

And a good Thursday morning to you, my family and friends. God bless you as you consider these thoughts relating to revival. Surely it is the great, great need in our world. God help us to keep praying for and meeting the conditions for a true God-sent revival.

WHAT RESULTS FROM A TRUE REVIVAL?

A Devotional prepared by Dr. Robert L. Morris

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2 Chronicles 30:1-27 (Read the entire Chapter)

This is a Devotional that continues our study of the great Revival under King Hezekiah. We need to be aware of what happens when God moves among us in what we decide to call "a great revival." Change happens! In addition to the transformation in the lives of the people there are significant changes in the overall attitudes and actions in the area or even nation where the revival takes place. In the 30th chapter of 2 Chronicles we learn something about the changes that took place in Judah and Israel when a true revival took place under the leadership of King Hezekiah.

1. Redeeming the Value of Meaningful Tradition. (vv 1-8)

After the Temple had been repaired and sanctified (cleansed and made ready for worship) and the priests and Levites were sanctified (cleansed and appointed to their places of responsibility), and the service of celebration completed, the first act of King Hezekiah was to return all Israel to the great tradition of keeping the Passover. To accomplish this, he sent letters throughout all Judah and Israel, and to Ephraim and Manasseh encouraging them to come to Jerusalem to keep the Passover.

For whatever reasons, King Hezekiah included Ephraim and Manasseh in his correspondence calling all Israel to come to Jerusalem to observe "the Passover to the LORD God of Israel. For the king and his leaders and all the assembly in Jerusalem had agreed to keep the Passover in the second month. 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." (2 Chronicles 30:1b-3)

Why is it important to include "... they could not keep it at the regular time?" What was the regular time? This had been established by the LORD Himself. "Now the LORD spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying: 'Let the children of Israel keep the Passover at its appointed time. On the fourteenth day of this month, at twilight you shall keep it at its appointed time.'" (Numbers 9:1-3a)

This statement is about keeping the Passover. While in our general time period we can think back, enjoy, and even desire some of our meaningful traditions, the Passover in Israel was more than just a tradition. Annually Israel celebrated the memorial of divine grace that had delivered them out of the bondage of Egypt. Passover is the name given to this special celebration memorial. Of great significance is the LORD'S statements: "It is the LORD'S Passover." (Exodus 12:11) The LORD then explained this title. "For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike 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. Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance." (Exodus 12:12-14)

From our study thus far, it is obvious that the Scripture details carefully when the Passover to the LORD was to be observed. In one of the LORD'S instructional statements to Moses, He identified seven holy convocations and special feasts they were to observe. In these the LORD stated clearly: "On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the LORD'S Passover." (Leviticus 23:5)

So, what do Christian people do today? Are there cherished traditions or practices in years gone by that we desire to have returned? Each one of us in the Church could cite one or more. For some, it may be a more structured service of worship. For others it may be an open time of praise and testimony. For others it may mean a return in our music to singing the great hymns of the Church. For some, it may mean the use of liturgical elements such as reciting the Apostle's Creed, or singing the Doxology. For others ... well, who knows? But, for one thing, we commemorate the Lord's death and resurrection by participating in what we call "The Lord's Supper," or "Holy Communion," and well we should. Like in Israel of old, this is much more

than a “tradition.” We are participating in the true meaning of keeping the Passover of the LORD, for it is commemoration of the glorious truth that we have been delivered out of the bondage of sin. And this, I believe is the singular most important practice we must maintain in our worship services. Whatever we return, or to whatever we return, we must make sure each element is true worship, honoring the Lord, and enriching our lives.

2. Returning to the Source of Continuous Blessing. (vv 9-12)

In redeeming the value of meaningful traditions and practices, the Passover was primary in the life of King Hezekiah and the people of Judah. It is somewhat difficult to pinpoint the time of this invitation from King Hezekiah. The Assyrian conquest of the northern kingdom of Israel was in 721 or 722 BCE. King Hezekiah became sole king of Judah in 715 or 716. It seems from the language of 2 Chronicles 30:6, 10 and 11 that Hezekiah’s kind invitation was issued when the northern kingdom of Israel was defeated and lay prostrate under Assyria, but perhaps prior to a time when the entire kingdom had been depopulated through exile. In reading 2 Chronicles we note that “the runners went throughout all Israel and Judah.” (2 Chronicles 30:6) It makes sense to suggest that the invitation actually went out to the remnant of people who at this point escaped the exile under Assyria. This is confirmed because “... some from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem.” (2 Chronicles 30:11) The king’s heart would not forget the remnant of Israel who had survived the Assyrian siege. He invited them to celebrate the LORD’S Passover in Jerusalem. Nothing was more important than living in the light of God’s promises and provisions. “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.” (v 9)

As the carriers spread across the land carrying the letters from the king they were met with different responses. The reception among the remnant of the northern kingdom was divided. Some of the Israelites even “laughed at them and mocked them.” (v 10b) On the positive side, some from the nation of Israel “humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem.” (v 11) It is a thrill to note that in response to this, “the hand of the 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.” (v 12) The Passover had not been observed for a long time, and King Hezekiah was determined to right this wrong. God NEVER lets His people down, or allows them to struggle uselessly. He is always with His own, even though difficult times encompass them along the way. It is a fantastic source of encouragement and blessing to know that no one of God’s children walks the pathway of life alone.

There is no such thing as a true spiritual revival apart from turning or returning wholly to the LORD. And when we do, we can be assured of His abiding presence and continuous blessing after blessing!

3. Removing All Non-Spiritual Religious Diversions. (vv 13, 14)

These two verses are power-packed! The text reads: “Now many people, a very great assembly, gathered at Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the second month. 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.” In Judah, this was obviously the greatest assembly of people gathered for a Passover in many generations. The large assembly of people included the people of Judah and the remnant from the northern tribes who responded to the invitation. The Scripture notes that the purpose of the assembly was to “keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread.” Some may be tempted to retort: “What about observing the Passover? It isn’t included in the Biblical text!” True, but when the LORD established the Passover it was to immediately precede the deliverance of Israel out of the Egyptian bondage. (Exodus 12:12-20) In that passage one learns that Passover is the seven-day feast or celebration of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Therefore, the account in 2 Chronicles 30:13 is correct.

The first act of the people was to “clean house!” That is, they went through Jerusalem and removed the forbidden altars to pagan gods or any unauthorized altars placed there under the evil reign of King Ahaz. In preparation for the reinstatement of the Passover of the LORD the city of Jerusalem was cleansed of all idolatrous or unauthorized religious worship. It was vitally necessary for the people to forget their differences, come together as one people, remove all spiritual baggage, and worship God in the beauty of holiness. As Christians, let’s make sure we first throw away the unholy, unauthorized, unworthy baggage. Then we can come to the place of worship and the practice of those meaningful experiences, including the Lord’s Supper, singing His praises, praying from the depths of our hearts, and worshipping Him in spirit and in truth, and above all else, remembering Jesus’ sacrifice as our Passover Lamb.

4. Restoring an Emphasis on True Spirituality. (vv 15-20)

Priests, Levites, people from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun, and “many in the assembly” were apparently ignorant of the Divine arrangements for preparation for the Passover, or at least they were unaccustomed to preparing themselves to participate in the Passover of the LORD. (See vv 15, 17, 18) It is the tender spirit manifested in the prayer of King Hezekiah for the people that is characteristic of people who walk in close fellowship with God. His prayer is powerful: “May the good LORD provide atonement for everyone 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.” (vv 18c, 19)

(See Jeremiah 29:13 ... “when you seek Me with all your heart, you will find Me...”

The sacred record states: “And the LORD listened to Hezekiah and healed the people.” (v 20) Here is the mercy and goodness of God to those who seek Him. The people in Jerusalem prepared their hearts to seek the LORD. In ignorance they did not do it according to the pattern showed to Moses centuries before. The people in Jerusalem were proud of their great past, and desired to stand right before the LORD God of their fathers. As he sensed this, King Hezekiah prayed for them and God heard and answered the king’s prayer.

Their pattern of preparing to receive the Passover is a powerful source of instruction for all Christians who gather to worship the Lord. Specifically, in coming to the Lord’s Supper, we come only on the basis of the shed blood of our Passover Lamb. In honesty and humility of heart we come before the Lord in prayer, receiving the witness of the Holy Spirit that by the grace of God our hearts are in harmony with God. We may feel very unworthy, but with spiritual integrity, we come on the merit of the sacrifice of our Passover Lamb. At the Lord’s Supper, or holy communion, we partake of the elements representing His body and blood, rejoicing that our names are in the Lamb’s Book of Life.

5. Rejoicing Together in the Goodness of God. (vv 21-27)

The Word of God is clear when it states: “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.” (v 18a) There was obviously great gladness for the ones who had come from the northern tribes. God answered the prayer of King Hezekiah, and “the children of Israel who were present at Jerusalem kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with great gladness.” (v 21) The use of the term “the children of Israel” is very important, for it is the indication of the reuniting of many people from the twelve tribes of Israel. The inclusion of the words “seven days” is important, for it is in response to God’s original instruction in that pre-deliverance order while they were yet in Egypt. The LORD said to them through Moses: “You shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this same day I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. Therefore, you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening.” (Exodus 12:17, 18)

It is significant then, as recorded in 2 Chronicles 30, that under the leadership of King Hezekiah the reunited group of Israelites observed the Passover of the LORD for the seven days according to God’s original instructions. The excitement, the joy, the evident blessing of God was so meaningful to the people that “the whole assembly agreed to keep the feast another seven days, and they kept it another seven days with gladness.” (v 23) It was truly a time of rejoicing in which “the Levites and the priests praised the LORD day by day, singing to the LORD, accompanied by loud instruments.” (v 21b)

Truly, it was a day of worship characterized by praise, singing, and playing of musical instruments. But it was also a day of teaching, something that was obviously needed, especially for the people from the northern tribes. Because of this, King Hezekiah encouraged the Levites who “taught the good knowledge of the LORD.” (v 22)

The sacred record, in 2 Chronicles 30, observes that “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.” (v 26) Revival had come to the children of Israel. With it was a reuniting of the tribes of God’s special people Israel. There was joy, happiness, and celebrating God’s goodness and the final benediction of grace from the hearts and lips of the spiritual leaders of Israel, the priests and Levites: “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.” (v 27)

Why could this happen in Judah and all Israel? King Hezekiah was guided by God’s Word to Moses: “I bore you on eagles’ wings. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests

and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to children of Israel.” (Exodus 19:4b-6) Amen!
and Amen!

I want to close this Devotional with a great hymn of rejoicing and praise. Some who read this Devotional may remember Dr. Myron and Pauline Tweed. Margie and I knew them well, and rejoiced in their marvelous God-given giftedness in music. Margie grew up in Oregon, and knew Pauline very well as a dear friend. I recall listening to Myron and Pauline singing this great hymn, written by Eliza E. Hewitt, to the music composed by William J. Kirkpatrick. Every time I hear it or sing it, I am reminded of the glow on their faces expressing the joy in their hearts, as they sang it to God’s glory. It reminds me of the people of God rejoicing when revival came to Judah!

SINGING I GO

1. The trusting heart to Jesus clings, nor any ill forebodes,
But at the cross of Calv’ry sings, “Praise God for lifted loads!”
2. The passing days bring many cares. “Fear not,” I hear Him say;
And when my fears are turned to prayers, the burdens slip away.
3. He tells me of my Father’s love and never slumb’ring eye;
My everlasting King above will all my needs supply.
4. When to the throne of grace I flee, I find the promise true;
The mighty arms upholding me will bear my burdens too.

CHORUS after each verse

Singing I go along life’s road, Praising the Lord, praising the Lord;
Singing I go along life’s road, for Jesus has lifted my load.