

XIV. Revival in Biblical Perspective

Revive Us Again!

“The Hezekiah Revival—Turn”

II Chronicles 29, 30

Dr. Harry L. Reeder III

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I'd like to start by looking at II Chronicles 29:3–11, 15, 20, 25–26, 30–31, 35–36 which says [3] *In the first year of his (Hezekiah) 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 consecrate yourselves, and consecrate the house of the LORD, the God of your fathers, and carry out the filth 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 have turned away their faces from the habitation of the LORD and turned their backs. [7] They also 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 the wrath of the LORD came on Judah and Jerusalem, and he has made them an object of horror, of astonishment, and of hissing, as you see with your own eyes. [9] For behold, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity for this. [10] Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with the LORD, the God of Israel, in order that his fierce anger may turn away from us. [11] My sons, do not now be negligent, for the LORD has chosen you to stand in his presence, to minister to him and to be his ministers and make offerings to him.”*

[15] They gathered their brothers and consecrated themselves and went in as the king had commanded, by the words of the LORD, to cleanse the house of the LORD.

[20] Then Hezekiah the king rose early and gathered the officials of the city and went up to the house of the LORD.

[25] And he stationed the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, harps, and lyres, according to the commandment of David and of Gad the king's seer and of Nathan the prophet, for the commandment was from the LORD through his prophets. [26] The Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. [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.

[31] Then Hezekiah said, “You have now consecrated yourselves to the LORD. Come near; bring sacrifices and thank offerings to the house of the LORD.” And the assembly brought sacrifices and thank offerings, and all who were of a willing heart brought burnt offerings. [35] Besides the great number of burnt offerings, there was the fat of the peace offerings, and there were the drink offerings for the burnt offerings. Thus the service of the house of the LORD was restored. [36] And Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced because God had provided for the people, for the thing came about suddenly.

The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

Everything that was just read above happened in the year 715 BC. Just seven years before that in 722 BC God had brought Assyria down upon the ten Northern Tribes and were taken away into captivity. The hand of Divine disciplining judgment was brought upon His people. Literally hundreds of thousands of people had been taken away into bondage and

captivity in Assyria but God had stopped them and then had not come to the two Southern Tribes of Judah and Benjamin where Hezekiah was now King following his father, Ahaz.

When I was a kid living in August, Georgia which was a railroad center we used to love looking at this place called the 'round table' which was where all the trains came in. Here are these gigantic locomotives that would come in on a track in the mornings and then they would go out in the afternoons on the same track. How did they do this? They would come in on the round table and then the round table would turn 180 degrees for these gigantic locomotives to be positioned to go out the way they came in.

Here in II Chronicles that is what we are looking at in this study. It is God's work of grace in providing for God's people as a turntable. That word 'turn' in the Greek shows in various forms in the Bible as 'return' and 'repent' and in the New Testament as change of heart, change of direction, change of mind, turn from to turn to and this is used hundreds and hundreds of times in the Bible. When it is found as 'turn' it is speaking of what God's people do in their conversion. When you get converted you turn from your sin, not to do better, but to Jesus as Savior. Now that will make you do better but you turn from your sin and self to the Savior when you're converted.

The Greek word for return is metanoia and means radical, a radical change of heart. One time when I was preaching on this I got kind of carried away and said 'when God gets a hold of your heart it's radical for He calls you to a 360 degree change' but even with taking geometry I should have known better than that. It is great news that it's a radical change but the great news is that God is only asking for 180 degree turn, not 360 for that means you are back where you started. It's like that round table for you are turned and headed to where you ought to be. So in revival you are 're'turning to the One you once turned to but you have allowed yourself to turn away from Him. Now He turns you back to Him.

Why is this important? When I was a kid my grandmother used to say some interesting things to me. One thing she used to say to me was 'son, God don't bless ugly.' She wasn't talking about what I looked like but my behavior. That doesn't mean God doesn't deal with those who do ugly but He doesn't bless ugly. He calls us to leave it, repent of it, confess it and to turn from it to Him who is good, beautiful and true. He saves us not only from the penalty of sin and its ugliness but its power and increasingly from its practice. Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, the prophet says. Those multiple times of turning are extremely crucial in the life of a believer as we turn from God and are now walking in the disciplining hand of God's judgment, not His condemning judgment. Why? That we might turn from what we have turned to back to Him to walk with Him. It is so we return to Him.

We have been studying revival and from Psalm 85:6 and other texts of Scripture we have come to a definition of revival which is revival is an extraordinary work of God's grace through ordinary people in ordinary places by ordinary means with extraordinary consequences for God's glory. What is the extraordinary purpose? Two things happen when you know revival has come. One is a vertical and one is horizontal. The vertical is when God does a work He raises up His people to God-centered worship and nothing is more important than giving praise to God in the life of a believer. They gather for worship but what about when they scatter? Then comes the horizontal evidence of revival which is Gospel harvest. We begin to proclaim the Word of the Lord but it doesn't mean everyone we go to will come to Jesus. There will always be a mixed response but we take the Gospel out to the world.

We need a Gospel harvest in this nation. Am I concerned about taking the Gospel to all the nations? Absolutely but I don't believe we'll long take the Gospel to all the nations unless

God allows us to bring the Gospel to this nation. To bring the Gospel to this nation we need revival. So how does revival come down? Revival is like salvation. God only can save and God only can raise up sinners. In revival God only can revive for we can't revive ourselves but the same God who sovereignly brings salvation through means also sovereignly brings revival through means.

What are the means through which God brings revival? God has already revealed it in II Chronicles 7:14 which says [14] *If 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.* The Chronicler records God's promise to His people. What is abundantly clear in this verse is that God's people will falter. We are fickle and faithless but God is faithful. This is the way God brings His people back from their unfaithfulness.

To help me remember this promise I think of the number 2435. The '2' is that there are two things to remember. Who gets the promise of revival? Revival is a promised work of God's grace to (1) His (covenant) people and we know His people because (2) they are called by His Name. Who has called upon His Name? It is those who have called upon Him for salvation. Romans 10:13 says [13] *For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* When you are saved you are now called by His name and that means you are His people.

The next number is '4' and when you are under the disciplining hand of God's judgment there are four things God calls you to do. One is to humble yourself. Two is to pray. Three is to seek His face and four is to turn from your wicked ways. That order is crucial. You will not turn until you seek Him. You will not seek Him until you call upon Him in prayer. You will not call upon Him in prayer until you're humbled. Then the Chronicler gives the three blessings when that happens which represents the number 3. The three blessings God will do after the four things His people do are hear them, forgive them and heal them.

What is the number 5 for? The Chronicler that records the history of Judah makes sure that the Southern Kingdom which is the focus of his record, highlights five revivals. Each revival emphasizes one of the those four things God's people must do – humble, pray, seek and turn. The revival that took place under Rehoboam we learned the blessing that God will lift His people up when they bow down – humble themselves to lift Him up. Then we saw under Asa that revival awaits revival prayer and it doesn't come without it for we have not because we ask not. The reason we don't ask is because we're self-reliant instead of humbling ourselves but when you humble yourself you start praying and when you start praying God's hand of revival begins to come down with power. Then as God's people humble themselves and pray they begin to seek His face. We saw this particular one under the revival that took place under King Jehoshaphat. Lord, our eyes are on You. A revival relationship with God is a real relationship that is reciprocal. Draw near to Him and He will draw near to you. Our drawing near doesn't merit His grace but it's the means whereby He begins to express His grace in a real relationship with us.

Now we come to another revival in this study and it's the revival under Hezekiah. In II Chronicles 29, 30 and 31 one word keeps showing up. In the Hebrew language it is *shub* – God says 'turn.' This word is said time and time again in these three chapters and in two verses it is used six times. The last revival under Jehoshaphat was Hezekiah's great, great grandfather and God's people from that revival for almost 120 years are sliding deeper and deeper into rebellion, debauchery, pagan worship and it has hit unbelievable proportions of denigration and depravity by the time Hezekiah is born. For the 29 year reign of Hezekiah it has come to a plummeting

low in his father, King Ahaz. You can't get more depraved than what was happening during this time.

They have uncovered the artwork of that era and I don't want your mind to run off into imagination but I want to simply say the pornography of that era revealed in the artwork is astoundingly depraved. Under King Ahaz he boarded up the temple and he began to erect the gods of the Assyrians and the Canaanites. All forms of Baal worship begin to take place and all these different kinds of Baal gods were erected all over the place. The most depraved of all gods he not only put near the temple but he put it in the valley of Hinnom where the three valleys come together right below the pool of Siloam. It was the god Molech.

Why was it so depraved? There were the male and female temple prostitutes, the sexual promiscuity, the sexual anarchy and the sexual perversion that took place but worse than that Molech demanded child sacrifice. It's best presentation what when the god Molech would be put with either stone or brass with his outstretched hideous figure and arms where the inside of it would be filled with 24/7 burning coals constantly. You were required to bring your first born and place them on those arms. That's why the Bible speaks that God's people must never allow their children to bear the marks or the brands of Molech because that burning god with the coals within would sear on the backs of the children. That was in its best presentation but it's normal presentation is the tilting of the arms of Molech so that when the child was placed and then the priests removed the holders the child then rolled into the burning pot of Molech and burned alive. The first born were required. King Ahaz not only demanded that the people worship Molech with their firstborn as a child sacrifice but he did it himself with his own sons.

Hezekiah simply avoided that fate but not all of his brothers. The firstborn destroyed and likely one other at least in Hezekiah's family by King Ahaz in the fires of Molech. That is where Israel had come after the last revival. So that is where the people of Israel were and then Hezekiah comes up and we see a revival leader. The first thing Hezekiah does in his first month of his first week as he comes out, is he unboarded the temple. He opened the doors of the temple. He went through the temple and started repairing everything. He ordered that all the idols wherever they may be found be ground to dust and poured into the Kidron Brook. Did you notice the language in the text? It said clean the filth out of the holy place.

Then they went to get the Levites for they had been out farming and doing everything else. Hezekiah wanted them to do three things because he knew they had work to do. One they were going to be consecrated, then they needed to consecrate themselves and then the holy place of God was to be consecrated. The people of God in the gathered assembly are open for business again. Hezekiah wanted leaders who were fully committed to the glory of God. He was preparing the place of God to invite the people of God and it wasn't their business that they were doing in God's temple but it is His business. That is what Hezekiah does.

Sometimes when God brings a revival, I'll confess to you, it's a crockpot revival but there are moments when God brings a microwave revival. Did you remember the end of the text I read at the beginning? II Chronicles 29:36 says [36] *And Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced because God had provided for the people, for the thing **came about suddenly***. What had accumulated over decades in rebellion, debauchery, idolatry and sin, in less than seven weeks it was wiped away and a transformation began to occur inside the people and outside the people. Inside watch them worship. Outside God began to deliver the people from all their enemies.

In II Chronicles 32 Sennacherib, king of Assyria, is coming down to attack the people of Israel and God intervenes where they begin to kill each other and 185,000 die. Then Sennacherib goes back home with his tail between his legs and when he gets home some of his

own family and friends kill him. You better be careful when you mess with God's people. Some who mess with God's people He'll save but some will be used as an example not to mess with His people. That's exactly what He does with Sennacherib. God not only works in them, but around them and for them.

What does this Hezekiah revival begin to look like? It should look like God-centered worship and an outreach, a harvest. Let's look at II Chronicles 30. They are singing, playing tambourines, doing peace offerings and all those things. II Chronicles 30:1–12,17, 23, 26–27 says *[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. [2] For the king and his princes and all the assembly in Jerusalem had taken counsel to keep the Passover in the second month— [3] for they could not keep it at that time because the priests had not consecrated themselves in sufficient number, nor had the people assembled in Jerusalem— [4] and the plan seemed right to the king and all the assembly. [5] So they decreed to make a proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, that the people should come and keep the Passover to the LORD, the God of Israel, at Jerusalem, for they had not kept it as often as prescribed. [6] So couriers went throughout all Israel and Judah with letters from the king and his princes, as the king had commanded, saying, "O people of Israel, **return** 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 the kings of Assyria. [7] 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. [8] Do 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, that his fierce anger may turn away from you. [9] For if you return to the LORD, your brothers and your children will find compassion with their captors and return to this land. For the LORD your God is gracious and merciful and will not turn away his face from you, if you **return** to him."*

[10] So the couriers went from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, and as far as Zebulun, but they laughed them to scorn and mocked them. [11] However, some men of Asher, of Manasseh, and of Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem. [12] The hand of God was also on Judah to give them one heart to do what the king and the princes commanded by the word of the LORD. (Then they get together and celebrate the Passover Supper. Now look what happens.) [17] For there were many in the assembly who had not consecrated themselves. Therefore the Levites had to slaughter the Passover lamb for everyone who was not clean, to consecrate it to the LORD.

[23] Then the whole assembly agreed together to keep the feast for another seven days. So they kept it for another seven days with gladness. [26] So there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem. [27] Then 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.

What is it that turns the landscape of debauchery over 120 years into a place where worship is going up? It wasn't just worship going up but they were focused on the Passover Lamb of God. The focus was brought to the Passover. The Passover started back in Egypt and it was started because God's people were in oppression and bondage. God says to Pharaoh 'Let My people go so that they can worship Me.' Set them free to worship Me. He isn't going to do it. Plague one comes. I'm not going to do it. Plague two comes, etc. What do we call that? We call that grace. He could have jumped immediately to plague ten but He showed His common

grace, calling Pharaoh and Egypt to repentance but they did not repent. When they got to plague ten now all the firstborn are going to die but God's people were given a lamb. When the lamb was sacrificed with the blood over the doorpost, when the angel of death came he passed over them and therefore they were allowed to live.

So now with Hezekiah they are going to remember the Passover. We have a God who will free His people from their oppressors and will free us from our sins and pass over us by providing a sacrifice for us. Then when it gets to the end of the week they want to go for another week of worship and celebration. Even with faltering Levites around us there is nothing more we want to do than worship God. We rejoice as we are bringing worship as He prescribed it. Business is being done for God and to God. We are open for business. We are going to do the Lord's business the Lord's way and there is no other business that is more important to us than that.

We not only have this worship but we have this message going out. Hezekiah sends it out to Ephraim and to all the other ten tribes. He sends it beyond that. Perhaps when we come back to the Lord maybe God will bring those out there back to the Lord because the temple is open again and we're doing business for the Lord. Maybe God will do that and gather more to Himself and that is what we call a harvest for a Good News harvest is going out. Now does everybody believe? No, in fact when the message got out there a lot of them laughed at them and scorned them but Hezekiah didn't change the message. The message stayed the same – repent of your sin. What about the younger generation? I understand common sense about this but the message is not framed by the audience. The message is revealed to us and we need to put it in the language of the audience but we don't put it in terms that the audience accepts. We put it in the terms that the audience can understand for the message has already been given. Send it! Not all mocked for some believed and they came to the temple.

I'm reminded of the time when we had this great awakening in the 18th century as it went out throughout the land. Benjamin Franklin said 'It looked like the whole world was going to church' and that's exactly what happens. I'm just being vulnerable here. When you get saved you go to church. You don't go to church to get saved. You go to church because you're saved. They don't consult their calendars to see if they have anything better to do because there is nothing better. If you have company and they don't want to go then tell them you will see them in about an hour and half and then you go to church. Tell them you'd love for them to come with you. They don't consult their children. God's people who know God's Word who love their God go to church. I'm not talking about the building but the assembling of the people wherever it is. When the church gathers it worships and there is nothing more important to them.

In fact, it so fills the people here with Hezekiah that they ask for another seven days of it. All of it was being used to the glory and majesty of God and it filled them up to overflowing and it doesn't fill us up. The answer is not a preacher to do handstands or a program or entertainment. The answer is that God so filled us up that His praise is coming out of us and we can't help but do it because we long to praise Him. When that happens then we'll send a message out to the world. That is what is happening there with Hezekiah and Israel, the people of God.

Here is the takeaway. When God's people turn from their sins to return to their God then God turns to His people with revival presence and power. This is what was happening with Hezekiah and the people of God. I want to give you some essentials just to help us understand this a little bit better. Revival awaits our repentance. As I said earlier, God don't bless ugly. We can't hold onto idols and expect God to bless us. If God is going to bless us it is because He first

blesses us to kill our idols. God saves idolaters but not for them to continue their idolatry. God destroys idols and idolatry and He saves idolaters from it. When He saves us we turn from it to Him. Am I saying revival won't come until we turn? That is exactly what I'm saying and we won't turn until we seek His face. We won't seek His face until we pray. We won't pray until we humble ourselves. When we humble ourselves, pray and seek His face then that radical repentance of turning from our sins to our God will send God's reviving power which has already begun.

The second essential is revival awaits Gospel proclamation. Why? It is because repentance is impossible without trust in God and it is a fabrication without obedience to God. We will never turn until we hear the Good News that God is gracious and glorious through the Passover Lamb Jesus Christ. We get to hear the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and not the One who sprinkles blood over the doorposts. When you hear that you know you have a God that is gracious and glorious so you can trust Him with your life, your family, your children, your job and with everything. I trust Him and that sets me free. He forgives me of the penalty of sin, emancipates me from the power of sin, is liberating me from the practice of sin and when He does that I am not only free to trust Him but I am now free to follow Him. I'm not talking about perfection for I could show you places where Hezekiah really slipped up. God's people are ordinary and are not perfect but they have a heart for God and when you have a heart for God you not only trust in Him but you also seek to obey Him. We you don't there is something in our soul that is convicting because we want to give pleasure to our God who has saved us from our sins. If there is no heart for obedience then our repentance would be a fabrication before God.

The third essential is revival repentance begins with revival leaders. I'm not sure if I have shined a light on you but I have tried to do it lovingly, graciously and truthfully as Hezekiah would do it but now I have to turn the light on me. The people worshipped, destroyed idols, and consecrated themselves to the Lord, why? It was because the Levites had and why had the Levites done it? It was because Hezekiah did it. We not only need to know that God does this in the lives of His people but He begins with leaders – pastoral staff, senior leaders, elders and deacons. They trust God and are intentionally obedient to Him. It reminds me of the words of the hymn that says; Trust and obey, for there's no other way, to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.

The final essential is revival can transform in days what sin has destroyed for years. Sometimes revivals are long term. Sometimes they are gloriously, powerfully seen and in a few days restore what the locusts have eaten for years and it is because the Lamb of God who allows us to destroy idolatry but He saves idolaters.

One might be thinking that I said 'revival comes down' and so if I repent then God will bring a revival? Yes but let me give you some good news. The reason we repent is one because God gives us leaders which was a gift from God. Number two it is because God works in the leaders lives before He worked in you life which was a gift of God. Number three has to do what Peter said when he saw the Gentiles being converted which was, 'how can we deny what God is doing if He granted them repentance.' II Timothy 2:24–26 says [24] *And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil,* [25] *correcting his opponents with gentleness. **God may perhaps grant them repentance** leading to a knowledge of the truth,* [26] *and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.*

So if you and I are repenting do you know the story behind the story? It is that God gave us the ability to turn so we praise Him. So we turn and then God turns with His felt sense of His presence and power in our life. Whenever I say this I know there is going to be a mixed response for some will mock, some will ignore, some will be indifferent but some of us will give a glad heart to and turn from the emptiness of idolatry to the glorious blessing of a God who loves us and the church will get open for business again, God's business, because we mean business. And it's because God has done business with our soul.

The last revival we had pretty much petered out in the 1880s. We are just like them about 120 years downstream. They killed kids back then so do you want to see how many we have killed? They had that kind of pornography and look at what we produce today. We can't even sell a hamburger without a pornographic ad to go with it. They worshipped vain idols and watch what we do today but there is a God who is gracious and if we turn to Him and mean business then we can be open for business. Then we'll see God do something, maybe even in weeks what we have seen destroyed for 120 years and He'll get all the glory but can you imagine all the joy that we will have? Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, not to be overly illustrative I'm just simply asking as we do business with You, would You roll these heavy laden lives just like those locomotives I used to watch as a kid, up on the roundtable of Your grace and turn us from our self-preoccupation to the glorious vocation of knowing and loving our God? Would it be seen in our love for worship that is pleasing to You? Would it be seen in our commitment to tell others that Your church is open for business because we have a God whose business is to save them? We can bring them to You as they see in us the imperfect but the triumphant transforming work of Your grace and that's what I would ask You, Father. If you want to pray with someone today please call us at (205) 776-5200 and know it will be in confidence. May our God be exalted and I pray this in Jesus' Name, O Fount of every blessing, Amen.

Power Point

REVIVAL

Revival is an extraordinary work of God's grace through ordinary people in ordinary places by ordinary means with extraordinary consequences for God's glory.

GOD-SENT REVIVAL EVIDENCES

1. God-centered worship.
2. Gospel Harvests.

GOD'S DESIGN FOR REVIVAL – II CHRONICLES 7:14 (THE TEMPLE PRAYER)

1. Humble themselves
Revival comes down to lift God's people up when they bow down to lift Him up.
2. Pray
Revival awaits Revival prayer and will not come without it.
3. Seek my face
A Revival relationship with God is a real relationship—a reciprocal relationship.
4. Turn from their wicked ways

THE HEZEKIAH REVIVAL

LIFE TAKEAWAY

When God's people turn from their sins to return to their God, then God turns to His people with revival presence and power.

LIFE TAKEAWAY—ESSENTIALS

1. Revival awaits our repentance.
2. Repentance is impossible without trust in God and it is a fabrication without obedience to God.
3. Revival repentance begins with revival leaders.
4. Revivals can transform in days what sin has destroyed for years.
5. The repentance that brings revivals, like revivals, comes from God by His grace.