



Second Chronicles - Chapter Twenty Nine

III. 2 Chronicles 10:1-36:23 - The Kingdom of Judah Down to the Exile (continues)

Summary of Chapter Twenty Nine

King Hezekiah came to the throne at a time of great apostasy in Israel. His predecessor, King Ahaz, had greatly sinned against the Lord and had set up pagan worship, even in the temple. Judah had also suffered military defeats against Aram and Israel because of their apostasy. Hezekiah's immediate task was to call together the priest and Levites and have them open up the temple again. They immediately rallied to Hezekiah's commands and set about cleaning out the temple. It took sixteen days to complete their task.

Once the temple was restored, Hezekiah called the officials of the city to the temple and there was great sacrificial offering and songs of praise made to the Lord, asking for his forgiveness for the faithlessness that had gone before. The amount of animals offered was so great and there were too few priests who had kept themselves consecrated for the task that their brother Levites had to come and support them in the task of ministering at the altar. Thus worship in Judah was restored and all the people rejoiced- revival had come!

III.1 2 Chronicles 29:1-32:33 - Hezekiah

The Chronicler devotes more attention to Hezekiah's reign (715-687 BC) than to that of any other king since David and Solomon. His account has little in common with 2 Kings Chapters 18-20, which concentrates mainly on Hezekiah's role in the Assyrian crisis of 701 BC. The Chronicler, by contrast, is primarily interested in presenting Hezekiah as a restorer and reformer of Judah's worship. Most of his account is devoted to describing the cleansing of the temple and the restoration of worship after Ahaz's apostasy, followed by a national celebration of Passover.

For the Chronicler, Hezekiah's successful resistance to Sennacherib and the prosperity of his kingdom are a consequence of his religious reforms. The Chronicler's presentation of Hezekiah combines traits of both David and Solomon, especially in organising the priests and Levites for their work and worship, and in presiding over the great rededication of the temple.

III.1.i 2 Chronicles 29:1-2 - Reign of Hezekiah

This brief introduction indicates Hezekiah was a king after David's heart for serving God as his primary focus in life.

¹ Hezekiah began to reign when he was twenty-five years old; he reigned for twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abijah daughter of Zechariah. ² He did what was right in the sight of the Lord, just as his ancestor David had done.

2 Chronicles 29:1-2

Hezekiah began to reign when he was twenty-five years old. Hezekiah came to the throne of Judah at the very end of the Kingdom of Israel. Three years after the start of his reign the Assyrian armies set siege to Samaria, and three years after that the northern kingdom was conquered. The sad fate of the northern kingdom was a valuable lesson to Hezekiah. He saw firsthand what happened when the people of God rejected their God and his word, and worshipped other gods

He reigned for twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. Hezekiah was one of the best kings of Judah, and thus had a long and mostly blessed reign. No doubt his mother Abijah was a godly and important influence on his life. His mother was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah, probably the person mentioned by the Prophet Isaiah: <<*Then the Lord said to me, Take a large tablet and write on it in common characters, 'Belonging to Maher-shalal-hash-baz', and have it attested for me by reliable witnesses, the priest Uriah and Zechariah son of Jeberechiah*>> (Isaiah 8:1-2) as a faithful witness. This possible friendship of his mother for the prophet, combined with the certainty that up to this time he had been under the influence of Isaiah's ministry, may account for Hezekiah's prompt action on coming to the throne.

He did what was right in the sight of the Lord. Hezekiah was one of Judah's most zealous reformers, even prohibiting worship on the high places according to 2 Kings 18:4. These were popular altars for sacrifice set up as the worshipper desired, and not according to God's direction. Scripture elsewhere makes this remarkable statement about Hezekiah: <<*He trusted in the Lord the God of Israel; so that there was no one like him among all the kings of Judah after him, or among those who were before him*>> (2 Kings 18:5). This is a remarkable testimony since it also likens him here to his most famous predecessor: just as his ancestor David

had done. However, he is not considered greater than David in this statement as he had been king of the united Israel.

III.1.ii 2 Chronicles 29:3-19 - The Temple Cleansed

Immediately on coming to the throne of Judah, Hezekiah summoned the priests and Levites, ordering them to consecrate the temple and bring it back into a fit state for worship, praise and sacrifice to God alone.

³ In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them.

2 Chronicles 29:3

In the first year of his reign, in the first month. Hezekiah wasted no time in setting about the task that lay before him. This reference is to the first month of the Jewish year and not the first month of Hezekiah's reign as will be made clear as preparations for the Passover are made. Passover was ordered to be celebrated on the fourteenth day of the first month called Abib (pre-exilic), renamed Nisan (post-exilic), but it could not be held until the alternative date in the second month because the temple cleansing and the consecration of the priests could not be completed in time. This was permitted under the statutes of God, which made such provision: <<*Speak to the Israelites, saying: Anyone of you or your descendants who is unclean through touching a corpse, or is away on a journey, shall still keep the passover to the Lord. In the second month on the fourteenth day, at twilight, they shall keep it; they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs*>> (Numbers 9:10-11).

Hezekiah opened the doors of the house of the Lord, reversing his father's action: <<*Ahaz gathered together the utensils of the house of God, and cut in pieces the utensils of the house of God. He shut up the doors of the house of the Lord and made himself altars in every corner of Jerusalem*>> (2 Chronicles 28:24).

⁴ He brought in the priests and the Levites and assembled them in the square on the east. ⁵ He said to them, 'Listen to me, Levites! Sanctify yourselves, and sanctify the house of the Lord, the God of your ancestors, and carry out the filth from the holy place.'

2 Chronicles 29:4-5

He brought in the priests and the Levites. Tragically, the condition of both the Levites and the temple was so bad that they seemed incapable of reforming themselves without this push from King Hezekiah. If Hezekiah was to be successful in starting the revival he needed to get these key men motivated and functioning.

The appeal to the Levites to sanctify or **consecrate** themselves recalls David's summons to the priests and Levites in the sacred mission to retrieve the ark; refer to 1 Chronicles 15:11-15.

The filth denotes pagan cult objects that had been installed in the sanctuary, which were to be removed and burned in the Kidron Valley (v.16).

⁶ For our ancestors have been unfaithful and have done what was evil in the sight of the Lord our God; they have forsaken him, and have turned away their faces from the dwelling of the Lord, and turned their backs.

2 Chronicles 29:6

For our ancestors have been unfaithful and have done what was evil in the sight of the Lord our God; they have forsaken him, and have turned away their faces from the dwelling of the Lord, and turned their backs. They had failed because they had turned their backs instead of their faces towards God. One might say that in every opportunity to encounter God, a person has the choice to turn either their back or their face to God.

Presbyterian leader and Bible commentator Matthew Poole (1624-1679) suggests that the idea of turning the back to God could also be understood literally, because according to 2 Kings Chapter 16, in the days of Ahaz the altar was moved and its replacement was directed to the west, in the manner of pagan altars instead of toward the east as God had commanded. The idea was therefore that under this dangerous innovation, one had to literally turn his back to the temple and the ark of God to stand before the pagan altar.

Unfaithful, the Hebrew word *ma'al*, and forsaken are key terms in the Chronicler's theological vocabulary, accounting for punishment and exile.

⁷ They also shut the doors of the vestibule and put out the lamps, and have not offered incense or made burnt-offerings in the holy place to the God of Israel.

2 Chronicles 29:7

They also shut the doors of the vestibule and put out the lamps, and have not offered incense or made burnt-offerings in the holy place to the God of Israel. As commented on above, this happened in the days of King Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah. Hezekiah knew that it was time to open up the temple again, both to clean it out and so that it could operate as God had intended it should.

⁸ Therefore the wrath of the Lord came upon Judah and Jerusalem, and he has made them an object of horror, of astonishment, and of hissing, as you see with your own eyes.

2 Chronicles 29:8

Therefore the wrath of the Lord came upon Judah and Jerusalem. In a remarkable way, Hezekiah recognised that the calamities that had come upon Judah, the losses in battle to Aram and Israel, came about because of their disobedience to God. It takes a wise and godly person to admit this, and to act appropriately. Hezekiah made no attempt to blame God for these calamities which had overtaken the nation and caused so much distress.

He has made them an object of horror, of astonishment, and of hissing. The surrounding nations had known that God's people were remarkably blessed when he was with them. However, when they departed from him their support was gone and their lives fell into sharp decline making them the objects of derision. This would again be the case when the end finally came for Judah: *<<Thus says the Lord of hosts, I am going to let loose on them sword, famine, and pestilence, and I will make them like rotten figs that are so bad they cannot be eaten. I will pursue them with the sword, with famine, and with pestilence, and will make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be an object of cursing, and horror, and hissing, and a derision among all the nations where I have driven them, because they did not heed my words, says the Lord, when I persistently sent to you my servants the prophets, but they would not listen, says the Lord>>* (Jeremiah 29:17-19).

⁹ Our fathers have fallen by the sword and our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity for this. ¹⁰ Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with the Lord, the God of Israel, so that his fierce anger may turn away from us. ¹¹ My sons, do not now be negligent, for the Lord has chosen you to stand in his presence to minister to him, and to be his ministers and make offerings to him.'

2 Chronicles 29:9-11

Hezekiah recalls the terrible consequences of Ahaz's apostasy and announces his intention to make a covenant with the Lord to avert his fierce anger. No ceremony of covenant renewal is described here, unlike in the days of King Asa: *<<They entered into a covenant to seek the Lord, the God of their ancestors, with all their heart and with all their soul. Whoever would not seek the Lord, the God of Israel, should be put to death, whether young or old, man or woman. They took an oath to the Lord with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with horns. All Judah rejoiced over the oath; for they*

had sworn with all their heart, and had sought him with their whole desire, and he was found by them, and the Lord gave them rest all around>> (2 Chronicles 15:12-15), or the child King Joash: <<Jehoiada made a covenant between himself and all the people and the king that they should be the Lord's people>> (2 Chronicles 23:16), but it is clear by their response that the people took this appeal to heart.

My sons, do not now be negligent, for the Lord has chosen you to stand in his presence to minister to him. This call to courage from Hezekiah to the priests and Levites was focused on their sense of calling. Getting back to a focus upon their calling and their central purpose to serve and honour God was essential, and this exhortation demonstrates that they had lost this focus.

For the Lord has chosen you. This is a reference to the selection of the descendants of Aaron to be priests and all other Levites to be servants of the Lord in the duties of the Tabernacle: <<*And so the priest, anointed from among Aaron's descendants as a successor, shall prepare it; it is the Lord's—a perpetual due – to be turned entirely into smoke>> (Leviticus 6:22), <<and their kindred the Levites were appointed for all the service of the tabernacle of the house of God>> (1 Chronicles 6:48).*

Hezekiah set the example in this devoted service to God, in that he even destroyed a notable artefact from the Exodus, the bronze serpent of Moses known as Nehushtan, when it became an idol: <<*He removed the high places, broke down the pillars, and cut down the sacred pole. He broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the people of Israel had made offerings to it; it was called Nehushtan>> (2 Kings 18:4).*

¹² Then the Levites arose, Mahath son of Amasai, and Joel son of Azariah, of the sons of the Kohathites; and of the sons of Merari, Kish son of Abdi, and Azariah son of Jehallelel; and of the Gershonites, Joah son of Zimmah, and Eden son of Joah; ¹³ and of the sons of Elizaphan, Shimri and Jeuel; and of the sons of Asaph, Zechariah and Mattaniah; ¹⁴ and of the sons of Heman, Jehuel and Shimei; and of the sons of Jeduthun, Shemaiah and Uzziel.

2 Chronicles 29:12-14

Then the Levites arose. These were men who had been complicit in the neglect and disgrace of the temple. Yet the Chronicler rightly noted these men by name, because when they were exhorted by King Hezekiah to do what was right in cleansing and restoring the temple, they responded positively and did it.

It is likely that the priests and Levites lived in fear of King Ahaz and had not opposed his desecration of the temple. This may be understandable from a

human perspective but upholding the will and laws of God was their sacred duty. Their allegiance was to God rather than to the king and so they were guilty of sin in giving in to their fear.

The list of Levites who lead the work of purification closely parallels the list in 1 Chronicles 15:5-10, except that representatives of the Levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, have replaced Hebron and Uzziel.

¹⁵ They gathered their brothers, sanctified themselves, and went in as the king had commanded, by the words of the Lord, to cleanse the house of the Lord. ¹⁶ The priests went into the inner part of the house of the Lord to cleanse it, and they brought out all the unclean things that they found in the temple of the Lord into the court of the house of the Lord; and the Levites took them and carried them out to the Wadi Kidron. ¹⁷ They began to sanctify on the first day of the first month, and on the eighth day of the month they came to the vestibule of the Lord; then for eight days they sanctified the house of the Lord, and on the sixteenth day of the first month they finished.

2 Chronicles 29:15-17

The Wadi Kidron. The Kidron Valley, a place of olive groves, ancient tombs and misnamed funerary monuments, divides Jerusalem's Temple Mount from the Mount of Olives. Once a deep ravine channelling a seasonal stream or wadi, it provided a defensive border to the original City of David, and a route into the wilderness for King David when he fled from his rebellious son Absalom; refer to 2 Samuel 15:23.

Jesus often traversed the Kidron on his way to the village of Bethany, his favourite place of rest and refuge. After the Last Supper, he crossed the valley with his disciples to the garden of Gethsemane. Then, after he was betrayed, he was brought back the same way to the house of the high priest. By the light of the Passover moon, the whitewashed tombs cut into the valley's rock-face would have provided a stark reminder to Jesus that on the following day his own body would be laid in a tomb.



View of the Kidron Valley

Since the 4th Century AD, an identification of the Kidron with the Valley of Jehoshaphat, a name meaning 'Yahweh shall judge' mentioned in the Book of Joel: *<<I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat, and I will enter into judgement with them there, on account of my people and my heritage Israel, because they have scattered them among*

the nations>> (Joel 3:2a), and: <<*Let the nations rouse themselves, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the neighbouring nations*>> (Joel 3:12), has led to the belief that it will be the place of final judgement.

They began to sanctify on the first day of the first month, and on the sixteenth day of the first month they finished. This relates the staggering extent of the prior damage to the temple, in that it took sixteen days to simply carry out the rubbish, mostly from the pagan worship, that had accumulated in the temple, until the sixteenth day of the first month, two days past the proper date of Passover; refer to Numbers 9:1-11 and the comment made on 2 Chronicles 30:2-4.

¹⁸ Then they went inside to King Hezekiah and said, ‘We have cleansed all the house of the Lord, the altar of burnt-offering and all its utensils, and the table for the rows of bread and all its utensils. ¹⁹ All the utensils that King Ahaz repudiated during his reign when he was faithless, we have made ready and sanctified; see, they are in front of the altar of the Lord.’

2 Chronicles 29:18-19

All the utensils that King Ahaz repudiated during his reign when he was faithless, we have made ready and sanctified. After the first step of removing the problem, now they could put back what had been taken out during the reign of Ahaz; refer to 2 Kings 16:17-18 and 2 Chronicles 28:24.

The gold and silver temple vessels, which Solomon’s craftsmen fashioned, as recorded in 2 Chronicles 4:6-22, were removed by the Babylonians at the fall of Jerusalem: <<*All the vessels of the house of God, large and small, and the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king and of his officials, all these he brought to Babylon*>> (2 Chronicles 36:18), then returned by the Persians at the restoration after the exile; refer to Ezra 1:7-11. They signified the continuity of the Chronicler’s generation with the pre-exilic temple worship, and God’s covenant faithfulness to his people.

III.I.iii 2 Chronicles 29:20-36 - Temple Worship Restored

Now that the temple was restored and cleansed a great gathering of all the people is described with thousands of animals offered in sacrifice to the Lord, while the people worshipped him and the Levites sang songs of praise. This is a scene of jubilation and the revival of a nation.

²⁰ Then King Hezekiah rose early, assembled the officials of the city, and went up to the house of the Lord. ²¹ They brought seven bulls, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven male goats for a sin-offering for

the kingdom and for the sanctuary and for Judah. He commanded the priests the descendants of Aaron to offer them on the altar of the Lord. ²² So they slaughtered the bulls, and the priests received the blood and dashed it against the altar; they slaughtered the rams and their blood was dashed against the altar; they also slaughtered the lambs and their blood was dashed against the altar.

2 Chronicles 29:20-22

Then King Hezekiah rose early, assembled the officials of the city, and went up to the house of the Lord. The diligence of Hezekiah was evident in that he rose early to do these things. His zeal for God's glory made his obedience prompt and present, ready and speedy. He could not rest until he had reformed. The city officials are now involved in the revival of the proper practice of worshipping God.

They brought seven bulls, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven male goats for a sin-offering for the kingdom and for the sanctuary and for Judah. The restoration of worship following the cleansing of the temple begins with a sin-offering for all Israel as the appointed means in the Law of Moses for removing every kind of evil and defilement from the people; refer to Leviticus 4:1-5:13.

He commanded the priests the descendants of Aaron to offer them on the altar of the Lord. In his bold restoration of the service of the temple, Hezekiah was not so foolish as to overstep the Biblical and traditional commands and to offer these sacrifices himself. His great-grandfather Uzziah did this and was struck down with leprosy for doing so; refer to 2 Chronicles 26:16-23.

²³ Then the male goats for the sin-offering were brought to the king and the assembly; they laid their hands on them, ²⁴ and the priests slaughtered them and made a sin-offering with their blood at the altar, to make atonement for all Israel. For the king commanded that the burnt-offering and the sin-offering should be made for all Israel.

2 Chronicles 29:23-24

That they laid their hands on them calls to mind the scapegoat ritual of the Day of Atonement: <<*When he has finished atoning for the holy place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall present the live goat. Then Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and sending it away into the wilderness by means of someone designated for the task. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a barren region; and the goat shall be set free in the wilderness*>> (Leviticus 16:20-22). For the assembly to lay their hands on the

goats of the sin-offering was to designate these as substitutes for their own lives and to transfer their sins on to the animal victims. The goats thus served as types of Christ's substitutionary death for sinners: <<*For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*>> (2 Corinthians 5:21).

²⁵ He stationed the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, harps, and lyres, according to the commandment of David and of Gad the king's seer and of the prophet Nathan, for the commandment was from the Lord through his prophets. ²⁶ The Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. ²⁷ Then Hezekiah commanded that the burnt-offering be offered on the altar. When the burnt-offering began, the song to the Lord began also, and the trumpets, accompanied by the instruments of King David of Israel. ²⁸ The whole assembly worshipped, the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded; all this continued until the burnt-offering was finished. ²⁹ When the offering was finished, the king and all who were present with him bowed down and worshipped. ³⁰ King Hezekiah and the officials commanded the Levites to sing praises to the Lord with the words of David and of the seer Asaph. They sang praises with gladness, and they bowed down and worshipped.

2 Chronicles 29:25-30

The burnt-offering that is accompanied by the Levites' singing and music signifies the people's act of consecrating themselves afresh to Yahweh (v.31).

The song to the Lord. In his arrangement of this restoration of temple service, Hezekiah was careful to include both offering and worship. Each honoured God in important ways. The Hebrew that lies behind the phrase the song of the Lord, suggests a specific writing, i.e. perhaps including the canonical Psalms that were then available for use in worship. Refer also to 1 Chronicles 16:7.

Hezekiah was wise in making worship such a priority. Every human being's first priority should be to acknowledge God's worth. That, for example, is how the Ten Commandments begin (Exodus 20:3-6), it is the reason for Jesus obedient death on the Cross, and it is the chief characteristic of the community in heaven; refer to Revelation 4:1-5:14 and 22:1-9.

King Hezekiah and the officials commanded the Levites to sing praises to the Lord with the words of David and of the seer Asaph. They sang praises with gladness, and they bowed down and worshipped. They worshipped God with the

best words they could find, the words of the great psalms of praise written by David, Asaph and possibly others.

³¹ Then Hezekiah said, ‘You have now consecrated yourselves to the Lord; come near, bring sacrifices and thank-offerings to the house of the Lord.’ The assembly brought sacrifices and thank-offerings; and all who were of a willing heart brought burnt-offerings. ³² The number of the burnt-offerings that the assembly brought was seventy bulls, one hundred rams, and two hundred lambs; all these were for a burnt-offering to the Lord. ³³ The consecrated offerings were six hundred bulls and three thousand sheep. ³⁴ But the priests were too few and could not skin all the burnt-offerings, so, until other priests had sanctified themselves, their kindred, the Levites, helped them until the work was finished – for the Levites were more conscientious than the priests in sanctifying themselves. ³⁵ Besides the great number of burnt-offerings there was the fat of the offerings of well-being, and there were the drink-offerings for the burnt-offerings. Thus the service of the house of the Lord was restored. ³⁶ And Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced because of what God had done for the people; for the thing had come about suddenly.

2 Chronicles 29:31-36

You have now consecrated yourselves to the Lord; come near, bring sacrifices and thank-offerings to the house of the Lord. Sacrifices and offerings are only acceptable when those offering them are themselves consecrated to God.

The sacrifices and thank-offerings that the people bring to the temple are individual rather than regular, communal expressions of worship and thanksgiving. Once they had properly sacrificed and cleansed the temple and their own hearts before the Lord, now the assembly was invited to come and bring their personal offerings. One of the great purposes of the temple as a place for the personal sacrifice and worship of the believer was now restored.

Sacrifice for sin in both the OT and the NT is the springboard for the sacrifice of praise: <<*And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful*>> (Colossians 3:15), and: <<*Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God*>> (Hebrews 13:15-16), and for the fellowship or communion meal, as described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

The number of the burnt-offerings that the assembly brought was seventy bulls, one hundred rams, and two hundred lambs; all these were for a burnt-offering to the Lord. Now the whole assembly of the nation of Judah is involved in worshipping the Lord once again. Each person played their part in this large, communal honouring of God. The chapter started with Hezekiah having the determination to restore the nation to worship; here it is seen that the first stage has been accomplished.

But the priests were too few and could not skin all the burnt-offerings. The pent-up desire of the people to sacrifice and honour God through sacrifices was so great that when they were given the opportunity the priests were overwhelmed.

So, until other priests had sanctified themselves, their kindred, the Levites, helped them until the work was finished. This was a good example of temporarily suspending a commandment out of godly necessity. It is also a pointer to the role of the body of the church to step up into ministry rather than expecting the whole burden to be placed on the leadership.

It was also fitting on this occasion because the Levites were more conscientious than the priests in sanctifying themselves. For the truest faith is often found among the humble; and throughout history professional religious leaders have too often been among those least willing to submit to Christ and to the Word.

And Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced because of what God had done for the people. The remarkable response of the assembly was proof that God had prepared the people. There could never have been such a response unless God was at work among his people, and this was evidence of such a work.

For the thing had come about suddenly. This is an important message for the church. Many people become despondent when little seems to be happening in response to the work of the church. Yet God can change it all in an instant. The church simply needs to seek God's will and persevere in faith.

Two consequences followed from these offerings. The first was to acknowledge that only God had made it all possible, as Paul confirms: <<Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says 'Let Jesus be cursed!' and no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit>> (1 Corinthians 12:3), and: <<So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father>> (Ephesians 2:17-18). The second was that everyone rejoiced in complete contrast with the situation with which they had begun.