

Lessons from Hezekiah—The Test of Relationship
Bethany Chapel
September 9, 2012

- I. Intro. Modern Lessons from an ancient King. I love history. Shakespeare “All the world’s a stage!”
- A. Bible Truths played out on the grand stage of history.
1. Adultery: King David
 2. Resurrection:
 - a. Joseph (resurrected to be the vice-King of Egypt)
 - b. Jonah (3 days in the great fish)
 3. **Kings of Judah and Israel**
 - a. Good like David
 - b. Bad like Jeroboam
 - c. So where does Hezekiah, our subject for today stand? It depends.
- B. Map: OT Sandwich. A healthy slab of Hezekiah between two slices of Moses
1. Last week— **test of Dependence**, as illustrated by Moses at the Burning Bush—On Fire with Christ, not for Christ, in any available bush.
 2. Today — **test of Relationship**, as illustrated by Hezekiah’s early kingship
 3. 9/16— **test of Adversity**, as illustrated by Hezekiah’s middle kingship
 4. 9/23— **test of Success**, as illustrated by Hezekiah’s late kingship
 5. 9/30— **test of Deliverance**, as illustrated by Moses and the Bronze Snake
- C. Background to Hezekiah—setting the stage
1. What truths does Hezekiah illustrate? Living the Christian life. Part-saint, part sinner. Not unlike some of Jesus’ disciples. At one point they leave everything to follow Him, at another point they are arguing who will be the greatest in the Kingdom.
 2. One of the later Kings of Judah, about 716 BC and contemporary of Isaiah.
 3. Became king at 25 and inherited a kingdom in spiritual disarray (his father Ahaz was approximately 13 at Hezekiah’s birth!).
- Hope for people coming out of dysfunctional backgrounds!
4. A truly remarkable king from the start.
 - a. Restored the Temple and worship. (Like coming to Christ!)
 - b. Re-established the Passover – communion with God
 - c. Tore down the high places. (The high places were like having spiritual mistresses on the side in addition to a wife)
 - d. Stopped paying protection money to the bully nation of Assyria.
 - e. Since David, probably one of the best Kings of Judah—but not without his weak points. See 2 Kings 18:3, 5-6.
- D. The three spirituality tests of Hezekiah before returning to Moses
1. This week: **Relationship**— Getting his life and the life of Judah back on track.
 2. Next week: **Adversity**— Dealing with the Assyria.
 3. 9/23: **Success**— Dealing with his own pride.
- E. Morning Map: Unpacking the Test of Relationship

1. **Purifying the Temple**—an act of **personal** relationship
2. **Restoring the Passover**—an act of **corporate** relationship
3. **Cleansing the land**—an act of **national** relationship

II. The test of **Relationship**

- A. Purifying the Temple—an act of **personal (key word)** repentance. 2 Chronicles 29:1-3

¹Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. His mother's name was Abijah daughter of Zechariah. ²He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father David had done. ³In the first month of the first year of his reign, he opened the doors of the temple of the LORD and repaired them.

1. What Hezekiah did: As soon as Hezekiah took control of his life and the Kingdom, he brought it back to the Lord. He fixed the temple and re-established worship. The Temple was the place where God met His people.

Illus. Radio transmissions all around the room. Hezekiah repaired the two-way communications system—with God!

- a. Carried out the garbage.
- b. Consecrated the furniture and repair the building.
- c. Re-established temple worship.

Ahaz, Hezekiah's father, had completely trashed the temple. Not only was the building in disrepair, it had been filled with all manner of unholy material.

2. What does this mean to us today?
 - a. The Temple is a metaphor for us. We, like the temple were designed to be inhabited by God. **One of three conditions--**
 - (1) Your temple has never been consecrated in the first place. You need to invite Christ into your heart for the very first time.
 - (2) Open for business. Christ dwells in you because you have invited Him into your heart. You are a Christian and worshiping the Lord.
 - (3) Your temple is in need of repair.
 - (a) worship ceases
 - (b) the temple is in spiritual disrepair (sin)
 - b. The test of **relationship**: What will you do with your temple? **One of 3 options:**
 - (1) **Option 1: Consecrate the temple** for the first time! The first temple was made holy by blood. We are cleansed by the blood of Christ.
 - (a) Confess your sins to Christ

- (b) Receive His forgiveness
- (c) Respond with Thanksgiving

Illus. Billy Graham—the Hour of Decision.

- (2) **Option 2: Continue open for business—maintaining worship.** Pray without ceasing, worship the Lord in the Spirit of Holiness.

I trust that is what many of you are doing today—keeping your temple busy, active and filled with Christ!

- (3) **Option 3: Repair the temple.** This was Hezekiah’s option.
 - (a) We know the symptoms.
 - i) we’ve lost the joy of our salvation.
 - ii) our desire for worship has fallen by the wayside.
 - iii) we are reticent to pray, reticent to read His Word.
 - iv) our temple has become cluttered with sins.
 - v) It’s time for the cleaning crew. It’s time for the repair crew!
 - (b) How do we then repair the temple?
 - i) Carry out the garbage—confess our sins.
1 Jn. 1:9

Illus. 4 dumpsters in 4 days. Hard work—but it felt really good to see it hauled away.

- ii) Consecrate the furniture and repair the building—rededicate ourselves to God.
2 Cor 5:20-21 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. *21* God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. **Rom 12:18** If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Illus. Mend broken relationships. AA 12 steps. Fix the broken things.

- iii) Re-establish worship (a sneak preview of the next point)—meet God on the basis of the shed blood of Jesus—both the act of worship—and the attitude.

Illus. How do I know what is important to an individual? Watch and observe. What does one make time to do? That’s important. Where do we spend the bulk of our time? That’s also important. Is relationship with God a priority? Watch someone else! Now ask, what would another person say about you?

2 Chronicles 29:35b

So the service of the temple of the LORD was reestablished. ³⁶Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced at what God had brought about for his people, because it was done so quickly.

3. Summary: **Hezekiah purified the temple.** This represents an act of *personal* repentance and restoration—the temple, needed cleaning, repair, and re-consecration. We have 3 ways to approach this:
 - a. Option 1: Open. (Never accepted Christ). What a tremendous opportunity!
 - b. Option 2: Maintain. (Christian in good standing) Keep on keeping on!
 - c. Option 3: Repair. (Backslider) Return to your first love.
4. Transition. OK— Hezekiah and I have sorted out the temple. If I understand the Bible properly, an act of personal repentance and restoration with God will have result in changes that go beyond myself. So it was with Hezekiah and the temple. What, therefore happened next?

B. Restoring the Passover. This is an act of ministry to believers. Key word: **Corporate.**

1. Background to the Passover
 - a. Moses—Egypt
 - b. A measure of health of the nation
 - c. Christ is our passover
2. What Hezekiah did:

2 Chronicles 30:1 *Hezekiah sent word to all Israel and Judah and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, inviting them to come to the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem and celebrate the Passover to the LORD, the God of Israel.* ²*The king and his officials and the whole assembly in Jerusalem decided to celebrate the Passover in the second month.* ³*They had not been able to celebrate it at the regular time because not enough priests had consecrated themselves and the people had not assembled in Jerusalem.* ⁴*The plan seemed right both to the king and to the whole assembly.* ⁵*They decided to send a proclamation throughout Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, calling the people to come to Jerusalem and celebrate the Passover to the LORD, the God of Israel. It had not been celebrated in large numbers according to what was written.*

3. What did this mean in Hezekiah's time?
 - a. Passover—an act of **Corporate** Worship. Required the people to come together. Other sacrifices did not require a national assembly.

Illus. Acts of National Worship: July 4, Thanksgiving, Labor Day, Memorial Day. Meant to be celebrated together.

- b. Marked the restoration of the spiritual health of the nation.
- c. All who loved God were invited.
- d. There was great rejoicing as a result.

2 Chronicles 30:25 *The entire assembly of Judah rejoiced, along with the priests and Levites and all who had assembled from Israel, including the aliens who had come from Israel and those who lived in Judah.* ²⁶***There was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the days of Solomon son of David king of Israel there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem.*** ²⁷*The priests and the Levites stood to bless the people, and God heard them, for their prayer reached heaven, his holy dwelling place.*

4. What does this mean to us? Participation in the Body of Christ.

- a. A person who is restored spiritually, **will not remain alone.**

Illus. Lone ranger spirituality. Spurgeon: Coals on the fire.

- b. Regular corporate worship marks the health of the church.
- c. All who love the Lord Jesus Christ are invited.
- d. Everyone rejoices!

Illus. Open table. Hezekiah even made provision for those whose relationship with the Lord was imperfectly realized, because of years of separation.

- 5. Summary: What does **restoring the Passover** mean? A spiritually restored individual **will not remain in isolation** nor will he or she rest until the Body of Christ is likewise restored. Their first acts of worship will be to bring the Body together.
- 6. Transition. The temple had been purified. (A Christian has come back to the Lord—personal.) The Passover has been reinstated. (Christians are once again identifying themselves as the body of Christ—corporate). What could be better? How can we top this? There remains one more act of restoration for Hezekiah:

C. **Cleansing the Land.** This is an act of *national* transformation.

2Chronicles 31:1 *When all this had ended, the Israelites who were there went out to the towns of Judah, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles. They destroyed the high places and the altars throughout Judah and Benjamin and in Ephraim and Manasseh. After they had destroyed all of them, the Israelites returned to their own towns and to their own property.*

- 1. Just what did Hezekiah and the people really do here?
 - a. The meaning of the high places. Self-made religion.

Illus. Syncretism. “All roads lead to God.” Frank Sinatra: “I’ll do it my way!”

- b. Historically—the last thing to go are the high places. Symbols of religious corruption.

Illus. A married man with many mistresses. India—“adding to the God collection”

- c. Symbolic of a national cleansing. Any form of aberrant behavior.

The entire country was decidedly different because of their faith. They had a faith that made a difference!

- 2. What does *removing the high places* mean to us today?
 - a. Personal high places.
 - (1) Secret places in our lives that have not yet been turned over to God.

Illus: My heart, God’s home.

- (2) Open places simply not turned over to Christ.
 - (a) possessions
 - (b) habits
 - (c) associations
 - (d) time management
 - (e) personal goals
 - (f) anything not consecrated to Christ

Illus. Monkey fist

b. **National** high places: anything in our country not reflecting the Glory of God.

(1) abortion

(2) moral ambiguity—similar to Judges.

Illus. Rookies vs. Partners. Heterosexual sin is just as reprehensible as same sex sin.

(3) poverty

(4) injustice

(5) crime

Illus. William Wilberforce: Slavery

Illus. *The Church of Irresistible Influence*. Does anyone know we are here? Does our presence make a difference? Would our absence be missed?

c. Summary Statement: Removal of the high places implies that we who belong to Christ and are active in His body are actively **influencing the world** around us and it is different because of our presence.

2 Chronicles 31:20 *This is what Hezekiah did throughout Judah, doing what was good and right and faithful before the LORD his God.*

²¹*In everything that he undertook in the service of God's temple and in obedience to the law and the commands, he sought his God and worked wholeheartedly. And so he prospered.*

III. Conclusion—Hezekiah's test of relationship.

A. Why is it a test of relationship? Because it affects relationships at all levels

1. **Personal** relationship with Christ

2. **Corporate** relationship with the Body of Christ

3. **National** relationship with the world for whom Christ died.

B. How was this relationship tested?

1. Hezekiah **purified the Temple**. For us, this means re-establishing our personal relationship with Christ.

How is our relationship with *Christ* this morning? We can't move beyond this until this is right.

2. Hezekiah **restored the Passover**. For us, this means re-establishing our relationship to the Body of Christ—His Church.

How is our relationship with this *Body* this morning? Are we connected—or just visiting?

3. Hezekiah and the people **removed the high places**. They redeemed the land for God. For us this means, at the minimum, having a tangible and positive impact on our surrounding culture.

How is our relationship with our *culture*? Are we changing it, or is it changing us?

C. Have you passed this test? I hope so. If not you won't be ready for the next test!

D. Next week—the Test of **Adversity!** This week has just been the **preparation!**