

Seeing the Lord of the Word in the Word of the Lord

Jesus: Restorer of God's People

II Chronicles 29

2007-12-09

INTRODUCTION

It was the end of the basketball year in 1998, under head coach Orlando Tubby Smith, that Kentucky would win its most recent NCAA championship. We haven't even graced the floors of the Final Four since that year! For UK fans that is unacceptable and inexcusable.

We are the greatest basketball program in the world. We own the all-time wins record. North Carolina, UCLA, Florida, Duke, Kansas.....we have won more games than any of those powerhouse programs. Yet, we have fallen from the ranks of the elite. We have spent the last 10 years declining. Once great, now we get beat by the likes of Gardner-Webb!

Fans will not rest until we have returned to the position of greatness. We yelled and screamed at Tubby until he opted to go north for the winter. We will yell and scream at Billy Clyde until he gets us back to form or he decides to go live with Tubby. That is the way Kentucky fans are.

We want restored to our former ways. We need it! Our jobs suffer because we can't sleep at night when we get beat by North Carolina for the 20th time. We are a people who are looking for that man who can take us back to greatness. We hoped it would be Tubby after Ricky P left. When Tubby left, our eyes glimmered with a thought of Ricky P coming back, or young Billy the Kid coming our way. Neither happened and we were left to ponder who our savior would be. In steps Billy Clyde Gillispie. The fan-fare has been huge. We hope that he is the one that will lead us back to greatness....to restore us to basketball greatness.

The story of Christianity has many similarities. Adam and Eve were created in a perfect garden with a perfect relationship. They fell from that perfection...that greatness if you will, and mankind has longed for restoration ever since. The people of Israel constantly rebelled against their God and would continually be in the need of restoration. In this story we find a king who leads the children of Judah towards this restoration, pointing us towards the King who would ultimately restore us.

INTRO to Text: Setting the Stage

As we jump into 2 Chronicles it would benefit us to understand what is taking place in this book. In this book the history of Judah that was started in 1 Chronicles is

extended. The people have returned from their Babylonian captivity and the chronicler perhaps is trying to encourage the children of Israel.

First the writer recounts the construction and dedication of Solomon's temple. The history of Solomon's kingship is told in chapters one through nine. Solomon takes the place of his father David at the age of 25. He would reign for 40 years then he would pass. The kingship would pass then to his son Rehoboam.

The story line would continue as the writer follows the stories of the kings that would come after David and Solomon. Judah would have several godly kings, but still would fall into sin.

Ahaz would be king of Judah when he was twenty years old and would reign for sixteen years. The Bible says that *"he did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord, as his father David had done."* (28:1) Under Ahaz Judah would be defeated by Syria, he would sacrifice to the gods of Damascus, he would take articles from the temple and make other altars, and ultimately end up closing the doors to the house of the Lord. Judah would be lead into deeper sin under Ahaz their king.

When we come to chapter 29 of 2 Chronicles we find the people of Judah in desperate need of restoration. They had rebelled against their God and they were feeling the affects. They had fallen from greatness! Here we join the story.

The Text: Ahaz Dies—Hezekiah Reigns!

"Hezekiah began to reign when he was twenty-five years old, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abijah the daughter of Zechariah. And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, according to all that David his father had done." (29:1-3)

The pagan king Ahaz had passed away. Evidently even in his unfaithfulness to God he had been blessed with a son who had a love for the Lord God of Israel. When Hezekiah takes the throne over Judah he is only 25 years old and would reign until he was approximately 54 years of age. His reign would be a good one.

When Hezekiah takes the throne he knows that there needs to be some changes. No doubt he had watched as his father had taken Judah farther down the path of unrighteousness. He had more than likely thought through what needed to happen many times before. He had a plan! A famous commentator says this about Hezekiah:

"Hezekiah, the pious son of the godless Ahaz, recognized that it was to be the business of his reign to bring the kingdom out of the utterly ruinous condition into which Ahaz had brought it by his idolatry and his heathen policy, and to elevate the state again, both in respect to religion and morals, and also in political affairs." (Keil & Delitzsch)

Here is a king who had a mission and gets right down to business.

The Text: Hezekiah Restores the Temple.

“In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them.” (29:3)

Hezekiah opens the doors that his father had shut. The doors to God’s house are opened and the work begins. The priests and Levites would be brought together to consecrate the house of the Lord. He rebukes their ancestors; pointing to their unfaithfulness as the reason “the wrath of the Lord came on Judah and Jerusalem.” (29:8)

That was the past, Hezekiah points towards the future, telling them not to be “negligent” now. God has called us to return to Him and we must respond.

The priests and Levites do respond. They consecrate themselves as the king had commanded and begin to cleanse the temple. The priests would carry the “uncleanness” out and the Levites would take all of it to the “brook at Kidron.” All the idols, all the accumulated rubbish was removed and taken to the very same place where over a century earlier Asa had burned his queen-grandmother’s idol. The time it took was approximately 16 days. The temple had been cleansed.

The Text: Hezekiah Restores Temple Worship.

“Then Hezekiah the king rose early and gathered the officials of the city and went up to the house of the Lord.” (29:20)

After he had the temple cleansed the next item on the agenda for the king was to make sure that it was used for the purpose for which it was built by his ancestor Solomon. Solomon had this temple built so that offerings and sacrifices could be made to the Lord. It was a house of worship and Hezekiah sought to make it so again.

He rises early and gets the officials together for a meeting. He tells them to bring sacrifices as a sin offering for all of Judah. The sacrifices are made and the priests and Levites come together with the assembly and begin to worship their God.

How sweet it must have been for those men and women of Judah who had longed for so long to be able to worship their God in the temple of their ancestors. They sing with all they have, giving glory to their God and Father.

“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 worshipped.” (29:30)

Can you imagine not being able to worship your God! Imagine if we were not able to come into our churches and sing praises to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus

Christ. For years worship in the churches had been outlawed. Then all of sudden we are able to walk in once more and lift our voices as a church and sing to our Creator. How awesome that sound must have been! Hezekiah had restored the temple, restored temple worship, and most importantly, restored the people of Judah to their God and King.

The Text: Hezekiah Leads Judah in Being Restored to God!

“Then the goats for the sin offering were brought to the king and the assembly, and they laid their hands on them, 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.” (29:23-24)

Judah had sinned against God. They had been unfaithful for years under different kings. In truth Israel has always been unfaithful at different points in their history as the people of God. Over and over again they rebel against the God who has chosen them and been faithful to them. This case was no different. Under Ahaz they had rebelled. They had sinned against God Himself. That sin must be paid for in order for reconciliation to occur. Hezekiah leads them to offer sacrifices to atone for their sins.

The officials bring seven bulls, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven male goats for the sin offering. That is a total of 28 animals that were to be sacrificed. Can you imagine the amount of blood that was about to be shed? Why so much we ask?

I. Why So Much Blood?

Hezekiah saw the sins of Judah as grave! They had left their God and desecrated His temple. Under the leadership of Ahaz they had failed to give Him His rightful place as their God and King. They had worshipped other gods, giving the worship that the God of Israel alone deserved to another. The sin was severe.

Since their sin was great the sacrifice to atone for those sins must also be great. That is the message of the book of Leviticus. God is holy and just. His justice is a perfect justice. His hatred of sin and unrighteousness is perfect. Therefore the sacrifice that would atone for those sins must be great.

II. Why Did They Put Their Hands on the Goats?

When the representatives laid their hands on the goats they are symbolizing the transference of guilt that they deserved onto that animal. It would be this sacrificial animal that would shed its blood, in a sense paying the penalty that was due the people of Judah. Here the picture is atonement. The shedding of blood is the penalty for sin and “without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness.”

This atonement was specific and definite. It was for a specific people, the people of Israel (all of Israel) and was definite as it actually paid the penalty that was due.

The Text: Jesus—Our Ultimate Restorer.

When we look at this passage notice we have to notice how the sin of Judah was great but that our sin is great as well. All of mankind sins grossly against God. Paul points to the severity of our sin when he quotes Psalm 14:1-3 and 53:1-3.

READ Romans 3:11-18

Our sin is great and therefore the sacrifice that will make atonement for our sins must be great. The sins that we have committed are sins that carry consequences that are due to us individually. We are in desperate need for someone to come and take that penalty from us. Since the days of Adam and Eve mankind has longed for the One who would restore us to that intimate relationship with God.

God was not surprised by these events; He knew Judah would fall into sin. But against that backdrop, when they are in desperate need of restoration, God sends them a king who would show the path of restoration. Hezekiah would lead Judah to cleanse the temple, to make sacrifices to pay for their sins, and to once again worship in the house of the Living God. Judah remembers that God is for them and will not forsake them.

Jesus Christ steps into history to restore a people that have continually rebelled against Him. He comes as our restorer! As Hezekiah cleanses the temple of God, Jesus comes AS the temple of God. As Hezekiah comes calling Judah to repentance, so Jesus comes calling His people to return to their God and worship in Spirit and Truth. As Hezekiah leads the people of Judah to offer sacrifices to make atonement for their sins, so Jesus offers the ultimate sacrifice to make atonement for the sins of His people.

Just as Hezekiah lead the people of Judah back to their God, Jesus comes and provides ultimate and final restoration, leading His people into the very presence of their God and King.

God wants you to know, that yes we have fallen from that perfect relationship that Adam and Eve enjoyed with Him, but He the God who loves. The God of mercy and grace has sent us the King of Glory to restore His people to a perfect relationship with Him.

Conclusion: Trust in God Alone as the Only Way to Restoration.

In a world that tells us to work for our salvation, that it depends upon us to gain eternal life, God wants to say that you only need to trust in Him!

Appeal to:

1. Unbelievers to trust in God alone and find ultimate restoration.

2. Believers who struggle to stop trying to do things to please God and just trust in Him.
3. Believers who are faithful to continue to trust in a God who is for you and not against you.