

## 2 CHRONICLES 31:1

As we pick up in **2 Chronicle 31** Hezekiah is still king over the southern kingdom of Judah. He is an amazing man — outside of king David there was none greater than him in the estimation of the Holy Spirit.

*2 Kings 18:5-7 He trusted in the Lord the God of Israel, so that there was none like him among all the kings of Judah after him, nor among those who were before him. <sup>6</sup>For he held fast to the Lord. He did not depart from following him, but kept the commandments that the Lord commanded Moses. <sup>7</sup>And the Lord was with him; wherever he went out, he prospered.*

Not a perfect man — but God's man. When we first meet him in 2 Chronicles 29 we immediately discover the passion of his life and the priority of his life. The first thing that he does in the first month of the first year of his reign was to re-establish worship. Before he does anything that will benefit himself he takes care to re-establish worship in the house of the Lord. He sets out to repair the house of the Lord and restore the vessels used in the worship of the Lord. He re-consecrates the priests and Levites for service and worship in the house of the Lord. Then (2 Chronicles 30) he restores the observance of Passover in Judah — even inviting the remnant of the northern tribes to return to the Lord who redeemed their ancestors from bondage and death on Egypt. And it was a remarkable time as so many men and women had never celebrated Passover because they were so steeped in idolatry. It was an amazing moment — one of the most remarkable times in the history of Jerusalem.

*2 Chronicles 30 So there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem.*

## CHAPTER 31

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

That's a LONG first verse — but an amazing one. It is filled with truth that is so relevant to each of our hearts and lives this evening.

**NOTE:** Something happened. The reasonable questions to ask of the text are, **who did what, and where did they do it?**

WHO was doing it = *all Israel who were present.*

WHAT did they do = *went out ..... and broke in pieces the pillars and cut down the Asherim and broke down the high places and the altars.... until they had destroyed them all.*

WHERE did they do it = *throughout all Judah and Benjamin, and in Ephraim and Manasseh*

**NOTE THE TIME STAMP for all of this** — the **when** all of this happened! It is crucial to our understanding of the Christian life.

*<sup>1</sup>Now when all this was finished,*

All of these idols were destroyed **after** they kept the feast of Passover. Passover was a commemoration and celebration of how God delivered His people, Israel, from **slavery** and **bondage** and **death** in Egypt. If you recall that story, God sent a succession of **nine plagues** upon the Egyptians. In each of those plagues God was bringing judgment Egypt for the way that they treated God's people — but ultimately it was because they had de-godded God with their pantheon of pagan deities. In fact, each plague was a judgment upon one of Egypt's idols. In the **tenth** and final and most devastating plague upon Egypt, the True and living God sent the angel of death throughout the land killing every firstborn male child. But before that transpired Yahweh, the God of Israel, commanded His people to take a lamb, without spot or blemish, kill it, take the blood of that innocent sacrifice and essentially paint the doorpost of the entryway to each of their homes. When the angel of death passed through the land, he would see the blood of the spotless lamb and PASS OVER that home.

**FOLLOW ME HERE** — First I want to commend you for studying through the Old Testament with us on Monday nights. Some people are put off by, or struggle with, reading the “**OLD** Testament” because the title suggests that it's outdated and archaic — irrelevant. The Old Testament is not irrelevant to Jesus — the Gospel — or the Christian or the New Testament! Roughly three-quarters of the Christian Bible is the Old Testament (39 books in the Old Testament). The whole of the Old Testament was all about Jesus. It pointed to Jesus — anticipated Jesus.

***John 5:39** You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me,*

***Luke 24:25-27** <sup>25</sup>And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup>Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer*

*these things and enter into his glory?”<sup>27</sup> And beginning with Moses (that included Exodus 12) and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*

The **Old** Testament was a foreshadowing of the coming of Jesus — filled with prophecies and the expectation of the coming of Jesus. The **New** Testament is the **fulfillment** of the Old Testament promises.

**QUOTE: Augustine** — *“The New Testament is latent in the Old Testament; and the Old Testament is patent (easily recognizable) in the New Testament.”*

Latent = existing but not yet developed or manifest; hidden; concealed

Patent = clearly seen in the New.

**QUOTE:** *The NEW is in the Old contained. The OLD is in the New explained.*

So as students of the bible we are going to process what they did in **2 Chronicles 31:1** in that light!

The tearing down of those idols was essentially **a response to hearing the Gospel** (as God chose to reveal it and foreshadow it in the feast of Passover). Remember, most of those people had never even heard about the lamb that was slain. They had bought into the lies of idolatry even as their parents and their kings had bought into the lies of idolatry. They worshipped and lived for things other than the true and living God. It was **when they were told** — via the feast of Passover — how God triumphed over the idols of Egypt — and what **God did** to deliver Israel from death and bondage — — by way of the shed blood of an innocent, spotless lamb, they were stirred in their hearts to find the idols they used to worship and live for and they pulled them down, utterly destroyed them.

The heart of the **Gospel** was wrapped up in **Exodus 12**. The Passover Lamb slain was pointing to Jesus, “the Lamb of God” slain for the sins of the world.

**1 Corinthians 5:7** *For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.*

**THIS IS SO AMAZING** — In a very real way each household was spared **because** they TRUSTED what God had to say about the blood of the lamb that was slain! They were spared because they had a relationship with God based upon faith. It didn't matter if you were a descendant of Abraham. It didn't matter if you were circumcised. You had to exercise personal faith in God, demonstrated by obedience. You didn't have to

understand HOW the blood of that lamb saved you. You didn't need to know WHY any old animal wouldn't do, or why it had to be without spot or blemish. But you did have to trust and obey, take refuge from the judgment of God under the blood of the spotless lamb!

That night in Egypt — something so POWERFUL, so WONDERFUL, was going to happen that God told them they would measure time by it — they would set their calendars by it!

*Exodus 12:1 The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, <sup>2</sup>“This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you.*

**HERE'S THE PICTURE** — Something so POWERFUL, and so WONDERFUL happens when the blood of Jesus is applied to your life – (deliverance from the power and penalty of sin) – that it brings about a NEW BEGINNING.

*2 Corinthians 5.17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*

I'm 59 years old — but life BEGAN for me 39 years ago at around 1:30am on December 31, 1973. The term BORN AGAIN takes on wonderful and fresh meaning in the light of **Exodus 12:1**

**HERE'S THE GOSPEL TRUTH of 2 Chronicles 31:1** — Destroying idols doesn't produce regeneration or revival. In fact — destroying idols to earn or produce revival is dead religion! Destroying idols doesn't produce revival — destroying idols is the result of revival. The Biblical pattern for revival is this — As the GRACE and GOODNESS of the Lord is proclaimed, believed and experienced, people respond by destroying the idols in their lives.

This exact pattern is recorded in **Acts 19**. The Gospel was preached in Ephesus, it was being confirmed by miracles and the name of Jesus was being made great. Then we're told how the people responded

*Acts 19:17-20 <sup>19</sup>And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. <sup>20</sup>So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.*

They SAW and EXPERIENCED the goodness of God — the greatness of God. It was **then** that they burned any bridges to the idols they once worshipped and lived for. They brought little slips of parchment with symbols or magical sentences written on them called *Ephesia Grammata* (Ephesian Letters). These Ephesian Letters were worn as amulets or charms. They brought their books on magic and spells and burned them all. They were BURNING all BRIDGES to their past.

It's said that when Cortez landed in the new world that he commanded that their ships be burned in order to put to death any thoughts of turning back — returning to the “old world.”

## **We need to understand the what happened in 2 Chronicles 31:1 on two levels**

<sup>1</sup> We need to understand this in our evangelism and ministry. We have it backwards when we expect people to change BEFORE they experience the goodness of God. Holiness is the **result** of regeneration and revival, **not** the **reason** for it. We need to let the people *taste and see of the goodness of the Lord* because that is what will lead them to repentance. They will WANT to turn from their old lives.

*Romans 2:4 Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness (KJV = goodness) is meant to lead you to repentance?*

When people were coming to Christ in the late 60's and early 70's their lives were so totally transformed by the Gospel that they were eager to pull down the idols they used to live for. As soon as they recognized anything in their life that once served as their functional savior — a substitute for Jesus — they pulled it down.

There is REAL HOPE for change in the Gospel. But there is NO HOPE of change in religion. Religion is about man trying to earn God's love and acceptance by making changes in his behavior without any transformation of heart; without any transformation at the core of who he is. That is why religion is so frustrating — so fatal.

**Man was designed** to worship God and derive his identity from God.

Man was made in the image of God. He was made to reflect the glory of God; live for the glory of God; worship the God of glory. Idolatry is choosing to live for the glory of something other than God; worship anything other than God. You're either worshipping God, or you're worshipping an idol(s). You're either deriving your identity from God, or you are by default deriving it from an idol (s).

Again — an idol is anything you live for; look to as your functional savior; and derive your identity from apart from the True and Living God. Common idols in our culture would be things like success, wealth, and sexuality.

Without excluding the idols of success and wealth (or any other idols), let's consider the idol of sexuality — and those who look to sexuality and human intimacy to save them — those who derive their sense of identity from sexuality and human intimacy. What would ever make them want to tear down that idol?

Again — this is not to the exclusion of any other idols or those who worship them — but it goes without saying that there are a lot of men and women who struggle with, or are even hostile in their opposition of the Gospel because of what the Bible says about sexuality and sexual sin (heterosexual sexual sin or homosexual sexual sin). The Bible speaks without ambiguity about sexuality. It speaks without ambiguity about heterosexual sexual sin. It speaks without ambiguity about homosexuality. That's why many people who are attracted to members of the same sex struggle with the idea of being Christian.

Some don't want to believe the objective truth and fact of the Gospel simply because it calls them out on their idolatry. Their idol (sexuality and the desire for human intimacy) destroys their objectivity! All truth claims are trumped by their need to defend and preserve their idol. In that same sphere of idolatry there are countless individuals who have never even heard the truth claims of the Gospel. All they have ever seen or heard is self-righteous hatred from men and women who claim to be representing Jesus. There is nothing in those messengers or in the message they preach that could make other men or women tear down the idol of sexuality. In reality — those voicing their self-righteous hatred for homosexuals are trying to recruit men and women away from the idol of sexuality to the idol of self-righteousness and religion. It is only the Gospel that can move a man or woman to tear down ANY idol.

The Authentic Christian should stand out in culture as ***different*** because he or she is not living for idols — they are living for Jesus. Wherever they are or whatever they are doing they do it for Jesus (living a life of worship). While others in business are living for the idol of success or wealth — the Christian is living for Jesus, laying up treasures in heaven. Different! Their great aim is not success and recognition from man; their great aim is to love Jesus in the way they do their work and the way they love people in the workplace — even those worshipping idols. Different! While others are looking to academic achievement to be their functional savior — to be the thing from which they derive their identity — the Christian is pouring out all of their efforts in study and learning as an act of

worship to Jesus — hoping that their knowledge and training might open an opportunity to be on mission with God in some profession. Different!

Jesus said that makes the believer like salt and light in this world. Jesus is seen as the greatest thing about them.

*Philippians 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.*

In the physical world there are two ways of magnification: microscopic and telescopic. Microscopic magnification takes something small and makes it appear larger than it is. Telescopic magnification takes something that is very large; but because of distance appears to be very small; and magnifies it by bringing it closer to the viewer. Jesus is not small, needing us to make Him appear bigger than He really is (exaggeration). Jesus is the God of infinite glory and honor. But lost man is *far* from Him. It is as we live for Jesus and worship Jesus in a world that lives for and worships idols; we bring Jesus into closer view. He is made great — magnified!

When that happens those who are worshipping idols begin to see Jesus for who He truly is — full of life, full of grace and truth, beautiful and compassionate, a savior who can truly save. And as a result they begin to see their idols for what they are.

They begin to say things like this (at a meeting in Oxford, England):

*I'm gay, but I want to be a Christian. I feel the need for a transcendent Savior and lover.... but I also long for human intimacy while on this earth. Following Christ and this (my sexuality and the seeming innate desire for human intimacy and companionship) appear mutually exclusive.*

In other words — they're wondering what could ever enable them to tear down their idol! They're wondering how they could ever walk away from their identity that has been derived from and totally dependent upon that idol.

The answer to that dilemma is the same thing that enabled the men and women in **2 Chronicles 31** to tear down their idols — the same thing that enabled the men and women in **Acts 17** to burn the bridges to their idols. The answer to that dilemma is the transcendent love and justice and truth of Jesus. Evangelism is proclaiming the Good News — announcing what God has done for us in the sending of Jesus to be our Passover Lamb — the one who would shed His blood to save us from sin and death!



Christianity is not just a change of philosophy — a shift in moral values — it's a shift in worship. Becoming a Christian begins by saying — *I used to **want** human intimacy. I used to depend on sexuality and human intimacy as the thing that would save me and satisfy me and give me a sense of identity — but now I know Jesus is the Son of God who loves me and died in my place for my sin and rose from the grave. **I want Him!***

When that happens it doesn't matter what idol they used to serve and live for and derive their identity from. When someone with opposite-sex attraction comes to Christ, his or her sexuality has to undergo a reboot as well. Heterosexual Sexuality and heterosexual intimacy **get demoted** gets demoted from the most important thing in your life. The same is true for those with same-sex attraction. That does not mean that the homosexual will never be tempted by or ache because of same sex attraction — it means that they will look to the One who is infinitely worthy of their worship and adoration — and defer to His infinite wisdom in regards to human sexuality and wisdom. Like the heterosexual — their feelings bow to their redeemer and His Word! The same goes for those who used to live for success or wealth. When they come to Christ their view of success and possessions undergoes a reboot as well. The things they used to worship now become things they offer to Jesus as an expression of love and adoration.

**DETHRONING IDOLS** is ALWAYS the response to what God has done for us in the sending of His Son Jesus. **DETHRONING IDOLS** is ALWAYS the response to the infinite worth of Jesus — that He alone is worthy of exaltation and adoration.

And along with the **transcendent love** and **justice** and **truth** of Jesus — there is the **transforming power** of the Holy Spirit.

***Philippians 2:13** for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

***Ephesians 1:18-20** having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is....<sup>19</sup>... the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might <sup>20</sup>that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,*

**Lastly** — <sup>2</sup>. We need to understand that this same truth applies to us in regards to our personal relationship with Jesus.