

CHAPTER 30

INTRODUCTION TO 2 CHRONICLES 30

Hezekiah having consulted his nobles about keeping the passover the second month, and determined upon it, sent messengers throughout Israel and Judah, to acquaint them with it, at which some mocked, and others seriously attended to it, (^{<480B>}2 Chronicles 30:1-12) so it was celebrated in a solemn manner, though some were not qualified for it according to the law, and for whose pardon Hezekiah prayed, and it was granted, (^{<480B>}2 Chronicles 30:13-20), also the feast of unleavened bread was kept seven days, and a festival of seven days more was likewise observed with great joy and gladness, (^{<480B>}2 Chronicles 30:21-27).

Ver. 1. *And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah,* etc.] Sent messengers to them, not only to the subjects of his own kingdom, Judah, but to all the Israelites that dwelt in it, who were come thither for the sake of religion, and the worship of God:

and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh; which are put for all the ten tribes, as appears from (^{<480B>}2 Chronicles 30:10,11) and are distinguished from Israel in the preceding clause:

that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem; not that he laid his commands upon them to come, they not being his subjects, namely, those of the ten tribes; but he hereby admonished them of their duty, and gave them a kind invitation, signifying the doors of the temple were open for them, and they were welcome to come thither:

to keep the passover unto the Lord God of Israel; to the glory of his name, who was the common Lord of them all, and whose command it was to keep the passover, and that at Jerusalem, and nowhere else, (see ^{<560C>}Deuteronomy 16:1-6).

Ver. 2. *For the king had taken counsel, and his princes, and all the congregation in Jerusalem,* etc.] He and his nobles, and the great sanhedrim or senate of the nation, had consulted together:

to keep the passover in the second month; in the month Ijar, as the Targum, because they could not keep it in the first month, as it should have been kept, according to the law of God, for the reasons following.

Ver. 3. *For they could not keep it at the time*, etc.] In the month Nisan, as the Targum adds, on the fourteenth day of the month, as the law enjoined, because the cleansing of the temple was not finished until the sixteenth day, (see ⁴⁹⁷2 Chronicles 29:17) and, besides this, two other reasons follow:

because the priests had not sanctified themselves sufficiently; that is, a sufficient number of them were not sanctified, to slay all the passover lambs the people that came to the feast would want:

neither had the people gathered themselves together to Jerusalem; they had no notice of it, nor summons for it; and it was required that, at such a time, all the males in the land should appear at Jerusalem; but this custom having been long disused, it required time to acquaint them of the revival of it.

Ver. 4. *And the thing pleased the king, and all the congregation.*] They all unanimously agreed to it, and determined it should be done.

Ver. 5. *So they established a decree, to make proclamation throughout all Israel*, etc.] Passed a vote, that heralds should be appointed and sent to proclaim it throughout the land, that all might know it, and none plead ignorance:

from Beersheba even to Dan; the one being the southern and the other the northern boundary of the whole land of Israel:

that they should come to keep the passover unto the Lord God of Israel at Jerusalem: the only proper place where it was to be kept:

for they had not done it of a long time in such sort as it was written; as prescribed in the law those of the ten tribes had not observed it from the time of the schism of Jeroboam, and many in the kingdom of Judah had neglected it, at least had not kept it as the law required; for the phrase which we render “of a long time” rather respects a multitude of persons than length of time, who had been very deficient in their observance of this ordinance; the Targum is, that

“many had not done it in its time, in Nisan,”

and suggests that it was kept twice this year, first in Nisan by a few, and now again in the second month Ijar, and which is the sense of some Talmudic writers^{f126}, but has no foundation in the text.

Ver. 6. *So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah*, etc.] Both through the kingdoms of the ten tribes of Israel, and the kingdom of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin:

and according to the commandment of the king, saying; so they were ordered by the king to say, when they delivered the letters which by the king's commandment they carried; or this was the purport of them, as follows, especially of those that were sent to the ten tribes:

ye children of Israel, turn again unto the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel; from whom they had revolted, and from whose worship they had departed, by setting up and serving the calves at Dan and Bethel:

and he will return to the remnant of you that are escaped out of the hand of the king of Assyria; Pul and Tiglathpileser, who had both invaded their land, and the latter had taken many of their cities, and carried the inhabitants captive, (^{<1259>}2 Kings 15:19,29).

Ver. 7. *And be not ye like your fathers, and like your brethren, which trespassed against the Lord God of their fathers*, etc.] By worshipping the calves, and neglecting the service of God in the temple at Jerusalem; the Targum is,

“which acted deceitfully with the Word of the Lord their God:”

who therefore gave them up to desolation, as ye see; some part of the land of Israel being already made desolate by the kings of Assyria, which was very visible.

Ver. 8. *Now be ye not stiffnecked, as your fathers were*, etc.] Obstinate and refractory, like heifers unaccustomed to the yoke, which draw back from it, and will not submit to it:

but yield yourselves unto the Lord; be subject unto him, or “give the hand”^{f127} to him, as a token of subjection and homage, or of entering into covenant with him, promising for the future to serve and obey him:

and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever; set apart for worship and service, until the Messiah should come:

and serve the Lord your God; there, in the temple, according to his prescribed will:

that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you; which had already broke out, in suffering the Assyrians to invade their land, and distress them.

Ver. 9. *For if ye turn again unto the Lord*, etc.] To the fear or worship of the Lord, as the Targum:

your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land; who had been carried away by Tiglathpileser, (see ¹³⁴⁶Psalm 106:46),

for the Lord your God is gracious and merciful; so he had proclaimed his name, as they must know, (¹³⁴⁶Exodus 34:6),

and will not turn away his face from you; in wrath and anger; or withdraw his Shecaniah from you, as the Targum; his gracious and glorious presence:

if ye return unto him; his fear and worship, as the same paraphrase.

Ver. 10. *So the posts passed from city to city, through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, even unto Zebulun*, etc.] Through all the ten tribes, not being hindered or forbid by Hoshea king of Israel, who was one of the best of their kings, and was very willing his people should go and worship at Jerusalem if they thought fit; so that they had no excuse to make, as before, that they were forbid by their king going thither; and which it is very probable Hezekiah knew, and therefore took the freedom to send posts throughout his kingdom:

but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them; the messengers that brought the letters, the contents of which they despised, and paid no regard to; this was the behaviour of many, and probably of the greater part, but not of all, as follows.

Ver. 11. *Nevertheless, divers of Asher, and Manasseh, and of Zebulun, humbled themselves*, etc.] Confessed their idolatries and impieties, and expressed sorrow and repentance for them, and were willing to obey the commands of God, and attend his worship and ordinances:

and came to Jerusalem; to keep the passover.

Ver. 12. *Also in Judah the hand of God was to give them one heart*, etc.] To make them unanimous in this service, hearty and willing to it, to a man, which was owing to the power and efficacy of divine grace:

to do the commandment of the king and of the princes, by the word of the Lord; to keep the passover, which they did not only in obedience to their superiors, and their orders, but considering these as agreeable to the word and will of God.

Ver. 13. *And there assembled at Jerusalem much people*, etc.] Out of the several tribes:

to keep the feast of unleavened bread: the passover, which was eaten with unleavened bread:

in the second month: the month Ijar:

a very great congregation; such as had not been seen on such an occasion for many years.

Ver. 14. *And they arose*, etc.] Before they slew and ate the passover:

and took away the altars that were in Jerusalem; which Ahaz had set up in every corner of Jerusalem, to offer sacrifices upon, (~~403~~2 Chronicles 28:24)

and all the altars for incense took they away; for as there were some to offer sacrifices on, there were others to burn incense upon, not to the Lord, but to idols, as the Targum adds:

and cast them into the brook Kidron; having reduced them to dust and ashes, (see ~~406~~2 Chronicles 29:16).

Ver. 15. *Then they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the second month*, etc.] For though they could not keep it in the month in which it should have been kept, for the reasons before given, yet they kept it on the day of the month in which it was observed:

and the priests and the Levites were ashamed; of their negligence and backwardness to service, and to fit themselves for it, when they saw the people so forward and ready to attend to it:

and they sanctified themselves; by washing their bodies and their garments:

and brought in the burnt offerings into the house of the Lord; to be offered up on the altar of burnt offerings, to expiate their own sins, and the sins of the people; though some take these to be the passover offerings; but they were not offered until the fifteenth day, and besides were peace offerings, mentioned (^{<4402>}2 Chronicles 30:22), rather these were the daily sacrifices.

Ver. 16. *And they stood in their place after their manner, according to the law of Moses the man of God,* etc.] The priests in their place, and the Levites in theirs, in which they were ordered to stand when they offered sacrifice:

the priests sprinkled the blood, which they received of the hand of the Levites; the blood either of the burnt offerings before mentioned, or of the passover lambs, which the Levites slew, and received the blood of them in basins; and which the priests took of them, and sprinkled, not on the door posts of houses, as in Egypt, but on the altar round about, and which none but priests might do, (^{<R065>}Leviticus 1:5).

Ver. 17. *For there were many in the congregation that were not sanctified,* etc.] Or purified from uncleanness, contracted either by idolatry, or through such things which, according to the ceremonial law, made them unclean, and from which they had not now time to cleanse themselves according to the law:

therefore the Levites had the charge of the killing of the passovers for everyone that was not clean, to sanctify them unto the Lord; this they did for the masters of families, who were ceremonially unclean, who otherwise might have killed their passover lambs themselves, (see ^{<0206>}Exodus 12:6), but now the Levites did it for them, that their passovers might be sanctified and consecrated to the Lord; for, as Philo the Jew says ^{f128}, one day in a year the whole sacrificed, everyone acted as a priest, and brought and slew his own sacrifice, meaning at the passover.

Ver. 18. *For a multitude of the people, even many of Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun,* etc.] All which were of the ten tribes, where idolatry had prevailed for a long time:

had not cleansed themselves; from impurity contracted by idolatry and other things:

yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it was written; because they ate it in their uncleanness, which was not according to the law, that

required that such should be clean that ate of any holy things, (see ^{<688>}John 18:28) but since these people came a great way off, and there was no deferring it to another month, the king chose rather they should be admitted to eat of it, though in their uncleanness:

but Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, the good Lord pardon everyone; God, who is gracious and merciful, and of his goodness, grace, and mercy, forgive such who, though ceremonially unclean, ate of the passover, and especially since they were sincere and cordial in their services; and therefore he hoped that this breach of the ceremonial law would not be laid to their charge. Goodness is such a well known attribute of God, that the very Heathens ascribe it to their deities; hence we read of a temple of the “good god”, the gods being the givers of good things to men; Jupiter, or Jove, the supreme god, is supposed to be meant ^{f129}.

Ver. 19. *That prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers,* etc.] Who was heartily desirous of worshipping God, and observing his ordinances, which had been enjoined their fathers, and they had kept; though Aben Ezra, as Kimchi observes, refers this to Hezekiah, *whose whole heart he directed, or prepared to seek the Lord,* etc. by prayer and supplication for everyone of the said persons:

though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary: according to the ceremonial law, which the service of the temple required; since, though they were attended with a ceremonial impurity, had a moral purity, and their hearts were right with God.

Ver. 20. *And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah,* etc.] Heard his prayer, and accepted of it, and granted what he desired:

and healed his people; that is, forgave their sins, as Kimchi interprets it; forgiveness being expressed by healing, for which he refers to (^{<1940>}Psalms 41:4) to which may be added (^{<1943>}Psalms 103:3 ^{<3012>}Malachi 4:2) and which was known either by a prophet sent to declare it, or by not punishing them for their offence.

Ver. 21. *And the children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness,* etc.] Which, according to the law of Moses, were always to follow the passover, (^{<1218>}Exodus 12:18,19)

and the Levites and the priests praised the Lord day by day, singing with loud instruments unto the Lord; or instruments of strength ^{f130}; so called not from the matter of them, or manner in which they were made, but either from the sound of them, as our version, or from the strength and power of God, which they set forth in praise; the Targum is,

“with instruments of praise,”

and so the word is sometimes used, (see ^{
}Psalm 8:2) compared with (^{
}Matthew 21:16), the priests blew with trumpets, and the Levites played on harps, psalteries, etc. and this they did every day when the sacrifices were offered, during the seven days of unleavened bread.

Ver. 22. *And Hezekiah spake comfortably to all the Levites,* etc.] Or “to the heart” ^{f131} of them, such things as were very encouraging to them to go on in the work and worship of God, commending their singing, exhorting them to diligence in instructing the people, promising them his favour and protection:

even those that taught the good knowledge of the Lord; who instructed the people well in his word, worship, and ordinances; though some restrain this to their skill in singing the praises of God, both vocally and instrumentally, and their abilities and diligence in teaching others:

and they did eat throughout the feast: or did eat the feast; that is, the sacrifices of it; not the Levites only, but the king, and all the congregation:

offering peace offerings; part of which belonged to the Lord, another part to the priests, and a third to the offerers, on which they feasted with their friends; and this they did throughout all the seven days of the feast:

and making confession to the Lord God of their fathers; confessing their sins of omission and commission they had been guilty of; owning the goodness, grace, and mercy of God towards them; blessing and praising his name for the restoration of his worship and ordinances among them.

Ver. 23. *And the whole assembly took counsel to keep other seven days,* etc.] They consulted among themselves, and with the king and his nobles about it, who all agreed to it:

and they kept other seven days with gladness; not altogether in the same manner they had kept the preceding seven days; they did not slay and eat passover lambs, nor did they eat unleavened bread, but offered peace

offerings, and feasted upon them; and sung the praises of God, and attended to the instructions of the priests and Levites, being in a very agreeable frame of mind for religious exercises.

Ver. 24. *For Hezekiah king of Judah did give to the congregation one thousand bullocks, and seven thousand sheep,* etc.] He separated them, as Kimchi interprets it, from his own herds and flocks; or out of his own substance, at his own expense purchased them; or lifted them up, as the word signifies, as heave offerings to the Lord; and gave them to the people for thank offerings to feast upon:

and the princes gave to the congregation one thousand bullocks, and ten thousand sheep: for the same purposes, following the king's example:

and a great number of priests sanctified themselves; besides those who had before, that they might be fit to offer this great number of sacrifices.

Ver. 25. *And all the congregation of Judah, with the priests and Levites,* etc.] The people that were gathered together out of the several cities of Judah, which no doubt was the largest congregation, with whom the priests and Levites are joined, as being of that kingdom, and dwellers in Jerusalem, where their office lay:

and all the congregation that came out of Israel; out of the ten tribes, particularly Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, (^{<408>}2 Chronicles 30:18), and the strangers that came out of the land of Israel, and that dwelt in Judah, rejoiced; the proselytes, even such as were circumcised, who ate of the passover, and kept the feast of unleavened bread, as well as the other days of rejoicing, the former of which none might partake of but circumcised persons; and it can hardly be thought that any other would come out of Israel on such an occasion, (see ^{<428>}Exodus 12:48).

Ver. 26. *So there was great joy in Jerusalem,* etc.] Not merely carnal, expressed in eating and drinking, and making merry with one another, but spiritual, on account of the restoration of temple service, and the feasts of the Lord:

for since the time of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel, there was not the like in Jerusalem; not the like joy, so spiritual, sincere, and hearty; nor such a number of persons rejoicing together on such an occasion; nor for so many days together, which were as many as at the dedication of the temple by Solomon.

Ver. 27. *Then the priests the Levites arose*, etc.] The priests who were of the tribe of Levi; for there were some in Israel that were not, but were made of any of the people, as in the times of Jeroboam; though some supply the copulative “and”; so the Targum: “and blessed the people”; which was the proper work and business of the priests to do; though, while they were blessing, the Levites might be singing:

and their voice was heard; meaning not by the people, though undoubtedly it was, but by the Lord; the Targum is, “their prayer was heard or received;”

for the blessing was delivered in a petitionary way, (^{0102}Numbers 6:24,26), and was no other than a request that God would bless them, which he did:

and their prayer came up to his holy dwellingplace, even unto heaven; (see ^{1004}Psalm 3:4 18:6) by what means it was known their prayer was heard and accepted cannot be said; there might be some visible token of it, as the people were dismissed, and departed.