

Hard to believe that it is May 24th already! Time flies by, doesn't it? And, here is another Devotional for our study and hopefully enrichment in life. I think some of you will feel this one, and the four that follow, are more of Biblical Studies than inspirational devotionals. O well! That is just me ... an old, retired college Professor of Theology and Biblical Studies. I do trust it will be a blessing as well as a challenge to you. God bless you. REVIVE US AGAIN!

A Devotional prepared by Dr. Robert L. Morris
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Today I am posting the first in a series of five Devotional Studies focusing on the need for true Biblical revival. This is illustrated in the revival during the days of King Hezekiah of Judah. In this series, we need to look at the need for revival in our own day, parallel to that of Judah in the days of King Hezekiah. The Biblical context from which these Devotionals will come is 2 Chronicles, chapters 28 through 31. Some will rightly say that these are less "devotional" and more "Bible study instructional." That is fine with me. And, I make no apology. We need to dig into the Word of God. Therefore, please follow me through these studies, praying earnestly for our beloved nation that is so desperately in need of a mighty move of God. We need to remind ourselves that God has declared very plainly: "If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." (2 Chronicles 7:14; NKJV) My dear friends, there is no other way. We will do it God's way, or it won't happen! We desperately need revival if our beloved nation will survive in these tumultuous days. It can and must happen. Let's look at the revival in Judah in the days of King Hezekiah. Today's study, teaching lesson, devotional, or call it what you want, is introductory.

For this series of Devotionals, the focus will be on King Hezekiah and the revival that broke out in Judah during his reign. Following this introductory study, the remaining studies in the series will be formulated into four sections as follows, and based on these four chapters in 2 Chronicles:

1. Why is revival needed? (Chapter 28)
2. What are the characteristics of a true revival? (Chapter 29)
3. What results from true revival? (Chapter 30)
4. What are the lasting evidences of true revival? (Chapter 31)

At this point it would be helpful to return to the Devotional I posted on May 17. At the very least, please read Isaiah, chapters 36 and 37. The May 17 Devotional, "Handling Crises in Our Lives," was based on these chapters, in which we find Isaiah's record of King Hezekiah taking the Assyrian threat to the Lord in prayer. Hezekiah was the son of King Ahaz of Judah. He became king at the time of his father's death. He was 25 years old when he ascended the throne of Judah, and reigned for 29 years. He began his reign in 715 BCE, just seven years after the Northern Kingdom of Israel came to its demise under the Assyrian hordes. The witness of the Holy Scriptures regarding his life and reign is as follows: "...he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done." (2 Chronicles 29:2; NKJV)

That divine testimony is repeated in 2 Kings 18:3. According to Scripture, Hezekiah was the most faithful to God of all the kings of Judah. He wasted no time after coming to the throne to bring about a return to the LORD God of Israel. The account of his revival ministry is contained in only one verse in the account in 2 Kings: "He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, and cut down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan." (2 Kings 18:4; NKJV) What a testimony!

Of this great leader in Judah, the Scripture states: "He trusted in the LORD God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, or who were before him. For he held fast to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses." (2 Kings 18:5-6; NKJV) And the historic, powerful result was: "The LORD was with him; he prospered wherever he went." (2 Kings 18:7a; NKJV)

Fortunately, the Holy Spirit provided in 2 Chronicles a much more detailed account of Hezekiah's revival ministry. In fact, that account occupies nearly all the sacred record in 2 Chronicles 29:3 through 31:19. The account closes with these magnificent words preserved for all eternity:

“Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah, and he did what was good and right and true before the LORD his God. 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.” (2 Chronicles 31:20-21; NKJV)

Having read the foregoing material in this study, someone will be quick, and rightly so, to raise an issue regarding what some people try to declare is a contradiction. Two character expressing verses in the comparative narrations contained in 2 Kings may come to the mind of the careful Bible reader of Scripture. They are quoted here with a resolution following. Carefully read these two verses. Of King Hezekiah the Bible states: “He trusted in the LORD God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him.” (2 Kings 18:5; NKJV)

Of King Josiah the Bible states: “Now before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him did any arise like him.” (2 Kings 23:25; NKJV)

There are some who boldly declare these statements to be contradictory, and therefore render the Scriptures inaccurate. In other words, both of these kings of Judah cannot “be like no other king before or after” in relationship to his reign. Several factors need to be identified here.

It is extremely interesting that for each of the kings, Hezekiah and Josiah, there are two criteria by which they were evaluated. First, they “did what was right in the sight of the Lord,” and second, what they did was “according to all that his father David had done.” (Compare 2 Kings 18:3 and 22:2) As far as comparability is concerned, it is the reign of King David by which these two were evaluated.

As to specifics, the alleged contradiction is not difficult to resolve. Carefully reading the passages, one notes they do not contradict. Both King Hezekiah and King Josiah were the greatest in the manner describing them. King Hezekiah’s notable greatness is related to “he trusted in the LORD God of Israel.” (2 Kings 18:5)) King Josiah’s notable greatness is related to the fact that he “turned to the LORD with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses.” (2 Kings 23:25) King Hezekiah trusted in the Lord while King Josiah turned to the Lord. When reading the different Scripture passages, it is evident that one speaks of faith and the other of restoration. King Hezekiah was preeminent for his trust in the Lord, and King Josiah was equally preeminent for his turning to the Lord. However, for both of them, the rule of comparison was the reign of King David. The powerful evidence of the testimony concerning each is related to their obedience to the Law of Moses. (See 2 Kings 18:6 and 23:25)

This is the same way of looking at King Solomon who was incomparable in wisdom. Of him the Scriptures state: “Behold, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you.” (1 Kings 3:12)

In these Biblical accounts we find three kings with the quality of greatness attached to them, but each in a different aspect of their personal and public service lives. One was incomparable in wisdom. One was incomparable in trust. One was incomparable in turning to the Lord. Therefore, it is with integrity that one can state there is no contradiction in the statements regarding each of these kings.

In addition to the three kings of Judah noted above, there is one other man in Scripture of whom such an accolade has been ascribed. John the Baptist came announcing the coming of the kingdom, and calling people to repent. (Matthew 3:1-3) Confronting many of the Pharisees and Sadducees by calling them a “brood of vipers,” (Matthew 3:7) he incurred their anger. He also prophesied the coming of the Messiah by saying “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” (Matthew 3:11, 12; NKJV) This did not win any friends, but to the contrary, resulted finally in John’s imprisonment. From prison he sent two of his followers to inquire about the ministry of Jesus. (Matthew 11:2) Jesus responded, and even quoted Scripture, Malachi 3:1, to identify John as God’s messenger who would prepare the way for the Christ. (Matthew 11:10) Jesus then said: “Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist.” (Matthew 11:11)

Three kings and a preacher! For each the accolade of greatness in comparison to all others differs. King Hezekiah - greater in trusting the Lord, King Josiah - greater in turning to the Lord, King Solomon - greater in wisdom from the Lord, and John the Baptist - greater in announcing the Messiah according to the Word of the Lord. Therefore, there is absolutely no reason to consider any of these as contradictory to the others.

If there was ever a day when a true, Bible-based, God-honoring, Christ-glorifying, Spirit-led, sin-destroying, life-transforming revival is needed, it is now! It is true that we learn from the lives of people like Hezekiah,

Josiah, Solomon, and John the Baptist, but we must also remember that the commission of Jesus given to all of us has not changed, nor will it change. There is no unique formula that can be invented or created by people that can stir our imaginations and enlist our energies relating to revival. No, it has not changed. Every born-again follower of Jesus is to be involved in sharing the Good News of Jesus to the whole world. Jesus said: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-10; NKJV)

While living on this earth we won't be kings like Hezekiah, Josiah, and Solomon, and we may never have national leaders like those men. Further, we won't all be preachers like John the Baptist, even though God has raised up a host of men and women who preach the Word of God faithfully. By the enabling grace of the Holy Spirit we must leave a legacy parallel to that of King Hezekiah and King Josiah who "did what was right in the sight of the Lord." (2 Kings 18:3 and 22:2) Our assignment is laid out before us. Make disciples everywhere we live and have influence, establish them as followers of Jesus, baptize them, thus identifying them as followers of Jesus, and teach them to observe all that Jesus commanded. In so doing, we will have the sweet peace of Jesus living in us and around us, knowing that truly, He is with us, even to the end of the age. Now, let us make sure that we do "what is right in the sight of the Lord."

I want to close this introductory study on Revival with the familiar hymn penned by William P. Mackay, in 1863, and sung to the music of John J. Husband, created in 1815.

REVIVE US AGAIN

1. We praise Thee, O God, for the Son of Thy love -
For Jesus, who died and is now gone above.
 2. We praise Thee, O God, for Thy Spirit of Light,
Who has shown us our Savior and scattered our night.
 3. All glory and praise to the Lamb that was slain,
Who has borne all our sins and has cleansed ev'ry stain.
 4. Revive us again; fill each heart with Thy love.
May each soul be rekindled with fire from above.
- Refrain, after each stanza
Hallelujah! Thine the glory! Hallelujah! Amen!
Hallelujah! Thine the glory! Revive us again.