherib's invasion of Judah. Several wall reliefs depict the battle for the fortress city of Lachish in great details, In fact, that relief has provided historians with much of what we know about ancient warfare and siegecraft.

BTW – this campaign by the Assyrians took place 14 years after the reforms Hezekiah made recored in the previous chapters.

² And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come, and that his purpose was to make war against Jerusalem, ³ he consulted with his leaders and commanders to stop the water from the springs which were outside the city; and they helped him.

Reports brought to Hez about the Assyrians maneuvers made it clear that he was systematically conquering those fortresses that could provide reinforcements to the capital.

Sennacherib's obvious goal was to lay siege to Jerusalem.

So Hez covered up those places outside the city walls that provided water and built a 1750 ft tunnel from Jerusalem's main water source at the Gihon spring, to a spot inside the walls so the people in the city could have water while the besiegers would not have any local water.

They'd have to travel a good distance to get it.

Remember, the whole goal of siege was to outlast your opponent.

Because they were in a hurry, 2 teams dug the tunnel from both ends. If they had travelled a straight line, they would have only dug about 1070 ft.

The extra 700 ft. was because they meandered – yet miraculously, they were able to meet up!

⁴ Thus many people gathered together who stopped all the springs and the brook that ran through the land, saying, "Why should the

kings of Assyria come and find much water?”⁵ And he strengthened himself, built up all the wall that was broken, raised *it* up to the towers, and *built* another wall outside; also he repaired the Millo *in* the City of David, and made weapons and shields in abundance.⁶ Then he set military captains over the people, gathered them together to him in the open square of the city gate, and gave them encouragement, saying,⁷ “Be strong and courageous; do not be afraid nor dismayed before the king of Assyria, nor before all the multitude that *is* with him; for *there are* more with us than with him.⁸ With him *is* an arm of flesh; but with us *is* the LORD our God, to help us and to fight our battles.” And the people were strengthened by the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.

Hez was a man of faith who used that faith to encourage others. This is simply a *great leader*.

Now watch what happens – after he gives this speech that encourages the people. *They’re tested.*

⁹ After this Sennacherib king of Assyria sent his servants to Jerusalem (but he and all the forces with him *laid siege* against Lachish), to Hezekiah king of Judah, and to all Judah who were in Jerusalem, saying,¹⁰ “Thus says Sennacherib king of Assyria: ‘In what do you trust, that you remain under siege in Jerusalem?’

While the Assyrians were laying siege to the last fortress before marching on Jerusalem, Senn sent some officials to offer surrender terms to Hez as was the Assyrian custom.

When they got there, they found the city shut up tight already.

They start with a provocative question -“What do you trust in? What are you hoping for? Who do you think is going to rescue you?”

¹¹ Does not Hezekiah persuade you to give yourselves over to die by famine and by thirst, saying, “The LORD our God will deliver us from the hand of the king of Assyria”?

They are mocking God!

¹² Has not the same Hezekiah taken away His high places and His altars, and commanded Judah and Jerusalem, saying, “You shall worship before one altar and burn incense on it”?

They question Hez’s methods & suggest he hasn’t endeared them to God but rather has ticked God off.

¹³ Do you not know what I and my fathers have done to all the peoples of *other* lands? Were the gods of the nations of those lands in any way able to deliver their lands out of my hand? ¹⁴ Who was *there* among all the gods of those nations that my fathers utterly destroyed that could deliver his people from my hand, that your God should be able to deliver you from my hand? ¹⁵ Now therefore, do not let Hezekiah deceive you or persuade you like this, and do not believe him; for no god of any nation or kingdom was able to deliver his

people from my hand or the hand of my fathers. How much less will your God deliver you from my hand?’ ”

Make no mistake – this is the cynical, sneering voice of atheism.

“Your God ain’t nothing and can’t help you!”

16 Furthermore, his servants spoke against the LORD God and against His servant Hezekiah. 17 He [Senn] also wrote letters to revile the LORD God of Israel, and to speak against Him, saying, “As the gods of the nations of *other* lands have not delivered their people from my hand, so the God of Hezekiah will not deliver His people from my hand.” 18 Then they called out with a loud voice in Hebrew to the people of Jerusalem who *were* on the wall, to frighten them and trouble them, that they might take the city. 19 And they spoke against the God of Jerusalem, as against the gods of the people of the earth—the work of men’s hands. 20 Now because of this King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah, the son of Amoz, prayed and cried out to heaven.

These men knew the best thing to do when being assaulted by the enemy with lies is to take it to the God of Truth.

21 Then the LORD sent an angel who cut down every mighty man of valor, leader, and captain in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned shamefaced to his own land. And when he had gone into the temple of his god, some of his own offspring struck him down with the sword there.

2 Kings says 185,000 were slain in a single night!

There’s a record for this in the Assyrian chronicles.

Sennacherib’s campaign, was totally dominating Judah, then all of a sudden, he faced a huge loss of men and had to withdraw quickly before his remaining forces were overwhelmed and he himself was captured.

Wanting to protect Sennacherib from embarrassment, the details of his defeat are left sketchy but it looks like a plague killed off his force.

Then, some years later, his own sons assassinated him while he was worshipping his god in his temple.

22 Thus the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all *others*, and guided them on every side. 23 And many brought gifts to the LORD at Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah, so that he was exalted in the sight of all nations thereafter.

We’ll leave the last vs of the chapter to our study next time because they set up the story of the next king – Manasseh.