

Lecture #29 – Exposition of II Chronicles 29-36

Chapter 29 – Hezekiah

vs. 1-2 – Overview of Hezekiah’s Reign

☪ II Kings 18:1-7

Hezekiah was a good king.

vs. 3-19 – Temple Restored – 726 B.C.

From the very start of Hezekiah’s reign, he worked to restore the true worship of Jehovah.

Work began on the first day of the first month (Nisan). Eight days later the courts were cleansed and another eight days later the Holy Place was cleansed. In all, sixteen days are spent doing the work (minus the Sabbath days, of course). This means it was not finished in time for Passover on the 14th.

vs. 20-36 – Temple Worship Restored

Edersheim writes:

“From the detailed account in the Book of Chronicles, we learn that ‘the house of the Lord’ had actually been closed (2 Chronicles 29:3,7). By this we understand the closing of the Sanctuary itself, that is, of the holy and most holy places, since Ahaz continued to use the court of the priests, although for sacrifices at the heathen altar which he had reared. But now the doors of the Sanctuary were repaired, and once more thrown open. Then Hezekiah ‘gathered’ the priests and Levites in ‘the wide place on the east,’ probably some well-known locality in the eastern part of the Temple-buildings (comp. Ezra 10:9; Nehemiah 8:1,3, 16).

“This for the purpose of calling upon them to sanctify themselves, and to remove the heathen abominations which had defiled the Temple. And with this object, the king made in their hearing an earnest review of the sinful past, with its consequent judgments, and a declaration of his purpose ‘to make a covenant with the Lord.’

“The response to his appeal was immediate and hearty. In the account of the work now taken in hand by representatives of the Levites they appear once more according to their ancient division into the three families of Kohath, Merari, and Gershon, as David had arranged their courses (1 Chronicles 23:6-23, comp. ver. 27). With these were conjoined as a special branch, probably on account of their pre-eminence (Numbers 3:30), the representatives of the house of Elizaphan, a chief of the Kohathites (Exodus 6:18). Next in the enumeration we find the representatives of the

three ancient divisions of Levite musicians - the sons of Asaph, of Heman, and Jeduthun (comp. 1 Chronicles 25:1-6; 2 Chronicles 5:12).

“While these heads of Levite houses gathered their brethren to do the work assigned to them, the priests similarly cleansed the inner part of the house, when the Levites flung the remnants of past heathen defilement into the brook Kidron. It marks the zeal with which the work was carried on that, begun on the first day of the first month of the first year of Hezekiah's reign - reckoning its ecclesiastical commencement from the month Nisan - it was completed on the sixteenth day.

“Then the vessels which Ahaz had cast away were restored, viz., the altar of burnt-offering, the stands for the brazen lavers, and that for ‘the sea’ (comp. 2 Kings 16:14,17). The Temple having been thus purified, its services were recommenced with a grand function, when seven bullocks, seven rams, and seven lambs were offered for the congregation as burnt-offerings, and seven he-goats as sin-offerings (comp. Leviticus 4:14; Ezra 8:35).

“In strict accordance with the Mosaic law, all the sacred functions were discharged by the Aaronic priesthood, with sprinkling of blood on the altar, and imposition of hands on the sacrifices, denoting their vicariousness (Leviticus 1:4; 4:4,15, 24, and Leviticus 4:7,18, 30; 5:9). But what specially distinguishes these services is that the sin-offerings were brought not only for Judah, but ‘for all Israel’ (2 Chronicles 29:24), indicating alike the solidarity of ‘all Israel’ as the congregation of the Lord, and the representative character of these sacrifices. And in accordance with the institution of David, the sacred strains from Levite instruments, and the inspired hymns of David and of Asaph, once more filled the Temple with the voice of melody and of praise, while the king, the princes of Judah, and the people responsively bowed their heads in lowly worship.

“The more direct sacrificial offerings for the people were followed, at the king's suggestion, by thankofferings (comp. Leviticus 7:11,16), also of a public character, to which ‘as many as were of upright heart’ - probably they who had stood aloof from the idolatry of the previous reign - added burntofferings. As these thankofferings were brought by the congregation as a whole, the victims were not slain and flayed by the offerers, as was the case when brought by private individuals (Leviticus 1:5,6); but this part of the service devolved on the priesthood, who called in, as in such case they might, the assistance of the Levites. When we remember that, besides the special ‘burnt-offerings’ of individuals (70 bullocks, 100 rams, and 200 lambs), the ‘thankofferings’ of the congregation amounted to no less than 600 oxen and 3,000 sheep (2 Chronicles 29:32,33), we scarcely wonder that the priests alone should not have sufficed for the service. And as the text significantly marks, recalling the special defection of the priesthood, from the high-priest Urijah downwards (comp. 2 Kings 16:15), the number of priests who had as yet sanctified themselves was proportionally smaller than that of the more faithful Levites. ‘So the service of the house of Jehovah was established. And Hezekiah rejoiced and all the people, because of that which God had prepared to [for] the people [probably referring to their willing participation and contribution to these services], for the thing had come suddenly’ [without long previous preparation] (2 Chronicles 29:35,36).”¹

¹ Bible History: Old Testament by Alfred Edersheim. Book 7, p. 124-127

Chapter 30 – Hezekiah’s Revival

vs. 1-27 – Passover Kept

Not that this Passover was held in the second month, not the first. Because of the restoration of the Temple, it could not have been properly observed at its prescribed time.

Edersheim writes:

“What followed shows that, however sudden the impulse in this religious revival, it was neither transient nor superficial. Of all the festivals in Israel, the most solemn was that of the Passover. It commemorated Israel's national birthday as the redeemed of the Lord, and pointed forward to that better deliverance of which it was the emblem. Ordinarily this feast commenced on the evening of the 14th Nisan (Exodus 12:6,8, and parallels). But in the present instance this was impossible. Not only had the cleansing of the Temple occupied till the 16th of the month, but a sufficient number of priests for the services had not yet sanctified themselves, while further time was required to make announcement of the Passover throughout all Israel. For, unlike the services at the reconsecration of the Temple, which seem to have been confined to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, this was to be observed as a great national festival. But it was possible to remove the difficulty thus arising. The law, while fixing the ordinary date of the Passover, had also made provision for an after-celebration of the feast on the corresponding day of the second month in cases of unavoidable hindrance (Numbers 9:6-13). This is one of the most instructive commendations on the character of the Mosaic law. It shows that the outward form was not of its essence, but was flexible and adaptable. Thus the law was not something rigidly outward and absolutely permanent, but gave indication of the possibility of an enlargement by a higher fulfillment of its spirit as distinguished from the mere letter. Hence such a provision seems like an unspoken pledge of a future transformation of the law, in accordance with the higher conditions and the wants of new circumstances. Lastly, it also affords a precedent and a warrant for such a change as that of the transference of the Sabbath from the close of the week to its beginning; from the day of rest to that of the Resurrection of Christ; from the memorial of the completion of the first creation to that of the second in the creation of the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

“Of this legal provision of an after-Passover, Hezekiah resolved to avail himself. We mark as specially interesting in itself, and as foreshadowing great changes in the future political and ecclesiastical organization of Israel, that Hezekiah acted in this with the advice of ‘his princes and all the congregation in Jerusalem’ (2 Chronicles 30:2). And yet more interesting is it to learn that the invitation to attend the Passover addressed by the king ‘and his princes’ was sent not only to the cities of Judah, but to all Israel, ‘from Beersheba even to Dan.’ To this the text adds the retrospective notice that previous Paschal observances had been partial, not general: ‘or not in multitude [in large numbers] had they done it, as it is written’ (2 Chronicles 30:5).

“This brotherly invitation to the feast of Israel's birth and the common worship of their God and Redeemer was, so to speak, the answer which repentant Judah now made to that fratricidal war which Israel had so lately waged with the object of exterminating the kingdom of David. And the letters of the king and the princes bore such tender references to past sin and judgment, and to

present national calamity, and breathed such a spirit of religious hope for the future, as almost to rise to the level of New Testament sentiment.

“In spite of the mockery with which at least at first the invitation was received by the majority in what still remained of the northern kingdom, the final response was truly encouraging (comp. vers. 10,18). In Judah it was both hearty and unanimous (2 Chronicles 30:12). From the other parts of the country ‘a multitude of people, even many,’ came from out of five of the tribes that still constituted the kingdom of Israel. For Naphtali had been annexed to Assyria, and Reuben and Gad been deported. The festival in Jerusalem was followed by a spontaneous national movement against idolatry.

“For while the purification of the Temple had been a public act of reform initiated by the king, it was left to the people gathered in Jerusalem to remove the altars in the capital, whether in private houses or in more public places, which were the remnant of the idolatrous worship introduced by Ahaz (2 Chronicles 28:24).

“The only drawback to the right observance of the Passover festivities was that many of the worshippers ‘were not sanctified.’ Accordingly the Levites had to offer for them the Paschal lamb, which, by the law, each offerer should have slain for himself and his house. This applied specially to those who had come from the northern kingdom (ver. 18). If, none the less, they were allowed to partake of the Paschal feast, this was a concession almost necessary in the circumstances, since otherwise theirs would not at all have been a Passover; and for this Hezekiah implored and obtained forgiveness from the Lord.”²

Chapter 31 – Hezekiah’s Reforms

vs. 1-21 – Religious Reforms

Note the impact that was made on those that came from the Northern Kingdom in vs. 1.

Next, we find the provision for the Temple and priesthood restored. The king himself takes responsibility for supplying sacrifices. The people resume giving their tithes and offerings. By the seventh month great “heaps” of grain accumulated over and above the needs of the priests. Storehouses were constructed to hold the supply. From this great supply the support of the tribe of Levi resumed.

² Bible History: Old Testament by Alfred Edersheim. Book 7, p. 127-130

Chapter 32 – Hezekiah Delivered

vs. 1-19 – Jerusalem Besieged – 702 B.C.³

↪ II Kings 18:13-37, Isaiah 36

Hezekiah had stopped the tribute payments to Assyrian that were begun by his father Ahaz (II Chronicles 28:20-21). When they saw the Assyrians coming, they prepared their defenses. They stopped up water sources outside of Jerusalem to be a hinderance to their invaders. He prepared his army and encouraged the people to trust in the Lord.

Sennacherib attempts to persuade Jerusalem to surrender. The details are fuller in II Kings.

vs. 20 – Hezekiah’s Prayer

↪ II Kings 19:14-19, Isaiah 37:1-35

II Kings has the text of the prayer and Isaiah’s response.

vs. 21-23 - Deliverance

↪ II Kings 19:35-37, Isaiah 37:35-38

II Kings and Isaiah give a body count of the slain Assyrians: 185,000. II Chronicles only speaks of the status of the killed: that they were the military leadership and soldiers.

See Isaiah 37:38 for details on Sennacherib’s death.

vs. 24 – Hezekiah’s Illness

↪ II Kings 20:1-7, Isaiah 38

The details of the illness and sign of the sun dial are found in II Kings and Isaiah.

³ This is the date given by Reese, but it does not seem right to me. This attack came in the 14th year of Hezekiah’s reign, which began in 726 B.C., so 712 B.C. would be the date based on those criteria.

vs. 25-30 – Hezekiah’s Pride and Preparations

Hezekiah gave into his pride but repented of his error when faced with his deadly illness. He prospered in many ways.

vs. 30 references “Hezekiah’s Tunnel”.

vs. 31 – Babylonian Envoys

↪ II Kings 20:12-21, Isaiah 39

See the other accounts for details.

vs. 32-33 – Death of Hezekiah

↪ II Kings 20:20-21

The passing of a great king was honored properly by his people.

Chapter 33 – Manasseh

vs. 1-9 – Overview of Manasseh’s Reign

↪ II Kings 21:1-9

After one of the best kings comes one of the worst.

vs. 10-13 – Manasseh’s Captivity and Repentance

On the difference in the two accounts of Manasseh’s reign, Edersheim writes:

“Here the history of Manasseh abruptly breaks off in the Book of Kings, to be resumed and supplemented in that of Chronicles (2 Chronicles 33:11- 20). This in itself is noticeable, first, as casting fresh light on the ‘prophetic’ character of the history as presented in the Books of the Kings, and, secondly, as attesting the historical value of those of Chronicles. In the Books of the Kings, the writer, or compiler, gives not the annals of a reign, nor the biographies of kings and heroes; but groups together such events as bear on the Divine issues of this history, in relation to

the calling of Israel. This explains not only the brief summary of the longest reign in Judah or Israel - that of Manasseh, which lasted fifty-five years - but specifically the omission of what he had done for the defense of Jerusalem and Judah (2 Chronicles 33:14), as well as of his captivity, his repentance, return to his capital, and reformation. For these defenses of Judah were useless; the captivity of Manasseh was temporary; and his reformation was, as we shall see, only superficial. But rarely has the skepticism of a certain school of critics received more severe rebuke than in regard to the doubts which on internal grounds have been cast - and that not long ago - on the credibility of the narrative in 2 Chronicles 33:11- 20. It was called in question for this reason, that, in view of the silence of the Book of Kings, there was not ground for believing that the Assyrians exercised supremacy in Judah - far less that there had been a hostile expedition against Manasseh; and because, since the residence of the Assyrian kings was in Nineveh, the reported transportation of Manasseh to Babylon (ver. 11) must be unhistorical. To these were added, as secondary objections, that the unlikely account of a king transported in iron bonds and fetters was proved to be untrustworthy by the still more incredible notice that such a captive had been again restored to his kingdom. Eminently specious as these objections may seem, they have been entirely set aside by the evidence from the Assyrian inscriptions, the preservation of whose testimony is here specially providential. Unfortunately, the lessons which might have been learned in regard to skepticism on 'internal grounds' have had little influence.”⁴

Reese dates the captivity and return of Manasseh to 677 B.C.⁵ but this seems too early to me. I think it would fit better with the middle or late reign of Ashurbanipal (reigned 669-631 B.C.). Perhaps this has to do with the rebellion of Ashurbanipal's elder brother Shamash-shum-ukin (who ruled Babylon) from 652-648 B.C.⁶ Judah could have sided against Assyria and faced retribution for their actions. Or better, that Manasseh was accused of being disloyal but was proven innocent, so he was released and able to take his throne again.

vs. 14-17 – Spiritual Renewal

Josephus writes:

“...and when he was come to Jerusalem, he endeavored, if it were possible, to cast out of his memory those his former sins against God, of which he now repented, and to apply himself to a very religious life. He sanctified the temple, and purged the city, and for the remainder of his days he was intent on nothing but to return his thanks to God for his deliverance, and to preserve him propitious to him all his life long. He also instructed the multitude to do the same, as having very nearly experienced what a calamity he was fallen into by a contrary conduct. He also rebuilt the altar, and offered the legal sacrifices, as Moses commanded. And when he had re-established what concerned the Divine worship, as it ought to be, he took care of the security of Jerusalem: he did not only repair the old walls with great diligence, but added another wall to the former. He also built very lofty towers, and the garrisoned places before the city he strengthened, not only in other respects, but with provisions of all sorts that they wanted. And indeed, when he had changed his

⁴ Bible History: Old Testament by Alfred Edersheim. Book 7, p. 173-174

⁵ Reese's Chronological Bible, p. 766

⁶ Information on Ashurbanipal's reign found on <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashurbanipal> - accessed 11-28-22

former course, he so led his life for the time to come, that from the time of his return to piety towards God he was deemed a happy man, and a pattern for imitation.”⁷

vs. 18-20 – Death of Manasseh – 643 B.C.

↪ II Kings 21:17-18

The prayer of Manasseh is believed by some to have been preserved in an apocryphal “Prayer of Manasseh”. This is almost certainly untrue as it appears to have been written in the 1st or 2nd century B.C.

vs. 21-25 – Reign of Amon

↪ II Kings 21:19-26

Amon attempted to return to idolatry but was assassinated after a reign of only two years.

Chapter 34 – Josiah

vs. 1-2 – Overview of Josiah’s Reign

↪ II Kings 22:1-2, 23:25

Josiah is the last good king over Judah.

vs. 3-7 – Early Reforms

In the 8th year of his reign, he turned to the Lord. In the 12th year he began a campaign against idolatry. This campaign appears to have been ongoing.

⁷ https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Antiquities_of_the_Jews/Book_X - accessed 11-28-22. – Book 10, chapter 3, paragraph 2. Strangely, Josephus has the king of Babylon and Chaldea, not the Assyrians, being the one that imprisoned Manasseh.

vs. 8-13 – Temple Repaired

↪ II Kings 22:3-7

More details and names are included in this account.

vs. 14-19 – The Law Recovered

↪ II Kings 22:8-11

The accounts are nearly identical.

vs. 20-28 – Hilkiah's Message

↪ II Kings 22:12-20

The accounts are nearly identical.

vs. 29-33 – Josiah's Reforms

↪ II Kings 23:1-3

vs. 33 is basically a summary of II Kings 23:4-20.

Chapter 35 – Josiah

vs. 1-19 – Passover Kept – 623 B.C.

☪ II Kings 23:21-27

What is covered in 3 verses in II Kings is here covered in 19.

vs. 3 is interesting in that it speaks of the Ark being put back in the Temple. Some think it was removed by a pagan king to put in an idol instead. Others say it had only been temporarily removed for the repair of the building. This is the last mention of it by name to it in the Old Testament.⁸

Tremendous effort was put into celebrating the Passover. So much so that vs. 18 speaks of it in the most glowing of terms. From the hearts of the people to the sacrifices made to the liberality of the rulers, this was one of the highest days in the history of the Jewish people.

vs. 20-24 – Josiah Slain in Battle

☪ II Kings 23:28-30

Necho, king of Egypt, warned Josiah to not take part in the battle against the remnants of the Assyrian army. Josiah disguises himself, enters the battle, and is killed.

vs. 25-27 – Laments and Records

The book of laments mentioned in vs. 25 is not the same as Lamentations in our Bible. It is a lost collection of poems.

The “to this day” in vs. 25 likely means the time of Ezra and the writing of this book.

Chapter 36 – Fall of Judah

vs. 1-4 – Reign of Jehoahaz

☪ II Kings 23:31-35

Jehoahaz reigns three months until the Egyptians replace him and put a tribute on the land.

⁸ Reese’s Chronological Bible, p. 786.

vs. 5-8 – Reign of Jehoiakim

☪ II Kings 23:36-24:7

Jehoiakim reigned eleven years, did not follow the Lord, and was taken captive by the Babylonians.

vs. 9-10 – Reign of Jehoiachin

☪ II Kings 24:8-12

Jehoiachin reigns for three months and ten days before being taken captive to Babylon. More details are given on his capture in II Kings.

vs. 11-16 – Reign of Zedekiah

☪ II Kings 24:18-20

Zedekiah's reign of eleven years ended in the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon. He rebelled against the Babylonians. More importantly he and the people rebelled against God.

vs. 17-21 – Fall of Jerusalem – 586 B.C.

☪ II Kings 25:1-25

vs. 21 reminds us that the length of the captivity was tied to the failure to keep the sabbatical years. See Leviticus 25:1-7,18-22; Deuteronomy 15; Jeremiah 25:9, 29:10; Daniel 9:2.

We can attempt to determine how long the Israel had not kept the sabbatical years. We can work backwards from 586 B.C. to determine the starting point. If only sabbatical years are counted (that is Jubilee years are not included as sabbatical years) and assuming no sabbatical years were observed at all, we would need 490 years times to miss 70 sabbaticals. Moving backwards 490 years from 586 B.C., we get to 1076 B.C. which is in the reign of Saul. If we assume that sabbatical years and Jubilee years are both counted (and it does not appear to work that way), then we would need 440 years. That would be in 1026 B.C. at about the time of Absalom's revolt against David. Therefore, it seems most likely that the 70 missed sabbatical years took place during the kingdom period.⁹

⁹ Looking at the times of the Judges, the sabbatical years were either kept or were observed through God's judgment when the Israelites would be subjugated by their enemies.

vs. 22-23 – Proclamation of Cyrus – 538 B.C.

↻ Ezra 1:1-4

The final entry in the Chronicles is the record of a proclamation by Cyrus, king of Persia that the Temple be rebuilt in Jerusalem. The Jews begin to trickle back into their homeland. We can close the Captivity Period when this decree was fulfilled when the Second Temple was built and dedicated in 516 B.C.