

II CHRONICLES

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to II Chronicles chapter 28 as we continue our study through the Word of God. We have seen several good kings in the Southern Kingdom of Judah, but that is all going to change and change very quickly as we will see tonight. The time-frame is around 741 B.C. and the Northern Kingdom of Israel is less than 20 years away from being taken captive by the Assyrians for their idolatry, God's judgment against them. For the Southern Kingdom of Judah, Jotham has died and his son, Ahaz is now the king in Judah. And as we will see, all the strides that were made towards the Lord by the previous kings are going to be pushed back by Ahaz. And the reality is, the Southern Kingdom of Judah will never fully recover from the influences of this wicked king. Yes, there will be some good kings, but the dye has been cast and they too will go into captivity by the hands of the Babylonians a little over 150 years from now for their idolatry, God's judgment against them! With that said, let's begin reading in II Chronicles chapter 28, beginning in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

II CHRONICLES 28

VERSES 1-4

1. Ahaz's father, Jotham, was a good king and yet, his son was not, as we can see. How can that be? The reason is simple; each individual has a choice to make what they will do. Yes, parents have a role to influence their children in the things of God, but there comes a point in their lives when they will choose what they want to do. And please understand that when God associates a king with the kings of Israel, the Northern Kingdom, it was a rebuke.

You see, the Northern Kingdom of Israel had no good kings, they all were evil, some worse than others. And so God is saying that Ahaz was just as wicked as they were. He was not at all like David, the standard for all kings to be judged by. And as we have said before, David was not perfect, but he never led the nation into idolatry. Ahaz, on the other hand, goes crazy and sets up all these places of worship, offering sacrifice to all these pagan gods, and even offering his own children in the fire as a sacrifice to them.

2. And please understand that it was not that Ahaz did not know what was right and what was wrong. It was not that he didn't know that he was not to sacrifice his children to this false god. You see, in Leviticus 18:21 God said, "**And you shall not let any of your descendants pass through the fire to Molech, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the Lord.**" That is pretty straight forward, pretty clear on what you are not to do and yet, Ahaz did his own thing like many do today.

Now you may be wondering how in the world they could do this horrible thing? First of all you have to understand the pagan cultures that surrounded Israel. They all worshipped, in one way or another, the process of reproduction because it was such an amazing mystery to them. And through the worship of these fertility gods and goddesses they would perform sexual acts, orgies and-so-on in the groves. And it is because of all that sexual promiscuity that many unwanted children were born. It was many of these children that were placed in the bronze outstretched hands of their god Molech. And once those hands were burning hot, that is when the children were placed in there and they would burn to death. And as this was going on the people would work themselves into an altered state of consciousness, screaming and yelling, beating drums as they were drowning out the screams of these unwanted children as they were being sacrificed. And now this king was doing what these pagan nations were doing!

3. Many are outraged at this kind of activity, they would never condone something like that and yet, they are Pro-Choice or really Pro-Murder. The safest place for a child to be prior to birth is the mother's womb and yet today we have made it the most dangerous place to be with abortion! We are destroying these children because they are unwanted, the result of the worship of the god of pleasure, which is seen in fornication here. The average amount of abortions done per year right now, and this number may be on the low end, is 1.2 million!

Since 1973 and the Roe vs. Wade decision to legalize abortion, there has been 53, 310, 843 babies that have been murdered in the womb at the close of 2010! We are no different; we are doing the same thing, killing our children so we can enjoy the pleasures of life! But it was an abomination to the Lord back then, and it still is an abomination to the Lord now - I don't care how you dress it up!

4. One more point here. This place where they offered these children to the god Molech by passing them through the fire was located in the valley of Hinnom, which was just south and west of Jerusalem. In the New Testament this area was used as a garbage dump which continued to burn day and night. Jesus picked up on this and used the Valley of Hinnom as an illustration of Hell, Gehenna. And so all were familiar with this picture in Jesus day and they saw this Valley of Hinnom as an eternal punishment which never ends. You see, just as the fires of the garbage dump continued to burn so too will the fires of Hell! They knew exactly what Jesus was saying. Thus, in Matthew 10:28 Jesus said, **“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Gehenna).”**

VERSES 5-8

1. How could God allow this? How could God bring judgment upon Judah by the hands of those that were even more wicked than they were? Because they should have known better and God will use whoever He wants to accomplish His plans, His purposes! And thus, we now see God bringing judgment upon Ahaz and the Southern Kingdom of Judah by the hands of the Syrians and the Northern Kingdom of Israel! And in this battles Judah lost 120,000 soldiers and 200,000 civilian hostages, plus much spoil! You see, the inevitable result of idolatry is captivity, and we see that over and over again in the Scriptures and even in the lives of people today! The lessons are there for us to learn, may we learn them!

VERSES 9-15

1. This prophet, Oded hits the nail right on the head. He rebukes Israel for their actions, in thinking that they were better than Judah and that is why God used them. And so we see this prophet of the Lord basically say to Israel, “The Lord used you to discipline the people of Judah, but you’ve taken it way too far. You’ve slaughtered them without mercy and you’re capturing them for your own purposes. Because the Lord is angry, you must let them go.” That takes a lot of guts, but this prophet spoke for the Lord and he was willing to do it at any cost! It is as Trapp wrote, “Here we have the picture of a good preacher. Oded teacheth, reproveth, exhorteth, turneth himself into all shapes, of spirit and of speech, that he may work upon his hearers; and he had his desire.”

2. Now we have to give some credit to these leaders in Israel, they were wise in what they said to Oded. They recognized that they were not perfect, that the nation had many problems, and by continuing to disobey God's commands, they feared that they would just add to their sin and judgment.

3. How important it is to have a cool head and listen to what a person is trying to say to you. That you just don't jump to conclusions, or try to second guess what someone has said or done. You don't want to just fly off the handle but listen to what is being said and try and glean from it something that you may need to change in your walk with the Lord. Ask Him for wisdom in the various situations you find yourself in. As Proverbs 18:13 says, **"He who answers a matter before he hears it, It is folly and shame to him."** May we heed that council in our own lives!

4. Now when these people from Judah were taken captive, many of them had nothing with them, and some were even naked. You see, it was a common practice to humiliate your captives, and many times they took them away naked. But now they are given clothes and food, sandals and the weak are even given donkeys to ride on so they can make their way home. That must have cost them something to feed and cloth some 200,000 people and yet, they did it. There were willing to correct the sin that they had done at any cost and they did the right thing in releasing their captives.

VERSES 16-21

1. Here we see that as God removes His hand of protection from Ahaz and the Southern Kingdom of Judah, they are now being attacked from every side. And you would think that this would at least get his attention and cause Ahaz to look up, but the king's heart is so hard that he refuses to listen to the warnings, to see why this is happening. He shuts his eyes to the truth. And instead of turning to God for help, he turns to the king of Assyria, who takes the money and in the end, does not protect him or the Southern Kingdom of Judah!

2. As you look at verse 19 it says, "**For the Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel . . .**" Why does it say "**king of Israel**" instead of Judah? Some say it was a general term for all of Israel, which may be. But I also think that he walked in the ways of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and instead of associating him with David and the Southern Kingdom, God speaks of his ways and his reign like the reigns of the kings of the North. Not a good thing! It was a rebuke.

3. The prophet Isaiah also spoke to Ahaz and in Isaiah 7:1-13 we are told, **“Now it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to make war against it, but could not prevail against it. And it was told to the house of David, saying, ‘Syria’s forces are deployed in Ephraim.’ So his heart and the heart of his people were moved as the trees of the woods are moved with the wind. Then the Lord said to Isaiah, ‘Go out now to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-Jashub your son, at the end of the aqueduct from the upper pool, on the highway to the Fuller’s Field, and say to him: “Take heed, and be quiet; do not fear or be fainthearted for these two stubs of smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria, and the son of Remaliah. Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah have plotted evil against you, saying, ‘Let us go up against Judah and trouble it, and let us make a gap in its wall for ourselves, and set a king over them, the son of Tabel’ - thus says the Lord God: ‘It shall not stand, Nor shall it come to pass. For the head of Syria is Damascus, And the head of Damascus is Rezin. Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be broken, So that it will not be a people. The head of Ephraim is Samaria, And the head of Samaria is Remaliah’s son. If you will not believe, Surely you shall not be established.””** Moreover the Lord spoke again to Ahaz, saying, **‘Ask a sign for yourself from the Lord your God; ask it either in the depth or in the height above.’** But Ahaz said, **‘I will not ask, nor will I test the Lord!’** Then he said, **‘Hear now, O house of David! Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary my God also?’”**

God instructs Isaiah to let Ahaz know that he is not to fear Rezin or Pekah, they would not prevail. But Ahaz had no relationship with the Lord and it is hard to trust someone that you don't know! You see, the plan was to invade Judah and put their king on the throne, Tabeel. And God is saying that their plan will not come to pass. Why in the world would God comfort such a wicked king? I don't think that these words of encouragement and comfort are for Ahaz alone. He was to be the leader and comfort the people, but because he was shaking in his boots, so were the people. And God is saying that this conspiracy will not be victorious, don't be fearful of their plans.

And notice what this promise is. That within 65 years they will be nothing. They Syrians will not be strong; Samaria will not even be a nation. If Isaiah spoke these words in 734 B. C., by 732 B. C. the Assyrians destroyed Damascus, Rezin was dead, and the Syrians were taken into captivity. Then in 721 B. C. the Assyrians took the Northern Kingdom of Israel into captivity, and by 669 B. C., 65 years after these words were spoken, Ephraim was completely wiped out, the Northern Kingdom of Israel ceased to exist.

Now I don't know about you, but if someone told me these things and I had no faith in the Lord, I might smile at what this person said, but inside I would think he was a nut. I think that is what was going on in the mind of Ahaz. And so as Isaiah is watching the response of Ahaz, he must have noticed something about Ahaz that showed a lack of trust. So Isaiah tells him to ask a sign from God so that he might see that what God has said is true and will come to pass.

And Ahaz tells Isaiah that he is not going to ask anything from the Lord. Now that sounds very pious on the part of Ahaz, but understand his heart was far from the Lord, he was not being sincere in what he said. In fact he had already made a deal with Tiglath-Pileser and the Assyrians. And once they defeat Syria and the Northern Kingdom, Ahaz goes to meet Tiglath-Pileser in Damascus and he sees an altar they used to sacrifice to their gods. He is so impressed he sends plans back home and by the time he gets back to Jerusalem, they have this pagan altar built, and the brazen altar in the Temple is removed to make room for this pagan one. The actions of Ahaz spoke louder than his words! But don't think Isaiah was fooled by the words of Ahaz, he understood where this king stood with the Lord! And even with the lack of faith of Ahaz, God was not going to allow the nation to be wiped out, not because of Ahaz, but because of the promise that God made to David!

VERSES 22-25

1. As God turns on the heat, as the pressure from God increases, Ahaz does not draw close to God, he does not repent of his sins, but Ahaz hardens his heart even more and he refuses to look up. And many do the same today as God is trying to get their attention, they do everything they can to look the other way and not acknowledge Him. They blame God for all that has happened to them instead of looking inward and seeing that their own sin has brought this upon them and God is waiting with open arms to forgive them in Christ!

2. I am sure most if not all of you have heard people say, “It really doesn’t matter what you believe, as long as you believe in something.” How foolish. You would never go to a doctor who just believed in something but not necessarily the standard medical practice. And here we see God telling us through this example of Ahaz that sincerity in something does not save you, for it was the downfall of Ahaz. And Ahaz was very sincere in his walk with these other gods, just as many people are today. They tell you that, “Jesus is not the only way, that there are many roads that led to God. You are just too narrow-minded.” But that is contrary to what God has said in His Word, for example, in John 14:6 Jesus said, “**... ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’**” That is pretty narrow minded but if it is the truth, why does it have to be broad and all inclusive? It doesn’t, the only way to God the Father is through Jesus Christ! You see folks, it is not sincerity that saves you but faith that is counted to us for righteousness, and that faith must be in Jesus Christ!

3. Now what we see here is that the king wasn’t hearing from the true and living God, and so he was going to make sure that no one else would hear. How does he do that? By shutting up the house of God, he blocks it off so no one could enter. He tried to stomp God out, but let me tell you something, that will never happen.

Make no mistake about it, the Bible has withstood many vicious attacks, more so than any other book, and yet today it still stands. “Voltaire, the noted French infidel who died in 1778, said that in one hundred years from his time Christianity would be swept from existence and passed into history. But what has happened? Voltaire has passed into history, while the circulation of the Bible continues to increase in almost all parts of the world, carrying blessing wherever it goes . . . ‘only fifty years after his death (Voltaire), the Geneva Bible Society used his press and house to produce stacks of Bibles.’” And as Bernard Ramm said, “A thousand times over, the death knell [tolling of a bell as for a funeral] of the Bible has been sounded, the funeral procession formed, the inscription cut on the tombstone, and committal read. But somehow the corpse never stays put.” God’s Word has and will continue to stand, it will not fade away!

VERSES 26-27

1. Here we see the death of Ahaz and in his death Hezekiah will now reign in Judah. And he is truly a great king, and yet, he will not be able to overcome the spiritual darkness that was blanketed by his father, king Ahaz. In the Southern Kingdom of Judah you could hear the hoof beats of the coming judgment quickly approaching. They are only some 110 years away from the Babylonians coming and invading their land. In 606 B. C. they will come in and take captives back with them and the final deportation will occur in 586 B. C. Amazing what influence one man can have on an entire nation, and that is one of the reasons we should be praying for our leaders!

And the reality was not just this man, but we can go back and look at his grandfather and his father and see the influence down the line until we come to Ahaz. You see, Ahaz brings this three-generation saga to its inevitable conclusion, for in Uzziah, Jotham, and Ahaz, we see a father who had a quarrel with the church followed by his son who stopped going to church, followed by his grandson who closed the doors of the church. In other words, church attendance is not beneficial only to you, but the example you set will have a direct effect on your kids and grandchildren. May we learn the lesson!

II CHRONICLES 29

VERSES 1-2

1. Hezekiah was probably the best king since the time of David. The reason I can say that is this. Not only did Hezekiah bring spiritual reform to the nation, but he was also able to remove the high places that were used in worship. Also, II Kings chapter 18 tells us that Hezekiah broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses made in the wilderness. You remember the story from Numbers chapter 21, during their wilderness wanderings the people began to complain again and saying that they would rather be back in Egypt than to die in the wilderness. And because of their murmuring God brought judgment by sending poisonous serpents among the people, and many died from their bites.

And the people came to Moses, repented of their sins and God told Moses to make a brass serpent and place it upon a pole. Then, whoever is bitten by one of these serpents, all they would have to do is look at this brass serpent upon the pole and they would be healed. And all that did were healed and all that refused, thinking that was ridiculous, died. And all this was a picture of Christ and the work He was to do. As Jesus said in John 3:14-15, **“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”**

And now some 800 years after this event here in Numbers 21, the people were worshipping this bronze serpent on a pole. And Hezekiah destroys it, calling it nehushtan, or a thing of bronze. He was telling them that God is not that bronze serpent, nor is He in any man-made image, open your eyes and get right with God. In worshipping this idol it just showed that they had lost the consciousness of God and they were trying to replace it with this idol, which will never help. Hezekiah brought spiritual reform farther than anyone else, but as we will see, it will be too little too late for the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

In II Kings 18:5-6, listen to this statement about Hezekiah. We are told, **“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. And so, let's look at this man named Hezekiah and see the reform that he brought to the Southern Kingdom of Judah. And keep in mind that Hezekiah saw that the things his father Ahaz did brought the judgment of God upon the nation. It was during this time that the Northern Kingdom of Israel went into captivity by the Assyrians because of their idolatry. So he had some very vivid object lessons that he learned from!

VERSES 3-11

1. What a tragic scene this is. The Levites, the priests and the Temple were all in such bad condition that it took a push from Hezekiah to get them back on track and to clean up the Temple, to open its doors! And Hezekiah wastes no time in bringing forth spiritual reform to the nation. The first thing he does is to re-open the house of worship, the Temple, and to repair it. Why did he have to do this? Because during his fathers reign, Ahaz closed everything up that had to do with the Lord. We are told in II Chronicles 28:24, **“So Ahaz gathered the articles of the house of God, cut in pieces the articles of the house of God, shut up the doors of the house of the LORD, and made for himself altars in every corner of Jerusalem.”** Thus, Hezekiah is going to open the doors of worship once again, the place where spiritual revival is to begin.

2. We see this in our day. Not necessarily the shutting up of church doors, but the shutting out of the true and living God in many churches, which is just as bad. Let me give you an example of how bad things are. Listen to this article from WND from June 24, 2011, The Falling Away. We are told about this event called “Chrislam” which is a word that has been made up uniting Christians and Muslims together, to help Christians and Muslims find common ground. This is what was said in part of that article,

Dozens of churches, from Park Hill Congregational in Denver to Hillview United Methodist in Boise, Idaho, and First United Lutheran in San Francisco to St. Elizabeth’s Episcopal Church in Honolulu, are planning to send “a message both here at home and to the Arab and Muslim world about our respect for Islam” with a time to read the Quran during worship this Sunday.

It’s not just wrong, but dangerous, according to Christian trends analysts. The aim of the program, which is promoted by social activists behind the Faith Shared website, is to counter the message from Islamic activists who say opposition to their religion is the product of what they call a cottage industry of hate.

So the Interfaith Alliance and Human Rights First is calling on Christian clergy to read portions of the Quran during their services Sunday. . .

The readings, supporters say, will “counter the anti-Muslim bigotry and negative stereotypes that have erupted throughout the country in the past year and led to misconceptions, distrust and in some cases, violence.” . . .

Silva believes the real reason for the Shared Faith event is spiritual emptiness in the country.

“So many Christians talk to each other and they read other Christians rather than read the Scriptures themselves. There’s a real move inside our country right now for an ecumenism and a syncretism trying to bring everyone together and it’s rooted in contemplative spirituality,” Silva observed.

“There’s a deception that comes. They’re under the impression that God is trying to bring all people together, and bring in God’s dream for the world to make the world a better place,” Silva continued.

“The Gospel has been changed from repentance and forgiveness of sins in Jesus’ name to God wants to make the world a better place, get involved with where He’s working and bring about His dream,” Silva added.

“It’s what Walter Martin would say spiritually obtuse Christians are easy marks for the more militant of the Muslims who are presenting this as some big Islamophobia,” Silva said.

“We are not hateful to Muslims, but we are hostile to Islam because it enslaves people. We want people to be free,” Silva said. . . .

He cited Brian McLaren of the emerging church movement, who planned for an Islamic Ramadan celebration. And he mentioned Warren’s agreement to address the Islamic Society of North America, which “the Department of Justice categorized two years ago as a co-conspirator in financing a foreign terrorist group!”

Another church leader, Tony Campolo, “a proponent of the so-called ‘evangelical left’ claimed that ‘even if’ Muslims ‘don’t convert, they are God’s people,’” Schimmel wrote.

“Even more chilling is the fact that over 300 prominent Christian leaders signed a letter issued by the Yale Center for Faith and Culture claiming that world peace is dependent on Muslims and Christians recognizing ‘Allah’ and ‘Yahweh’ as the same God. This letter, titled ‘Loving God and Neighbor Together,’ was written in response to a signed document by 138 Muslim leaders titled ‘A Common Word Between Us and You.’ McLaren, Warren, Robert Schuller and Bill Hybels were just several of the signatories to this outright betrayal of Christ!” he said.

- The Falling Away, WND, News Date:
06/24/11, Author: Michael Carl Submitted
By: Doug Warwick

That is where America is at regarding spiritual things in many churches across America. There is confusion about God, what to believe, if there are many roads to God and the list goes on and the reason is simple, we have taken God out of the picture. We would rather read the Koran in churches than the Bible and that is sad and God judged Judah for their actions and I would not be surprised if He judged us!

In Hosea 4:6 we read, **“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.”** And we see the same today, Biblical illiteracy which opens the door for false doctrine to come into the church and into people’s lives!

Thus, Hezekiah is going to gather together the religious leaders, to see that they get right with God, to consecrate their hearts before the Lord. You see, if the leader’s hearts are not right, if they are wicked, so too will be the hearts of the people. So Hezekiah begins with the leaders and then will move to the common people.

2. We are told here that the Temple was used as a big storage area where all the junk, all that was worthless was kept. And I think many times we fill our hearts with all kinds of garbage, like bitterness, anger, covetousness, all kinds of carnality, and in doing that or having that in our hearts, we have a hard time worshipping the Lord. You see, we are the Temple of God, and God wants us to remove that garbage from His Temple, and the amazing thing is, that as God purges more and more of that garbage from our hearts, from our lives, the easier it is to worship Him.

3. And I want you to notice that Hezekiah understands the reasons that God has brought judgment upon Judah, that they turned from the Lord. And he is probably thinking back to Deuteronomy chapter 28 where God said He would bless His people for their obedience to Him and curse those that were disobedient to Him. They were to be a light to the world by showing how God blesses those who love and obey Him. But by letting the Menorah go out, which was to burn perpetually, they no longer were the light to the world, but have shut up the house of God. Because of that, God brought judgment upon them; some were even taken captive by the enemy. It is one thing to recognize your wrong, but Hezekiah takes it a step farther, he is going to do something about it.

VERSES 12-17

1. Here we see the Levites and the priests coming together and sanctifying themselves before the Lord. The Levites took care of the outer court areas and the priests cleaned up the inner court area. During the reign of Ahaz the house of the Lord, the Temple, became a big storage area for junk and it took these men eight days to clean the outer court and another eight days to clean the Temple proper or the holy place and the holy of holies, the inner court. It took them sixteen days in all to remove all the junk that had been stored there and to restore the house of God to a place of worship. That tells me that the Temple was trashed, for it was not just a couple of guys doing the cleaning, but the Levites and the priests came together to assist in this work, and they took the trash out to the Brook Kidron. This was a major cleaning project and yet it was so important in re-establishing the worship of God. How many houses of worship today need that very thing, to remove the junk of New Age and Eastern Mysticism, throw that garbage out and get back to the Word of God!

VERSES 18-19

1. First we see that they cleaned the Temple and not only was the Temple cleaned, but all that was broken was restored, and those things that were removed from the Temple were brought back. The Temple was prepared once again for sacrifices to take place and the worship of God to begin. Interestingly enough, the Hebrew word for “**cleanse**” means “to make free from blemish” and there was a big blemish upon the people of God for their transgressions, but now Hezekiah is rectifying that blemish, he is bringing the people back to the true and living God.

VERSES 20-24

1. As you read this it may seem kind of strange what they are doing. They want to worship God and that is great, but before they do we see them make all these sacrifices, all this shedding of blood, but why? The reason is simple. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin and thus, before they could worship God they had to make the atonement for their sin, these sacrifices! You see, sin had separated man from God, and thus, the sin offering covered your sins or made atonement for your sins. This sacrifice was a substitute, for you would take your hands and place them on the animal as the priest killed the animal. This represented your sins being transferred to the animal and through its death your sins have been covered. It was truly a horrible sight when you think about it, but it shows us how horrible sin really is. But the shedding of blood was needed as God said in Leviticus 17:11, **“For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.”** The Hebrew word for **“atonement”** is KAPHAR which speaks of a “covering” or “to cover.” You see, as the writer of Hebrews tells us, the sacrifice of goats and calves could never take away your sins, but it pointed us to something that would one day make all of us AT-ONE-(MENT) with God!

Payne puts it like this in regards to what these sacrifices were all about, “For the assembly to lay their hands on the goats of the sin offering was to designate these as substitutes for their own lives and to transfer their sins to the animal victims (Numbers 27:18-21). The goats thus served as types of Christ’s death in the sinner’s stead (2 Corinthians 5:21).”

Now, as we move to the New Testament, John the Baptist, in seeing Christ, says, **“... ‘Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’”** John 1:29.

You see, Jesus came to *take away*, to completely remove sin from us through His sacrificial death. The Greek word for **“atonement”** is KATALLAGE and speaks of “reconciliation.”

You see, Jesus has reconciled us to God by His blood, which has cleansed us from our sins. That is the point that Paul made in Romans 5:9-11. He wrote, **“Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.”**

And in Hebrews chapter 9, Paul tells us, **“And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.”** Hebrews 9:22, 27-28. Thus, Jesus has reconciled us to God by His shed blood; He has restored that fellowship that was broken by sin as He paid in full the penalty for our sins!

2. Today the Orthodox Jews have no Temple, no sacrifices, no shedding of blood, and thus no atonement for their sins. And so, on the Day of Atonement, the Jews see if their good deeds outweigh their bad deeds, and if they do, then God accepts them. Listen to an encounter Jon Courson had with a Jewish leader. He wrote,

When I spent an afternoon with a leader of a local synagogue, I asked him what he does with the issue of sin since the temple is no longer in service and sacrifices are no longer being made.

“We believe sin is dealt with in two ways,” he said, “through confession to God and reconciliation with man. You confess your sin to God and then make things right with the one against whom you’ve sinned. If you reconcile with man, God will forgive.”

“How do you deal with all of the Scriptures in the Old Testament that declare that without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness?” I asked.

“If you take those things literally, that’s a problem,” he said.

- Jon Courson, *Jon Courson’s Application Commentary : Volume One : Genesis-Job*, pp. 1201-1202

We are so blessed as Christians. You see, when Christ died on the cross of Calvary the veil of the Temple was torn from top to bottom. This veil was what separated the holy place from the holy of holies, and some say it was 18 inches thick and a mule team of 20 could not pull it apart. And yet God opened the way to the holy of holies, the place where God dwells by tearing that curtain from top to bottom and now we can all come to Him through His Son Jesus Christ. The sad thing is that the Jews, and many others, through a works mentality or theology, have sewn that veil back up once again, preventing man to come to God.

But for those that come to Jesus and ask Him to forgive their sins and be Lord of their life, it is a done deal. Your sins are forgiven, cast away as far as the east is from the west to be remembered no more! When Jesus died on the cross of Calvary He cried out, **“It is finished.”** In other words, the price for our sin was paid in full by Jesus! If you are basing your eternal security, your salvation on your good works, your confession of your sins, that is a scary place to be. But, if you base your salvation upon the finished work of Christ, then that is a beautiful place to be. Praise God for all that He has done for us!

VERSES 25-28

1. As I read what Hezekiah is doing here, I see that he must have studied the life of David because he is trying to pattern his life after David's. He is trying to do the things that David did for Hezekiah rightly recognized that there are blessings for those who are obedient to the Lord, just as was seen in the life of David.

2. And you can see the celebration that is taking place here. We see that after the sin offering was made, the atonement for their sins, then the burnt offering was made. And the burnt offering spoke of our consecration to the Lord. In this offering the entire animal was given to the Lord and it symbolically represented our own lives, and how we give our whole life to the Lord as a sacrifice. Paul spoke of this in Romans 12:1 when he said, **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.”**

At the end of this verse, when we read of “**your reasonable service**” which can also be translated “**your spiritual worship.**” As we give our lives to the Lord, allow Him to do in us as He pleases, it speaks of our worship of Him! But until your sin was atoned for, you could not consecrate yourself to the Lord. Hezekiah was doing the right things, he did not come before the Lord anyway he wanted, but by what the Lord instructed!

VERSES 29-30

1. The joy that filled the hearts of the people exploded into a time of worship, as they sang the songs of David and Asaph unto the Lord. If there is no song in your life, if there is no joy in your life, something is wrong. Meyer put it like this, “The music of your life is still, because you are out of accord with the will of God; but when by surrender and consecration there is unison, your heart will be filled with songs without words, and love like an ocean in the fullness of her strength.” If you are struggling this evening, if you have lost that joy, lost that song, then surrender your life back to the Lord and consecrate your life to Him, set your life apart for His use, placing your life on His altar of sacrifice!

VERSES 31-36

1. The celebration continues and now we see these “**thank offerings**”, which were also the fellowship or peace offerings. And you would bring your sacrifice to the priest and he would take the fat, the liver and the blood and that was burned on the altar to the Lord. Then the rest of the animal was barbecued, some given to the priest and the rest back to you. In that culture, when you ate with someone, you became one with that person. Thus, symbolically speaking, you were becoming one with the Lord through this offering. But understand this, before you can have fellowship with God, before you can consecrate yourself to God, you must deal with the sin in your life, and that was done by the sin offering, and today by accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of your life. It is only when His blood is applied to our lives that our sins can be removed completely from us and because of that we can give ourselves completely over to Him to be used by Him and enjoy intimate fellowship with Him.

2. Now what kind of church growth program did Hezekiah use to get these people fired up? He did not use any church growth program, he sought the Lord and the people joined in, they did this from a willing heart, they were not forced into it. You see, you can't legislate righteousness, you can't force people to worship God, it has to come from their heart. Remember the reforms that king Asa tried to enforce in the Southern Kingdom of Judah?

We are told in II Chronicles 15:12-13, **“Then they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul; and whoever would not seek the LORD God of Israel was to be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman.”** That did not change people’s hearts back then and it doesn’t change people’s hearts today. Just by threatening them to worship the Lord with death does not make them love the Lord; it only creates a false worship that is born out of the fear of death. It has to come from their hearts!

3. Now they did have a little problem. Remember that it was just the descendants of Aaron that could be priests, the Levites just assisted in the upkeep of the Temple and-so-on. But for some reason some of the priests did not go through the purification process so they could perform their duties. And so we see with all these sacrifices that were being made, it was just too much for these priests to handle on their own and the Levites helped them out. Today we see many who are lost and searching for God and God is looking for people to put into service to minister to them. Don’t think that you need a college degree to minister to the lost, you don’t. In fact it seems that God is doing like He did when the church first got started, putting unlearned and uneducated men into the ministry. And as God blesses these men, the establishment, the religious leaders just shake their heads because they can’t understand how they are doing it. But it is not the schooling that is important, it is who you know!

You see, when the Sanhedrin, the religious establishment back in Jesus' time, saw how these fishermen, Peter and John, were speaking with boldness and so profoundly, they were dumbfounded. The only thing they saw that changed these men is spoken of in Acts 4:13, "**... they realized that they had been with Jesus.**" God uses the foolish things of this world to confound the wise. Be open to where God is leading you. Spend time with Him. Don't look at your credentials for service, look to Jesus to equip you for the work He wants you to do.

4. Let me close this evening with what we see here in verse 36, "**Then Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced that God had prepared the people, since the events took place so suddenly.**" They saw all these events as the result of God working in them and through them. Folks, when the Spirit of God begins to move, ***HOLD ON!*** I have seen this in my own life as God opened a door some 16 years ago for me to come up here and be the pastor of this church. Things moved so quickly from me finding a job, finding a home, selling our home in Illinois that I could see clearly that this was of God and was able to rejoice what He was doing in our family and through our family! Folks, when the Spirit of God begins to move, things happen very quickly and hold on and see what God is going to do.

That is what we see here with the people of Judah. It is as Poole wrote, “It was, as a very great, so a sudden change, that the people, who but the other day were so ready to comply with wicked Ahaz in his idolatrous and impious prescriptions, were now so free and forward in God’s service; whereby it plainly appeared to be the work of the Almighty God changing their hearts by his Holy Spirit.” May we be open to what the Lord is doing! May we place our lives on the altar of sacrifice for His use! And may we rejoice in the Lord, worship Him for who He is and His great love for us!