

God seems to think that it is important for you to understand  
the history of his dealings with his people during the period of the kings.  
After all, there *two versions* of this history:  
Samuel-Kings,  
and Chronicles.

So not only do you need to know the basic outline of the kings of Israel,  
from David to the Exile,  
but you also need to see that story from two different perspectives.

Both Kings and Chronicles agree that Hezekiah was a great king.  
But they focus on the different things about Hezekiah that made him great.

### **Introduction (v1-2)**

*29 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<sup>al</sup> the daughter of Zechariah. <sup>2</sup> And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done.*

Verse 2 is really, really important.

Last time we hear about the idolatrous rule of King Ahaz.  
Ahaz turned away from the LORD – and Judah was nearly obliterated.

When you look back at the kings of Judah in 2 Chronicles,  
the best of them do what is right – like their fathers.

Hezekiah does “what is right in the eyes of the LORD,  
*according to all that David his father had done.*”

In other words, Hezekiah is the closest thing to David – since Solomon!  
There are lots of parallels between Hezekiah and Solomon,  
because Hezekiah is the true son of David.  
He shows you Jesus.

Now, there are a number of chronological challenges in these years.

Ahaz was 20 years old when he began to reign and he reigned 16 years –  
thus dying at the age of 36.

If Hezekiah took the throne upon the death of his father,  
and Hezekiah was 25 years old at the death of his father,  
then Ahaz was only 11 years old when Hezekiah was born.

There are many possible solutions.

Some have suggested that the throne of David in Jerusalem was empty for several years.  
Both Kings and Chronicles suggest a time of chaos and disarray.

But however things went,

Hezekiah is one of the best attested kings of Jerusalem in ancient records.

The Assyrians sure remembered Hezekiah!

They make a big deal about plundering Jerusalem.

Given how *puny* Jerusalem was, it is a curious episode.

Sennacherib and the kings of Assyria had conquered many nations  
that were far stronger than Judah,

but the siege of Lachish (a smaller town in Judah) was so important to them  
that they devoted a whole room in the palace to the depiction of their siege –  
carved on 8 foot high slabs which stretch for 80 feet around the room!

We also know that the population of Judah jumped dramatically during his reign –  
even though there were several sieges and Assyrian attacks.

Even liberal scholars have said that after the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel  
it is likely that many Israelites would have fled to Judah for protection.

[How nice of them to agree with God!]

But we need to remember (as we hear in the book of Kings)

that Hezekiah faced entire annihilation by the Assyrians.

Assyria was the most brutal war-machine the middle east had ever known.

They slaughtered and butchered – and when they were finished,

they took the ruling classes as captives

and replaced them with the elites from other regions –

though spread out and mixed together in order to prevent uprisings.

I like Michael Wilcock's point when he says that the Chronicler's

“lesson on ‘How to be a king in Judah’ is to be understood by us as a lesson,

not on ‘How to run a secular twentieth-century state’,

but on ‘How to be a pastor in the Christian church.’” (p244)

At the moment, we are tempted to be obsessed with the political menace of militant Islam.

We are tempted to look for allies to help us!

Obviously the secularists don't like militant Islam – maybe we can make common cause!

Well, that's exactly what the kings of Judah tended to do.

But that was the wrong answer.

### **1. First Things First: Worship the LORD! (29:3-11)**

The right answer is found in the *first thing* that Hezekiah does –

in the first month of his reign –

is open the doors of the house of the LORD and start repairing the temple.

<sup>3</sup> *In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the LORD and repaired them.* <sup>4</sup> *He brought in the priests and the Levites and assembled them in the square on the east* <sup>5</sup> *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 the Holy Place. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> For behold, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity for this. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> 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.”*

Hezekiah’s speech to the priests and Levites

demonstrates that he understands the centrality of worship.

Our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our wives and children are in captivity  
all because our fathers were unfaithful – they turned away from the temple,  
and worshiped other gods.

Hezekiah understands that liturgical reform is essential for the well-being of the church.

If the church is not worshipping the way that God commanded,  
then nothing else will work.

Captivity – alienation – and exile come when we forget the LORD our God.

And so Hezekiah calls the priests and Levites to be diligent in their service at the temple.

## **2. A New Creation: the Cleansing and Consecration of the Temple of the LORD (v12-19)**

*<sup>12</sup> Then the Levites arose, Mahath the son of Amasai, and Joel the son of Azariah, of the sons of the Kohathites; and of the sons of Merari, Kish the son of Abdi, and Azariah the son of Jehallelel; and of the Gershonites, Joah the son of Zimmah, and Eden the son of Joah; <sup>13</sup> and of the sons of Elizaphan, Shimri and Jeuel; and of the sons of Asaph, Zechariah and Mattaniah; <sup>14</sup> and of the sons of Heman, Jehuel and Shimei; and of the sons of Jeduthun, Shemaiah and Uzziel. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> 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.”*

And so in verses 12-19 the Levites went to work, cleansing the house of the LORD.

The priests took care of the inner part of the house of the LORD,  
and brought out all the uncleanness in the temple  
(we don't know what they found);  
and the Levites carried it out to the Brook Kidron.

Notice that 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 –  
and then for eight more days they consecrated the house of the LORD,  
so that on the 16<sup>th</sup> day of the month they finished.

Next time we'll see one effect of this.

Passover was supposed to be on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the 1<sup>st</sup> month.  
But the cleansing of the temple was not yet complete,  
so they postpone Passover by a month – until the 2<sup>nd</sup> month!

But the emphasis on the eighth day is also important.

In 2 Chronicles 7, when Solomon dedicated the temple,  
they kept the feast of booths for seven days,  
“and on the *eighth* day, they held a solemn assembly,  
for they had kept the dedication of the altar for seven days  
and the feast seven days.”

The eighth day is the day of the new creation.

In the OT, the seventh day is the day of rest –  
the day of fulfillment.

But the problem with the 7<sup>th</sup> day is that man has sinned.

Every seventh day reminds us that we are stuck in a never-ending cycle of 7s.  
There needs to be a day *beyond* the seventh day.

And in 2 Chronicles 23-24, we saw that Joash's reforms were all about the number 7 –  
Joash was seven years old when he began to reign.

And, not surprisingly, Joash's reforms were partial and half-hearted,  
and Joash ushered in a series of half-hearted kings,  
who did what was right in the eyes of the LORD...  
mostly.

Joash, Amaziah, and Uzziah

all were half-hearted kings – who started off well, but couldn't finish well.

Then Jotham did what was right – but the people were corrupt.

And then Ahaz ruined everything by leading the people into the worship of other gods.

Now, Hezekiah leads Israel in the restoration of the temple –  
a restoration that is portrayed as a new creation!

That's why the Chronicler will spend *three chapters* on these reforms.

(Of course, the irony will be that Hezekiah himself *will not finish well!*)  
Hezekiah's new creation will fall short –  
as do all new creations except for the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ! –  
but God is showing his people what the new creation will look like.

If you delete the Old Testament,  
and you jump straight from Adam to Christ,  
then the resurrection becomes meaningless!

But when you see what the new creation is all about,  
as the OT tells the stories of these “new starts” – these “new covenants” –  
these “eighth days” pointing forwards to Christ,  
then you can see that what *we do* in our worship  
is a participation in this new creation!

So, the basic point is that Israel's worship was pointing *them* towards the new creation.  
And of course, Israel's worship was all about the sacrifices.

Perhaps when you read through Leviticus, you find yourself wondering,  
“what is all this doing here?”  
Well, the Chronicler can help us out!

### **3. The Sin Offering for the Kingdom – and for All Israel (v20-24)**

<sup>20</sup> Then Hezekiah the king rose early and gathered the officials of the city and went up to the house of the LORD. <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> 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. <sup>23</sup> Then the goats for the sin offering were brought to the king and the assembly, and they laid their hands on them, <sup>24</sup> 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.

In verses 20-24 you have the burnt offering and the sin offering.

The normal pattern was burnt offering, grain offering, peace offering –  
but when the altar has been defiled – and the temple has been desecrated –  
you need to cleanse the temple and the altar,  
so that they are holy –  
so that burnt offerings and peace offerings can be offered once again.

Watch how this works.

They bring seven bulls, seven rams, and seven lambs, for a burnt offering (v22).  
Then the seven male goats are offered  
“for a sin offering for the kingdom and for the sanctuary and for Judah.”

How does a sin offering work?

Verse 24 refers to this as,

“they slaughtered them and made a sin offering with their blood on the altar,  
to make atonement for all Israel.”

Moses had explained in Leviticus that the sin offering was designed  
to cover the unintentional sins of the people (Lev. 4:2).

Deliberate, willful sin was to be dealt with according to the law.

Murder, adultery, theft, etc.

But there are lots of sins that are not conducted “willfully.”

You rarely set out to sin against your wife (at least I hope that’s rare!).

But it happens!

But there are lots of sins which have no penalty in the law.

And further, when you look at the sin offering in Leviticus 4,  
there are provisions for what to do when the whole congregation of Israel  
has sinned “unintentionally.”

Hezekiah looks at the law of Moses,  
and he doesn’t see a specific provision for what to do in his case.

But he sees the general principles in Leviticus 4.

If a priest sins, he is supposed to offer a bull from the herd.

If the whole assembly sins, they are supposed to offer a bull from the herd.

If a leader sins, he is supposed to bring a goat, a male without blemish.

So what do you do when the whole assembly, and all its leaders, and all its priests have sinned?  
And they’ve kept doing it – over and over and over again!

Is there any hope for Israel?

After all, it would be hard to say that all this was “unintentional”!

So Hezekiah turns to the number of completeness.

Seven bulls, seven rams, and seven lambs are offered as the burnt offering,  
and then seven male goats as the sin offering.

Not just Judah and Jerusalem – but all Israel is included in this atonement.

*Ordinarily*, the priests would partake of the sin offering.

But, Leviticus 6:30 said that

“no sin offering shall be eaten from which any blood  
is brought into the tent of meeting to make atonement in the Holy Place;  
it shall be burned up with fire.”

Notice in verse 23, the king and the assembly lay their hands on the goats –  
thereby transferring their guilt to the goats.

As an offering for atonement, it is not likely that the priests partook of the goats.

But then look at the ritual itself.

What's going on here?

I want you to see the distinction here between the slaughter of the animal  
and "making a sin offering."

The slaughter of the animal is *not* a sin offering.

The slaughter of the animal is the slaughter of an animal!

A sin offering consists in throwing the blood of the animal against the altar.

This is why Hebrews will say that Christ "entered once for all into the holy places,  
not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood,  
thus securing an eternal redemption." (9:12)

And then Hebrews goes on to say,

"Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things  
to be purified with these rites,  
but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands,  
which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself,  
now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf." (9:23-24)

And thus Christ has "put away sins by the sacrifice of himself." (9:26)

Remember the distinction between the slaughter of the animal and the sin offering?

Jesus' death on the cross is *not* (by itself) the sin offering.

The sin offering is when the *blood* is thrown on the altar.

And Hebrews says that *heavenly things* were purified with a better sacrifice –  
namely, the blood of Christ, which he offered before the Father  
at the heavenly altar.

And notice in verse 24 that the sin offering and the burnt offering are offered  
"for all Israel."

And so having atoned for their sins,  
and having consecrated the altar,  
now the priests are prepared to offer the *regular* burnt offerings once again.

In verses 25-30 we hear about the resumption of the burnt offering.

#### **4. The Burnt Offering and the Song to the LORD (v25-30)**

<sup>25</sup> 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. <sup>26</sup> The Levites stood with the  
instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. <sup>27</sup> 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.* <sup>28</sup> *The whole assembly worshiped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded. All this continued until the burnt offering was finished.* <sup>29</sup> *When the offering was finished, the king and all who were present with him bowed themselves and worshiped.* <sup>30</sup> *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.*

Again, in the burnt offering, the death of the animal is *not* the offering.  
The animal is slaughtered and cut into pieces.  
Then the burnt offering *begins* with the pieces of the animal  
being placed in the fire on the altar.

The burnt offering is offered as a statement of humility and dependence upon God.  
The burnt offering declares, “we are here to worship our God.”  
That’s why when the burnt offering began, “the song to the LORD began also.”  
Even as the smell of the burnt offering was to be a sweet aroma –  
so also the music and singing was to be a pleasing sound – to the LORD.

We do not have animal parts to burn on an altar in our worship –  
but that is because Jesus offered himself  
as the one who would endure the fire of God’s wrath in our place.

But we do come into the presence of God through that once-for-all offering of himself –  
and we come giving praise to God through him.  
Verse 30 then suggests that the Levites sang praises to the LORD  
with the words of David and Asaph (the psalms).

Congregational singing didn’t really take off for another thousand years!  
But the principle is established – that we should respond to what God has done  
with songs of praise!

I want you to see, however, the connection between the offering and the song.  
You may be familiar with the language in Hebrews 13:13,  
“Through Christ, then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God,  
that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.”

Do you see why it is called “the sacrifice of praise”?  
Singing the temple was intimately bound up with the offerings and sacrifices.  
And even so, *our singing* is intimately bound up with the offering and sacrifice  
*of Jesus!*

If our musical worship ever becomes detached from the sacrifice of Jesus,  
then it will cease to be a sacrifice of praise!  
If singing becomes focused on *our* emotions and feelings,  
then we miss the point of singing!

Music can (and should) have a powerful emotional effect,



but that effect should be driven by the sacrifice:  
Jesus' death on the cross,  
and his resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God,  
where he made atonement with his own blood –

*that* is what is at the center of our musical praise!

So, then in verse 31, Hezekiah turned to the people.

The sanctuary was cleansed and consecrated once again!

But notice how Hezekiah puts it:

### **5. The Sacrifices and Thank Offerings: Hezekiah and All the People Rejoiced (v31-36)**

<sup>31</sup> *Then Hezekiah said, "You have now consecrated yourselves to<sup>[b]</sup> the LORD. Come near; bring sacrifices and thank offerings to the house of the LORD."*

The cleansing of the sanctuary *is* the cleansing of the people.

Hezekiah points us toward what the NT will make explicit –

that the people of God *are* the sanctuary!

That's not quite true in Hezekiah's day!

But the consecration of the altar and the sanctuary thereby consecrates the people as well.

And so:

*And the assembly brought sacrifices and thank offerings, and all who were of a willing heart brought burnt offerings.* <sup>32</sup> *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.* <sup>33</sup> *And the consecrated offerings were 600 bulls and 3,000 sheep.* <sup>34</sup> *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.* <sup>35</sup> *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.* <sup>36</sup> *And Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced because God had provided for the people, for the thing came about suddenly.*

Sacrifice is the other word for "peace offering."

The peace offering (or sacrifice) was slaughtered like the other offerings.

Then the fat, the liver, and the kidneys was burned in the fire,

a portion was given to the priests,

and then the worshipers partook of the rest.

There are several different kinds of peace offerings:

there is the vow offering, the thanksgiving offering, and the freewill offering.

The vow offering (which we saw this morning)

is a peace offering offered in fulfillment of a vow.

The thank offering

is a peace offering given in thanks to God for what he has done.

The freewill offering  
is a peace offering given just because you want to worship God!

All of these are referred to here as “consecrated offerings.”

600 bulls and 3,000 sheep would feed a lot of people.

They would also take a long time to flay, butcher, and cook!

And the Chronicler tells us that there were not enough priests for all the work –  
so they drafted the Levites into priestly service.

Think about that for a minute.

The point is that the *work* needs to get done.

The priests are the ones who are *supposed* to do it,

but if you don't have enough priests, what do you do?

You draft some Levites.

It happened a few weeks ago.

We didn't have enough elders to serve communion, so what did we do?

We drafted a deacon.

But remember that the whole problem in Jerusalem has been a failure of worship!

Why does Hezekiah think that it's okay to play fast and loose with worship?

Didn't God strike down Aaron's sons – Nadab and Abihu –  
when they tried to “tweak” God's rules for worship?

Wasn't Hezekiah's own great-grandfather, Uzziah, struck with leprosy  
for failing to observe the rules of the temple?

Perhaps you can see now why Presbyterians distinguish between the *elements* of worship,  
and the *circumstances* of worship.

There are certain things that are simply non-negotiables.

In the Old Testament, you had to have

burnt offerings, grain offerings, and peace offerings;

and you have to offer them to Yahweh – in the place that Yahweh chooses!

Only priests can offer incense – and only the high priest goes into the Holy of Holies.

No golden calves.

No other gods.

But in terms of the general ordering of things,

God gave them lots of discretion.

And, in unusual circumstances, even “ordinary” rules could be relaxed.

If you don't have enough priests – borrow some Levites!

As one wise Old School Presbyterian put it 165 years ago,

“the church order was made for man, not man for the church order!”

*Even the Mosaic church order!*

After all, who was that wise elder paraphrasing?

Jesus was the one who said,

“the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath!”

Hezekiah understood this principle.

He understood that the *point* was that the offerings and sacrifices needed to be offered in an orderly way.

The people of God should not suffer for the failure of the priests to get a sufficient number consecrated in time!

You see this over and over again throughout the scriptures.

We’ll see it next week as Hezekiah sets aside certain Passover rules!

Now don’t get me wrong.

Neither Hezekiah nor the Chronicler are advocating a free-for-all when it comes to ethics.

The point is that sometimes you discover a situation that the rules never imagined!

If someone willfully disregards the rules and then asks for an exception, then you say *NO!*

(And sometimes, if the rules are overlooked long enough, everyone forgets about the rules, and so no one enforces it anymore).

The point is:

“Love the LORD your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your strength.”

That necessarily involves loving your neighbor as yourself,

because if you love God, you will love that which reflects God!

And of course, loving God means that you will believe what he promises,

and you will do what he commands.

Of course, lest we get buried in the details, think back to Hezekiah’s context.

The Assyrians are coming.

The most brutal war-machine known to man has set its sights on you.

And what are you doing?

Cleaning the temple, offering sacrifices, singing praise to God!

I’ve been convinced of this for years.

When I first came to Michiana Covenant, what did we focus on first?

Worship.

Why?

Because if you worship the LORD your God and serve him only, then you have nothing on earth to fear!

Everything else flows out of our worship of God.

As Wilcock puts it,

“Was God’s temple open, clean, glorious with offerings and praise?

The result was that when the invaders did reach Jerusalem  
the presence of God filled it, and was impregnable.” (p247)

In the same way,

when the church of our Lord Jesus worships him –

not just in “technically correct” way,

but wholeheartedly – entirely –

devoted to him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength,

then the glory of the Lord fills his church –

and no foe can possibly stand against that!