

INTRO:

(Very) brief recap of 3 previous sermons

Either... “Did not set his heart to seek the LORD” (2 Chronicles 12:14) or “Did what was right according to father David”

Even Asa and Jehoshaphat “good kings” failed.

This morning we’re looking at part of the reign of Hezekiah, namely the mass revival that takes place in a remarkably short amount of time immediately after his coronation. There’s so much more to Hezekiah’s reign than we can get to this morning, so I’d encourage you to read further on your own as there is so much we can learn from the life and reign of this king.

PRAYER -

To understand what transpires in Judah under King Hezekiah we must first understand the condition of the kingdom when Hezekiah is first crowned king. Hezekiah’s father, King Ahaz, was truly wicked. The whole of Ahaz’s wickedness can be summed up in a few small snapshots of scripture; let’s take a look.

2 Chronicles 28:1-4 - Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. And he did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as his father David had done, ²but he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel. He even made ^gmetal images for ^hthe Baals, ³and ⁱhe made offerings in the ^jValley of the Son of Hinnom and ^kburned his sons as an offering, ¹according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel. ⁴And he sacrificed and ⁱmade offerings on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree.

So Ahaz was wicked to begin with. Then God sent enemy armies to invade, possibly as judgement, possibly as an opportunity to repent and cry out to the LORD. Judah was defeated by Syria, then by Israel. But rather than repent and turn to God for help, Ahaz turned instead to another wicked, evil kingdom.

2 Chronicles 28:16-21 - ¹⁶ *u*At that time King Ahaz sent to the king² of Assyria for help. ¹⁷ For the Edomites had again invaded and defeated Judah and carried away captives. ¹⁸ *v*And the Philistines had made raids on ^wthe cities **of Judah** (~~in the Shephelah and the Negeb of Judah, and had taken Beth-shemesh, Aijalon, Gederoth, Socoth with its villages, Timnah with its villages, and Gimzo with~~) **and had taken some of its villages. And they settled there.** ¹⁹ For the LORD humbled Judah because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he had made ^yJudah act sinfully³ and had been very unfaithful to the LORD. ²⁰ So ^z**the** (~~Tiglath-pileser⁴~~) king of Assyria came against him and afflicted him instead of strengthening him. ²¹ *a*For Ahaz took a portion from the house of the LORD and the house of the king and of the princes, and gave tribute to the king of Assyria, but it did not help him.

Ahaz took what was God's and gave it to an earthly king, to bribe or pay him for protection. And the king of Assyria instead chose to take what he wanted while Judah was weak. And we see in this next passage that Ahaz further hardened his heart away from the Lord. When he should have been crying out to God in his distress, he instead went so far as to attempt to remove any trace of God from Judah.

2 Chronicles 28:22-25 - ²² In the time of his distress he became yet more faithless to the LORD—this same King Ahaz. ²³ For ^bhe sacrificed to the gods of Damascus that had defeated him and said, ^c“Because the gods of the kings of Syria helped them, I will sacrifice to them that they may help me.” But they were the ruin of him and of all Israel. ²⁴ And Ahaz

gathered together the vessels of the house of God and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and he shut up the doors of the house of the LORD, and he made himself altars in every corner of Jerusalem. ²⁵In every city of Judah he made high places to make offerings to other gods, provoking to anger the LORD, the God of his fathers.

Ahaz was a wicked king. He did everything he could to remove the worship of God from his kingdom. And the people followed him. And the priests and the Levites followed him. Ahaz had all the tools of worship God and intended for the Temple removed and destroyed, and he had the Temple filled with idols and artifacts of pagan worship. He erected sites of pagan worship all over the nation. During that time they even worshiped the bronze serpent that God told Moses to make in order to save the people from death from the bites of the Fiery Snakes that God sent to the Israelites for speaking against God and Moses in Numbers chapter 21. The people had been worshipping this bronze serpent and had given it the name “Nehushtan”. This was something that God gave them as a way of salvation, and they worshiped it as the giver of salvation itself. This shows how the people of Judah were wicked and far from God, pursuing every evil thing apart from their Creator, looking to give glory to created things (idols, men, nature) rather than the Creator who deserves all glory.

This is the spiritual context into which Hezekiah first became King. However, God had been working on Hezekiah’s heart that though he grew up in that wicked context, he was faithful to God and to the law.

2 Kings 18:3-7 ³And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done. ^{4 m}He removed the high places and broke the pillars and cut down the Asherah. And he broke

in pieces ^pthe bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the people of Israel had made offerings to it (it was called Nehushtan).⁷
⁵^qHe trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel, ^rso that there was none like him among all the kings of Judah after him, nor among those who were before him. ⁶^sFor he held fast to the LORD. He did not depart from following him, but kept the commandments that the LORD commanded Moses. ⁷^tAnd the LORD was with him; wherever he went out, ^uhe prospered.

Franklin D. Roosevelt coined the term "First 100 Days" during a radio broadcast in 1933. 13 major laws were enacted during this period of his presidency. Ever since then, the first 100 days of a presidential term has taken on symbolic significance, and that 100 day period is considered a benchmark to measure the early success of a president. God used Hezekiah to enact sweeping revival through his people, starting with the priests and the Levites, and encompassing the whole of the kingdom of Judah in a remarkable, supernatural time frame. God undoes generations of wickedness in about 100 days time and clearly demonstrates that this revival is no act of man, but an act of God.

Let's take just a minute and talk about Revival.

Revivals happen when God draws near and they happen for the declaration of His glory.

Psalm 73:28 ²⁸ But for me it is good to ^obe near God;
 I have made the Lord GOD my ^prefuge,
 that I may ^qtell of all your works.

So it is to our benefit to be near God, which God orchestrates, not us. He works in our hearts and minds, our lives and circumstance, he uses godly people like Hezekiah, and he uses wicked people

like the Babylonians or the Assyrians. God orchestrates revival when his people have wandered far and everything looks bad. And in that revival God draws near to his people and his people in response return to him. And there is repentance, and lost people are converted, and people cling to what is holy and they leave behind/destroy what is sinful. And their lives are reoriented to pursue things of eternal consequence: holiness and the worship of a holy God; and they put away the pursuit of sin and self.

We'll look at this revival in three parts (borrowed from David Atkins):

- 1) Repentance
- 2) Return to Holiness
- 3) Reorientation to God and his Kingdom

1) Repentance

To better understand repentance I've asked Darrel to demonstrate an about-face. (Ask Darrel to demonstrate an about-face) To repent is to do an about-face. You are moving forward in sin and self, then you repent, you do an about-face and immediately turn and move the other direction towards God and holiness. There is no "half-repentance". Repentance requires total surrender of the sin and self you once pursued, and total submission to God in holiness.

2 Chronicles 7:14 - ¹⁴if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

Acts 3:19 - ¹⁹ Repent therefore, and ^u turn back, that ^v your sins may be blotted out, ²⁰ that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord

2 Chronicles 29:3 - ³ In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the LORD and repaired them. ⁴ He brought in the priests and the Levites and assembled them in the square on the east ⁵ and said to them, “Hear me, Levites! Now ^m consecrate yourselves, and consecrate the house of the LORD, the God of your fathers, and carry out the filth² from the Holy Place. ⁶ For our fathers have been unfaithful and have done what was evil in the sight of the LORD our God. They have forsaken him and ⁿ have turned away their faces from the habitation of the LORD and turned their backs. ⁷ They also ^o shut the doors of the vestibule and put out the lamps and have not burned incense or offered burnt offerings in the Holy Place to the God of Israel. ⁸ Therefore ^p the wrath of the LORD came on Judah and Jerusalem, and he has made them ^q an object of horror, of astonishment, ^r and of hissing, as you see with your own eyes. ⁹ For behold, ^s our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity for this. ¹⁰ Now ^t it is in my heart ^u to make a covenant with the LORD, the God of Israel, in order that his fierce anger may turn away from us.

So they repent and agree to consecrate the temple and themselves. Now, to consecrate is to make holy, to set apart as dedicated to God. In the old testament, this required blood and sacrifice.

¹⁷ They began to consecrate ^g on the first day of the first month, and on the eighth day of the month they came to the vestibule of the LORD. Then for eight days they consecrated the house of the LORD, and on the sixteenth day of the first month they finished.

As they cleaned out the temple, it was so bad, so idol-filled that it took them 16 days to carry off all the idols and dump them in the river. 16 days, for them to purge the filth from the Temple!

¹⁸ Then they went in to Hezekiah the king and said, “We have cleansed all the house of the LORD, the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and the table for the showbread and all its utensils. ¹⁹ All the utensils that King Ahaz discarded in his reign when he was faithless, we have made ready and consecrated, and behold, they are before the altar of the LORD.”

After the Temple is consecrated, they begin offering sacrifices for the consecration of the priesthood and sacrifices of atonement.

²⁰ Then Hezekiah the king rose early and gathered the officials of the city and went up to the house of the LORD. ²¹ And they brought seven bulls, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven male 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.

²² So they slaughtered the bulls, and the priests received the blood and threw it against the altar. And they slaughtered the rams, and their blood was thrown against the altar. And they slaughtered the lambs, and their blood was thrown against the altar. ²³ Then the goats for the sin offering were brought to the king and the assembly, and they laid their hands on them, ²⁴ and the priests slaughtered them and made a sin offering with their blood on the altar, to make atonement for all Israel. For the king commanded that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for all Israel.

²⁷ Then Hezekiah commanded that the burnt offering be offered on the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song to the LORD began also, and the trumpets, accompanied by the instruments of David king

of Israel. ²⁸ The whole assembly worshiped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded. All this continued until the burnt offering was finished. ²⁹ When the offering was finished, the king and all who were present with him bowed themselves and worshiped. ³⁰ And Hezekiah the king and the officials commanded the Levites to sing praises to the LORD with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed down and worshiped.

This is a great example to us of repentance. The Priests and Levites were, at best, facilitating worship of idols, at worst, participating in worship of idols. Then, by God's grace, they left the worship of idols destroying them in the process and immediately they turned, consecrated themselves, and bowed down in worship of the Holy God.

Under the new covenant, we (that is, all believers) are priests.

Revelation 5:9b-10 -

for ^vyou were slain, and by your blood ^wyou ransomed people for God from ^xevery tribe and language and people and nation,
¹⁰ and you have made them ^ya kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

So, Christian, you are a priest. Are you consecrated? Is your life set apart for God and for the work of his Kingdom? Or are you like the priests in Hezekiah's day?

What sin and self in your life needs to be repented of?

What parts of your life are not worthy of a holy God?

What idols do you have in the temple that you need to carry out and dump in the river?

Romans 12:1 - ^zI appeal to you therefore, brothers,¹ by the mercies of God, ^ato present your bodies ^bas a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.²

2) Return to Holiness

This concept of returning to God is a big deal. You cannot stay where you are and experience the nearness of God. We already looked at Psalm 73, “The nearness of God is my good”.

Joel 2:12-13 -

¹² “Yet even now,” declares the LORD,
ⁱ“return to me with all your heart,
^Λwith fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
¹³ and ^krend your hearts and not ^your garments.”
 Return to the LORD your God,
^mfor he is gracious and merciful,
 slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love;
ⁿand he relents over disaster.

Job 22:23 - ²³ If you ^ereturn to the Almighty you will be ^hbuilt up;
 if you ^gremove injustice far from your tents,

In the second month Hezekiah sends out a letter to the people and asks them to return.

2 Chronicles 30:1 - Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem to keep the Passover to the LORD, the God of Israel.

“O people of Israel, ^rreturn to the LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, that he may turn again to the remnant of you who have escaped from the hand of ^gthe kings of Assyria. ^{7h}Do not be like your fathers and your brothers, who were faithless to the LORD God of their fathers, so that he made them a desolation, as you see. ⁸ⁱDo not now be stiff-necked as your fathers were, but yield yourselves to the LORD and come to his sanctuary, which he has consecrated forever, and serve the LORD your God, ^tthat his fierce anger may turn away from you. ⁹For if you return to the LORD, your brothers and your children ^kwill find compassion with their captors and return to this land. For ^tthe LORD your God is gracious and merciful and will not turn away his face from you, ^mif you return to him.”

Hezekiah pleads with the people to return and not to be stiff-necked. He doesn't want them to cling to what they have done, or what their fathers have done for generations. He calls them to abandon ritual and tradition, if these things are cause them to be separated from God.

Don't be stiff-necked. Don't allow something to cause separation between you and God because “that's just the way I am”, or “that's just my personality”, or “that's the way my family has always done it”. Stop it. Return to holiness. Love God and his law, and hate your sin. Don't be stiff-necked.

The people of Judah, and many from Israel returned to Jerusalem from their wanderings. They came to celebrate Passover together, and the Passover lamb was slaughtered for every person who was unclean (which would be almost everyone there). And there's this massive celebration, they break out all the instruments for worship: I mean, this is quite the ordeal. It lasted for two weeks. They were there worshipping and celebrating their love for God.

(Love God)

²⁵The whole assembly of Judah, and the priests and the Levites, and the whole assembly that came out of Israel, and the sojourners who came out of the land of Israel, and the sojourners who lived in Judah, rejoiced. ²⁶So there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem. ²⁷Then the priests and the Levites arose and blessed the people, and their voice was heard, and their prayer came to his holy habitation in heaven.

And when they left the Passover celebration they continued in the return to holiness. They sought out that which had caused them to wander from God and they destroyed it.

(Hate sin)

2 Kings 18 - ⁴He (Hezekiah... or probably more accurately, the people under Hezekiah's leadership) removed the high places and broke the pillars and cut down the Asherah. And he broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the people of Israel had made offerings to it (it was called Nehushtan).

2 Chr. 31 - ¹Now when all this was finished, all Israel who were present went out to the cities of Judah and broke in pieces the pillars and cut down the Asherim and broke down the high places and the altars throughout all Judah and Benjamin, and in Ephraim and Manasseh, until they had destroyed **(some of them... No! Until they had destroyed)** them all.

They destroyed them all! They didn't leave a single one hidden away in a closet or under the bed for a later date when they might be weak or vulnerable and want to cling to what is comfortable, no they got rid of every stinking one.

3) Reorientation to God and his Kingdom

When God's people repent and return they will be reoriented. The things they spent their time and effort and money on will be changed. They will now use their time and effort and money to build God's kingdom. Time and energy will be spent in hearing and doing God's word.

Ezekiel 36:26-27 - ²⁶And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. ²⁷And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

God will change the affections of his people. He will cause them to be reoriented.

And so, we have this is Hezekiah's time, after Passover.

2 Chronicles 31:2-6 - ²And Hezekiah appointed the divisions of the priests and of the Levites, division by division, each according to his service, the priests and the Levites, for burnt offerings and peace offerings, to minister in the gates of the camp of the LORD and to give thanks and praise. ³The contribution of the king from his own possessions was for the burnt offerings: the burnt offerings of morning and evening, and the burnt offerings for the Sabbaths, the new moons, and the appointed feasts, as it is written in the Law of the LORD. ⁴And he commanded the people who lived in Jerusalem to give the portion due to the priests and the Levites, **that they might give themselves to the Law of the LORD.** ⁵As soon as the command was spread abroad, the **people of Israel gave in abundance** the firstfruits of grain, wine, oil, honey, and of all the produce of the field. And they brought in

abundantly the tithe of everything. ⁶ And the people of Israel and Judah who lived in the cities of Judah also brought in the tithe of cattle and sheep, and ^wthe tithe of the dedicated things that had been dedicated to the LORD their God, and laid them in heaps.

The people of Judah and of Israel, they have be reoriented toward God and his Kingdom. And so they begin to bring tithes from their own stores to be used for Kingdom work in the temple. And they do it in *abundance*. Twice it says that they gave in *abundance*. So they were not giving before (makes sense, since they were wandering and far from God), then God comes near and they repent, and they return, and they are reoriented. And now they've begun to give, not the acceptable bare minimum, but in abundance.

We end the chapter with this:

²⁰ Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah, ^hand he did what was good and right and faithful before the LORD his God. ²¹ And every work that he undertook in the service of the house of God and in accordance with the law and the commandments, seeking his God, he did with all his heart, and prospered. **Fancy way of saying: “He set his heart to seek God.”**

You'll remember, Rehoboam did not what? He did not set his heart to seek God. And he did great evil. Hezekiah DID set his heart to seek God, and God used him as an instrument to bring mass revival to the nation of Judah. Incredible.

**Have you set your heart to seek God?
Are there things you need reorient?**

Closing

Hear this warning as we wrap up. Revival is not an end to sin. We must continue to repent and return and reorient. Hezekiah blunders near the end of his life, and it has massive effect for the future of the nation.

(Summery) Hezekiah gets sick to the point of death. Isaiah tells him ‘God said you’re going to die.’ Hezekiah cries out to God and asks for healing. God hears Hezekiah’s prayers gives him another 15 years to live.

There’s this whole thing where Hezekiah asks for a sign, Isaiah tells him God will reverse the course of the shadow (literally move back time), we don’t have time to get into all that.

A convoy from Babylon came with tidings and gifts for Hezekiah because they’d heard he had been sick. Hezekiah, in his pride, gives them a tour of his kingdom to show off his wealth and accomplishments. He shows them everything, all his money and storehouses, his weapons, his defenses; everything in his kingdom he laid bare because he was proud.

2 Chronicles 32 - ³¹ And so in the matter of the envoys of the princes of Babylon, ^awho had been sent to him to inquire about ^ethe sign that had been done in the land, God left him to himself, ⁱin order to test him and to know all that was in his heart.

Isaiah comes to Hezekiah and tells him that because of his pride, because he showed Babylon all the wealth Jerusalem had to offer, that Babylon would come back one day and carry off everything in the city. Because of Hezekiah’s pride, the City of Jerusalem would be sacked and the people taken into captivity.

Hezekiah was a good king of Judah. In fact, 2 Kings 18 tells us Hezekiah was a great king.

2 Kings 18 - ⁵He trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel, so that there was none like him among all the kings of Judah after him, nor among those who were before him.

Hezekiah was one of the best kings Judah or Israel had to offer. And yet, he failed miserably because of his pride and vainglory.

Application:

There is only one good King. The best of the best kings of men will always fail us. But the One Good King, King Jesus, will not fail. On him rest all our hopes, all our futures, our comforts and our victories, and hope of revival, the very condition of our souls.

Revival happens when God draws near to his people. We're entering that time of year when we begin to celebrate Advent, the coming of Immanuel, God with us. Let this fill you with hope: "ultimate" revival is made possible by our union with Christ.