

AUGUST 1

2 Chronicles 30-31

When you think back on the attempt of Jehoshaphat to unify Israel and the disaster that was, you look at these two chapters and see that God showed Hezekiah the right way to call Israel together.

I really don't have a lot to say about these chapters other than what is obvious. A godly king or leader leads his people in following God and worshiping God, and he oversees the organizing to make this possible. Ezra showed that this passion for organization began with David and was true of every godly king who had the heart of David.

Vs. 1-9 I'm sure that they consulted the Lord on changing the date to celebrate the Passover. Isaiah was a prophet and I'm sure they sought the Lord to get these concessions. God had already mentioned in Numbers 9:11 that if someone was unclean, they could celebrate the Passover in the second month.

Vs. 6-9 This message was very straightforward and truthful. Political correctness and tolerant persuasion were not given any credence. The offer was very simple and the reasons to respond would only have been felt and understood by the humble. Notice that it refers to there only being a remnant of the people left. It was during the reign of Ahaz, Hezekiah's father, when the northern kingdom had been taken into exile. The fact that God had allowed the Assyrians to take the northern kingdom into captivity should have had an impact on the Jews who had been left in the land.

Vs. 10-12 What is interesting about the couriers being laughed to scorn is that God's judgment had already hit the northern kingdom. Most of the people had been dragged away into captivity. These were the few people who were left. Talk about blindness and arrogance. But even at this late date, there were some who saw and understood and were humbled. God was still extending grace, but many people decided to ignore this offer. Still, some responded and came to Judah where the hand of the Lord was blessing. As disciples, we, like our heavenly Father, keep extending the offer.

Vs. 13-22 As the people came together to worship God, they noticed the monuments that had been standing for years, maybe generations, and understood that they were not just landmarks, they were idols or places of worship. Notice in v. 15 that the priests and Levites were ashamed. They never believed that so many people would show up. They hadn't bothered to consecrate themselves, so they would be ineligible to make the sacrifices.

V. 17 Again, God showed His flexibility by not judging the people from the northern kingdom who came to eat the Passover. What is even more amazing is that Hezekiah and the leaders knew those people were in trouble and they prayed for them.

V. 20 Hezekiah, though not a priest, interceded for the people and God "healed" them, by forgiving them.

Vs. 23-27 There was such a spiritual atmosphere and blessing from God that they decided to celebrate *for another seven days*. This second week seems to have surpassed the first week. The spirit of sharing and devotion to God was so great the entire congregation rejoiced in God, and God blessed them from *His holy habitation*.

God had made the feasts a requirement. Obeying Him and celebrating the feasts would have kept the country unified and focused on Him. Anyway, that had been the original plan. Notice that nothing like this had happened since Solomon. What is in view is probably the dedication of the temple. It is very cool to see the people gathered together like this. At the same time it is kind of

sad that this happened so seldom since God had made the provision for it to happen three times a year, not once every two hundred years.

2 Chronicles 31

This chapter shows the result of this great spiritual awakening. Hezekiah organized the worship of Israel. Ezra again is showing that political leaders do this because it is the mark of a truly spiritual leader.

V. 1 This is the response of the people as they made their way home. Cleansing had already been done, but I think the deeper the people went spiritually, the more they noticed the objects of pagan worship that had become invisible parts of their culture.

Vs. 2-10 Notice that Hezekiah made sure the tithes were brought in to feed the priests and the Levites. This was an important part of showing that the people understood the importance of the sacrifices, the worship and the presence of God among them. Later in Nehemiah, Nehemiah will set up all of this and convince the priests and Levites to come to Jerusalem. As soon as Nehemiah went back to Persia, the people stopped giving and the Levites left and went back to their farms. Tithing is not a matter of economics and return on investment (Why should I work and pay to have them sit on their hands?); it is a matter of spiritual perspective. God had commanded the people to support the priests and Levites so His work could be done, so His people would be cleansed and so that they would be unified in His love through the feasts. We have seen too that the Levites taught the people. Men and women of faith saw this and obeyed. Others didn't see the importance at all.

Vs. 11-19 Now that the people were willingly giving tithes, these resources had to be organized and stored. All of these names would have had meaning to the returned exiles. In a couple hundred years Nehemiah would be looking at these Scriptures and trying to do the very same thing in Jerusalem.

Vs. 20-21 This is a summary of Hezekiah's faithfulness, and the result was that people were seeking the Lord.

Romans 15:1-22

Paul is continuing his teaching about what to do when you have people in the congregation who are weak in conscience because of their past life in paganism or in legalism. The answer will be to imitate the love of Christ and to focus on why we are left here, that is, to proclaim together the glory of God to a lost world.

Vs. 1-3 Notice that Jesus is the example. We were (are) all weak and Christ bore with us. He is our example. So, who do you suppose reproaches sinful worthless humanity?

Vs. 4-7 Verse 4 sounds very much like 1 Corinthians 10:11, *Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the age has come.*

Notice that the focus of all of this is to have the unity to proclaim together the glory of God. Jesus again becomes the one we imitate. He didn't save us to be alike, but to give glory to God together. Regardless of our differences, we should all be able to welcome one another into the company of the redeemed and work together in the harvest. Right?

Vs. 8-13 How Paul and the Spirit state this is very interesting. The promise to Abe and to this nation is always being respected. Christ came one way, as a servant to the Jews (Jesus the deacon), for two purposes. First, He confirmed the promises to the Jews. He didn't fulfill them. He showed by His coming that they would one day be fulfilled. Second, in fulfillment to the promise to Abraham and using the blessing to the Jews, Jesus started a fire under the Gentiles so that because of receiving God's mercy, the Gentiles would proclaim God's glory in all the earth.

That's why we were left here, to proclaim God's glory. It is another way of expressing the Great Commission.

Notice how Paul goes to the OT to show that God's plan of redemption always included the Gentiles and how reaching the Gentiles was always the mission of the Messiah.

Vs. 14-16 This is a very clear expression of Paul's commission by God. Notice that one of Paul's criteria is that they not only knew the Word, but that they were able to teach one another. That would be important if disciple-making was functioning in that church. When Jesus called the disciples as apostles, there were three things that stood out: they were to be with Him, they were to preach and they were to have authority. All of these are seen in Paul. Here Paul expresses his "authority" as his service to the Lord and to other disciples in the harvest.

Vs. 17-21 I think this is our commission also as disciples working in the harvest. This portion is worth memorizing. When I read this I think of Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 4:7 *For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?*

Paul understood the grace and commission given to him. It was all a gift and there was never room to boast in anything but Jesus. I'm sure Paul was amazed and humbled by what God had done through him. Paul and the Spirit said in 1 Corinthians 15 that Paul worked harder than any other apostle, but it was the grace of God. Only Jesus could have designed a guy like Paul, and it came at a price to Paul and to many other believers for Paul to be the grateful, driven man he was. Unknown to Paul, shortly after this writing, God was going to give him at least four years of R&R in jail, with some adventures in between.

V. 22, in my thinking, should have gone with tomorrow's reading.

Psalm 25:1-15

I get the feeling that David wrote this while he was still in distress, either before Ziklag or afterward in Hebron. It's interesting to me that when we are in distress, we also think back on our own sins. I guess we can't help thinking there might be a connection. Subconsciously we are always under the weight of our sin and our failures. Isn't it great to know that Christ has lifted that weight, and we are totally whole, loved and accepted in the Beloved?

The parts that speak to me are the desire to know the way of the Lord (4-5), the remembrance of, and pleading for, God's *steadfast love* (6-7), the confidence that when the Lord leads us we realize His *steadfast love* (10), and finally, David's desire for God's *friendship* (14).

Vs. 1-3 David knew he was being judged and ridiculed for waiting on the Lord. David also knew that God respected that kind of faith.

Vs. 4-5 In spite of all the criticism directed at David, David knew he was following the Lord. David wanted to know the Lord more and more. What a guy.

Vs. 6-10 This is something David learned from God. What a thing to learn. God gives love and that love is the basis for forgiveness.

Vs. 11-15 On the basis of all of this, David became a witness to the nations, glorifying the Lord for His love and greatness.

Proverbs 20:13-15

This seems like another random smattering of wisdom. I guess if I were putting them together to make sense of them, I would say that diligence (13) and craftiness (14) can get you what you need, because there is an abundance of gold and costly stones to be had (15); but lips of knowledge (of the Lord) are rarer, more valuable, and you only get them one way. We have to seek the Lord and stay alert for His leading (13). The people in the ruined northern kingdom

figured this out when they received Hezekiah's offer to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem. They humbled themselves, saw the opportunity, sought the Lord and went to Jerusalem.