

## February 8

**Scriptures:** Read 2 Chronicles 30 & 31

**Key Verse:** “Now do not be stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves to the Lord;...” (2 Chronicles 30:8)

### Overview

With the success of his localized revival, Hezekiah desired to extend it nationwide. He wished to have even the apostate Northern Kingdom come and observe the Passover feast in the manner Moses had prescribed. Since the time of Solomon, no unified Passover feast had been observed. After the division of the kingdom under the reign of Rehoboam, Solomon’s son, the Northern Kingdom established its own religion under Jeroboam. Thus ties with the centralized place of worship in Jerusalem had been cut off. The Passover was one of the three feasts for which the Law required the assemblage of all the males of the children of Israel at the House of the Lord (Deuteronomy 16:16).

In hopes of restoring spiritual unity, Hezekiah sent messengers throughout Judah and Israel, “from Beersheba to Dan” (30:5) inviting everyone to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem. The circumstances in Israel at this point made it possible for him to do such a thing. King Hoshea of Israel was preoccupied with a revolt against Assyrian domination and with the resulting Assyrian attacks wherein some of his people had been taken captive (2 Kings 17:3-6).

Hezekiah’s message sounded more like that of a prophet than of a king, as he exhorted the people to return to the Lord. Using an expression Moses often used in referring to the children of Israel, he warned them not be “stiff-necked” (“like a stubborn calf” that is disobedient and uncontrollable, Hosea 4:16), but to yield to the Lord and serve Him, in order to avert His wrath. Hezekiah prophesied that if they did so, God would bring the captives back because of His grace and mercy (30:8-9). Though the nation was on the verge of disaster, many of their hearts were so set against the Lord that they mocked at the message and thus spurned the grace of God (30:10). There was, however, a remnant from Israel that responded to the call.

The Passover was observed as a memorial of God’s deliverance and salvation from the death angel in Egypt (Exodus 12:27). The blood of the lamb which brought them salvation typified the future vicarious death of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ (Exodus 13:15; 1 Corinthians 5:7). Normally, the Passover was observed in the first month, but Moses had set a precedent that permitted the celebration to be a month later if circumstances necessitated it (cf. Numbers 9:10-11). On this occasion, the reason for the delay was that many priests had not yet sanctified themselves, but they later repented for being negligent (30:15). Many Levites, however, were ceremonially clean and helped the priests. They also slaughtered the Passover lambs for all those who came to the feast from far distances on such short notice without having the time to be properly cleansed. Hezekiah prayed on their behalf that they still might be able to participate in the Passover meal (30:18-20). His prayer illustrated the true essence of sanctification, like the teaching of Jesus in the New Testament: it is the condition of the heart that matters.

The people's obedience to the Lord in observing the Passover, and then the seven-day feast of unleavened bread (30:13; Leviticus 23:5-6), brought them great joy and satisfaction. Because they did not want it to end, seven more days were designated for corporate worship. This great time of revival led to further obedience to the Lord — the destruction of anything associated with idolatry, including the brazen serpent of Moses which had become an object of heathen worship (31:1; 2 Kings 18:4; Numbers 21:7-9).

Hezekiah not only led in the restoration of the Temple, but he also put in order the Levitical organization as king David had instituted (1 Chronicles 24 & 25). However, before this system could really work, the people needed to obey the Law of God concerning the giving of their tithes, first fruits (Numbers 18:12, 21-24), and other offerings which Moses had instructed (Numbers 28 & 29). Without this support, the Levites could not carry out the responsibilities to which God had called them (cf. Nehemiah 13:10). As an example to the people, Hezekiah led the way in giving generously. To his joyous amazement, he found that the people tremendously responded to his appeal. There was enough provision for all the priests and Levites, and even an abundance remaining. When the Lord's people step out in faith and obedience to Him by giving, He blesses it and supplies an abundance that is accredited for His glory.

### **Prayer**

Dear Lord, we are so impressed with Hezekiah's leadership. Please give us leaders today with such strength and understanding. You are restoring Your church today. Help us all to do our part joyously.