

~Other Speakers A-F: Joseph Benson:

Verse 1

2 Chronicles 30:1. Hezekiah sent to all Israel " To all the persons of the ten tribes who were settled in his kingdom, as well as to those of the tribe of Judah. And wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh " To all the remainder of the ten tribes, (2 Chronicles 30:5,) here expressed by the names of Ephraim and Manasseh, as elsewhere by the name of Ephraim only. But he names these two tribes, because they were nearest to his kingdom, and a great number of them had long since, and from time to time, joined themselves to the kingdom of Judah, 2 Chronicles 15:8-9. That they should come to the house of the Lord " Admonishing them of their duty to God, and persuading them to comply with it.

Verse 2

2 Chronicles 30:2. The king had taken counsel, &c. " The law directed that the passover should be celebrated on the fourteenth day of the first month: but as it was found impossible to get all things in readiness against that time, it was thought more advisable to adjourn it to the fourteenth day of the next month, than to defer it till the next year. And for this they had some encouragement, as it was allowed in the law, that in case any man was unclean by reason of a dead body, or was on a journey afar off, at the proper time of the celebration of the passover, he might eat it on the fourteenth day of the second month, Numbers 9:10-11. And what was an indulgence to particular persons, they judged, might be allowed to the whole congregation of Israel.

Verse 3

2 Chronicles 30:3. For they could not keep it at that time " Which God had appointed for it, both because the temple was not then purified and prepared, and also for two other reasons, which he here adds. The priests had not sanctified themselves sufficiently " To wit, in such a manner as was fit, nor in such numbers as were necessary for the slaying and offering of so many thousands of paschal-offerings, as appears, because they were not sufficient for those offerings, which were comparatively few, 2 Chronicles 29:32-34. Neither had the people gathered themselves together, &c. " As they used, and ought to do, at that time, from all places: which now they could not do, because neither was the matter agreed upon, nor were the people summoned thither, till the proper time was past.

Verse 5

2 Chronicles 30:5. So they established a decree " They fixed a resolution; to make proclamation throughout all Israel " Hezekiah, it is certain, had no right to invite Hoshea's subjects to repair to Jerusalem, to the celebration of his passover; yet for the doing of this we may well presume that he had encouragement from Hoshea himself; who, as to the matter of religion, has a better character in Scripture than any of his predecessors, from the time of the division of the two kingdoms. But the truth was, that both the golden calves, which had caused this political separation, were now taken away; that of Dan by Tiglath-pileser, and that of Beth-el by his son Shalmaneser; and therefore some of the apostate Israelites, being thus deprived of their idols, began to return to the Lord, and to go up to Jerusalem to worship, some time before Hezekiah made them this invitation to his passover. See Prideaux and Dodd. They had not done it of a long time, &c., as it was written " In such a manner as God had commanded them to keep it. Indeed, the ten tribes had never kept it since the division of the kingdom by Jeroboam; at least, not in the way in which Moses had prescribed, being hindered by his threatening interdicts from going to Jerusalem; where only it could be kept according to the law. And as for Judah, it appears, from 2 Chronicles 30:26, that they had never kept this feast with such solemnity since the time of Solomon.

Verse 6

2 Chronicles 30:6. So the posts " Hebrew, *x"x"x!x™x**, haratsim, the runners; went with the letters " Expresses were sent throughout all the tribes of Israel, with memorials, earnestly pressing the people to take this opportunity of returning to God, from whom they had revolted. Saying, Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the Lord, &c. " In these letters Hezekiah discovers great concern both for the honour of God and for the welfare of the neighbouring kingdom, the prosperity of which he seems earnestly to have desired, though he not only received no toll, tribute, or custom from it, but it had often, and not long since, been vexatious to his kingdom. This was indeed rendering good for evil. And he will return to the remnant of you " You are but a remnant, narrowly escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria, (namely, Pul and Tiglath-pileser,) who have carried your brethren away captive. And therefore it concerns you to put yourselves under the protection of the God of your fathers, that you may not be quite swallowed up: and if you turn to him in the way of duty, he will turn to you in a way of mercy.

Verse 8

2 Chronicles 30:8. Be not stiff-necked, as your fathers were â€” A metaphorical expression, taken from refractory oxen, which will not go forward, but endeavour to withdraw their necks and shoulders from the yoke, and go backward. But yield yourselves unto the Lord â€” Hebrew, Give the hand to him, that is, submit yourselves to him, by obeying his command, and renew your covenant with him: both which things were wont to be done among men, by the ceremony of giving the hand; and enter into his sanctuary â€” Come to worship in his temple at Jerusalem; which he hath sanctified for ever â€” Hath hallowed, not for a transient and temporary use, but as long as the state and church of Israel shall have a being, whatsoever alterations may happen therein.

Verse 9

2 Chronicles 30:9. Your brethren and your children shall find compassion, &c. â€” You may hope that he will turn again the captivity of your brethren that are carried away, and restore them to their own land; bringing them first to true repentance, according to the prayer of Solomon, 1 Kings 8:47; and 2 Chronicles 7:14; and then causing them to be pitied of those that have carried them away captive, according to the declaration of David, Psalms 106:46.

Verse 10

2 Chronicles 30:10. They laughed them to scorn, and mocked them â€” Having been long accustomed to serve other gods, the hearts of the generality of the ten tribes were so hardened, that they scoffed at this most gracious invitation to repentance. And what wonder that Hezekiahâ€™s messengers were thus despitely used by this apostate race, when even Godâ€™s messengers, his servants the prophets, who produced undeniable credentials from him, had been and still were worse treated. These Israelites, however, in a little time, paid dear for thus rejecting the counsel of God against themselves. In about two years and a half after their refusing this grace, Shalmaneser, the king of Assyria, invaded the country, and laid siege to Samaria, their capital city, and, at the end of three years more, took it, and carried the whole nation away captive into Assyria and Media, because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord their God, but transgressed his covenant, and all that Moses, the servant of the Lord, commanded, and would not hear nor do it, 2 Kings 18:9-12.

Verse 11-12

2 Chronicles 30:11-12. Nevertheless, divers of Asher, &c. â€” Here is not so much as one of Ephraim mentioned; yet some of that tribe are spoken of afterward as partaking of the passover, 2 Chronicles 30:18. It is likely that these, although at first they mocked at the message, yet afterward, upon consideration, followed the example of their brethren. In Judah the hand of the Lord was to give them one heart â€” God, by the power of his grace, inclined their hearts to a unanimous compliance with his and the kingâ€™s will. And this is mentioned as the reason of this wonderful change wrought in these men, who had lately been given up to idolatry.

Verse 14

2 Chronicles 30:14. They arose and took away the altars, &c. â€” As soon as they came to Jerusalem, they began to show their zeal against idolatry, by throwing down the altars that Ahaz had erected in high places, either for sacrifice or burning incense, which were very many, (2 Chronicles 28:24,) stamping them to powder, and then casting them into the brook Kidron. Thus, before they kept the feast, they purged out the old leaven.

Verse 15

2 Chronicles 30:15. The priests and Levites were ashamed â€” Their negligence and remissness being upbraided by the general forwardness of the people. The zeal which we observe in others, should make us ashamed of our own coldness, and quicken us not only to do our duty, but to do it with our might.

Verse 16-17

2 Chronicles 30:16-17. The priests sprinkled the blood â€” Of the sacrifices upon the altar; which they received of the hand of the Levites â€” Who killed and flayed the sacrifices, which the priests, if they had been sanctified, should have done, as was observed on 2 Chronicles 29:34. For there were many in the congregation that were not sanctified â€” Abundance of people that came to keep this passover were not clean according to the law, and therefore many more sacrifices were to be offered for their cleansing than would otherwise have been necessary: which was one reason why the Levites were employed in the work, for the priests were not of a number sufficient to perform this duty. The reader must observe that besides the paschal-lamb, the offering of all the sacrifices, which were appointed to accompany it, are included in keeping the passover.

Verse 18

2 Chronicles 30:18. A multitude of the people had not cleansed themselves “ Either they did not know, after such a long night of ignorance and superstition, what ceremonies were required, in order to their purification, or they had not time to use them. Yet having an eager and pious desire to commemorate their wonderful deliverance out of the Egyptian bondage, they were permitted, in their uncleanness, to eat the passover, lest they should be discouraged if they were denied it, in this their return to the true religion. But Hezekiah prayed for them “ It was his zeal that had called them together in such haste, and he would not that they should fare the worse for being straitened for time in their preparation. He therefore thought himself concerned to be an intercessor for those that ate the passover otherwise than it was written. And he had confidence that God was so gracious that he would not, on account of the omission of some prescribed ceremony, be wroth with men whose hearts were upright before him.

Verse 19

2 Chronicles 30:19. That prepareth his heart to seek God “ The great thing required in our attendance on God in his ordinances is, that we prepare our hearts to seek him; that the inward man, the spirit, be engaged; that we make heart-work of our religion. All is nothing without this. Hezekiah does not pray that this might be dispensed with, or that the want of other things might be pardoned or overlooked, where this was not. For this is the one thing needful, and God is not, cannot be sought acceptably, without it. But he prays that where this was, other deficiencies and omissions, especially such as were of an external and ritual nature, might be pardoned. Though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary “ With that purification which was required of them that came into God’s sanctuary. So he calls it, to distinguish it from that internal purity which they are here acknowledged to have.

Verse 20

2 Chronicles 30:20. The Lord hearkened to Hezekiah “ Was greatly pleased with his pious concern for the congregation; and, in answer to his prayer, healed the people “ That is, pardoned this their sin, and accepted them and their services, as if they had been clean.

Verse 21

2 Chronicles 30:21. The Levites and the priests praised the Lord day by day “ All the seven days they praised him with songs and musical instruments, thus expressing their own, and exciting one another’s joy in God, and thankfulness to him. Much of our time in our religious meetings should be spent in praising God.

Verse 22

2 Chronicles 30:22. Hezekiah spake comfortably unto all the Levites “ Commended them for their care and diligence, and thereby encouraged them to a cheerful and diligent attendance upon their holy ministrations, and to continue to instruct the people in their duty, promising, it is likely, to reward them for what they had already done. That taught the good knowledge of the Lord “ Who by their office were to instruct and build up the people in the knowledge and fear of God; which is mentioned as the cause of his respect and kindness to them. Princes and magistrates, by encouraging faithful and laborious preachers of God’s word, greatly promote the kingdom of God.

Verse 23

2 Chronicles 30:23. They kept other seven days with gladness “ Not in the same manner as they had done the former, but in the solemn worship of God, by sacrifices, and prayers, and praises, and public instructions of that great congregation, in the good knowledge of the Lord; which was very necessary for the people, after so long and dismal a night of ignorance, superstition, and idolatry.

Verse 24

2 Chronicles 30:24. Hezekiah did give a thousand bullocks, and seven thousand sheep “ First to God, to whom the parts appointed were offered in a way of thanksgiving; and then to the people, who feasted upon the relics, as the offerer used to do in peace-offerings: and Hezekiah, who was the offerer, gave away his right in the remains of the sacrifices to the people. Which generosity is the more considerable, because it was in the beginning of his reign, when he found the exchequer empty; and when he had been at great expense about cleansing and refitting the temple, and making preparations for this great feast. By this great liberality of the king and princes, God was honoured, the joy of the festival was kept up, and the strangers were encouraged to come again to Jerusalem.

Verse 27

2 Chronicles 30:27. Then the priests the Levites arose, and blessed the people “ That is, those of the Levites who were priests also, for to them only this work belonged, 1 Chronicles 23:13. In performing this office, they were both the people’s mouth to God, by way of prayer, and God’s mouth to the people, by way of

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promise; for the blessing included both. And in it they testified both their desire of the people's welfare, and their dependance upon God and the word of his grace, to which they commended them. And their prayer came up to his holy dwelling-place " The voice of the priests, when they thus blessed the people, as God had commanded, was heard in heaven. God said amen to their prayer, and perhaps gave some sensible token of the ratification of the blessing which they had pronounced. The prayer that comes up to heaven in a cloud of incense, will come down again to this earth in showers of blessings.