

SONG AND TABLE

2 Chronicles 29-30

I. REVIEW

- A. We live in a time of history where the people of God are in need of a significant renewal. All around us we are experiencing an ever-increasing full-frontal assault on the things of God and his natural order for creation.
- B. At the same time, we are experiencing one of the fastest and most comprehensive transitions within the church as people are leaving, deconstructing, and walking away from Jesus, while the church is experiencing significant aspects of discipline and chastening. Over the next decade, the church will only experience an increase to the difficulties we face and the need to understand how to live as faithful witnesses to Christ in the midst of the new world we live in.
- C. As we have preached through 2 Chronicles, we have seen and emphasized the reality that God has given his people a pattern for pursuing renewal as we walk through seasons of hardship, opposition, and even chastening.

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 (2 Chr 7.14)

- D. Last week, we highlighted the story of Jehoshaphat as a portrait of the necessity to pursue God's means to see God's renewing power, with a specific focus on the weapons of warfare that God has given to his people. The two specific areas we looked at last week were *worship* and the *word of God*.
- E. Over the next two Sundays, we are going to look at the two major revivals at the end of 2 Chronicles and show how each one of these revivals emphasizes one of these 'weapons' for waging war for renewal.
- F. The revivals under King Hezekiah (2 Chr 29-32) and King Josiah (2 Chr 34-35) come in the darkest time of Judah's history and are demonstrations of God's desire to bring revival and refreshing among his people.

II. THE CONTEXT OF HEZEKIAH'S REIGN

- A. From the time of Jehoshaphat's reign to Hezekiah's is a period of nearly 150 years. The history of Judah between the two kings is one of growing chaos, unrest, and rebellion. This was introduced by Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram (the one given in a marriage alliance with Ahab's daughter, Athaliah).
- B. In 2 Chronicles 21, we are told that Jehoram kills his entire family and introduces the worship of Ba'al among the people of Judah. Because of the unlawful marriage alliance, the line of David is nearly destroyed, and the apostasy of Ahab (the king of the Northern Kingdom) is introduced among Judah.
- C. Things continue to take a turn for the worse after the death of Jehoram, as his son Ahaziah reigns for one year and walks in the wicked ways of Ahab and abandons God. After his one-year reign, he is killed and his mother (Athaliah) sets out to kill every member of the royal line (seeking to kill her own grandchildren!).
- D. Through the courage of a priest named Jehoiada, one of Ahaziah's sons — a child named Joash — is hidden away for six years while Athaliah reigns as a usurping, pagan queen over the kingdom of Judah. After six years, Jehoiada raises a resistance against Athaliah and installs Joash as the rightful Davidic king over Judah — ushering in a season of renewal among God's people, yet again.
- E. From the time of Joash, each king (Uzziah and Jotham) possessed moments of faithfulness and moments of rebellion to God's ways.

- F. In 2 Chronicles 28, we read of Hezekiah's father, Ahaz — who is the most wicked king in Judah's history to this point. Ahaz introduces the most vile demon worship throughout Judah and ultimately seeks to enter into a military alliance with Assyria (a growing international threat that led to the exile of the Northern tribes in 722 BC) by giving away the temple treasures. The wickedness of Ahaz descends so far that he shuts up the house of the Lord, barring entrance, and establishes altars to idols throughout Jerusalem.

¹Ahaz 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 metal images for the Baals, ³and he made offerings in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom and burned his sons as an offering, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel. ⁴And he sacrificed and made offerings on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree. (2 Chr 28.1-4)

²⁰So Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came against him and afflicted him instead of strengthening him. ²¹For 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. ²²In the time of his distress he became yet more faithless to the Lord — this same king Ahaz. ²³For he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus that had defeated him... ²⁴And 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. (2 Chr 28.20-26)

- G. At the beginning of Hezekiah's reign, he opens the doors of the temple and repairs the house of the Lord. Immediately he cleanses (sanctifies) the house of the Lord, the priests, and the vessels of the service (2 Chr 29.1-19).
- H. Hezekiah then reinstates the orders of Levitical worship in the house of the Lord to lead God's people in giving pleasing offerings of worship and praise to the Lord (2 Chr 29.20-36), and he consecrates God's people to celebrate the Passover feast (2 Chr 30).
- I. All of these things happened in the midst of the international crisis of the growing Assyrian threat. The restoration of worship among God's people under Hezekiah prepared the people of God to receive and experience his miraculous deliverance as Sennacherib (king of Assyria) came against Jerusalem (2 Chr 32).

III. THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE

- A. As the people of God, we must be reminded that God has given means to his church to wage war against the kingdom of darkness and see his kingdom expand. In order to faithfully pursue these means, we need *faith to believe that these God-ordained means will ultimately accomplish God's ends.*
- B. We are often tempted to exchange God's means for "earthly" means because we fail to understand how "spiritual" means can accomplish tangible ends.
- C. Paul exhorts the Corinthians to rightly assess the war before them and employ the means that are given by God to further his purpose.

⁴For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. ⁵We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, ⁶being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete. (2 Cor 10.4-6)

- D. We must ask God, in his grace, to give us faith and courage to pursue the ways of transformation and renewal that he has outlined for us in his word. To run after godly ends without pursuing the means that he has given us will end in futility, compromise, and greater dilution of God's truth. However, when God's people pursue God's means in a spirit of faith and obedience, the gates of hell cannot withstand as he drives back darkness, brings people into his kingdom, and releases his power through his church.

¹⁸on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (Matt 16.18)

IV. WORSHIP: THE SONG OF THE LORD

- A. At the heart of Hezekiah's reforms is the reestablishing of Levitical worship at the center of God's people. This structure was given to the kings of Judah as a perpetual commandment of David given to him by the Lord through the prophetic word of Nathan and Gad the seer.

²⁵And 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. (2 Chr 29.25)

- B. One of the most unique aspects of David's life is his revelation of worship in the place of God's kingdom economy. He was given a unique revelation of how God has ordered his creation and sought to bring the whole of his life and earthly pursuits in agreement with this order. This included building the tabernacle (and preparing the temple) according to the pattern that was revealed to him by God.

¹¹Then David gave Solomon his son the plan of the vestibule of the temple, and of its houses, its treasuries, its upper rooms, and its inner chambers, and of the room for the mercy seat; ¹²and the plan of all that he had in mind for the courts of the house of the LORD, all the surrounding chambers, the treasuries of the house of God, and the treasuries for dedicated gifts; ¹³for the divisions of the priests and of the Levites, and all the work of the service in the house of the LORD; for all the vessels for the service in the house of the LORD... ¹⁹"All this he made clear to me in writing from the hand of the LORD, all the work to be done according to the plan." (1 Chr 28.11-19)

- C. This demonstrates that God *desires to be worshiped* and has designed his *kingdom to be established through the worship of his people*.

³Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. (Ps 22.3)

²³But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. (John 4.24)

- D. If the heart of God's people (as his holy dwelling place in this world) is to live in a posture of engagement with him (communion) in the place of agreement with his person (worship) and his purposes (prayer), we must see one of the most profound gifts for facilitating and stewarding this reality is the gift of music and singing.
- E. Because of this, we desire to build and cultivate a *vibrant, healthy, and anointed worship ministry at the heart of our church*. Anointed worship is a summary statement for a commitment to the truth that music and song provide important avenues for the people of God to experience the presence and life of God as they minister to him in an atmosphere of anointed ministry.
1. *Music and song*: God has ordained and given singing and music as important ways to engage the whole of our person in the reality of worship.
 2. *Presence*: the belief that the reality of God's *immediacy* (his immanence, his presence) is an essential element of Christian worship. Because of this, we pursue a culture of worship that seeks to (1) invite believers to respond to him with this understanding; and (2) leads with expectation and clarity toward stewarding God's active presence among us.
 3. *Ministry to the Lord*: The New Testament gives us a portrait of the "priesthood of all believers". One of the most fundamental aspects of the priestly ministry is the *primacy* of ministry to the Lord. However, we often exclusively speak of the priesthood of all believers with regard to ministry to one another.
 4. *Anointed ministry*: belief that individuals are empowered by God's Spirit to lead his people with skill and excellence. This requires a (1) framework for understanding; (2) a model of *how we lead* and respond together; and (3) training of worship leaders, singers, and musicians to facilitate and lead with boldness and confidence.

V. WORSHIP: THE TABLE OF THE LORD

- A. The second important aspect of Hezekiah's renewals was the reinstatement of the Passover feast among God's people. The Passover feast was to be the annual remembrance and rehearsal of the truth that God had provided salvation for them in the Exodus.
- B. In the Passover, the people of God were to slaughter a lamb without blemish, apply its blood to their doorposts, and remember the provision of the Lord when he passed over their houses and did not bring judgment upon their families. The Passover was therefore a remembrance feast that the people of God were to participate in to remind them of the glorious salvation of the Lord (Exod 12).
- C. In the New Testament, Jesus fulfills the Passover by offering himself as the sacrificial lamb without blemish.

²⁹[John] said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1.29)

¹³if the blood of goats and bulls... sanctify for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our consciences from dead works to serve the living God. (Hebrews 9.13-14)

- D. Jesus gives his church a new "Passover" meal to celebrate when they gather.

¹⁴And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. ¹⁵And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." ¹⁷And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. ¹⁸For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." ¹⁹And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁰And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood." (Luke 22.14-20)

- E. Each week we celebrate at the Lord's table to affirm several things:

1. *Christ's death*: Each week we signify the death of Christ through the elements received at the table. The broken bread signifies the breaking of Christ's body and the wine poured out signifies his shed blood. Paul declares that the simple act of coming to the Lord's table declares the death of Christ (1 Cor 11.26).
2. *Our receiving of the benefits of Christ's death*: Jesus' body was broken for our peace with God and our healing (Isa 53.5) as well as to open the way into the very presence of God (Heb 10.20). Jesus' blood was the ransom price for us (1 Pet 1.19), was shed to forgive our sins (Matt 26.28), and the means to cover us from the wrath of God (Rom 3.25). In coming to the table of the Lord we signify our personal need to freely receive these benefits as a gracious gift from him.
3. *Our spiritual nourishment*: We recognize in the taking of the physical bread and cup that we are in need of spiritual nourishment from the body and blood of Christ. This happens by faith as we take these simple elements, and the Spirit of Jesus nourishes us with eternal life (John 6.53-57).
4. *The unity of Christ's family under his Lordship*: Paul emphasizes that the Lord's Table is to demonstrate and signify our unity with one another (1 Cor 10.17). We have been taken from the domain of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of Christ and come to his banquet table as his redeemed family.
5. *Our marriage betrothal to Christ*: The Lord's Supper is to be a signifier to the reality of the wedding feast that will be experienced in eternity. Each week as we gather as his people to come to this table, we declare the reality that we are the Bride of Christ, living as participants of his heavenly kingdom in the midst of this world and giving witness to the day when we will participate in the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19.6-9). In doing this, we are reminded afresh of his declaration of acceptance and love for us and we reaffirm our devotion to him in a posture of thanksgiving and praise.