

Reforms Under Hezekiah

By the time that Hezekiah ruled on the throne of Judah (ca. 715 B.C.), Isaiah had already been prophesying in order to point the people back to Yahweh. Israel in the north had finally fallen (ca. 722-1 B.C.), and Isaiah had been

addressing Hezekiah's father, Ahaz, warning him not to put his trust in other nations. Ahaz paid little attention. Hezekiah, however, would pay attention and strive to turn the nation back to God.

When Hezekiah became king, "He did right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done. In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them. He brought in the priests and the Levites and gathered them into the square on the east" (2 Chron. 29:2-3). He spoke to the Levites and told them, "our fathers have been unfaithful and have done evil in the sight of the Lord our God, and have forsaken Him and turned their faces away from the dwelling place of the Lord, and have turned their backs" (vs. 7). He recognized the consequences of God's anger and the breaking of the covenant, so he was intent: "Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel, that His burning anger may turn away from us. My sons, do not be negligent now, for the Lord has chosen you to stand before Him, to minister to Him, and to be His ministers and burn incense." (Vv. 10-11).



The Levites consecrated themselves, went into the temple and began to clean it out, including all that was considered unclean (that fact that any of that was in there shows their previous disrespect and negligence). They then reported back to

Hezekiah what had been done. Now Hezekiah was in a position to restore the temple worship back to the way it was supposed to be. This included the priesthood, with the sons of Aaron, offering up appropriate sacrifices on the altar. "He then stationed the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with harps and with lyres, according to the command of David and of Gad the king's seer, and of Nathan the prophet; for the command was from the Lord through His prophets" (vs. 25; we note here that the instruments were connected to the temple and its offerings, and was ultimately based on the command of God). With all of the years of neglect, the temple was once again being used for its intended purpose. "Thus the service of the house of the Lord was established again" (vs. 35).

Once the temple was back in order, Hezekiah made plans to celebrate the Passover. As he did so, he wrote letters and invited Israelites surviving in the north, asking them to come and join with Judah. He pleaded with them to return back to Yahweh: "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” (2 Chron. 30:9). Some men from the north “humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem.” Then 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” (vv. 11-12). They were acting according to God’s word.

The effect of these reforms was great. “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. 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” (2 Chron. 30:26-27). The reforms continued as the people began to break down the idols and high places.

The summary of Hezekiah’s work shows the commitment that he had: “Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah; and he did what was good, right and true before the Lord his God. Every work which he began in the service of the house of God in law and in commandment, seeking his God, he did with all his heart and prospered” (2 Chron. 31:20-21).

Hezekiah would have to deal with trouble, too, but at least his commitment to doing what was right was both obvious and rewarded. Some time had passed since reforms like these had been seen in the land. He was able to return hearts back to Yahweh, which was not an easy task. There was finally a sense of faithfulness and recognition once again that they were the people of God and in covenant relationship with Him. Hezekiah stands out as one of the great kings primarily because of his reforms and his commitment to serve God with his

whole heart. He wasn’t flawless, but he was commended by the Lord Himself as one who did good and right. This, in turn, serves as an example for us who strive to seek the Lord and be found faithful in Him.

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