

2 Chronicles 28-29

Though we've seen some flaws in the kings we've been studying as of late we've been enjoying for the most part generally godly reigns. And as we look at these guys and point out their faults or failures as we mentioned before it's not so that we can sit here all nice and comfortable and say, "Gee these guys didn't have their act together, my were they messed up and in need of a priority shift." But rather we note them, and focus *on* them so that *we* might learn *from* them. These things were written for *our* admonition that we might learn from them and not be found guilty of *repeating* some of these same mistakes. And so we've seen some areas of compromise, shortcomings, points of pride and various problems. Who among us doesn't wrestle at various times with all of those things? But for the most part as a general overview these last few kings have had an overall good run at it and though some of them may not have finished real well we realize that a significant chunk of their existence on the throne was found in seeking to set godly standards, uphold godly convictions.

Well, all that comes to an end in Ch 28. Ahaz will be the single most wicked king up to this point that Judah has ever known. And it's sad because he comes from a heritage (generally speaking) of a godliness. And I don't know why Ahaz decided to forsake the Lord and seek after pagan gods other than the fact perhaps that as I mentioned last week serving pagan gods really catered to the flesh. You could really feed whatever wicked tendencies you may have in the name of "worship" when it came to these so called "gods." You see there's really no inner conflict in our lives with respect to what it is we want to do or desire to do until we come to Christ. And what I mean by that is that before I come to Christ I just served the dictates of my flesh. If I felt like doing something, that's what I did. But once you come to Christ, the war is on. The war that rages between the flesh and the spirit, and there becomes constant conflict whereby I know what I *should* do, what I *need* to do, but what I really *want* to do may be something altogether different. And it can be tough, (of course Christ causes us to overcome and we realize that sowing to the flesh reaps corruption, difficulties and various problems in lives that stretch well beyond our own) but because of that people sometimes turn from the Lord to serve after the dictates of their own heart. In Jeremiah the Lord talks (in Ch 32) about how He's instructed them, rising up early to teach them and all of these things yet they turn to Him their backs and set up these abomination (idols) in the house which is called by His name rather than receiving the instruction. So sometimes people will turn from the Lord simply because they'd rather serve the lusts of their flesh, and sometimes people never come to the Lord for the same reason. It's easier to just serve my flesh, no inner conflict I do what I want, when I want and I don't have to wrestle with the Spirit's conviction upon my life. What was Ahaz's reason? I don't know, his dad was a godly man, sometimes kids just purpose on their heart for simply spite, (or perhaps to secure their own identity) to be the opposite of everything their dad, or their parents stand for. The reasons could be manifold but the result is the same, destruction, devastation and judgment. You would think that people would learn that it's never fruitful in the end to forsake the Lord and follow after the flesh, yet over and over and over again we see just that, notice.

So we have a brief overview of his reign; wicked, unrighteous, and abominable, not a single redeeming factor, not a single positive thing stated about him. “He did not do what was right in the sight of the Lord, as his father David had done.”

As far as a human standard for the kings of Judah and Israel was concerned, David was the man. He had his share of problems as well, but he pursued the Lord passionately from the heart. And he set the bar for the future kings with respect to what it meant to reign (overall) in righteousness, with uprightness and integrity before the Lord, desiring to do right and further the kingdom of God on the earth. He never even entertained the idea of idolatry or leading the nation into pagan practices. So though Ahaz had plenty of godly examples before him, he chose to abandon those examples and walk in the ways of the kings of Israel.

And as we’ve mentioned before when it was said of you that you walked in the ways of the kings of Israel it was not a compliment. It spoke ill of your reign because the kings of Israel were synonymous with idolatry, pagan practices and generally having forsaken the Lord. Judah had a good handful of godly kings down throughout the yrs after Israel divided; Israel never had even 1 good king. So when it’s said of you that you walked in the ways of the kings of Israel it wasn’t a good thing. We read that he made molded images for the Baals, (or for the pagan gods), he burned incense in the valley of Hinnom, and burned his children in the fire according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel.

The valley of Hinnom was later turned into a dump by Josiah and there was garbage being continually burned there which would in NT times become descriptive of hell itself being referred to as the fires of “Gehenna.” When Jesus was speaking about if your right hand offends you cut it off because it’s better for you to enter into life maimed than being whole be cast into hell, the word “hell” in that passage is the word, “Gehenna” which was the refuse dump and fire was constantly being burned there. Well, before Josiah did the right thing by defiling that place as a place of pagan worship. Ahaz engaged in the practice of burning not only incense but his own children in the fire to worship these gods. And this is a reference specifically to Molech, and he would generally be molded in such a way as to have his arms outstretched before him with his hands turned up and the lower half would in some way incorporate a kiln. And they would heat him up until his arms were glowing red hot, and then they would beat the drums to drown out the screams of the baby as they would place the baby in his incandescent arms until the baby burned to death. (Today we’re much more civil, we burn babies with a saline solution or knife through the back of their heads and suck out their brain in a partial birth abortion, God help us). But he was engaging in these very acts that summed God’s judgment on the inhabitants of the land prior to God’s giving it to Israel. And so what makes him think that God would overlook it in his life? God is not a respecter of persons. And human sacrifice was expressly forbidden by God and the worship of Molech was a capital offense under the law.

We read in Lev Ch 20, *“Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Again, you shall say to the children of Israel: ‘Whoever of the children of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell in Israel, who gives any of his descendants to Molech, he shall surely be put to death. The people of the land shall stone him with stones. I will set My face against that man, and will cut him off from his people, because he has given some of his descendants to Molech, to defile My sanctuary and profane My holy name. And if the people of the land should in any way hide their eyes from the man, when he gives some of his descendants to Molech, and they do not kill him, then I will set My face against that man and against his family; and I will cut him off from his people, and all who prostitute themselves with him to commit harlotry with Molech.’”* Lev 20:1-5 So this is no small offense in the eyes of God, don’t think that God won’t deal with this. So often when we commit sin we think we’re getting by with it, as though God won’t deal with it. But God is not only gracious and compassionate He’s also holy and righteous and He will always deal with the sin issue in our lives in one way or another at some time or another, notice.

Vs5-8

So 120,000 soldiers killed, and 200,000 civilian hostages taken; and when it mentions “The Lord his God” back in Vs 5 it’s not a reference to a personal relationship but rather God’s sovereign position in life. He’s the Lord God over all, and with respect to choosing Israel to be their God in particular so as to be a light to this dark world there’s no doubt some implication here regarding that as well. Now, we note that his abandoning the Lord led to defeat and captivity (it always does, we’ll find ourselves defeated by and enslaved *to* the net effect of sin in our life) but here Israel went over the top. God was using them to bring judgment but they went way beyond God’s intent in seeking to enslave 200,000 of their own brothers and sisters (w/respect to the 12 tribes of Israel). God had forbidden Israel to enslave one another because they’d been slaves in Egypt therefore they weren’t be place one another in bondage. So God was using them to an extent, but they went beyond the borders of God’s intent. And I think we need to be careful with regard to that as well, sometimes God will call us to a particular task but we can have the tendency (if we’re not careful) to take it to a place God never intended. Or God will give us a particular platform, but we can use that platform or that position (if we’re not careful) in ways that God never intended us to wield the influence He’s given us. To serve our own purpose, our own agenda, rather than His; here Israel took the platform God had given them in bringing judgment upon Judah and they pushed it to a point that went beyond God’s intent (check it out).

Vs9-11

Now we have to hand it to this guy because it takes a lot of guts to confront some leaders who have the potential to be enriched by the spoil of 200,000 people (not to mention the people themselves as personal servants) and say, “You guys went way too far, we already have enough problems of our own with out invoking God’s wrath over this issue, turn them loose and send them home.” Especially considering the fact that Israel at this point wasn’t really a “God fearing” society, this could be like signing off on your own death warrant.

But he's telling them that they shouldn't be all proud and pompous as if to think they're better than Judah and that's why they've obtained this victory, they're simply being used as God's instruments right now to bring judgment upon Judah. But in so doing they're all but asking God to judge them to based upon the way they've acted toward their brethren. And I think that there's a point here for us to pick up on and that is that when God uses you, or me to bring correction to a brother or sister's life. So that we see an error (and after praying for them we don't see a change in them so we feel pressed to go to them) we don't get puffed up like we're somehow more holy than them that's why we're the one God's using to bring correction to them. Because the shoe could very easily be on the other foot but for the grace of God, and if that were you in need of correction how would you like to be handled? Slain by the "sword" and taken into someone else's legislation for your life of what you need to do and how you need to do it? Or loved on, bandaged up, a fresh garment placed upon you and set back on the trail that brings you back home? You see, "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." "Blessed are the *merciful* for they shall receive mercy." Or as James put it, "*For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.*" James 2:13 We do well to remember that with the measure we use it'll be measured back to us....

Vs12-15

This is pretty incredible really that they would listen to the man of God, which is more than we can say for Ahaz. What does it mean when Israel who's no serving the Lord listens to the word of the Lord, but the one whom God is dealing with seeking to work repentance in... won't? Talk about incredible hardness of heart.

And don't think that God wasn't seeking to reach out to him. Guys like Micah, Hosea, and Isaiah were all on the scene at this time, sharing God's word with him, reaching out *to* him but he wouldn't have any of it. We're going to read here where Ahaz sought to hook up with Assyria, you can read in Isaiah Ch 7 where the Lord specifically warned him against it, said don't do it, look to Me, trust *in* Me and I'll deliver you. But he refused to look to or trust *in* the Lord, wanted to do things his way, and it's absolutely devastating the nation. Can one person make a difference? You bet, both to the positive or the negative, the single prophet speaking the leaders in Israel made a difference to the tune of 200,000 being set free. Ahaz is single handedly making a difference to the tune of the entire nation of Judah being brought low because of his sin. How important it is the walk with the Lord, be sold out *to* the Lord, not only for our sake but for the sake of everyone around us as well.

Vs16-18

You see when God removes that protective hedge, when we're not walking with Him, the enemy comes in like a flood, Judah was being bombarded from every direction and there wasn't a thing Ahaz could do about it. His wickedness was his weakness, if he would've just turned to the Lord, God would've turned it all around for him, but instead it kept getting worse and worse. War after war, devastation and destruction; or another way to understand that, "No peace."

Ahaz had no peace, *“There is no peace, ‘says the LORD,’ for the wicked.”* Isa 48:22 Again James said, *“Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain.”* James 4:1-2 You see it’s a sin issue, as long as there is sin in the heart of man there can be no peace, no peace with man (not true peace) and no peace with God. Because peace with God comes through the sin issue being settled, and the sin issue is settled through the blood of Jesus Christ And so what we’re seeing through this illustration of what’s happening with Judah is that until the sin issued is settled there can be no peace, only wars, stress, strife, turmoil and trouble.

Vs19-21

You see he turned to Assyria, trusted in Assyria, but did Assyria help him? No, the king of Assyria didn’t assist him at all, (ultimately) he only distressed him. But that’s what happens when you turn to the world and not to the Lord, the world will take/take and take from you and not be any real source of strength of help *to* you. That’s why we’re to look to the Lord to be our strength and our help in time of need. But for some reason, some people won’t do that, they’ll look to anyone and any thing else, but they won’t turn to the Lord; and that’s the way Ahaz was.

Vs22-27

So he made a concerted effort to go against the grain of godliness and to persuade others to cease in their worship of God. Made high places in every single city of Judah to burn incense to other gods, cut in pieces the articles of the house of God and shut the doors to the temple. And the more distressed he became the more increasingly unfaithful he was, he went down the ever increasingly downward slope of decadence to his own destruction. You’d think that he’d have eventually figured out that doing things his way wasn’t working out for him. Every choice he made just took things from bad to worse, but instead he seemed to only cement himself all the more in his rebellion against the Lord.

And here we see him leave Judah in an absolutely despairing position. A whole new level of low unlike anything they’ve seen prior to this, and now his son Hezekiah steps onto the scene. And perhaps seeing the way his dad handled things and what that resulted in he learned what not to do.

And so we have record of him as being one of the best kings (just under David) that Judah would ever know. And though we don’t read of it, it’s during the 1st few yrs of Hezekiah’s reign that Israel was taken into captivity by the Assyrians.

Vs1-2

So he receives the highest mark he can get as a king. As to where Jotham’s reign was compared to Uzziah his dad’s, and Uzziah was compared to Amaziah, his dad, Hezekiah gets compared to David, the man after God’s own heart.

We read in 2 Kings regarding him, *“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. 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 He was one of the most zealous reformers in Judah’s history. And we read here that his mother’s name was Abijah the daughter of Zechariah. And many people believe that this is the same Zechariah that Isaiah mentions as the faithful witness in Isaiah Ch 8 Vs 2. And so most people believe that Hezekiah was heavily influenced by Isaiah’s ministry and that to would help shape his convictions as opposed to those of his dad. Again how important it is to surround yourself with people that’ll prod and provoke you unto godliness, not pull you down in compromise.

Vs3-11

So we have a bit of an insight as to the sad and tragic spiritual condition of Judah when Hezekiah ascended to the throne. Because it seems as though the Levites didn’t really have the motivation to begin the reformation apart from the push from king Hezekiah. But man we want to be those people who are able to give that godly push to our brothers and sisters unto right priorities. We don’t want to be the one’s who need the push, the encouragement, we want to be the encouragers, the one’s giving people that push and the drive they need to get going in the right direction.

And we also have a nice insight into the priority of Hezekiah’s heart. The 1st thing he did wasn’t to build himself a new palace or try to somehow strengthen or enrich himself, he placed his priority on the things of God right from the start. Reopening the temple, placing the spiritual condition of the nation back in it’s proper order. *“It’s time to clean house,”* is the basic thrust of what’s being said here. He pinpoints their problems immediately sets about to provide a solution. He says, *“It’s not by chance that things are the way they are, our fathers have trespassed and done evil in the sight of the Lord, they’ve forsaken Him, turned their backs to Him, and have shut the doors to the temple. But it’s in my heart to turn things around.”* Think about that, is it in your heart to turn things around or are you content to let things slide the way they are? It’s a pretty heavy question to consider. But he recognized that if there was going to be a renewal the temple was going to have to be cleaned up and set in order.

And you know where I’m going with this; you and I are the temple of the Living God. And there is a filthiness, a pollution that penetrates our lives, and wise is the person that recognizes that truth and is under the constant waterfall of God’s cleansing flow. How are we cleansed? Through confession, through the waterfall of the Word of God, Jesus said that in Him we’re clean, but our feet still get dirty. As we walk through this life, in the world, not of the world our feet get dirty, pollution begins to penetrate our lives, priorities go askew, our focus can shift. And we need that washing of the water by the Word, we need to bring those things to the Lord in prayer that we might be forgiven, made clean before the Lord. Not in a saving way, but in a sanctifying way. *“Don’t be negligent now, to make matters right, to clean house, for the Lord has chosen you to stand before Him, to serve Him, that you should minister to Him, and burn incense (that ministry of prayer).”*

Vs12-19

So everything that had cluttered up the temple was put out, and everything that was set aside from where it should've been was restored to it's proper order. And it took 16 days for 14 guys to clean the temple and the courtyard, it was a real mess, but they responded and worked diligently. And that's really what I want you to see in this portion right here. It names the Levites who did this work by name, and the idea is they responded positively to godly instruction and God noted that. When you or I am exhorted unto godliness, someone gives us godly instruction, how is it that we respond? Do we get all upset, start accusing them of thinking they're so holy and a little bit better than the rest of us. Or do we recognize the legitimacy of the exhortation and respond in a positive manner. Making changes, moving forward, getting things cleaned up and placed in their proper order? These guys recognized the need, didn't make excuses for the way things had become, simply got to work and got the temple ready to be utilized for worship and service to the Lord.

Vs20-24

What is this whole thing with laying their hands on the goats for the sin offering and then killing them, presenting their blood and all of that. The idea behind it was that of acknowledging guilt, not seeking to justify it, or make excuses for it, but it was a confession of sin. And the laying of hands on the goat was symbolic of your sin being transferred upon the animal with the understanding that the only way the sin issue could be dealt with was by death and the shedding of blood. But it also realized that atonement couldn't be found for a man in that man, in other words if I could atone for my own sin, there would be no need for the death of another (in this case the animal). But we also know that it's impossible for the blood of a bull or a goat to cleanse a man's sin, it was a covering, but not a cleansing. So it was an act that looked forward by faith to another sacrifice, not a goat but a Lamb, the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world, our sin being transferred in some way upon Him, Him being slaughtered that our sin might be cleansed. So as the leaders of the nation laid their hands upon these goats, they were saying "We're guilty of sin before You God as a nation, and we realize that sacrifice and bloodshed is the only way we can be reconciled, we can't do it on our own, so by faith we look *to* You, and trust *in* You to forgive us and restore us in Your sight." So this is an awesome thing that's happening here as the nation is humbling itself before the Lord seeking renewal and restoration, forgiveness for their transgression.

Vs25-29

Are instruments acceptable in a worship service? According to my bible they are, but notice that along with restoration comes the celebration of praise and worship. Blessed/happy is the man who's sin is not imputed to him, man when that sense of forgiveness washes over you there is just a spontaneous sense of praise and worship that surges up in you, overflows from you to the Lord. And notice we see the king and the common people all on the same field in worship before the Lord. The "Who's who" and the "Who's he?" side by side on equal ground just praising and worshipping the Lord.

Vs30-36

You might note that Hezekiah didn't allow the sacrifices *from* the people until there was 1st a consecration *of* the people. In Vs 31 he said, "Now that you've consecrated yourselves to the Lord, come near, bring sacrifices and thank offerings." Sometimes people think that even though they're blowing life in some way they sorta make up for it by the sacrifice or service they give the Lord.

But understand that God doesn't acknowledge or accept the sacrifice unless there has 1st been a consecration. To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. Sacrifice and service doesn't make up for sin or indulging the flesh. The only acceptable sacrifice for our sin is found in the person of Jesus Christ We can't "make up" for our wrongs by working extra hard, or signing up for more service. Consecration...sanctification, then the Lord will receive the sacrifice of a pure heart, the offering of thanksgiving unto Him. So revival is taking place, the Spirit of God is moving and it's a beautiful thing.

Prayer Points:

God may we offer our service, our sacrifice, our offerings of thanksgiving to You, from a pure and holy heart. If there's any debris, ungodly clutter filling up the temple of our being, reveal those things to us, grant us repentant hearts that we might be restored, renewed and set in proper order before You. Lord revive us, for Your glory and Your Name's sake.