

HEZEKIAH'S NEW YEAR

2 Chronicles 29

INTRODUCTION

- Disaster and death can result from getting onto the wrong track
- Most people in this world are spiritually on the “wrong track” – the broad way that leads to destruction
- There are many who *seemed* to be on the right track once, but eventually turned out to be on the wrong one
- Charles Darwin professed the Christian faith, earning a degree in theology, but he later confessed, “I had gradually come by this time, to see that the Old Testament was no more to be trusted than the sacred books of the Hindoos.”
- Even genuine believers can drift from the path of godliness
- The saints at Ephesus were guilty of leaving their first love (Revelation 2:4)
- It is possible for the *form* of godliness to remain even as its power diminishes (2 Timothy 3:5)
- To make matters worse, often those in such a spiritual state are unaware of their wretched condition (Judges 16:20; Revelation 3:17)
- “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.” (Hebrews 2:1)
- The new year provides us with an opportunity to evaluate our spiritual condition, our successes, our failures, where we have gotten off track in our walk with God
- Hezekiah was one of the greatest kings of Judah (2 Kings 18:5-6)
- 2 Chronicles 29 records the beginning of Hezekiah’s reign, at the beginning of Israel’s year
- Every year, the Jews had *two* new years: a sacred and civil
- His father, Ahaz, had been a wicked king, bringing gross idolatry to the nation (2 Kings 16:10-18)

- Consider the spiritual state of Judah at the beginning of Hezekiah's reign: the door of devotion shut; the lamp of testimony snuffed out; uncleanness accumulated; sin unconfessed; sacrifice ceased, divine worship abolished
- This very description may be applied to many professing believers today
- Hezekiah's response to the situation was swift and decisive
- He started well, and as the saying goes, "Well begun is half done"
- The same principle can be applied to the new year
- The steps of revival that King Hezekiah took for his nation are the same steps that must take place in our individual lives

I. A RENEWED SANCTIFICATION TO THE LORD (3-11)

A. The doors of the temple must be opened (3)

1. Ahaz not only defiled the temple, but he eventually shut it completely (2 Chronicles 28:24)
2. Modern day Ahaz's are still wickedly attempting to shut the doors of churches
3. The door of communion and fellowship with God can become shut through neglect and sin

B. The lamps must be lit (7)

1. A rededication to the light of the word of God (Psalm 119:105)
2. A blameless testimony before the world (1 John 1:7; Matthew 5:14-16; Philippians 2:15; Ephesians 5:8; Romans 13:12)

C. The incense must be offered (7)

1. Incense is a picture of prayer (Psalm 141:2)
2. Prayer is often one of the first things to become neglected when we drift from the Lord, and is therefore a useful gauge of a believer's spiritual state

D. Holiness must be followed (5)

1. God is holy, as is everything connected to him

2. His saints must be holy (1 Peter 1:16; Hebrews 12:14)
- E. Filthiness and uncleanness must be removed (5,16)
1. The Lord only uses clean vessels for his work (2 Timothy 2:21)
 2. Christ instructed us to swiftly remove all offending things from our lives, no matter how precious they are to us (Matthew 5:29-30)
 3. Sins and weights beset us in our course, and must be laid aside (Hebrews 12:1)
 4. The Ephesian believers publicly burned their ungodly books (Acts 19:19)

II. A RELIANCE ON THE SACRIFICE OF THE LAMB (20-24)

- A. The work of cleansing took sixteen days (v.17) – one day for each year of Ahaz's wicked reign
- B. Sin must not only be confessed and repented of, it must be atoned for
1. The sin offering brought reconciliation between sinful man and the holy God
 2. The priests laid their hands on the animal, representing it bearing their sin at their substitute (v.23)
 3. All these animal sacrifices are fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is made an offering for sin (Isaiah 53:10; 2 Corinthians 5:21)
- C. The revived believer has a renewed view of Jesus Christ
1. Trusting in his blood alone for life and salvation
 2. He continually looks to the Lord Jesus for strength, and not to himself (Hebrews 12:2)
 3. He is dead, and Christ is his life (Colossians 3:3-4)
 4. The cross of the Lord Jesus Christ is his only glory (Galatians 6:14)

III. A REJOICING SUBMISSION TO THE LORD (25-35)

- A. The worship of God is man's chief end, and the purpose for which God made us

1. True worship acknowledges God for who he is, and his worthiness to receive our honour and adoration
 2. Worship requires a denial of self, and a sacrificial rendering of ourselves to God
- B. Singing to God is the normal and natural response of a heart that has been transformed by grace
1. “You tell me that you cannot sing the Lord’s song; then I know you have gone into the strange land of backsliding” (F B Meyer)
 2. We are to sing with “grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col 3:16)
 3. We are to sing from the heart (Ephesians 5:19)
 4. We are to sing with the spirit and with the understanding (1 Corinthians 14:15)
- C. Thank offerings and burnt offerings rendered to God
1. Praise to God is a sacrifice to God in which we give thanks to his name (Hebrews 13:15)
 2. In the burnt offering, the entire animal was burnt, none was eaten
 3. It pictures the believer offering himself entirely to God as a “living sacrifice” (Romans 12:1)

CONCLUSION

1. “Those that begin with God, begin at the right end of their work; and it will prosper accordingly” (Matthew Henry)
2. Without giving “earnest heed” (Hebrews 2:1) all of us will drift away from godliness, and find ourselves on the wrong track
3. If you are to live for Christ in 2021, mere effort and will-power is not enough – it requires the same divine grace that “prepared the people” in Hezekiah’s day (v.36)
4. Just as we are able to recognise those who are in good physical fitness, so too, our spiritual fitness will be seen by those around us
5. The Jews faced obstacles in their spiritual revival, including family traditions (v.6), or cold-hearted brethren (v.34), and so will you
6. Will you resolve this coming year seek God *first* in all things? (Matthew 6:33)