

# THE REVIVAL IN JUDAH UNDER HEZEKIAH

BIBLE TEXT : II Chronicles 29:1-36.

LESSON 339 Junior Course

**MEMORY VERSE:** : "Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times" (Psalm 106:3).

## BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

### **2 Chronicles 29:1-36**

<sup>1</sup> Hezekiah began to reign *when he was* five and twenty years old, and he reigned nine and twenty years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah.

<sup>2</sup> And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done.

<sup>3</sup> He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the LORD, and repaired them.

<sup>4</sup> And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them together into the east street,

<sup>5</sup> And said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the LORD God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy *place*.

<sup>6</sup> For our fathers have trespassed, and done *that which was* evil in the eyes of the LORD our God, and have forsaken him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the LORD, and turned *their* backs.

<sup>7</sup> Also they have shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense nor offered burnt offerings in the holy *place* unto the God of Israel.

<sup>8</sup> Wherefore the wrath of the LORD was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and he hath delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing, as ye see with your eyes.

<sup>9</sup> For, lo, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives *are* in captivity for this.

<sup>10</sup> Now *it is* in mine heart to make a covenant with the LORD God of Israel, that his fierce wrath may turn away from us.

<sup>11</sup> My sons, be not now negligent: for the LORD hath chosen you to stand before him, to serve him, and that ye should minister unto him, and burn incense.

<sup>12</sup> Then the Levites arose, Mahath the son of Amasai, and Joel the son of Azariah, of the sons of the Kohathites: and of the sons of Merari, Kish the son of Abdi, and Azariah the son of Jehalelel: and of the Gershonites; Joah the son of Zimmah, and Eden the son of Joah:

<sup>13</sup> And of the sons of Elizaphan; Shimri, and Jeiel: and of the sons of Asaph; Zechariah, and Mattaniah:

## BIBLE REFERENCES:

### NOTES:

#### **Judah's Deplorable State**

King Ahaz had left the kingdom of Judah in a sorry state. He had set up idol worship; and never during his reign had he done anything good that might bring blessings to the people of his realm. Because of his sins and those of the people, God let other nations prosper against them. At one time the armies of Israel had killed 120,000 men of Judah in battle, and had taken 200,000 women and children captive. At another time the Edomites had carried away many of the people of Judah captive. The Philistines had captured many of the cities of Judah, and were living in them. All this trouble had come upon Judah because King Ahaz had caused the people to sin.

Misery had come upon the people when they turned their back upon God. We read in the Book of Proverbs: "Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard" (Proverbs 13:15). And the Prophet Isaiah wrote: "Thee is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked" (Isaiah 48:22). There is no true happiness in the world to those who forsake the Lord.

God has promised that if people will call upon Him in their distress He will deliver them. He will change their sorrow into singing. He will take away the misery and make them happy. But they must come to Him in repentance, sorry that they have sinned against Him, and willing to forsake their sins.

#### **The Beginning of Hezekiah's Reign**

King Ahaz had a son named Hezekiah, who was not at all like his father. When Hezekiah became king he wanted to enjoy the blessings that come by serving God, and he wanted to bring peace to his people. He was only twenty-five years old when he took the throne, but he already knew the value of serving God. He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, as the good King David had done.

We do not know how Hezekiah had learned about God when all the people, including his father, were worshipping idols and even offering their children as burnt sacrifices to the heathen gods. It may be that he had read the Book of the Law, which each king was supposed to have in his possession and make a copy of. However he had learned about God, his heart was eager to do the right thing and to worship as God had commanded.

In the first year of Hezekiah's reign he began the reformation by cleaning up the house of the Lord. Through all the 16 years of his father's reign, people had not gone to church nor taken care of the things of God. You can imagine how dirty and run-down the Temple would have become during that time. King Ahaz had even taken away many of the vessels used in worship, and had cut them into pieces; and he had taken away one of God's altars to use in idol worship; so greatly had he dishonoured God.

#### **No Light**

All those years the lights in the Temple had been out. Have you ever passed a church that was no longer in use, with weeds growing in the yard, and panes of glass broken from the windows? And have you passed at night, again and again

<sup>14</sup> And of the sons of Heman; Jehiel, and Shimei: and of the sons of Jeduthun; Shemaiah, and Uzziel.

<sup>15</sup> And they gathered their brethren, and sanctified themselves, and came, according to the commandment of the king, by the words of the LORD, to cleanse the house of the LORD.

<sup>16</sup> And the priests went into the inner part of the house of the LORD, to cleanse *it*, and brought out all the uncleanness that they found in the temple of the LORD into the court of the house of the LORD. And the Levites took *it*, to carry *it* out abroad into the brook Kidron.

<sup>17</sup> Now they began on the first *day* of the first month to sanctify, and on the eighth day of the month came they to the porch of the LORD: so they sanctified the house of the LORD in eight days; and in the sixteenth day of the first month they made an end.

<sup>18</sup> Then they went in to Hezekiah the king, and said, We have cleansed all the house of the LORD, and the altar of burnt offering, with all the vessels thereof, and the shewbread table, with all the vessels thereof.

<sup>19</sup> Moreover all the vessels, which king Ahaz in his reign did cast away in his transgression, have we prepared and sanctified, and, behold, they *are* before the altar of the LORD.

<sup>20</sup> Then Hezekiah the king rose early, and gathered the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of the LORD.

<sup>21</sup> And they brought seven bullocks, and seven rams, and seven lambs, and seven he goats, for a sin offering for the kingdom, and for the sanctuary, and for Judah. And he commanded the priests the sons of Aaron to offer *them* on the altar of the LORD.

<sup>22</sup> So they killed the bullocks, and the priests received the blood, and sprinkled *it* on the altar: likewise, when they had killed the rams, they sprinkled the blood upon the altar: they killed also the lambs, and they sprinkled the blood upon the altar.

<sup>23</sup> And they brought forth the he goats *for* the sin offering before the king and the congregation; and they laid their hands upon them:

<sup>24</sup> And the priests killed them, and they made reconciliation with their blood upon the altar, to make an atonement for all Israel: for the king commanded *that* the burnt offering and the sin offering *should be made* for all Israel.

<sup>25</sup> And he set the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the

perhaps, and have never seen any light? Does it not look sad? Do you consider what it would mean if all churches were dark and neglected?

There are people in the world today who do not want anyone to worship God. They are trying to close all the churches, put out all the lights. Think how dark this world would be if no one worshiped Jesus! Jesus is the Light of the world. Jesus brought us light and love. Jesus is the source of all true happiness.

### **The Priests and Levites Called**

Hezekiah called upon the priests and Levites to come together and purify themselves for the service of God. Some of the priests may have been serving idols, too, and would be in no condition to serve God. When they came together, Hezekiah told them about the wickedness of their fathers and what evils were being done in the land. "Our fathers have trespassed, and done that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD our God." He explained that that was the reason so much misery had come upon the people. The nations around them were hissing at them, making fun of them, they who were supposed to be the people of God.

May we who profess to be the children of God always live so that the world will see that we belong to Him! If they cannot see the likeness of Jesus in us, then we are not His children.

### **The Covenant of Hezekiah**

Hezekiah wanted to be in favour with God, and was willing to pay a price to win His blessings. He was willing to repent on behalf of himself and his people, and make sacrifices and consecrations to the Lord in order to have forgiveness. He reminded the Levites that they had been chosen by God to minister at the Temple. It was the tribe of Levi who had come over on the Lord's side at the time of Aaron's golden calf, when Israel had first turned to idolatry. From that time on, the Levites had had a special place in the service of God; and now Hezekiah was calling upon them again to come up to the help of the Lord.

The Levites and priests agreed with everything that Hezekiah said. They first cleansed themselves, made their hearts right with God, and then they began the work of cleansing the house of the Lord.

When we come to worship God we must first turn from our sins and be cleansed from our wicked ways by asking Jesus to take our sins away. When we worship God with a clean heart, our service and gifts are accepted by Him.

### **A clean House**

All the work of cleaning the house of the Lord was finished by the sixteenth day. The Levites went to the king and said: "We have cleansed all the house of the LORD, and the altar of burnt offering, with all the vessels thereof, and the shewbread table, with all the vessels thereof. Moreover all the vessels, which king Ahaz in his reign did cast away in his transgression, have we prepared and sanctified, and, behold, they are before the altar of the LORD."

That was all Hezekiah wanted to hear. How happy he was that now the true worship could again be established in Judah! Early in the morning he gathered the rulers of the city and went up to the house of the Lord. There the priests offered the sacrifices of animals according to the Law of Moses, for the sins of the king and of the people.

### **Songs of Praise**

Among the Levites were certain families who were appointed to be the musicians and the singers in the Temple. They were now ready, too, to do their part in the worship of God. "And when the burnt offering began, the song of the LORD began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David

commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet: for *so was* the commandment of the LORD by his prophets.

<sup>26</sup> And the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets.

<sup>27</sup> And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the LORD began *also* with the trumpets, and with the instruments *ordained* by David king of Israel.

<sup>28</sup> And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded: *and all this continued* until the burnt offering was finished.

<sup>29</sup> And when they had made an end of offering, the king and all that were present with him bowed themselves, and worshipped.

<sup>30</sup> Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the LORD with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped.

<sup>31</sup> Then Hezekiah answered and said, Now ye have consecrated yourselves unto the LORD, come near and bring sacrifices and thank offerings into the house of the LORD. And the congregation brought in sacrifices and thank offerings; and as many as were of a free heart burnt offerings.

<sup>32</sup> And the number of the burnt offerings, which the congregation brought, was threescore and ten bullocks, an hundred rams, *and* two hundred lambs: all these *were* for a burnt offering to the LORD.

<sup>33</sup> And the consecrated things *were* six hundred oxen and three thousand sheep.

<sup>34</sup> But the priests were too few, so that they could not flay all the burnt offerings: wherefore their brethren the Levites did help them, till the work was ended, and until the *other* priests had sanctified themselves: for the Levites *were* more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests.

<sup>35</sup> And also the burnt offerings *were* in abundance, with the fat of the peace offerings, and the drink offerings for *every* burnt offering. So the service of the house of the LORD was set in order.

<sup>36</sup> And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people: for the thing was *done* suddenly.

king of Israel." And all the congregation worshiped, and the singers sang, and the trumpets sounded: all this continued until the burnt offering was finished. We read in the new Testament, "In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Philippians 4:6).

What joy there was in the hearts of the people! Again they could sing. Today the Christian religion is the only religion that really sings. Some religions may have their mournful chants and their weird-sounding dirges; but happy, joy-filled singing is a mark of the Christian religion.

How happy these people of Judah were as they sang their praises to the God of Heaven! They bowed before Him, and their choir "sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped." What a joyful day it was in Judah! The hearts of the people had been turned from idolatry and wickedness, and they had found forgiveness with God.

### Thanksgiving

Now that God had showered these great blessings upon the people, they must say, "Thank You." So Hezekiah called upon the priests to bring their thank offerings, and burnt offerings of consecration. And so many offerings were brought by the people who had wholeheartedly turned to God, that there were not enough priests to take care of them. Not all the priests had sanctified themselves to the Lord. "The Levites were more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests." It is sad that sometimes people who truly love the Lord and want to know the whole Word of God, are disappointed by ministers who do not preach the whole Bible nor hold up a standard of holiness.

The happy people are those who are working together in the unity of the faith, all wholly given to serve God without letting any of the foolishness of the world come into their lives and worship. May God help each one of us to put the holy things of God first in our lives, so that we shall enjoy close communion with Him!

### QUESTIONS

1. What kind of king had Ahaz been?
2. How did Hezekiah begin his reign?
3. How old was Hezekiah when he began to reign?
4. What was the first duty of the priests and Levites after they had cleansed themselves?
5. Describe the worship that followed the cleansing of the Temple.
6. What part did the singers and musicians have in the service?
7. What religion sings?
8. Who are the happy people?