

8. Restoration of Godliness

December 4, 2014

Some people who are good with their hands in carpentry or auto machinery love to restore old antique houses or vehicles. Whether it is a house or a car, the first step of restoration is taking garbage out of the object. You can paint and decorate everything all you want, but without removing the garbage out of the object first, you just have a nicely decorated and painted piece of junk.

Whether it is a temple, a church building or a person's heart, the garbage must be removed, if we are going to have spiritual restoration for the Lord. Tonight we are going to learn the proper way of restoration of Godliness from what king Hezekiah did.

A. UNFAITHFUL KING AHAZ

2 Chronicles 28:1-3 Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem; and he did not do what was right in the sight of the Lord, as his father David had done. 2 For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made molded images for the Baals. 3 He burned incense in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, and burned his children in the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel.

2 Chronicles 28:6 For Pekah the son of Remaliah killed one hundred and twenty thousand in Judah in one day, all valiant men, because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers.

2 Chronicles 28:16 At the same time King Ahaz sent to the kings of Assyria to help him.

2 Chronicles 28:22 Now in the time of his distress King Ahaz became increasingly unfaithful to the Lord. This is that King Ahaz.

King Ahaz was just a horrible king, a polar opposite of his father Jotham and his grandfather Uzziah. He had to be his own man and became a terrible ungodly king. How terrible? Terrible enough to sacrifice his own children to idol for his own benefits.

A pagan idol Molech had a pair of arms sticking out like you see in this drawing. The ancient people would heat this idol up with fire until it was glowing in red, then they would take their newborn babies, place them on the arms of the idol, and watch them burn to death. The Lord clearly forbade child sacrifice to Molech in Leviticus 18:21; 20:2-5; 2 Kings 23:10; Jeremiah 32:35.

Speaking of child sacrifice, do you know that people still do child sacrifices for their convenience's sake all around the world today? Yes, I am talking about abortion. In their justification they argue that it is about women's right. But in reality, it is about their convenience and no responsibility.

From the aftermath of the sexual revolution of the 60's and 70's, it became a common thing for a young girl or woman to have an abortion for their convenience. To them, they didn't want to have the responsibility of carrying a baby for 9 months and raising that precious life, so they offered the lives of babies to their god of pleasure, burned in abortionist's saline solution. The abortion advocates and liberals are not as civilized as they think.

One person's sin can affect those who are around that person. It gets much worse when a leader is in sin deeply like this king Ahaz. He led them into idolatry and they paid for it with the lives of 120,000 people and more.

In v16, we see Ahaz asking help from Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria to come help him by giving him money. But the Assyrian king took the money and didn't help. It is typical of what Satan does to humans. He makes us think that he is the best buddy and more than willing to help while the Lord is silent. But when the time comes, he leaves us high and dry like this Assyrian king.

Instead of repenting, Ahaz got worse than before. Listen, times of trial and distress do not necessarily drive people closer to God. Sometimes people allow such distresses to drive them away from God. Ahaz was digging deeper himself into trouble against the Lord. Not a good idea, Ahaz.

B. THE RESTORATION BEGAN BY HEZEKIAH

2 Chronicles 29:3-5 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 Then he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them in the East Square, 5 and said to them: "Hear me, Levites! Now sanctify yourselves, sanctify the house of the Lord God of your fathers, and carry out the rubbish from the holy place.

2 Chronicles 29:10 Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel, that His fierce wrath may turn away from us.

2 Chronicles 29:15 And they gathered their brethren, sanctified themselves, and went according to the commandment of the king, at the words of the Lord, to cleanse the house of the Lord.

The name Hezekiah means "the Lord strengthens," and during his reign of twenty-nine years from 715 B.C. to 687 B.C., King Hezekiah needed God's strength to accomplish all that he did. He was one of the few kings who actually removed the high places and put an end to idol worship in the hills. He restored temple worship and encouraged the people from both Judah and Israel to come to the temple in Jerusalem and worship the Lord.

One thing we must keep in mind is that the sequence of events in Hezekiah's life as recorded in Scripture is not strictly chronological. Most Bible students agree that the events recorded in Isaiah 38 and 39 – his illness and his welcome of the Babylonian ambassadors – actually happened before the Assyrian invasion that were mentioned in Isaiah 36-37. Since we have already studied about these portions, we are going to skip chapter 32 of 2 Chronicles.

King Hezekiah wisely noticed that the abandoning of the temple worship by the Northern Kingdom Israel people had led to their captivity, and the defiling and neglecting of the temple by his own father Ahaz had brought discipline to Judah, including invasions by Syria, Edom, and Philistia. The worship of the Lord in the temple was at the heart of the Jewish nation, and if that was not done right, everything else was not done right.

I want you guys to notice the steps King Hezekiah took:

- 1) **Opening the doors of the temple – v3**
- 2) **Bringing in the priests and Levites back to the temple – v4**
- 3) **Carrying out the rubbish from the Holy Place of the temple – v5**
- 4) **Making a covenant with the Lord to follow Him – v10**

5) Sanctifying themselves according to the Word of God and cleansing the house of the Lord – v15

Restoration cannot happen with garbage and debris inside and outside. We have to clear out everything first. If we are to have revival in the Lord's work, we must begin with cleansing. Over the years, individuals and churches can gradually accumulate a great deal of "religious garbage" in their denominational rules and regulations as well as religious rituals while ignoring the essentials of spiritual worship. Revival can only start from the house of God first.

1 Peter 4:17 For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

Please listen to me carefully. It's not by doing some unique new things that the world offers so that we can experience new blessings from the Lord, but by returning to the "godly and right things" of the Lord and doing them well. If we confess our sins, obey the commandments of the Lord from the Bible, pray to the Lord for His will over us, and offer ourselves as living sacrifices, the Lord will see and hear and will send His blessing.

C. RESTORATION OF PASSOVER

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 Lord at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover to the Lord God of Israel.

2 Chronicles 30:10 So the runners passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, as far as Zebulun; but they laughed at them and mocked them.

2 Chronicles 30:18-20 For a multitude of the people, many from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet they ate the Passover contrary to what was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, "May the good Lord provide atonement for everyone 19 who prepares his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he is not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary." 20 And the Lord listened to Hezekiah and healed the people.

King Hezekiah invited the people of Ephraim and Manasseh to come and join them at the temple in Jerusalem for the Passover. He did this out of his genuine heart without any ulterior motive.

Some of you who are keen with the ancient Israel history would say, "Hey preacher, don't you think that the king of the Northern Kingdom Israel would stop what Hezekiah was doing?" My answer is, "Probably not." Let me explain. Since the division of the Southern and Northern Kingdom for two centuries, this would have been prohibited. But at this point, the Northern Kingdom king Hosea was a mere puppet of Assyria's control and he was practically powerless to interfere with what Hezekiah was doing.

In v10, there always are mockers against the truth and the Word of God. They are shortsighted and ignorant people who are rejecting the truth of God for the sake of their own carnal desires. They don't make fun of the people like Stephen Hawking, British physicist Stephen Hawking warns that the development of intelligent machines could pose a major threat to humanity. According to the interview with BBC in December 3, 2014, Hawking warned that the development of full artificial intelli -

gence, a.k.a. AI, could spell the end of the human race. I think that he's been watching too many sci-fi movies. But at the same time this brilliant scientist is absolutely ignorant in the truth of God by rejecting and mocking it.

1 Corinthians 2:14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Contrary to these mockers, the remnant of the northern tribes wanted to worship the Lord in the temple in Jerusalem, but they naturally did not know anything about the proper preparation for Passover due to no godly worship in the Northern Kingdom Israel for over 200 years.

But Hezekiah knew that God was concerned about the hearts of these worshippers and not the details of meeting ceremonial requirements, and he prayed that God would cleanse and accept them. Of course, the Lord answered his prayer, because it's the heart that He wants and not mere religious ritual. If there were any legalists in the congregation, they must have been very upset, but their attitude would only rob them of God's blessing.

If God's people today would prepare their hearts for worship with as much care as they prepare their "Sunday best apparel," the Lord would send His blessings on His church.

D. RESTORATION OF THEIR HEARTS

2 Chronicles 31:4-12 Moreover he commanded the people who dwelt in Jerusalem to contribute support for the priests and the Levites, that they might devote themselves to the Law of the Lord. 5 As soon as the commandment was circulated, the children of Israel brought in abundance the firstfruits of grain and wine, oil and honey, and of all the produce of the field; and they brought in abundantly the tithe of everything. 6 And the children of Israel and Judah, who dwelt in the cities of Judah, brought the tithe of oxen and sheep; also the tithe of holy things which were consecrated to the Lord their God they laid in heaps. 7 In the third month they began laying them in heaps, and they finished in the seventh month. 8 And when Hezekiah and the leaders came and saw the heaps, they blessed the Lord and His people Israel. 9 Then Hezekiah questioned the priests and the Levites concerning the heaps. 10 And Azariah the chief priest, from the house of Zadok, answered him and said, "Since the people began to bring the offerings into the house of the Lord, we have had enough to eat and have plenty left, for the Lord has blessed His people; and what is left is this great abundance." 11 Now Hezekiah commanded them to prepare rooms in the house of the Lord, and they prepared them. 12 Then they faithfully brought in the offerings, the tithes, and the dedicated things;

Cononiah the Levite had charge of them, and Shimei his brother was the next.

There are only a few occasions in the Bible that people brought their tithe and offerings more than what the tabernacle, the temple, and the church needed. I wonder what that is like.

By the mercy of God, our church pay bills on time, but not in the point of the situation where we have more than we need. Obviously many people in our congregation do not obey the Lord when it comes to tithing and offering. It is their loss and their own robbery against their own blessings from the Lord. I am a firm believer of measuring the spiritual maturity of a believer with the percentage of one's tithe out of his income, because it is a matter of faith in the Lord who provides.

E. APPLICATIONS

- 1) Restoration of godliness for individuals, churches, or nations starts at the hearts of believers.

- 2) Unless we remove defiled things out of our hearts and become obedient to God's Word, revival cannot happen in our hearts.