

2 Chronicles 27-29 • Finally, a Godly King

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2 Chronicles chapter 27 begins with yet another king of Judah. This time, his name is Jotham.

“(And) Jotham (we’re told) was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. (not that long) His mother’s name was Jerushah the daughter of Zadok. ² And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD according to all that his father Uzziah had done, (although you remember Uzziah had a rather painful ending to his life as a king. We’re told,) except (in Jotham’s case) he did not enter the temple of the LORD (like his father had done, presumptuously, to burn incense. And I want you to see this last line of verse 2 because this is very important.) But the people still followed corrupt practices.” (ESV)

Now that gives us A pretty good character sketch right there of this king named Jotham. He himself was a pretty good guy. For the most part, Jotham, we're going to see, he does pretty good. Unlike his predecessors, Jotham is not going to fall into idolatry. Unlike his father, he's not going to be overwhelmed with pride that's going to cause him to do something incredibly stupid like his dad.

And for all intents and purposes, the Scripture tells us here that Jonathan was a pretty good guy, but the last part of verse 2 tells us, and that's a big but, *“But the people still followed corrupt practices.”* In other words, what we're being told here is that in spite of his own life being on track, for the most part with the Lord, he didn't do anything to change any of the idolatry that was rampant throughout the southern kingdom of Judah.

We read nothing about Jotham making any attempt to send priests to go and teach the people about the things of the Lord to bring them back to the Lord. We don't read about any spiritual reforms that Jotham made. He was one of those guys that was just kind of satisfied to do better himself, but as the king, he didn't take up that role of spiritual leader.

He was a civil leader and we're going to read here just a little bit that he made some changes and he did some upgrades to the physical part of the kingdom,

but spiritually speaking, although he himself didn't cave into the things that his predecessors did, he didn't step out to change the environment that was all around him. What he did do, we see here in verse 3,

“He built the upper gate of the house of the LORD and (we’re told he) did much building on the wall of Ophel. ⁴ Moreover, he built cities in the hill country of Judah, and forts and towers on the wooded hills. (I suppose those might be lookouts for those who were watching for an approaching enemy. We're told in verse 5 that,)

“He (also) fought with the king of the Ammonites and (he actually) prevailed against them. And the Ammonites (ended up paying tribute to him, giving him) gave him that year 100 talents of silver, and 10,000 cors of wheat and 10,000 of barley. (And) The Ammonites paid him the same amount in the second and the third years (as well).

And then you've got this statement in verse 6. Fascinating statement, again.

“So Jotham became mighty, (Again, this is from the standpoint of his kingship. Why? And here in the ESV it says) because he ordered his ways before the LORD his God. (Ordered his ways. This is an interesting phrase. The New King James actually uses the term, “prepared his ways according to”) the LORD his God.”

So you get a sense that Jotham was the kind of a man who felt the need to align himself with the purposes and the will of God for his own life, and because of that, there was a blessing that did take place in his life related to his reign there in Judah and related to the kingdom. Let me put it this way, the kingdom experienced a blessing because Jotham was experiencing a blessing being a leader.

That's what happens with leaders. When you have a good leader, whether you're talking about in a country, or in a state, or in the home, a city or even in the home. When you have a good leader, it trickles down. When you have a bad leader, it trickles down. Okay? Men, I speak specifically to you as husbands.

Those of you who are married, you're a leader, whether you want to be or not, and the quality of your home, in every respect I suppose that we could relate quality, it's going to largely be because of your leadership. A leader makes a big difference. These people are benefiting from his leadership, but his leadership isn't extending nearly as much as it could. In fact, we go on to verse 7, and we're basically done with the life of Jotham.

“Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all his wars and his ways, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah. ⁸ He was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years (which means he was just 41 years old, and we are not told why he passed so early. And then we're told that)... ⁹Jotham slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David, and Ahaz his son reigned in his place.”

So you have a good, albeit uneventful, reign spiritually speaking, of this man which eventually gave way to the rule of his son named Ahaz. And with Ahaz, who is just 20 years old as he begins to reign, he will begin to open the floodgates of idolatry in Judah as really no one before him really ever did. Verse 1 of chapter 28 says that,

“Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. (But in that 16 years, let me tell you, we're told) ...he did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as his father David had done, ² but he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel. (of the northern kingdom and we're told) He even made metal images for the Baals,

³ and he made offerings in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom (or they called the Valley of Ben Hinnom) and burned his sons as an offering, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel. (And I want you to notice this next verse) ⁴ And he sacrificed and made offerings on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree.”

Stop there for just a moment because that last statement there plays into a little bit of what we learn about Ahaz, this idea of sacrificing and worshiping under every green tree. Why a green tree? You ever stop to think about that? Why a green tree? Green trees, obviously, represent fertility, fruitfulness. Pagans are very geared in their mind to material things like high hills, green trees, so on and so forth.

Fertility, think about that. It's an amazing thing that God has factored into His creation. Even in this fallen world, we still see fertility. There's the fertility of the land, and if the soil is good, you can grow just about anything. If the soil's not good, we've learned in our culture to put the right nutrients into the soil through chemicals and so forth to try to grow things.

My father in law, who lived on a farm all of his life until he went to be with the Lord, used to come out here and visit us and laugh at the color of our soil, because he was from Minnesota and some of you who've never gone to the Midwest, you may not be aware of this. But real dirt is black. I mean black.

Real fertile soil is black, and I mean in Minnesota, you can literally grow anything. The soil is incredibly fertile. It's just it's amazing. He used to talk about our brown soil here, which we know. And it's amazing. I'm amazed that I can even grow anything.

I'm amazed I even have grass because I'm basically growing grass out of clay and dust. God has even allowed some kind of fertility to take place there. But we have to be fairly generous with weed and feed, mostly the feed. Anyway, you know how that goes. There are other kinds of fertilities that you and I have been given. There's even the fertility of our physical bodies. When a man and a woman come together, the beauty of procreation takes place in a wondrous and glorious sort of a way.

And if there is the proper fertility there on both sides of the equation, we are allowed the miracle of childbirth. And we look at that and we think to ourselves, every child is a gift from God. What happens in a culture where fertility begins to be something that they worship and they begin to create gods that are representative of some aspect of fertility, whether it's the earth's fertility or whether it's human fertility. That's exactly what the pagans did.

They came up with a God for every aspect of fertility, and so they would worship these gods in order to get them, implore them to grant greater fertility. You understand? The worship of those gods under pagan religious practices ran the gamut, they would do. But when it came to worshipping gods who were there to supposedly oversee and bless our human fertility, those practices involved sexual immorality and all kinds of what you and I would consider to be, immoral sexual practices, prostitution of every kind, in order to induce these gods that oversee these fertility areas to produce.

In other words, I have to get this god to produce by offering up sacrifices. You begin to engage, according to the religious practices of these gods, in various things including sexual immorality and when you engage in rampant sexual immorality within a culture, what happens? You end up having a lot of babies that you didn't want because you see, it's all the process of worship. This is literally in the process of worship that they're engaging in multiple forms of sexual immorality with multiple partners.

What's going to happen? You have a culture that is just exploding with children because of these pagan worship practices, and yet, in order to induce these fertile, fertility gods to produce even more you begin to sacrifice to them. Part of the sacrificial practices of these pagans was something that took place as you

read here in verse 3, in the valley of Ben Hinnom where they would literally offer their children live in sacrifice. Burn them alive, and it's horrific.

I mean, you and I hear about it, and we cringe. We absolutely cringe, and we think, how in the world could a culture become so depraved that they would sacrifice their children? I mean, literally, burn them alive to these pagan gods. We are living today in a culture that is similar to what Israel and Judah were dealing with at that time. It's a different form of paganism. It's a different form of idolatry.

We have different names for it. We do it different ways and we try to make it very clean and much more socially acceptable. But at the end of the day, we are sacrificing our children because of rampant sexual immorality, and the incredible number of unwanted children in our society who are being sacrificed on the altar of convenience. I don't want this child. I'm not ready.

I'm not at a place in my life where I can raise this child, and so instead we sweep them away and we don't even stop to think about the fact that we too have bowed to the altars of idols in our lives. And they may not be little figurines and so forth and so on, and we may have cleaned it up a little bit, but in the end, the mindset is essentially the same, and it's a very serious matter. And I want you to see in verse 5 what begins to happen because of all the things that Ahaz is allowing to take place in Judah. It says,

“Therefore the LORD his God gave him into the hand of the king of Syria, who defeated him and took captive a great number of his people and brought them to Damascus. He was also given into the hand of the king of Israel, (that's the northern kingdom of Israel) who struck him with great force. ⁶ For Pekah the son of Remaliah killed 120,000 from Judah in one day, all of them men of valor, because they had (And this is the key. because they had) forsaken the LORD, the God of their fathers.”

You see, they were no longer under his protective covering because they had abandoned the Lord. God said, as long as you are with me, I will be with you, and I will cover you, and your enemies won't be able to stand, but when you reject the things of the Lord, God said to his people, you're on your own. You've stepped out from the banner of my protection, and you are now vulnerable to your enemies. And so, the enemies strike, it says, with even great force, and they overcame the Jews of Judah. And then we're told in verse 7 that a man named,

“...Zichri, (who was) a mighty man of Ephraim, (again, from the northern kingdom of Israel) killed Maaseiah the king's son and Azrikam the commander of the palace and Elkanah the next in authority to the king.” The king is seeing people literally being picked off one by one. Many of his people taken captive. In fact, this is interesting here,

⁸ “The men of Israel (who came down and attacked Judah) took captive 200,000 of their relatives, women, sons, and daughters. They also took much spoil from them and brought the spoil to Samaria.” These are Jews against Jews. So the Jews from up in the northern kingdom of Israel come down into Judah and they attack Judah and they take 200,000 of their own relatives captive, back to Samaria, which is their capital of the northern kingdom of Israel. Check what happens here in verse 9. It says,

“But a prophet of the LORD was there, whose name was Oded, (that's all we know about that man) and he went out to meet the army that came to Samaria and said to them, “Behold, because the LORD, the God of your fathers, was angry with Judah, he gave them into your hand, but you have killed them in a rage that has reached up to heaven.

¹⁰ And now you intend to subjugate the people of Judah and Jerusalem, male and female, as your slaves. Have you not sins of your own against the LORD your God?”

He keeps talking to him here, verse 11,

“Now hear me, and send back the captives from your relatives whom you have taken, for the fierce wrath of the LORD is upon you.”

Now we're told, there were,

“¹² Certain chiefs also of the men of Ephraim, Azariah the son of Johanan, Berechiah the son of Meshillemoth, Jehizkiah the son of Shallum, and Amasa the son of Hadlai, (and they) stood up against those who were coming from the war ¹³ and (they) said to them, “You shall not bring the captives in here, for you propose to bring upon us guilt against the LORD in addition to our present sins and guilt. For our guilt is already great, and there is fierce wrath against Israel. ¹⁴ So the armed men left the captives and the spoil before the princes and all the assembly.”

So the army that had gone down from Israel to Judah, they just basically said, alright fine, and they just left them. Just right there. Just left them. Alright, there

you are. Deal with them. Alright, fine. You reigned on our parade. You can have them,

¹⁵ “And the men who have been mentioned by name rose and took the captives, and with the spoil they clothed all who were naked among them. (And you can see how they, these people were being treated) They clothed them, gave them sandals, provided them with food and drink, and anointed them, (That means, using oil and so forth to anoint their wounds, and so forth) and carrying all the feeble among them on donkeys, (Which obviously the army had made those people walk) they brought them to their kinsfolk at Jericho, the city of palm trees Then they returned to Samaria.”

Even in Israel's great depravity to the north there were a few men still, who feared the Lord, and when they saw this army coming into their land with these 200 captives from Judah, they, first the prophet confronted them, and then they confronted them and said, no way you're getting in here with these people.

You're going to bring greater guilt upon us. By doing this, and they took care of them and brought them home back to Jericho where they could then, head back to their homes wherever they may have lived. What do you think about the king at this point? Is he starting to get the picture? No. Verse 16,

“At that time King Ahaz sent to the king of Assyria for help. (You never see this king reaching out to God. He has rejected God and all that He stands for. And what does he do? He turns to the king of Assyria for help.) ¹⁷ For the Edomites had again invaded and defeated Judah and carried away captives.” You see the Edomites even were getting involved.

We're told in verse 18, the next verse, that the Philistines even got involved. They were making raids on the,

“...cities in the Shephelah and the Negeb of Judah, and had taken Bethshemesh, Aijalon, Gederoth, Soco with its villages, Timnah with its villages, and Gimzo with its villages. And they settled there.”

So the Philistines had invaded the land and had overtaken some of the cities on the outlying areas of Judah and they settled them as their own cities. You can see what's going on with Ahaz's kingdom. He's taking away his people. He's taking away his princes. He's taking away his land. He's shrinking the country. Wouldn't you think this guy would begin to humble himself and cry out to the Lord because that's what God was doing to Judah. Look at verse 19.

“For the LORD humbled Judah because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he had made Judah act sinfully and had been very unfaithful to the LORD.”

Now remember, he had reached out to the king of Assyria, so what's it say in verse 20?

“So Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came against him and (instead of strengthening him it says he) afflicted him...” The very king that he reached out to for help, came and was a burr under his saddle for, and look at this.

“²¹ For Ahaz took a portion from the house of the LORD and the house of the king (meaning his own house) and of the princes, and gave tribute to the king of Assyria, but it did not help him.”

That's a very important point there as well. You can see here that God is opposing this man. It doesn't matter where he turns, he gets no help, because he has turned his back completely on the Lord. This is really discouraging.

²² “In the time of his distress he became yet more faithless to the LORD—this same King Ahaz. ²³ For he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus that had defeated him and said, “Because the gods of the kings of Syria helped them, I will sacrifice to them that they may help me.” But they were the ruin of him and of all Israel.”

Actually, we read when we go to 2 Kings, we read that Ahaz, when he was up in Syria near Damascus, he saw these altars, and he was impressed by them. And so he had, I don't know if he did it himself, or he had some, draw up a model of these altars to these pagan gods in Damascus, and he brought it back to Jerusalem, and he made his workers build altars just like that.

I really like this. We're going to build the same altar and we're going to worship the gods of Damascus because we had a real hard time against them. And so, their gods obviously were helping them. So maybe we want to worship their gods too. Let's just throw that into the thing and see if that's going to help a little bit. I mean It's just futility. Verse 24 says,

“And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and he shut up the doors of the house of the LORD, (He literally, like, boarded the place up) and he made himself altars in every corner of Jerusalem. ²⁵ In every city of Judah he made high places to make offerings to other gods, provoking to anger the LORD, the God of his fathers.”

Great, yeah track record here for Ahaz. Brings nothing but distress except for one thing. There's one thing Ahaz did that was good. He had a good son. Keep reading. Verse 26,

“Now the rest of his acts and all his ways, from first to last, behold, they are written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel. ²⁷ And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, in Jerusalem, for they did not bring him into the tombs of the kings of Israel. And Hezekiah his son reigned in his place.”

And I want you to notice here as we begin chapter 29 that we're told.

“Hezekiah began to reign when he was twenty-five years old, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abijah the daughter of Zechariah. ²And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done.”

Stop there for just a minute please. Give me your attention because this is important. This is a really incredible statement in light of the chapter that we've just gone through where Ahaz did so much to bring the nation of Judah so far down into idolatry and sin. And Hezekiah is raised up, he's just 25 years old, and we're told here that not only did he do what was right in the eyes of the Lord, he did what was right according to all that David had done.

And this statement, right away gives us hope because this comes out of a father who gave absolutely nothing in the way of a good example to his son, related to the things of worshiping the Lord and being true to the Lord, his God. And this flies a little bit in the face of some of the psychology that you and I hear today in our culture that says if my father was this way, and I am this way because I am my father's son.

And you hear that, and we even, we hear it from different sectors and largely Christians have just gulped that down and said, this is the way I am. My dad was an angry guy, had a real short fuse, I do too. I'm just like my dad, chip off the old block, as they say. Or the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. Yeah, I'm just like my old man, and to be sure, from a biological standpoint, I'm sure those of us who have gotten a little bit older, we're accustomed to sometimes looking in the mirror and seeing our parents.

Scary as that may be from time to time. My kids used to tease me about doing things that was just like my dad. You look just like grandpa. But there's this idea, there's this belief that is ingrained in many people, that I'm a slave to those

things which have been passed down to me by my parents or grandparents or something like that and in some Christian circles they even get wacky, I mean, really wacky about generational curses, and it gets real strange, real fast.

And you got a lot of Christians who, some of them have written books and I've had people write me questions or ask me questions about, Pastor Paul what do you think about generational curses? Because they've read something or heard something that makes them feel like a slave to whatever their parents had been into, whatever sin or whatever addictions. My dad was an alcoholic. My grandpa was an alcoholic, and his dad before him was an alcoholic. You know, this is my life.

Fact of the matter is the Bible says that when we come to Christ, we are made new. The Bible says that we're a new creation in fact, in Christ. The Bible goes on to say that we received the Holy Spirit when we were born again, and greater is He that now is in us than he who is in the world. Right? The reality for believers when we come to know Jesus Christ as our Savior is that He has the power and ability to break any sort of generational chains or generational connection.

You now have a new Heavenly Father. You've been given a new nature, and you can now say no to the old nature, which you couldn't before you got saved, and you can say yes to the new nature and yield to that. The new nature, the Bible says, is created to be in the image of Christ. And that nature now lives inside of us, and you and I don't have to be a slave to the things of the past. You know, the older we get, the more we see in our parents or grandparents we look at those character flaws.

And we know, I knew both my sets of grandparents and my parents are still living. Sue's mom is still around. We can look at our, and we talk about our parents, or we talk about our family, and we know. We see all the warts and wrinkles, right that goes along with what it means to be in our family. But listen, we are not bound to that. That's the beauty of what it means to embrace the Gospel, to receive the power of the Holy Spirit.

I'm not saying it's easy, and I'm not saying that you never see those remnants of your biological background trying to resurface or trying to rear its ugly head to take hold of you and to get you to respond, perhaps in some of the ways that your family has traditionally responded. Maybe you come from a family where there was some mental illness.

Maybe you come from a family where you see in your parents there was a propensity for fear. My mom was just a real fearful person, someone might say, she was just always anxious about things, and I'm just I, so does that mean that, you may struggle with that? Yeah, you may struggle with that. Does that mean you're bound or in slavery to that? No, it does not. You can have victory.

It's basically victory over the flesh, you guys. This is what Jesus has made possible for you and I. It doesn't mean it's not going to be a struggle. It doesn't mean you're not going to see things crop up. Ooh, that's like my dad, or that's like my mom, or that's like my grandpa or something like that. You know, you may see those things pop up, but you have to resist. Right?

As Paul says, die to the flesh, allow, understand in your heart and mind that the flesh has been crucified. Remember what Paul says, Galatians, I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live. He's talking about the old man. The part that drives him, the part that was connected to his parents and their parents and he says, I no longer live, but Christ now lives in me. The life I now live in the flesh, or in the body I live by faith in the Son of God. Right?

So how do we get victory over the old man, the old ways, the old biological gravitational pull? By faith. By faith, believing I am dead to self. Believing that the sinful nature has been rendered ineffective from dominating my life. The chains have been broken. Now, it doesn't mean I can't go back and put those chains back on because I can. I can. If it's fear, if it's anger, if it's jealousy, I mean anything I see that's in my life, I can go back and wallow in those things if I want to but I don't have to because I've been set free.

So have you. So, there's great hope here in this passage that changes can happen in our lives. There's one other important note that I want to make before we move on here in verse three. It's important to note that by this time, by the time Hezekiah takes the throne in Judah, the king of Assyria, who his father tried to make friends with, and who actually troubled him, went up to the northern kingdom of Israel and conquered them. They are now conquered.

There are remnants of a few people, Jews, living up there, who, which we'll see in just a bit, but for the most part, Assyria came in and wiped them out. And the way Assyria did things is, they would conquer a people and then they would relocate them to keep them off their game, to keep them from revolting against the king. And then they would bring people from other conquered nations in to live in the lands that they had conquered. You understand how that's how the Samaritans came about?

Remember, Samaria was the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel. Assyria, not to be confused with Syria, but Assyria came in and conquered Israel, took most of the people away, left a few people there, brought people from other nations in that they'd conquered, settled them in the land of Israel, and those people intermarried. By the time of Jesus they referred to the whole area no longer as Israel, but Samaria, and the Jews despised those people, because they were half breeds.

They were half Jew, half Gentile. But this is how this came about, with the Assyrian invasion of the land, and the repatriation of the land by Assyria, bringing other people in to live in the land of Israel. So, here we go, verse 3. I want you to notice here, it says,

“In the first year of his reign, in the first month, (So, he didn't waste any time) he opened the doors of the house of the LORD and repaired them.”

And this is incredible too, you guys because not only is it incredible that he got to work on this so quickly, but remember, he's 25 years old. What were you doing at age 25? Was it anything worthwhile? I think back when I was 25, and I think my number one goal in life was having the best motorcycle that I could own. I think that was pretty much it. I mean, I was married. In fact, I became a father for the first time at age 25. Probably wasn't going to have the best motorcycle on the block anymore.

But, that's the way things go. That's what I was up to at age 25. Just trying to survive, keeping my head above the water. Here's a 25 year old who is leading a kingdom, and I want you to notice the first thing he does. He repairs the doors to the temple. He says, he opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them. What does that tell you about him? Because you have to know you guys.

You have to know this kingdom is a mess. His father had left him a mess. Countries had come in and eaten off part of their land, and many of his people had been taken away to other countries, and things were broken down, and things were just, they were a mess. But the amazing thing about Hezekiah at age 25 is that he understood that although there were a lot of problems that he was facing, oh, and I didn't tell you this, Assyria, the country that conquered the northern kingdom of Israel, they were on his doorstep, knocking at the door.

Well, they weren't knocking. You know what I mean. They were threatening to invade. Those are a lot of problems. You think, you might think to yourself, boy if I was king of Judah, I think the first thing I'd do is probably build up my army

because the Assyrian army just took down my relatives up to the north. They just conquered them. Isn't that scary when you have an enemy who is lurking? I mean they're breathing down your neck and you've seen what they've done.

There's no reason to believe, necessarily, that they're not going to do the same thing to you, but for the Lord. So this is a very challenging thing. What's the first thing you're going to do at age 25? Hezekiah understood that his first priority was to get worship of the one true God back in play, because that's, what's going to make a difference. He could have spent his time building up the army, building up more shields.

Maybe let's get some chariot production going here or something like that. We maybe, oh we need to take a census. Let's find out how many men we have left in the country who can even carry a sword. And then we, okay, and I need to get some generals and get them trained up and get them, knowing what they're doing, and he could have just gotten into a lather and gotten all busy with all these other things But the very first thing Hezekiah does in the first month of his ruling reign is, you know what?

We got to get back and worship God, because if we do all these other things, if I spend my time doing all these other things, getting the army ready, building up our armaments and implements of war and all that, if we don't have the worship of the one true God down here as a nation, it isn't going to matter. It isn't going to matter! Anything else I do isn't going to matter, until we get this one thing taken care of. Look at verse 4.

“He brought in the priests and the Levites and assembled them in the square on the east ⁵ and said to them, “Hear me, Levites! Now consecrate yourselves, and consecrate the house of the LORD, the God of your fathers, and carry out the filth from this Holy Place.”

You can see that whatever his father put in there it was just full. Before he boarded the place up, he probably just had it filled with all kinds of pagan stuff. And so, he charges the Levites to go in there and clean it out. We're going to clean house. Verse 6,

“For our fathers 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 habitation of the LORD and turned their backs.” And boy, that describes his dad.

“⁷ They also shut the doors of the vestibule and put out the lamps and have not burned incense or offered burnt offerings in the Holy Place to the God of Israel.

⁸ Therefore the wrath of the LORD came on Judah and Jerusalem, and he has made them an object of horror, of astonishment, and of hissing, as you see with your own eyes. ⁹ For behold, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity for this.”

Notice Hezekiah's vision, and understanding, his spiritual understanding. Ahaz never ever figured this out. He never figured out that all these people were captive, that we've been run down as a nation that we've been conquered as a people because we were unfaithful to the Lord, and his 25 year old son gives his first speech. In the first month of his rule and reign and says this is why all these things are in disarray and chaos. It's because we have abandoned the ways of the Lord. He says in verse 10,

“Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with the LORD, the God of Israel, in order 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.”

Did you notice there, in verse 11, He calls people, “*My sons, ...*” He's 25 years old. It sounds a little strange for a 25. He's probably talking to some of the Levites who are up in their 60s, but he says, my sons, let's get this thing done. You know what that is? That's a leader. That's a man who has taken the mantle of leadership, and he's running with it.

This is not a derogatory term. He's not shaming them. He's not speaking down to them. He's being a leader. And that's what it takes. And you can't be intimidated when you're going to be a leader. When God has given you the call to lead, you can't say, “well there are people here, and I can't get up and tell them, do this Bible study with you. There's people here twice my age. I can't do that.”

I've had people say that to me. I can't do a Bible study with those people because they all, some of those people have been in the Lord longer than I've been alive. You think I don't know that? I started doing the work of the ministry when I was 25 years old. That was the year, in fact, when I was, no, I was younger than that actually.

We were about 20, well, just a few years, maybe just a couple of years. 23, 24, and I know what it's like to minister to people who are not only twice your age,

but like I said, they've been in the Lord longer than you've been alive. But you know what? When the call of the Lord is there, you go with it, and you know what? You just realize, you know what? This is God's calling. This is God's calling. I'm just going to do this.

Here's the deal. When you get up to share the Word at a Bible study or whatever, it's not your Word, it's God's Word, and it doesn't matter how old you are when you go to share God's Word. Just make sure you're just sharing God's Word and not yours. You don't have to be this fountain of incredible experience to do something good.

If you get up in the Bible study and just read through the chapter without making any comment at all, you've done a good thing. We're going to read through this chapter tonight. Then we're going to pray. God bless you. Where's the doughnuts? It's God's Word, and that's the beauty of it. I love how Hezekiah is just 25 years old, and he says, let's do this thing you guys. And then in verse 12 it says,

“Then the Levites arose, ...” And the next few verses are nothing but an exercise in Hebrew names, so, skip down to verse 15, it just names them there. It says,

“They gathered their brothers and consecrated 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 uncleanness that they found in the temple of the LORD into the court of the house of the LORD. And the Levites took it and carried it out to the brook Kidron.

¹⁷ They began to consecrate 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 consecrated the house of the LORD, and on the sixteenth day of the first month they finished.” That's a lot of junk. Have you done spring cleaning here yet, around your house? I hope it doesn't take as long as these guys did. But this was a lot of junk that they had to carry out.

“¹⁸ (And) Then they went in to Hezekiah the king 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 showbread and all its utensils. ¹⁹ (And) All the utensils that King Ahaz discarded in his reign when he was faithless, we have made ready and consecrated, and behold, they are before the altar of the LORD.

²⁰ (And) Then Hezekiah the king rose early and gathered the officials of the city and went up to the house of the LORD. ²¹ And 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. And he commanded the priests, the sons of Aaron, to offer them on the altar of the LORD.

²² So they slaughtered the bulls, and the priests received the blood and threw it against the altar. And they slaughtered the rams, and their blood was thrown against the altar. And they slaughtered the lambs, and their blood was thrown against the altar.”

What are they doing? They're consecrating the altar, and all these things now with the bloods. They haven't even started doing sin offerings for the people. That's what they do next, here in verse 23.

“Then the goats for the sin offering were brought to the king and the assembly, and they laid their hands on them, ²⁴ and the priests slaughtered them and made a sin offering with their blood on 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.

²⁵ And 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 Nathan the prophet, for the commandment was from the LORD through his prophets.”

What commandment? Music. Worship the Lord, right?

“²⁶ The Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets.”

Hey, stop there for a minute. Did you ever stop to consider Hezekiah had never, ever heard this worship in his lifetime? He'd never heard it. Never heard it because he was only 25 years old. He never heard it. He never heard the music. He didn't know what it sounded like, and yet, they went through the Scriptures, they found the writings, they learned about what David and Asaph and Nathan had written and Gad, and they put it all into practice.

²⁷ “Then Hezekiah commanded that the burnt offering be offered on the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song to the LORD began also, and the trumpets, accompanied by the instruments of David king of Israel. ²⁸ The whole

assembly worshiped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded. All this continued until the burnt offering was finished.

²⁹ (And) When the offering was finished, the king and all who were present with him bowed themselves and worshiped. ³⁰ And Hezekiah the king and the officials commanded the Levites to sing praises to the LORD with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed down and worshiped.

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.”

What's Hezekiah doing? He's saying, Alright, we've got the sanctuary, the temple has been cleansed and set apart and consecrated now, and we've made offerings for the people at large. Now you, you bring your offerings. He's telling the people, now come individually and make your own personal offerings. And it says,

“And 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 70 bulls, 100 rams, and 200 lambs; all these were for a burnt offering to the LORD. ³³ And the consecrated offerings were 6,000 bulls (check this out) and 3,000 sheep.

That's a lot of animals. You know what else it's a lot of? It's a lot of blood. I had a mother write to me a few years back telling me that she was talking to her young son about the Bible and he was really distressed about how many animals died in the Old Testament, in the sacrificial system, and she was writing to me to say, what should I tell my son he's really bothered about this?

And I responded by saying that it was a good opportunity to convey the reality and the gravity of sin. Sin is not convenient. It makes a mess of things, and you know what, to resolve it is really messy too. It's messy and it's painful and you know what, if you'd have been there in Judah, in Jerusalem when they were doing all these offerings, it probably would have troubled you too.

I think it was supposed to be troubling. Seeing the animals die, watching them bleed out, taking the blood from them, and throwing it against the altar, and doing all these other things. It's troubling. Listen, the solution to sin is a painful, troubling mess, and it should not be cleansed in any way. We should not try to cleanse it or make it pretty.

There's nothing pretty about it. I would have hated it. I would have literally hated to live back in Old Testament. If I'd have been a Levite, I don't know. I think I might have gone to go live in Moab or something like that. Because it's like, I don't want to do this. I don't want to sit and skin animals all day long. Three thousand sheep? Are you kidding me?

Somebody might even ask the question but why animals? Why did they why did all the animals have to die? Well, you see, that was the point. That was the point. God was communicating the idea of an innocent sacrifice for the sin of the guilty. See, people get all lathered up. It's like, well, these animals, they were innocent. Why are they have to be involved in this sacrifice?

That's the point! They're innocent! They haven't done anything wrong! So, what is God communicating through the sacrificial system? That the innocent stand in for the guilty. In fact, do you know there's even times when they would bring the goat to offer and they would lay their hands on it and in that, they would communicate in a sense, the transference of guilt from the guilty party to the innocent party.

And then that innocent lamb, or goat, or whatever, would die. What is God communicating? Through the sacrificial system it's all pointing to Jesus. The perfect, innocent sacrifice. The ultimate sacrifice of God that would be made for you and I. But the fact that it's troubling, let it be troubling. That's what I wanted to say to that mom. Let it be troubling.

Sin is troubling. The solution to sin is troubling, and it's messy, and it bothers us, and it should. If you could have seen Jesus hanging on the cross, you'd have been troubled.

The Bible says, He was marred beyond appearance. They abused Him so badly that He was a single bloody mess on that cross for you and I, and don't think you wouldn't have. We have these cleaned up versions of Jesus on the cross today. Beautiful cleaned up versions. He's hanging there and doesn't even look like He's suffering. It was a bloody mess, but it always is a bloody mess when the innocent die for the guilty.

Verse 34, it says,

“But the priests were too few and could not flay all the burnt offerings, so until other priests had consecrated themselves, their brothers the Levites helped them, until the work was finished—for the Levites were more upright in heart than the priests in consecrating themselves.”

Stop there. Do you understand that the Levites weren't even supposed to be involved in the killing of animals? The Levites, the job of the Levites was essentially just to put the temple in order. They were to carry things, clean things, they were to just, they cleaned up messes. It was the priests, the priests, Aaronic not the Levitical side, but the , it was Aaronic to be the descendants of Aaron who were to actually do this work.

But it says here that they had, they didn't have enough of them. In other words, during the reign of Ahaz, things became so lax that these people just let things go in their own lives, and so when there was this sudden change with Hezekiah, literally in the first month, practically of his rule and reign, and he establishes this whole sacrificial system all over again. Nobody else can keep up with him. All the priests are like, oh man, I'm unclean, I can't. So it says, so the Levites had to get called in to help. And Hezekiah, hey, you guys just help out, we'll take care of this thing. And it says,

³⁵ “Besides the great number of burnt offerings, there was the fat of the peace offerings, 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 God had provided for the people, for the thing came about suddenly.”