

There is a story about a king of Judah who experienced things along a physical plane that parallel some of the things that we have been experiencing along a spiritual plane. We can glean from those parallel examples that apply to us on a spiritual plane and we can even be admonished as well as be encouraged or strengthened in resolve and purpose by some of the story.

We're going to turn over to 2 Chronicles 29. The title of this particular sermon is entitled, *Hezekiah, Then and Now*, and this is *Part 1*.

Quite an incredible story. Saw a lot of things during his reign and a lot of things that were experienced by the nation of Israel. Of course, they were divided at this time, Israel in the north, Judah in the south. He was the king of Judah.

In **2 Chronicles 29:1** it says, **Hezekiah became king when he was twenty-five years old, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem.** So we think of different life spans and different ones at that particular time or throughout time. Even here in the States at one time expectancy wasn't that long as far as life was concerned and how long people lived. It definitely wasn't three score and ten. In some cases just about half that. But here he was, he lived up to the age of 54 and had some things happen to him in advance of that that we're going to discuss as we go along here because God gave him extra time in life when it came about that he was told certain things, which we'll get to. But to think about him becoming king at 25 years old.

When it came to the kingdoms in the north, to Israel, and basically referring to the 10 tribes that were in the northern area, when you consider that particular region and what was happening to them, every king went against God. Every king, it talks about, when it mentions that, says "went the way of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat." It makes that point over and over again. Every king, which had to do with the false gods and so forth that were worshipped in the region, they themselves worshipped them and it even brings it out in this story here what they had done and what other nations thought about that because they recognized that's what they were doing. Judah was different.

It reminds me of things that have happened at different times through history, even within the Church, different cycles of time that people go through and different regions that people have gone through, and I marvel that when God has a specific purpose that He's going to work out at a specific time He will raise someone up. He will draw them. I think about a calling and our calling, and I think I've already referred to this; maybe even it might have been last Sabbath. It wasn't too long ago. I made the comment about how that when God has a purpose and He's called you, there are things He does in your life. He'll work with you, He'll mold and fashion certain things within you because He has a purpose.

That's an incredible thing to understand, that when God has a purpose to accomplish if you'll respond properly, if you'll yield yourself to God there are things He'll work out in your life. But there are times when He just calls an individual to fulfill a specific purpose, and it was this way with some of the kings of Judah. At different times He would allow them to go on their own way because they'd go back to other kinds of gods, and so forth. He let them go the way of their own human nature.

But there were times when He wanted to redirect people toward Himself because we're talking about a process here of time that God had intended, of what was going to come to pass for hundreds and hundreds, and a few thousand years later, things with the Jewish people, as an example, or things coming up to the time of Christ. Because God had things planned out, meticulously so, of things that were going to be in the world, of how the world would be at specific times (what He would allow and what He wouldn't allow) to fit into a plan and a purpose.

Just like the Roman Empire, Him allowing the Roman Empire. If you think back about what was given to Daniel, he was shown different kingdoms that were going to rise and fall and so all those things were planned out. Way back then God had different kingdoms that He was going to allow to rise up and then diminish and within that story then was the Roman Empire. God allowed certain things to exist in the Roman Empire, certain power that they had, certain sway they had, and a lot of that was going to affect His purpose and plan concerning Judah. Because there was a purpose that had to be fulfilled there in His own Son being born at a specific time and within a specific environment. So it's incredible to me how God molds and fashions things to fit into His plan.

Now, we can't even begin to grasp that. It's meticulous, is designed by, it's brought into action, if you will, or into life at different times by God's intervention and what He does, what His purpose is. Again, to grasp those things, to understand those things, that there are things that God planned out long, long ago, things about His own Son before the creation of the angelic realm, that's hard for us to grasp. We're so limited. We're so puny. We really are. And yet we begin to see evidence of how God has done things through time, how He's worked with different people at different times, and here is an example here with a story of Hezekiah.

So God had allowed Judah to drift off and go their own way and then now is the time when He's going to raise it back up again, bring Judah to confront or to the forefront in the sense of addressing certain things about God. Again, on a very physical plane, but again for great purpose because through this period of time God would work with individuals and prepare them for His Kingdom, for His family.

So this is the story we're going through here about Hezekiah. God had a calling for him. He was going to fulfill it. He was going to accomplish it. Hezekiah had choices, just like we have choices to make. And especially within the Church I think of how that scripture continues to come back, "Many are called and few are chosen." So God has given great opportunity to people at different times. But especially in the Old Testament when He's had specific things He's molding and

fashioning and preparing He has worked with those conditions and those situations in ways that one day we're going to be so dumbfounded by, in such awe of what He's done. Because to work with one individual in time to place into His family there are conditions in the world that He's worked with and molded and fashioned to bring about what He's creating. In many ways that's true today as well because of where we are in time.

So again, some of these things sometimes when you're able to think about them and go beyond just a story flow and you consider what God is doing it should bring us to be in great awe of God, truly in awe of His power and His might that the world, as a whole, doesn't even begin to comprehend. It can't. Even within the Church we're barely comprehending it, truly, and yet we're able to see things in a way that has never been given to people before because of where we are in time and because of a Kingdom that's about here.

So it goes on to say in the story, **His mother's name was Abijah**—in 2 Kings 18 it refers to her as "Abi," but short for Abijah—the **daughter of Zechariah. And he did what was right in the sight of the Eternal.** The thing we're going to be looking at on a spiritual plane, is that within God's Church if and when - because it isn't true with all people because many are called and few are chosen because of the choices people make - but when people are convicted of following God and they continue to live that way by faith and continue to seek to put God first, and it doesn't mean that you do it perfectly, because we can't. We have human nature and we have things pop up in our life that have to be addressed from time to time.

God reveals things about how we think. He reveals things in our thinking, in our mind that five or ten years before we couldn't even begin to see. He doesn't reveal it to us until He prepares us to see it. Because the point of showing those things and revealing those things is so that we can address it, so that we can be refined, so that we can be transformed even more because of what He's molding and fashioning within us. That's why I love how it refers to it in the New Testament as a creation. It's God's creation, what He's doing in us, in His family. It's an ongoing creation because now it's a matter of Elohim. It's not a physical creation, now we're far beyond that in what God has been doing as far as the Church and as far as His family is concerned. It's along a spiritual plane.

As we're going through this story, let's continue on. **And he did that which was right in the sight of the Eternal according to all that his father David had done.** He had that kind of a heart. And as you go through the story you see a zealously, a dedication, a purpose that he had in his thinking. It's just the way he was. Well, God prepared him for that. He molded and fashioned much of that in him when he was very young, a child on up, in his teen years, and finally to where he was able to become king at the age of twenty-five to rule a nation. That's hard to grasp and comprehend, but he was prepared for that, he was suited for that. God had molded and fashioned certain things in his thinking, in his mind and how he would be as an individual, as a being, as a person, because it's about something greater. It's not about just allowing for an individual to go out here and do what they want in physical life, which he still was able to do and he had his own

choices as we go through the story, but God had a special place for him in what He was molding and fashioning within him.

That's the way it is with anyone who is called to be a part of the temple. There are things that God does and works with to prepare us, to mold and fashion us, and if we'll remain faithful there are incredible things that await us. It has to do with our response toward God and how we think about God and to what degree then God can truly work with us and continue on working with us.

I had some conversation yesterday about individuals who had been around for certain length of time, and some for long periods of time, and come to a point in time where they just make the wrong decisions that lead them totally away from God. We've gone through a lot of that in this particular age. We're at the end of the building of the temple and there are things that God is doing. Well, I don't even want to go there. Awesome, awesome things that God does in our lives to prepare us to be in His family, very specific things.

If you think of the last pieces of construction, we're it as far as this age is concerned, as far as the 144,000. Now there is another group being worked with that have opportunity to go into the next phase of that building, and they are as long as individuals remain faithful to that, because the reality is you can come to a time where you make the wrong choices. I think of the scripture, was it for Philadelphia it made the comment? Because it says different things in different eras in the end that apply to all eras, that really apply to all people through time, in many respects, in that respect, because just as the last era of Laodicea no one is to be lethargic. You can't be lukewarm and be in God's Church; not even in the Millennium or the Great White Throne.

Also, if people don't respond to God's calling someone else can take their crown. Someone else can take that place because there are specific places that God has planned and prepared and He's going to fill it and it depends upon us then. It's not automatic. It's not absolute in all cases. In some cases it was because God specifically worked with certain ones, like David. There is a very specific place that God prepared and planned for David at a very young age and he fulfilled it. Incredible.

So it says here, **he did that which was right in the sight of the Eternal according to all that his father David had done.** So again here, unlike the king of Israel where it says they all, in essence, followed the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, their same way as Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. In this case here when it says this about a certain kind of Judah it refers so often back to David. It shows a heart and an attitude toward God, his desire toward God.

Verse 3—In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the Eternal and repaired them. Beautiful! It was in disrepair. There were things in shambles, if you will. There were things that because of what others had done before and before this period of time and now God raised up a king who was going to begin changing some things and making some things right. This is part of the story: "So he opened the doors to the house of the Eternal and repaired them." First step.

I think of what God did after the Apostasy. He began to bless us. The way into His temple, to be a part of Elohim. God had mercy upon us and began to work with us and mold and fashion us, and over a 3½ year period of time protected us, and then established us as a remnant Church starting in Pentecost of 1998. Those are incredible things to understand, how God has worked with us at different times, and a lot of it has to do with things like this because of the condition that the temple was in and because of what had happened during the Apostasy and how God had to give us time in order to help us become refocused again in a proper way so that we could start growing once again within the Body.

So again, in what preceded his reign, the reign of Hezekiah, Judah, again, had turned away from God. Quite obvious as you go through the story, the Levitical priesthood as well as the temple had fallen into disarray. The priesthood, it wasn't functioning, it wasn't working. Again, I can't help but think of things that led up to with the Church and led up to the Apostasy and what had happened in the Church and the ministry within the Church.

Verse 4—Then he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them in the East Square, and said to them, Hear me, Levites! Now sanctify yourselves... So to work with a people, to work with a nation this is where you had to start, this is where he had to start. He was moved and motivated to help them to focus again on God and so he started working first with the temple and then those who served in the temple. This is a part of the process because it would be of no good unless the Levitical system could be worked with and re-established once again. That's exactly what he did. He told them, "You need to sanctify yourselves, set yourselves apart for holy use and purpose," that's what it means, "to serve God in the temple." Because the Levites just couldn't go in and do whatever they wanted ever how they wanted to. There are procedures very explicitly marked out in scripture, especially in the book of Leviticus, of how the Levites were to serve God.

This is what it's telling. I think of us again, things we had to go through. Those who were a part of the scattering, those who were a part of coming through the Apostasy, we were all guilty of what led to the apostasy. We were the cause of what had happened so we had to be able to come to repentance. We had to begin seeing ourselves for what we had done, that we had let down, that we became lukewarm, and to see the danger in that, and then to begin working at getting our minds right again. That takes time to sanctify ourselves, to be set apart for holy use and purpose. It took 3½ years to get the Church to that point where finally then God made it clear to us, "Now you're established once again."

So Satan, I think of the scriptures there in Revelation 12 that makes it very clear that he was kept away for that length of time. We were blessed for 3½ years that he couldn't attack us. God blessed us with that so that we could get refocused. We were so messed up, the ministry was so messed up, and so many different ideas out there. Even for those who wanted to, in some form or another, go back and try to capture what we had before, but too much of it wasn't capturing the truth; it was more the size of congregations, it was the job. That's not what it's about! It's about

the service to God and God is first and what is taught must be true and must be right. You have to get your head screwed on right to teach what is right. If you're teaching 14/15, you've been taught that at college and you go out and start teaching that garbage, then you're not sanctified, you're not set apart, and God's not going to use you. So again, we went through things of this nature on a spiritual plane that are awesome.

So he told them, **sanctify yourselves, sanctify the house of the Eternal God of your fathers...** Now, we understand that on a spiritual plane. It's about each one of us individually and the Church. What are we doing? Are we in unity? Are we in oneness with God? Are we striving to be at one with one another in the Body? Are we striving to have right relationships toward one another? Are we striving to live what is right?

It says here, again, **sanctify the house of the Eternal God, the God of your fathers and carry out the rubbish from the holy place,** from the holy. Well, that should be quite obvious within the temple, better get cleaned up! It better, in that respect, if there is rubbish and wherever there is rubbish, get rid of it. We've been through that after the Apostasy. I think of all the ones at different times that came along and began to make a movement in a right direction, and then after a while wouldn't, couldn't go on, dealing with pride and haughtiness or a certain pet doctrine that they couldn't shake or get rid of, whatever it might be, with Pentecost or Passover or whatever out there. God used that to clean up the rubbish in the Church. Because if we won't follow God, if we won't adhere to and hold on to what we have been given and then begin to grow when God begins to reveal things to us, that we had an apostasy and why we went through it, if we can't hear those things, God can't use us and the rubbish can't be cleaned up.

We've lived through things like that on a spiritual plane that I wouldn't trade for anything. We can't grasp what's been put in the mind, the opportunities, the blessings, the ability to see things that by experiencing some of that kind of thing helps us to better serve God, truly. Then the blessing of all that God began to add to the Church through time here.

This, that matter of "carrying out the rubbish," the last two years God's been cleaning up the Church a whole lot more, because if we're not dedicated - at this point now especially - if we're not deeply convicted of God's Church, of God's truth, especially at this time of all times, and we won't grow with the Church and we play around with things that are not right and we know we're not living right, God is getting rid of it. God has been getting rid of it. And great reasons for that, because sanctification means "holy use and purpose." What does that mean? By God, to be able to be a tool and an instrument, a service to God Almighty. We have to be cleaned up in the mind. We have to be thinking right.

The so the areas that are wrong, the areas that are compromising, or whatever it might be, what's most important? God is number one in our life! Every other decision in life should be based on that truth. That sounds like it should be simple, but it's not, because people struggle then with whatever it might be in their life.

Verse 6—For our fathers have trespassed and done evil in the eyes of the Eternal our God. And when that exists, when that evil is around, when the error is around, when the disobedience is around, it must be gotten rid of.

...they have forsaken Him, have turned their faces away from the dwelling place of the Eternal... I think of those that I've used that expression "playing out in the courtyard," "fooling around out in the courtyard." That's turning your back on the temple. That's not looking at the doors of the temple and how to get right with God and how to get through the doors and to keep striving to accomplish that on a spiritual plane - which is what our lives should be about, striving to be in the temple. That's a battle. It doesn't come natural with human beings. You have to work at that! You have to be on your knees at times crying out to God, if you're able to. Physically, some of us can't do that. You know, fine! The matter is you're praying to God, you're looking to God for help to keep focused spiritually. So, incredible, these examples on a physical plane that apply to us on a spiritual one.

They have turned their faces away from the dwelling place of the Eternal, and turned their backs on Him. That's what it is to not be in the temple, not fighting to be in the temple, not fighting to be right with God, not crying out and praying to God on a regular basis.

They have also shut up the doors of the vestibule, which is the hall of entrance, the way, again, into God's temple. There are the doors and then on in once you're inside, stay inside. Work on cleaning that up. Work on straightening that out. Be in the temple. Stay in the temple. Strive to be in the temple. When sin comes along repent quickly so you can stay in the temple.

So it says, **They have shut up the doors of the vestibule, put out the lamps...** What is that? I think of the ten virgins, "Your lamps are going out." What does that mean? Spiritually for us it means we're not striving to be close to God, we're not striving to be at one with God. We're not praying and crying out to God on a regular basis because for whatever reason we haven't grasped the need to do so. When you know what you are, when you know what you must conquer and overcome, when you know you must change and the only way to do that is with God's help and God's spirit, you will cry out to God for His holy spirit. If you really want to change that's what you will do. It will be automatic. You won't get into a rut, lukewarm rut, a lethargic, Laodicean kind of rut where you're not praying to God on a regular basis because you'd be afraid not to because you know what you're capable of. Again, it's a battle. You have to fight against this, you truly do.

...they put out the lamps and have not burned incense... Prayers. God has shown us what these things all picture. Think these things are important? So these things are done on a physical plane to teach us something on a spiritual one. We have to do these things. We want our lamps to be burning! A lamp can't burn if we're not burning incense, because the spirit, God's power, the ability, the oil, as it is, reflective of God's spirit, is something we must have in our life all the time. It's not this month and then waiting for a holy day, Feast of Tabernacles, "Well, I need to

get a little closer. I need to do a few things more right..." No, it doesn't work that way. By that time you're so weak you can't do what you should do in the first place.

So we need to stay close to God, keep the lamps burning, offering up incense before God, sweet smelling incense, that smell that when it's thrown on the altar and the aroma of it, it was mixed in a certain way and it's to show what's pleasing to God, what smells good, what is right to God. It's a sweet smelling savor to God.

And don't we want to be that in what we say, in what we do and what comes out of our mouth, rather than let anything come out of our mouth at any time that's not good? So if we can learn those things in prayer then hopefully we're able to learn those things in how we conduct our lives in relationships with other around us, especially within the Church...and in the world as well, continually working on self.

...and they have not burned incense or offered burnt offerings... See, burnt offerings. Again here, a matter of sacrifice, a matter of the examples of the fiery trial. You put them on the altar, the fire to be consumed. Those things, again, talking about offerings and the fiery offering, if you will, fiery trials we go through in life. We offer ourselves. "I'm yours, God. I don't want my way. And whatever I have to go through, so be it." If you yield yourself to that process God will take you through them successfully, whatever it is in life.

What's incredible, something that Satan doesn't grasp, is those are the highlights of life, when you're going through trial. If you yield yourself to God He will mold things in your mind that otherwise cannot be molded in your thinking. It'll help to change the way you think. It'll help to transform the way you think by going through those things. If you're looking to God for help He will work with the mind to change the thinking. It's a beautiful thing. **...or offered burnt offerings in the holy place to the God of Israel.**

Verse 8—Therefore, the wrath of the Eternal fell upon Judah and Jerusalem. Now, again, I don't like that word "wrath" because it isn't really what it conveys, but that's how mankind has to learn and see things on a physical plane because they don't get the spiritual. But it's a matter of judgment. There are certain things because of what people do in life that judgment has to be meted out. It has to be handed out. God doesn't just let things go, and especially when He's working with individuals in a calling like He is with us, or as He was with Judah or Israel.

The rest of the world, they were just doing their own thing. They were doing their own thing, which is all carnal, fighting and warring and all the things that have happened with nations through time. But God wasn't working with them. He was working with two nations, as a whole (after they split up), Israel to the north and Judah to the south. Judah was the one that was responsive. Israel never was once they broke off.

Again here, very unique how God was working with them and at times then judgment had to be meted out. When Judah would go astray God would work with them in a manner that when He

raised up someone else, like He did Hezekiah, the nation was ready because they saw the results of disobedience to God. They saw the curses for disobedience because God would hand out the judgment. As far as the north was concerned God told them what would happen to them over and over again, and just like today in the world of Israel, they don't care, they don't.

People don't care. They don't have any desire toward God. Not anything that's true. They want their own way, or someone else's opinion. "Well, what do you think about that?" That's the way the world is. I don't care whether it be politics, the world, or anything in life, it's these people sitting around giving opinions. I'm weary of that kind of garbage. I'm just sick of it. You see it on TV. I don't care what your opinion is! Somebody writes a book, "What's your opinion then about this. You wrote about this so what do you see? What do you understand?" It's like, "Nothing!" Sorry. Just because they wrote a book it's like they're mesmerized so we'll talk to them for half an hour and give them the stage. Unless, of course, they were to get someone that is disagreeable. Then of course they're not going to ask anything anyway.

So it says here again, **the wrath of the Eternal fell upon Judah and Jerusalem, and He has given them over to trouble...** So they won't listen? Let them reap the results of it. People, if we don't listen, you know what happens? We start having troubles. You disobey God, you're going to have troubles. Things aren't going to go well for you.

Now, there is a difference between going through trials and having troubles because of what you're doing that's wrong and sometimes people in those situations can't grasp the difference. There is a big difference. God's in one and He's not in the other, see. We do things to ourselves and we reap the results of it, the damage of the mind is first and foremost because we hurt our own minds, our own thinking. This is a precious thing up here. The spirit, the mind that God is working with to change and transform is an incredibly precious thing, it truly is, and if we don't take care of that and try to guard that and want only one way into that, God's way, and we allow other things into it you're going to hurt your mind, you're going to hurt the way you think. You have to be on guard.

So even at that state you're going to go through various troubles that come at you in the world in some form or another, or you'll have certain things happen to you in life that God allows so that you can grow more, so that He can transform your thinking more, so that you can come to a certain point.

I think of the Apostasy. I think of that period of time. It was like what are the questions that should be asked. There are certain questions that should just pop into the mind. But they only pop there if God has a purpose and He's helping that process. But the first one: If this is God's Church, how did this happen to God's Church? Because God's Church isn't anywhere else. It keeps the Sabbath, the holy days, the truths that God had given to Mr. Armstrong that are so clear. So an apostasy, scattered all over the place, a third quit, just gave up on religion, another third went back into traditional Christianity. The other third, scattered all over the place in, finally, 600 organizations. It's all there in scripture. Yeah, we did it to ourselves. Incredible!

So there are certain things that we go through in life that are such a trial that through that process, if we're seeking God, there are questions that we'll come to. It's through that process then to come to a right answer, to come to soundness of mind, God will bless us with His holy spirit so that a change can take place in our thinking. Sometimes if people can't go through that successfully and don't take the right action in their life then they're bound to repeat the same thing over and over and over again later on until finally God's judgment is "That's enough."

So again here, reading this verse: **Therefore, the wrath of the Eternal fell upon Judah and Jerusalem, and He has given them up to trouble, to desolation, and to hissing** (as in jeering or mocking loudly) **as you see with your eyes.** Boy, have we gone through that as a Church. The mockery that we brought upon ourselves as a Church because of what happened after the Apostasy. An organization that used to be tens of thousands was whittled down to all kinds of little groups and scattered all over the place. Incredible.

For indeed, because of this our fathers have fallen by the sword. I think of all those who scripture talks about on a spiritual plane within the Church; it uses the example of falling by the sword, being killed. **...have fallen by the sword,** of those who have gone before us and things that were experienced on that plane, **and our sons, our daughters, and our wives are in captivity.** We've experienced those kinds of things. People have gone back into captivity, what they were called out of, or different ones because of not accepting the truth when they had opportunity they go back into a captivity. They're held captive by whatever it is that they want to hold on to.

God will allow people to hold on to whatever they want to hold on to. If you want to hold on to the truth and you're called to that, God will bless you in holding on to it. If you want to hold on to something that opposes the truth and God's way of life God will let us do that, too, to have our way and to experience then through time that's not such a good choice. Then He'll draw us back in time, if we're able to be drawn back, and most, obviously, are able to be, and worked with. So we learn through those things as well.

Then it says in **verse 10—Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with the Eternal God of Israel, that His fierce wrath may turn away from us,** so that things don't continue to happen that are hurting them as a nation, as a people, and a desire to be blessed by God, a desire to be closer to God because that's how we're able to be blessed by God. That was his heart's desire, to see that within Judah. We grow in that as far as the Church is concerned, our desire to see that within the Body, to see that within the Church.

He goes on to say here, **My sons, do not be negligent now, for the Eternal has chosen you to stand before Him.** So he's still talking to the Levites, "You've been chosen to this. This is your responsibility. This is your job, so the choice is yours."

"The Eternal has chosen you to stand before Him." I think of us. How much more...? What does that mean on a spiritual plane when God has chosen us to be a part of Elohim? When God has

called us at the end of an age and chosen us to stand before Him, to stand in His way of life regardless of what the world says or does, regardless of how the world looks at it. Because they're not going to understand this. But if we will stand, God will bless us to stand. If we choose, "I want to stand," God will bless you and help you to stand. It's a beautiful thing, really.

Do not be negligent now, for the Eternal has chosen you to stand before Him, to serve Him. God has called us to serve, to serve within the Body.

Sometimes we minimize the importance of praying, the importance of praying for others, the importance of having an attitude of serving others, an attitude of being there for others, just being there for others and living our lives right so that we can have a better fellowship. The more we clean, each one of us work to cleanse ourselves, the more we strive to be right with God the richer fellowship becomes. It truly does.

...to serve Him, and that you should minister to Him and burn incense. So God wants us to serve Him, each one of us. A part of that service includes within the temple. Because on a spiritual plane God has called us all into a royal priesthood. A royal priesthood. That's what it's referred to as. That's where we are. We are unique in the world, we truly are, because God dwells in us, Him and His Son. Awesome to understand! He wants us to have a special relationship with Him, to serve His purpose. What is that purpose? To change us. Don't minimize what that is in your life, the blessing of being called to serve God by changing, by yielding to change, by wanting change, by crying out for change. The more you work to change self, to work on self, the more you're serving God!

Sometimes we don't see those things. It's about serving God. That's God's purpose. That's why He called you - to stand, each one of us. So we're very much involved in this, every one of us, to serve Almighty God, to serve His purpose. Because His purpose is the Church! His purpose first and foremost right now in the world is about the Church. He's going to bring the world to a head, to what's going to happen, but it's centered around the Church first and foremost. It really is. The more we see that, the more we grasp that, the more in awe we'll be of that, and when that first phase is done, when the two wave loaves are complete, we're going to know it. You're going to know it! God knows how to do that in His timing. In the meanwhile, we learn, we remain faithful, we continue to move forward, we continue to follow God, we continue to serve God.

Again, **and that you should minister to Him and burn incense.** So to minister to God means you've got to stay close to God to burn incense. You can't do it without close relationship with God. Praying! Praying to God on a regular basis. You need, I need God. We need God. Crying out to Him for help to know what to do and when to do it. How to do certain things within the Church, we cry out to God. We don't have all the answers to things. We have to ask God for help.

Verse 15—And they gathered their brethren, sanctified themselves, and went according to the commandment of the king, at the words of the Eternal, to cleanse the house of the Eternal. For a long period of time now God has been blessing us as we have ears to hear and

we hear it and we want it and we respond to God's spirit as God works with us to teach, mold, and fashion us, and we want to cleanse the temple, which we know begins with us, then we have responsibility elsewhere as well within that at times depending on situations that come up so that nothing hurts the Body.

Verse 16—Then the priests went into the inner part of the house of the Eternal to cleanse it, and brought out all the debris that they found in the temple of the Eternal to the court of the house of the Eternal. And the Levites took it out and carried it to the Brook Kidron. Now they began to sanctify on the first day of the first month... So timing of when God has chosen this to take place is in a period of time that is approaching Passover, the first month, the fourteenth day of the month.

So it says, **they began to sanctify on the first day of the first month, and on the eighth day of the month they came to the vestibule of the Eternal. Then they sanctified the house of the Eternal in eight days, and in the sixteenth day of the first month they finished.** So again here, passes it up a little bit here. Sixteenth day of the first month they finished what they had been working on. That becomes part of the story as we go on.

Then they went to king Hezekiah and said, We have cleansed all the house of the Eternal, the altar of burnt offerings with all its articles, and the table of showbread with all its articles. Moreover all the articles which king Ahaz in his reign had cast aside in the transgression we have prepared and sanctified; and there they are, before the altar of the Eternal. Then king Hezekiah rose early...

Again, I can't help but think of that, what happened after the Apostasy. There are things that had to be made right and it took time for God to work within us to make them right, to make them absolute. He gave us extra so that we had even greater proof of certain things, or greater understanding of certain things, things about 14/15 Passover, to understand that everything was in the 14th. God blessed us to understand things in a greater way so that really there is no ability to argue on a, so-called, intellectual plane, period. But people still tried to because they wouldn't accept what was right in front of their face. Things about Pentecost that we have talked about, and all kind of doctrine because of what was taking place.

So those things had to begin to be made right before God. That's a part of preparing the temple, cleansing the temple for things to follow. Those things had to be done first for the Church to go on. That's why I marvel at 1998, Pentecost; incredible timing of what God gave us.

It says here in **verse 20** then, **Then king Hezekiah rose early, gathered the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of the Eternal. And they brought seven bulls, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven male goats for a sin offering for the kingdom, for the sanctuary, and for Judah. Then he commanded the priests, the sons of Aaron, to offer them on the altar of the Eternal.** Striving to do things exactly the way God said they were to be done and so they started following that; they started setting that example once again and Judah began to follow

that. Again, this all has meaning on a spiritual plane, as we've just talked about, all the way up to this point.

Verse 22—So they killed the bulls, and the priests received the blood and sprinkled it on the altar. Likewise they killed the rams and sprinkled the blood on the altar. They also killed the lambs and sprinkled the blood on the altar. Then they brought out the male goats for the sin offering before the king and the assembly, and they laid their hands on them. And the priests killed them; and they presented their blood on the altar as a sin offering to make an atonement for all Israel, for the king commanded that the burnt offering and the sin offering be made for all Israel. Awesome! So there was that desire thinking beyond self, thinking even beyond Judah, candidly. Their heart and their desire was to be able to help others if they would hear, if they would listen as well, if they would receive some of these things, as you're going to see in the story as we continue on in part of it.

We've gone through different cycles of things that God has helped us to focus on. I think one of the things we so desire and look forward to is the time when finally many who are asleep are going to be awakened, just like some of those after the Apostasy who lived through that particular time. Those things are exciting, but we must be prepared, we must be ready. That's what God is doing first with us, with the Body.

So as the story goes through here all these things have incredible meaning on a spiritual plane, things that all hasn't even been revealed yet as to what they mean. Some has, a great deal of it has, but there is much more here as to why God laid certain things out in the Levitical system like He did. But it's all very meticulous, exceedingly organized, and every bit of it, every step of the way has incredible meaning.

So in all this it takes a lot of preparation, work, and repetition, and repentance because the blood, it's about sacrifice. It's about what has to take care of, in that respect, atoning us to God. All these things, one way or another, point toward our Passover and toward the process we have to go through in order to be atoned to God. There's a lot involved in that, which God has given. Again, a lot of repetition, a lot of repentance and offering of ourselves before God to become atoned to Him. It's a lot of work, takes work. It's not something that's just done and is automatic just because we tithe or just because we go to the Feast of Tabernacles, or attend Sabbath services. No, it's far, far more than that. It takes a lot of work starting here with self.

Going on, **2 Chronicles 30:1—And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the Eternal at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover to the Eternal God of Israel.** Incredible, some of the story here and what was sent out and what the desire was. It wasn't just for Judah. It was beyond that. It was a desire toward Israel as well.

It goes on to say here, **For the king and his leaders and all the assembly in Jerusalem had agreed to keep the Passover in the second month.** See, they hadn't cleaned everything yet.

They hadn't prepared everything fully yet so they weren't able to do the first Passover. They weren't sanctified to be able to perform certain duties then for the Passover itself and so it passed over to a second Passover. This is what their hearts were set on. So the letters are going out then to Ephraim, Manasseh, and others of Israel and this is a part of the story then.

This is quite unique because this is reaching out in a very big way, because these are two nations that have been separated for a long, long time now and a full understanding of what it's like to the north but there is still that thing of history in the back of so many people's minds and influence that was there. When God lit the spark, there were those who responded. Incredible! Just like He's going to do again in a very powerful way. There are those that God's been preparing, and when the time is right it'll be there.

So they, again, verse 3—For they could not keep it at that time, because a sufficient number of priests had not consecrated themselves, nor had the people gathered together at Jerusalem. And the matter pleased the king and all the assembly.

So again here, things happen because changed in that respect, had to be addressed in a different way because all were not ready. I find that one amazing as well, to understand where we are and timing of certain things. Again here, the Passover then had to be kept in the second month in this particular case. I think of some things we're going through and what we have gone through and how we keep focusing and moving forward, that God has given to us, and when the time is right we'll know it.

Verse 5—So they resolved to make a proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, that they should come to keep the Passover of the Eternal God of Israel in Jerusalem, since they had not done it for a long time in the prescribed manner. I guess so. A long time.

It's been a long time since the Apostasy and I look forward to the time when some are able to be brought back before all this is ended, before Joshua returns. We don't know how many, how God's going to do it, but there are going to be certain things that happen, that come to a point in time where God will move certain individuals by being able to see things that are right in front of their face that right now they can't see. But there'll come that time, that shock on a spiritual plane that strikes them. God has prepared others for those things in a great way as well.

Verse 6—Then the runners went throughout all Israel and Judah with the letters from the king and his leaders, and spoke according to the command of the king: Children of Israel, return to the Eternal God of Abraham. They still knew who they were. They still knew certain things of history that had happened to them, that brought them into this promised land. Though in the north they were worshipping in different areas and not Jerusalem, because from the very beginning Jeroboam, he was concerned that they would go back down to Judah to observe the Feast so he changed times and he changed locations where they said they could have their religious services in the north and not have to travel so far. Because he was concerned, as it

brought out, that they would go back and have this desire to be reunited with Judah and he didn't want that, obviously. He'd lose his power and so forth.

So anyway, since that time a lot of kings have come and gone through this period of time, by the time we get to here. This is at the tail end of Israel before they're taken captive. This is right there. So they've gone through all the kings of Israel up to this point in time, almost to the end until they're taken captive into the north.

So here is where we are and this message goes out then from Hezekiah asking them to be able to come and keep this period of time with them.

As it says here, **Children of Israel, return to the Eternal God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel; then He will return to the remnant of you who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria. And do not be like your fathers and your brethren, who trespassed against the Eternal God of their fathers, so that He gave them up to desolation, as you see.** So this meant a lot to them because they were starting to see the end of their kingdom. They were starting to see things that were taking place, warning that was taking place coming in on them, and of a little fear. Little fear can go a long, long way if it's motivated in the right direction. He's making clear to them this is what you see right now, you see these things have taken place and these things are taking place now, so don't be like them and be stubborn and stiff-necked and the like but respond and come, return to God.

Verse 8, well, it goes on to say just that: **Do not be stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves to the Eternal; and enter His sanctuary.** I look forward to the time when people begin grasping that one on a spiritual plane, to begin to understand God's Church, to begin to understand where God has brought the Church and what is happening in the Church and to understand that they've been totally separated from traditional Christianity, to understand that we worship God Almighty and His Son, Joshua. Awesome to understand the God family as it exists now at this time. None of the things that used to tie us together are there anymore. We've been totally freed from that.

When they come to understand those things, it's going to be a beautiful thing. To come to understand what God is doing with the freedom, with the truth concerning the rightful place of women in the Church and in society and in family, because that needs to be corrected immediately in the world. It's going to be and it starts in the Church. It's been starting in the Church already. Incredible. What a freedom when they come to understand many of these things and their eyes are opened up to it and they're able to slap themselves on the forehead, say, "Dumb! Dumb! Dumb! Dumb! So blind! Been so blind for so many years now." Incredible.

Now do not be stiff-necked, as your fathers, but yield yourselves to the Eternal and enter His sanctuary which He has sanctified forever, and serve the Eternal God, that the fierceness of His wrath may turn away from you. So you'll no longer be cursed but be blessed. Come back to God. Return to God. For if you return to the Eternal, your brethren and your children will be

treated with compassion by those who lead them captive. You know, it's an awesome thing when God gives favor. He can do that with anyone. If God puts it in the mind of someone, which He has done over and over again biblically and in the Church, when you know that God has given favor, that there is no other answer nor explanation than the fact that something has changed - sometimes people haven't recognized it as being from God but the reality is God can work with situations and people to where all of a sudden their attitude toward you changes and their drawn to you. They can't explain it. It's just like it's a natural thing all of a sudden. They don't know what's happened to them. But God has that kind of power to do so and He's done it over and over and over again.

For if you return to the Eternal, your brethren and your children will be treated with compassion by those who lead them captive so that they may come back to this land; for the Eternal your God is gracious and merciful and will not turn His face from you if you return to Him. What an awesome thing! I think about even the message, "If you will listen, God will listen." God right now is just offering incredible mercy to the world, but no one is listening until they get the tar shaken out of them, whatever that is. They have to be so shaken to the core of their being before the ears can be sharpened to hear.

One day there will be that spark. Could be something as simple as what's happening now, ships, tankers, and blame that takes place, and then someone else who decides they're going to step in now and start another military action. Well, if that one happens it could very easily lead into a much bigger one in that part of the world and the rest of the world right after that. So we're in that kind of a world right now. We don't know where it's going to come from exactly. There are going to be certain things centered around the Middle East, and that's a certainty. It's an absolute nightmarish mess everywhere you look down there. So just one spark in one little part of the world and the world is on fire. So we're that close.

But what an awesome thing when God uses that to begin to shake people, to stir people, when they begin to see something that isn't going the way they thought it would or could. People have to be scared, sadly, before they'll start repenting, before they'll start changing, before they'll start looking for answers, because otherwise they really don't care. They really don't care. As long as you have your electricity, as long as you have your gasoline, as long as you have your food in the supermarket, as long as you have this and that people don't care, and they definitely don't want to hear the truth about God. God is going to change that.

Verse 10—So the runners passed from city to city throughout the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, as far as Zebulon; and they laughed at them and mocked them. So basically, that's how people think.

It's going to be the same thing in the world. There's going to be a certain point in time here where the laughter stops. But there will always be those, as a whole, who still have that. Even at the beginning here there are going to be the majority who still have that attitude and that mind toward the truth or toward God. But we live at a time where those things are going to change

rapidly as time goes along, because there is not a lot of time when things begin. So it shows an attitude here that Israel to the north had. I think of the Church then and how people respond.

But anyway, going on, **verse 11—Nevertheless, some from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem.** Incredible. Not a lot but some came, some from the different tribes. **Also the hand of God was on Judah to give them singleness of heart to obey the command of the king and the leaders, and the word of the Eternal.** Sometimes we just don't grasp the power of God, the power of God's spirit. He can work with the mind. It's in God's control and power as to when He opens the mind to receive certain things, to see certain things. As an example here, this was all on a physical plane but for a greater purpose, partially a spiritual one, but as a whole not, except for the example that is set and for what it teaches and what all who are a part of the Body can learn from it. But there were those being worked with as well at that particular time and it will benefit them in another day, as a whole.

But again here, for a time here there was that attitude and response to Hezekiah because people got into a routine. The reality is, is if God hadn't done that there would be many who still won't respond properly in order for Judah to make the kind of changes it needed to have, for Hezekiah to have the kind of response that he was able to have from them, obviously, so that they could accomplish the example that was needed, that God was going to set through this and teach through this, and candidly, mold and fashion into Hezekiah.

Can you begin to see a little bit God working with an entire nation of people and peoples to mold and fashion one person? Actually there was more, because Isaiah was the prophet at this time. There were some other prophets alive at this time and God was working with them and molding and fashioning certain things within them so all of them had the opportunity of experiencing things that made them stronger, that helped them to see things and grasp things and be molded and fashioned in ways that otherwise they wouldn't be able to. Because when they're able to see these kinds of things they're moving and inspiring when you see God's hand and what God does. There were others at that time. But to think of the numbers, there weren't that many being molded and fashioned to become a part of the temple, who are going to be resurrected when Joshua returns.

That's an awesome thing when you think about it. God and working with a physical people to bring about the molding and fashioning of a few who are going to be a part of His government, the temple. Incredible! Hundreds of thousands and millions of people to help mold and fashion a few, a handful. Mind boggling, astounding - what words can you use?

Also the hand of God was on Judah to give them singleness of heart to obey the command of the king and the leaders, at the word of the Eternal. It was God's purpose that was being worked out here.

Verse 13—Now many people, a very great assembly, gathered at Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the second month. They arose and took away the altars that were in

Jerusalem, and they took away all the incense altars and cast them in the Brook Kidron. Then they killed the Passover on the fourteenth of the second month. Now, some of what it's talking about here is there is more involved here in what it's talking about when it talks about "they killed the Passover." They took the second Passover, but there is one thing in expressions in the Old Testament that became clear very early on after the Apostasy that God's used, and sometimes that's been confusing to some. There were times when individuals killed the lamb and ate it. We know what that was. That was taking of the Passover. They had this that they went through. They roasted it on fire exactly as God said to do and they partook of and ate the Passover.

But now when they begin to kill the Passover is a different issue. It's about the days and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Okay? It's a different occasion. It's a different situation because this is about offering animals upon the altar. They started killing animals in the afternoon. This is why the Jews got so screwed up and changed to a 14/15 because they didn't even understand what the Levites did. They didn't start killing the animals after sunset and the Feast of Unleavened Bread began. They started killing them way in advance, but they didn't offer them up to God on the altar until after sundown! Because that's when the holy day comes. But the killing of thousands of animals that they did at certain times began in the afternoon. They had to have time to do these things. They had to have time to accomplish these things. It was an incredible task.

Some of the stuff we're going to read here, it was an incredible task for a huge number of priests, Levites, to have a sacrificial system prepared and ready by the time these things were to be offered up in the evening, or at sundown on Sabbath. But the killing of the animals and the preparing of these things started way, way, way in advance. It's because people have been ignorant of the fact of what they did, of what the Levites had to do, of the work that was involved there, and so when it says something like this about killing the Passover and they begin to understand by reading other scriptures, this was happening in the afternoon of the Passover, at the end of the Passover day, and then they did certain things on that night at sunset. They got messed up because they lost their history. They lost the truth of the Levitical system. And candidly, the high priest led them in that direction anyway by what they taught, by what they said.

In time God blesses His people to recapture, to understand, to know the things that have taken place and how. So just as it said back in verse 13, they'd gathered to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the second month. That's what they were preparing for. There were certain things they needed to do, which is a given when they kept the Passover itself the second month as well. But we know. God's people know the truth. They did it after sunset on the fourteenth, when the fourteenth came that evening. That's when they ate, partook of, roasted the lamb and ate it. Then in the afternoon the following day the work began, the killing of the Passover, because it was on the Passover day that they had to prepare. It's a preparation day for the high day. That's why it's called this "the killing of the Passover," on the Passover, if you will. Think duh, duh, duh, you know. Things that should be so simple but they aren't and they're lost. People who ought to

know better and that taught in Ambassador College or went out and taught in the ministry, read a few scriptures about things that took place and should know and should understand on a physical plane let alone a spiritual one.

So they killed the Passover on the fourteenth of the second month. That's right. In the afternoon. This is not the keeping of the lamb and the roasting of the lamb.

The priests and Levites, it goes on to say here, were ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought the burnt offerings. See, it's all about getting ready. Then when it was sundown they offered them, burnt offerings on the altar before God on the high day, on the first day of Unleavened Bread. It's so simple. **The priests and the Levites were ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought the burnt offerings to the house of the Eternal.**

Verse 16—They stood in their place according to their custom, according to the Law of Moses the man of God; the priests sprinkled the blood received from the hands of the Levites. They didn't do that with the lamb on the night of the fourteenth. They ate it. They no longer had to sprinkle the blood on the doorposts to be taken out of Egypt. That wasn't a part of the command. Their command about the Passover and keeping the Passover was the roasting of the lamb and their eating of it, which the Jews later called the Seder and moved it up to the 15th because they didn't understand some simple things here.

Verse 17—For there were many in the assembly who had not sanctified themselves; therefore, the Levites had charge of the slaughter, which is a word for "killing" of the Passover, and the word "*lamb*," they inserted that little jewel because they think it's about the Passover after the sun went down on the fourteenth. When the fourteenth came, in other words. See, there's a reason for it, because there is no such word in the Hebrew there, but they want you to think this is about something else that it's not, see, and people become confused. "It was the Passover."

...of the Passover for everyone who was not clean, to sanctify them to the Eternal. This is so awkwardly written and translated. **For a multitude of the people, many from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves...** had not cleansed themselves, **but had eaten of the Passover otherwise,** now this is some translation even don't put some of these things in their translations. It's amazing what's taken place in some of this because of ignorance, because they don't know, and so some just chose to omit certain things.

...but had eaten of the Passover otherwise than what was written. In other words, contrary. The word means "contrary" to what was written. Now, it doesn't say fully what had happened, but a part of being able to participate and be involved in some of this they were to eat the Passover lamb. It had something to do with the Passover itself, and whether it was because of travelling and other things or the way they did it perhaps, I don't know. It doesn't specify here. But there is something they did that by the law they were not sanctified to participate in the Feast, okay, in that respect.

So again here, it's talking here about those who were coming in and travelling in to various areas there to keep this second period of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, as it talks about, back in verse 13. So it says here various ones, a multitude of the people, many from these different areas, they weren't prepared for all of this.

But Hezekiah prayed for them... So because of what was happening Hezekiah knew it, that they weren't sanctified according to ritual, according to what they were supposed to do in order to participate in what they were coming down to observe, the Feast of Unleavened Bread. There were some who came earlier but as so often happens in time and the way people plan... Another story.

But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, May the good Eternal provide atonement for everyone... Everyone to be set apart, in other words, though they weren't able to do what they should have done according to what is written because it says they didn't do it, they did it contrary to or they just "otherwise." The word really is well translated there. They'd eaten of the Passover otherwise in what was told, what was stated. Whatever that involved it wasn't a proper keeping of it.

So Hezekiah prayed for them, he knew of this, May the good Eternal provide atonement for everyone who prepares his heart to seek God. So there are some who travelled a long way in order to come there and something like this was totally unheard of. Things like this just didn't happen where a king of Judah sent out and invited the northern tribes to come down knowing full well, as a whole, what would happen. Most would mock and make fun of and, you know, "You're nuttier than a fruitcake. We serve God!" Of course, they used the name of God but had other gods and other things that they did in how they worshipped and so forth because it truly was other gods.

So it says **...who prepares his heart to seek God, the Eternal God of his fathers, that he is not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary.** So in other words, let them be atoned, let them be set apart so they can participate with us in this second keeping of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, as it talked about in verse 13, because that's the focus of what they were doing by this time.

And the Eternal listened to Hezekiah and, my translation says "healed," but it's the word that means **purified His people, the people.** So He allowed this. He honored the request of Hezekiah and made note of that, that indeed they could participate, they could be a part with this.

Verse 21—So the children of Israel who were present at Jerusalem kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Because starting in verse 13 it's about keeping the Feast of Unleavened Bread. That's what they came down to keep, was the Feast before God. They didn't observe Passover properly from all indication.

So they kept it seven days with great rejoicing; and the Levites and the priests praised the Eternal day by day, singing to the Eternal, accompanied by loud instruments. And Hezekiah gave encouragement to all the Levites who taught the good knowledge of the Eternal. They talked about why they were doing this, their history, things that they had received through Moses and how they left Egypt and all the things that led them up to this point in time. That's what they were talking about. This is what is being recorded here.

And Hezekiah gave encouragement to all the Levites who taught the good knowledge of the Eternal, and they ate throughout the Feast seven days, offering peace offerings and making confession to the Eternal God of their fathers. So their heart was to return to God and so they went through physical ceremonies that pictured this atoning on a physical plane, not a spiritual one for them as a whole.

Then the whole assembly agreed to keep (it's not the word "the feast"; somebody's inserted that one again). You can't observe the Feast but they desired to stay together and observe another seven days, in other words, of being together and rejoicing before God. ...and they kept it seven days with rejoicing.

Verse 24—For Hezekiah, the king of Judah gave to the assembly—notice this—a thousand bulls and seven thousand sheep. That's astounding when you think of the numbers and what they were feasting on, what they were able to eat. They had what you would call a feast. It was an exciting time for them. Those in the north had never done this. They had never experienced this. Never! This was their first time and so they were experiencing something around the temple, something from the Levites as their history was being talked about and the stories of coming out of Egypt—because these are the things they talked about—and their coming into the promised land. These are the things they talked about. Incredible, what was taking place. It was exciting to them!

...and the leaders gave to the assembly a thousand bulls and ten thousand sheep; and a great number of priests sanctified themselves. The whole assembly of Judah rejoiced, and the priests and Levites, all the assembly that came from Israel, the travellers who came from the land of Israel, and those who lived in Judah. So there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon, the son of David, the king of Israel, there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem. That's amazing! So many kings later on, nothing on this scale had happened, basically, since the dedication of the temple when so much was offered up before God, when there was such rejoicing before God from king Solomon, from that period of time. That's what it's referring back to. Here was a rededication, if you will, of the temple, the priests, the priesthood, the Levites, and now a desire to invite others of Israel who were scattered. Well, they weren't scattered yet but to the north who were separated from Judah. The desire that the people had and the message that went out from Hezekiah.

Before we get lost in part of the story we need to think about each one of ourselves and what we're living. We need to think about things that were done on a physical plane here by an Hezekiah, Then and Now, Pt. 1

individual whose heart was set to seek God, where God was first in his mind over everything else and focused on that. It reminds me of this time now, that we have to be that way, we have to be ever so incredibly focused preparing for what God is bringing our direction. It's about all of us. It's about all of us being a part and sharing in this process and how we see ourselves in this process. It's an exciting time as we can recognize that, what God is doing in our lives, that He's drawn us to this point in time, and to be set apart in a very unique way to serve God at this end-time.

So it says, **Then the priests, the Levites, rose and blessed the people, and their voice was heard; and their prayer came up to His holy place, His holy dwelling place, to heaven.** So things that God is well pleased in and so they're written in very unique and specific ways here to help people to realize this is important to God. It's important to God what the people did at this time and how they responded to Him. So if we could see that on a physical plane how much more if we can see how it applies to us on a spiritual one in our relationship to God and being atoned to God and serving God and ever striving to draw closer and closer to God.

Let's turn over to 2 Kings. We're going to go back in the book of Kings to pick up more that's written about part of Hezekiah's reign. Some of this, as you go through, it's amazing what they did with Hezekiah's life. There are some translations that omit entire sections because it's like they don't understand what took place. Even in the section, one area called the Chronicles of the kings; they don't put it all in there, the whole story. In some ways it is rather difficult following through some of it, but then again, it's not.

2 Kings 18:1. So part of the story of Hezekiah is in 2nd Kings, part of it is in Chronicles. **Verse 1—Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea the son of Elah, king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz, king of Judah, began to reign.**

Verse 2—He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abi, as we said, called Abijah in 2 Chronicles 29 that we read, **the daughter of Zechariah. And he did what was right in the sight of the Eternal according to all his father David had done.** In other words, his heart was right. He had a right attitude, a right desire toward God, a right desire toward the kingdom.

Verse 4—He removed the high places and broke the images, the pillars, in other words, obelisks. So he went through destroying these things in his own country. He started doing this right away, basically, and this is talking about this period of time here. It's talking about all that Hezekiah accomplished and he started doing it right away. So he removed the high places. These were all in Judah. Incredible how far away that they'd gone from God. God in His time began to raise up Judah again, to raise up the Levitical system, to raise up the importance of worshipping in the house of God, keeping the holy days and on it goes.

So they **cut down the wooden images,** and this is a reference here, some point out, Asherah of the Canaanite gods. It was a specific image, if you will, the wooden image, referring to

that. ...and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made... This is seven hundred years later. I'm dumbfounded when I read this one here, you know, the serpent on the pole. Thinking it had the power of healing, they still had it. They worshipped in front of it. They'd get sick; it turned into a thing of healing. Not just when people got bitten, were bitten by a snake, a poisonous snake. That went a long, long time ago. Now they were worshipping it and they had their own little serpents on a pole. That's what they were like. It's easy to make a little pole and wrap something around it that looks like a serpent. And boy, they made a lot of them.

But this one here, he's going to get rid of because this is before everyone, before all of Judah. And to think it went through so long, that it was around through all the different kings that were before him? Do you realize it was around during the time of David? It was around during the time of Solomon. Somewhere it was around; someone had it. How much emphasis do you think was placed on some of that? Now, they didn't worship it necessarily but by the time, obviously, it went past them they began to worship before it. It was a religious thing to them, a religious object. That's what it became.

So again here, **He removed the high places, broke the images (the obelisks), cut down the wooden image, the Asherah, the Canaanite goddess, and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan, which means "the bronze thing."** Call it, "It's the bronze thing!" So when we see an ambulance going down: "It's the bronze thing!" Nah, I was just kidding.

But that one there just shows me how traditions are passed down. You know, it's hard for people to think that things like Christmas and Easter can be passed down, and some of those things like Ishtar, Astarte. Those things have been passed down for hundreds and hundreds and over a few thousand years that people have worshipped some of the false gods, and so forth, and then in time began to, in northern Israel especially, began to mix God's name in the Old Testament with certain things. It wasn't a hard thing by the time it came along for an individual to do this. These things were already around and they used God's name. They used the God of Israel; His name but false gods.

It shouldn't be such a mystery to us that those things exist to the degree they are today in this age, in this world. It's amazing how people manipulate and work with certain things and keep certain traditions that they want to keep. You're not going to tell them otherwise. You can't tell them about the ho-ho-ho and the big fat man coming down the chimney. How he does it is a mystery, but anyway.

So it says Israel to that day had still burned incense to this statue, to this pole, if you will, with a serpent on it.

Verse 5—He trusted the Eternal God of Israel, so that after him there was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him. Powerful what God said about him in all that he did and that heart and that attitude and that mind.

It's what we should be like on a spiritual plane. It should be our heart and our mind. There shouldn't be anything more important than God in our life, and if He is number one in our life and the most important thing in our life everything else will be judged accordingly as to what is right and wrong, as to what is acceptable and not acceptable, as to what is sound or not sound. God will bless us with greater soundness of mind if we think that way and want that and cry out to God for that in our lives.

Verse 6—For he had held fast to the Eternal... That's what we have to do. You have to hold fast. Whatever comes our way, you hold on. You can't hold fast without asking God for help to hold fast. That's what's amazing about it all. It requires God's spirit. It requires God's help. If that's the heart and the desire, then you cry out to God, you know what? He'll bless you in it. He'll help you in it. He'll help you do what is your heart's desire once He's called you, because that desire fits into His purpose and His plan for making you to stand before Him in the first place. It's to serve Him. It's to fulfill the purpose of His calling. It's amazing what we've been given by God.

It says, **verse 6** again, **For he held fast to the Eternal; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the Eternal had commanded Moses.** That should be our heart. What else will we want? They didn't understand much on a spiritual plane. I don't know to what degree He might have seen certain things, but as a whole it was a physical thing, but a faithfulness to those things that God had given physically. He could see those things as a matter of a relationship with God and his desire in his heart toward God, and God was working with him in an awesome way, but I think of how limited they were and what they could see. But what they could see they desired to be faithful to it, to be loyal to it, to be dedicated to obeying God.

The Eternal was with him and he prospered wherever he went. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him. Okay, some things that happened beforehand where the king of Assyria, they were conquering different areas different nations. They were very powerful and we'll go into some of the story as we go along here. But they were even, in some cases, paying, making payment and so forth, tribute to various kings because that's what they required. "You do that or we will take care of you. You owe us. You pay certain tribute to us on a regular basis." He said, "No." He came to the point where he said no to this, and so that's why it records this, of what had taken place because it's important later on as to what happens.

...he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him. He defeated the Philistines, as far as Gaza and its territory, from watchtower to fortified city.

Verse 9—Now it came to pass in the fourth year of king Hezekiah... So again, these things are showing this is very early in his reign. Started at twenty-five, all the way through that period of time now, twenty-nine and he's doing all these things. He's setting the temple right, he's setting the priesthood right, the Levites right. He is destroying the things that are falsely worshipped throughout Judah, and now it comes up to this point.

Now it came to pass in the fourth year of king Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of Hoshea the son of Elah, king of Israel, that Shalmaneser, king of Assyria came up against Samaria and besieged it. So now they're fulfilling prophetic things that God said was going to happen to Israel in the north in time. "You're going to go into captivity if you do not turn to Me." So He'd warned them over and over again through various prophets and they wouldn't turn back so now is the time of judgment. It's a time to fulfill the execution of judgment against them. He allowed them to go for a long, long time.

Verse 10—And at the end of three years they took it. So Shalmaneser, king of Assyria came down, warred against Israel, the tribes in the north, and finally conquered it, and so they took it. In the sixth year of Hezekiah, that is the ninth year of Hoshea, king of Israel, Samaria was taken. Then the king of Assyria carried Israel away captive to Assyria... So there were different points here along a short period of time where some of the invasion took place, but continually taking more out of the region there, totally destroying the nation of Israel to the north.

Then the king of Assyria carried Israel way captive to Assyria, and put them in Halah, by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and in the midst of the Medes, because they did not obey the voice of the Eternal their God but transgressed His covenant and all that Moses the servant of the Eternal had commanded; and they would neither hear nor do them.

So again, to this point it's good to see what's recorded concerning Hezekiah, but going back to 2 Chronicles 31 because the story jumps back and forth between Kings and Chronicles here. We'll just read this little portion here and then conclude for today.

But again here, what incredible history of a story about a king who after Judah had so disobeyed God, were worshipping false idols and everything else, that God raised up an individual at a very young age, prepared him to do a specific job at a time when the rest of Israel to the north, the tribes to the north are going to be taken captive. God's purpose was to have Judah strong at that time, close to Him at that time in that sense of a nation listening and responding, the house of God, the priesthood, the Levitical system re-established, and then the north taken captive. It's an incredible story. Incredible what God did in His timing and why He did things this way.

So, 2 Chronicles. We'll read this quickly and then stop there. **2 Chronicles 31:20—Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah...** In other words, cleansing of the false worship, false religious objects, and of strengthening the priesthood, as we've already read, and the Levitical system. So it's summing all this up and talking about this, all these things that he did, including what it said there in 2 Kings. That's why we read some of that, to show what he did with all the high places and so forth.

Verse 21—And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, in the law and in the commandment, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart. So he prospered. I think back about what it says about king David. God said, "He's a man after My own heart." That's the way we have to be, that's the way we're to live before God. It has to be in here. It has to be in

our mind. It has to be in the deepest desires and recesses of our being, that this is our motive, this is our purpose, that we have chosen God. We did it, candidly, at baptism, but so many have gone astray. It has to stay there, that desire to fulfill God's purpose, a desire to serve God, to fulfill God's purpose in us. What a calling! To understand that's so much of the story of our lives, of our serving God.

Sometimes people have asked, "Well, what can I do?" Do what God called you to accomplish because it's the greatest creation that God can perform. There is nothing greater that God Almighty can do than to transform this human life into Elohim! But we have to choose to participate in that and we have to desire God's way with all of our heart, yield our self to the process, keep moving forward regardless of what happens in life, and choosing what is right before God all along the course. God will bless us in it.

That's the greatest way one can serve God, yielding to the process of change, yielding to the process of the transformation of the mind. That's why we were made in the first place as human beings - to become a part of God's purpose when He calls us in order to become a part of His family that He loves with all His being.