

## 2 Chronicles 30 • Returning to the Blood of the Lamb

### Introduction

The issues of salvation and spiritual reconciliation always involve a return to the blood of the Lamb. It began with Passover in Egypt, is seen in Old Testament revivals where Passover is once again celebrated in conjunction with a right heart, and is prominent in the New Testament in being the day on which Christ literally fulfilled all the requirements of Passover on a literal Passover. In either Testament, there is no coming to God without first returning to the blood of the Lamb — not out of a sense of duty to rituals, but with earnestness from the heart.

<sup>1</sup>Now Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover to the Lord God of Israel. <sup>2</sup>For the king and his princes and all the assembly in Jerusalem had decided to celebrate the Passover in the second month, <sup>3</sup>since they could not celebrate it at that time, because the priests had not consecrated themselves in sufficient numbers, nor had the people been gathered to Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup>Thus the thing was right in the sight of the king and all the assembly.

### [Read v.1-4]

#### **Q: What is unusual about the list of those invited to celebrate the Passover?**

A: It wasn't just limited to those living in Hezekiah's kingdom of Judah – the invitation was sent out to **ALL** the tribes in both kingdoms.

#### **Q: Weren't they violating the Laws concerning the Passover by not celebrating it in the first month? Shouldn't they have waited until the following year?**

A: The Law provided an exception for individuals (Numbers 9:6-14) who were unclean during Passover to go ahead and celebrate it in the second month. Although this was not specifically an exception designated for a whole nation, it was nevertheless within the Law.

#### **Q: What had they been doing during the 1<sup>st</sup> month when they should have celebrated the Passover proper?**

A: The previous chapter describes how Hezekiah re-opened the temple after his predecessor, King Ahaz, had closed it for several years. The Levites spent that time cleaning out both themselves and the temple, a process called "consecration" whereby they make things ritually clean according to God's Law. Without doing this first, it would have been impossible to hold any celebration, much less Passover, as proscribed by God's Word.

**Point:** This wasn't just Hezekiah's "show", or the Levites "show", but a sincere effort to return to God's Word and ways supported by everyone. They understood that the spirit of the Law needed to be heeded most. And they also understood that no one should be excluded because **EVERYONE** needed to return to God.

<sup>5</sup>So they established a decree to circulate a proclamation throughout all Israel from Beersheba even to Dan, that they should come to celebrate the Passover to the LORD God of Israel at Jerusalem. For they had not celebrated it in great numbers as it was prescribed. <sup>6</sup>The couriers went throughout all Israel and Judah with the letters from the hand of the king and his princes, even according to the command of the king, saying, "O sons of Israel, return to the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, that He may return to those of you who escaped and are left from the hand of the kings of Assyria. <sup>7</sup>Do not be like your fathers and your brothers, who were unfaithful to the LORD God of their fathers, so that He made them a horror, as you see. <sup>8</sup>Now do not stiffen your neck like your fathers, but yield to the LORD and enter His sanctuary which He has consecrated forever, and serve the Lord your God, that His burning anger may turn away from you. <sup>9</sup>For if you return to the LORD, your brothers and your sons will find compassion before those who led them captive and will return to this land. For the LORD your God is gracious and compassionate, and will not turn His face away from you if you return to Him."

### **[Read v.5-9]**

**Q: How do these actions show that they're truly trying to follow God's Word?**

A: The Passover was one of three annual feasts wherein the whole of Israel was to present itself to the Lord at Jerusalem. So they didn't restrict the invitation to just those in Judah where the temple and Jerusalem were located, but extended it to all the tribes that it would be observed according to the Law.

**Q: Why does the proclamation make mention in v.6 of "those of you who escaped and are left from the hand of the kings of Assyria"?**

A: Although there will be a final conquest and deportation of the whole of the northern kingdom of Israel, parts of it had already been taken over in phases. God did this in order to provide an example of what would happen if the remainder do not repent. This is not merely an invitation to an annual celebration, but a vivid call to return to the Lord.

**Q: What seems to be the chief underlying issues which need to be addressed?**

A: Spiritual unfaithfulness (v.7), pride ("stiffen your neck" in v.8), and serving something other than the One True God (v.8).

**Q: What might be considered an unusual benefit offered in v.9 should they choose to return to the Lord?**

A: They will not only enjoy the personal benefits of spiritual reconciliation, but it can extend those benefits to the whole of the nation, even to those already taken into captivity. In other words, personal revival will spark corporate revival.

**Q: What did it mean for a Hebrew to decide to "enter His sanctuary"? What did they have to do in preparation?**

A: No one was supposed to go to the temple unless they first consecrated themselves; that is, first submitted their heart to God, followed the Laws for ritual purification, and brought the proper offerings prepared the right way. Entering His temple was supposed to be the **END** of a process that began at home in their heart and concluded with their arrival and observances at the temple. In fact, no one that wasn't so prepared was supposed to be allowed entrance to the temple. But people of this time, if they responded to this message, would almost immediately begin to return to God spiritually.

**Point:** *The message to return to God always address the issues of personal pride, sin, and unfaithfulness, the very things separating them from God to begin with. The message doesn't make people "comfortable" or "at ease" with themselves, but challenges them directly on the specific points that need to be addressed, no matter how "ugly" they may be.*

<sup>10</sup>So the couriers passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, and as far as Zebulun, but they laughed them to scorn and mocked them. <sup>11</sup>Nevertheless some men of Asher, Manasseh and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem. <sup>12</sup>The hand of God was also on Judah to give them one heart to do what the king and the princes commanded by the word of the LORD.

<sup>13</sup>Now many people were gathered at Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the second month, a very large assembly. <sup>14</sup>They arose and removed the altars which were in Jerusalem; they also removed all the incense altars and cast them into the brook Kidron. <sup>15a</sup>Then they slaughtered the Passover lambs on the fourteenth of the second month.

<sup>15b</sup>And the priests and Levites were ashamed of themselves, and consecrated themselves and brought burnt offerings to the house of the LORD. <sup>16</sup>They stood at their stations after their custom, according to the law of Moses the man of God; the priests sprinkled the blood which they received from the hand of the Levites. <sup>17</sup>For there were many in the assembly who had not consecrated themselves; therefore, the Levites were over the slaughter of the Passover lambs for everyone who was unclean, in order to consecrate them to the LORD. <sup>18</sup>For a multitude of the people, even many from Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun, had not purified themselves, yet they ate the Passover otherwise than prescribed. For Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, "May the good LORD pardon <sup>19</sup>everyone who prepares his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though not according to the purification rules of the sanctuary." <sup>20</sup>So the LORD heard Hezekiah and healed the people.

### [Read v.10-12]

**Q: What are the possible reactions to such messages?**

A: Some may reject it, even engaging in ridicule of it, but some will respond and accept it.

**Q: What does it mean they "humbled themselves"?**

A: They began the process described previously, allowing it to begin from their heart.

**Q: What is one of the identifying characteristics of a group of Believers truly following God's Word?**

A: Unity. They have "one heart".

**Point:** We need to be unified in obedience to God's Word and preach the Gospel regardless of how it might be received.

### [Read v.13-15a]

**Q: What did the people do before actually engaging in the Passover activities?**

A: They removed all the false and bad spiritual influences in their immediate vicinity.

**Application:** Do you see the connection to not just confessing sin as a part of the salvation process, but repenting of them, the pledge to cease doing them?

### [Read v.15b-20]

**Q: What is the centerpiece of the Passover ritual? What does it represent?**

A: The main thing was the sacrifice of a lamb. At the original Passover in Egypt, it was the blood of the lamb which saved them from the angel of death. It represents the work of Christ, whose blood atones to save **US** from the second death. When John the Baptist first sees Jesus, he declares, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

**Q: Why did the Levites have to intervene to sacrifice some of the people's lambs for them?**

A: Each head of household was supposed to consecrate their self in preparation for handling the Passover on behalf of their family. Some who responded to the invitation did not go through with the complete purification rituals of consecration. Therefore the Levites, who were consecrated, carried out the sacrifice for them.

**Q: Did Hezekiah ask God to simply forgive everyone who didn't bother or have time to consecrate themselves?**

A: No. Hezekiah qualified it by asking God to "pardon everyone who prepares his heart to seek God...though not according to the purification rules". Hezekiah is addressing the greater issue of the heart over the letter of the Law.

**Q: And how did God respond?**

A: "So the LORD heard Hezekiah and healed the people."

[Continued on the next page.]

Samuel said,  
"Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices  
As in obeying the voice of the LORD?  
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,  
And to heed than the fat of rams."  
1 Samuel 15:22

For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it;  
You are not pleased with burnt offering.  
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;  
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.  
Psalm 51:16-17

**Point:** The work of salvation is not a work of the lips, but a work of the heart. And God's work on the heart always begins with a return to the blood of the Lamb.

**[Read v.21-22]**

**Q: Why does it describe those Hezekiah encouraged in v.22 as having "showed good insight of the things of the LORD"?**

A: It indicates those who weren't just limiting themselves to carrying out the priestly and Levitical duties involved in the temple and the Passover, but were engaged in teaching the greater meaning of these things according to the Word of God to the people. They were immediately following up the reconciliation experience with a kind of discipleship in God's Word.

**Q: With what did they follow up the Passover offerings?**

A: With "peace offerings". In other words, offerings of praise and thanksgiving, indicating that their worship was far exceeding the bare minimum requirements of the Law as an expression of the condition of their heart and restored faith. They were engaging in worship from the heart.

**[Read v.23-27]**

**Q: Although there was such great joy that they doubled the length of the Passover celebration, what was the REAL reward experienced?**

A: "Their voice was heard and their prayer came to His holy dwelling place, to heaven." Just as this all was initiated from the heart and not because of the temple or the Passover or any of the "things" of God, but was a genuine outreach to God from the heart, so was God's response a genuine return from His place in heaven. It wasn't the reinstatement of an earthly institution that is being lauded here, but true spiritual reconciliation between the people and God.

**Point:** People often say they want "revival" when what they mean is that they want to see something happen or feel something special. They're really wanting to experience something, not necessarily change something. True revival takes place from the heart, always returns to the blood of the Lamb, commits to being changed according to God's Word and ways going forward, and results in God answering the prayer for a changed life.

<sup>21</sup>The sons of Israel present in Jerusalem celebrated the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days with great joy, and the Levites and the priests praised the LORD day after day with loud instruments to the LORD. <sup>22</sup>Then Hezekiah spoke encouragingly to all the Levites who showed good insight in the things of the LORD. So they ate for the appointed seven days, sacrificing peace offerings and giving thanks to the LORD God of their fathers.

<sup>23</sup>Then the whole assembly decided to celebrate the feast another seven days, so they celebrated the seven days with joy. <sup>24</sup>For Hezekiah king of Judah had contributed to the assembly 1,000 bulls and 7,000 sheep, and the princes had contributed to the assembly 1,000 bulls and 10,000 sheep; and a large number of priests consecrated themselves. <sup>25</sup>All the assembly of Judah rejoiced, with the priests and the Levites and all the assembly that came from Israel, both the sojourners who came from the land of Israel and those living in Judah. <sup>26</sup>So there was great joy in Jerusalem, because there was nothing like this in Jerusalem since the days of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel.

<sup>27</sup>Then the Levitical priests arose and blessed the people; and their voice was heard and their prayer came to His holy dwelling place, to heaven.

<sup>31:1</sup> Now when all this was finished, all Israel who were present went out to the cities of Judah, broke the pillars in pieces, cut down the Asherim and pulled down the high places and the altars throughout all Judah and Benjamin, as well as in Ephraim and Manasseh, until they had destroyed them all. Then all the sons of Israel returned to their cities, each to his possession.

**[Read v.31:1]**

**Q: What did they do after being reconciled to God?**

A: They now went out and removed all the false and bad spiritual influences previously encountered in the course of their daily life.

**Point:** *The previous cleaning in v.14 was just of Jerusalem, the area immediately around the temple. Think of that as cleaning up one's church. (God's judgment ALWAYS begins with the church.) Now they removed the things which would normally cause them to stumble out where they live, things that prevented them from living right AWAY from church, so to speak.*

**Epilogue**

*The great spiritual revivals such as those during the reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah were marked by once again celebrating the Passover after long periods of neglect. True revival always returns to the need for the blood of the Lamb, the need for a Savior to atone for our sin.*