

Exegetical Notes - 2 Chronicles 30:1-27

“The Great Convocation”

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2 Chronicles 30:1-27

Verses 1-5

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.

- Hezekiah became King of Judah, the southern kingdom of the divided Israel, in 715 BC. He was 25 years old when he became king, and he ruled the kingdom for 29 years. During those years he sought to do what pleased God.
- Ahaz, one of Judah’s most evil kings and Hezekiah’s Father, had ruled Judah before Hezekiah. In 2 Chronicles 28:24-25 the Bible says that Ahaz closed the Temple in Jerusalem allowing no worship of YHWH there. He erected shrines in “every town in Judah” to encourage the Hebrews to worship gods other than YHWH. During the 16 year reign of Ahaz, Israel had wandered far away from God.
- In the first month of his reign, Hezekiah reopened the Temple and ordered the priests to re-consecrate themselves to the service of the Lord. Temple worship was restored in Judah under Hezekiah.
- Hezekiah then sent a message to ALL Hebrews. This message was not just to the people of the Southern Kingdom over which Hezekiah reigned but to the people of the Northern Kingdom as well, and to the tribes of Israel who had settled east of the Jordan. The message proclaimed his intention to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem. The Passover had not been celebrated

during the reign of Ahaz. Hezekiah invited the whole people of God to come to Jerusalem to celebrate Israel's great salvation supper, the Passover.

- That year, the Passover was to be celebrated one month later than normal. It was normally celebrated in the first month of the year, but because the priests and the Temple were not ready at that time, Hezekiah delayed the great celebration to the second month.
- As this plan earned consensus, everyone agreed to it, the message was sent to all Israel inviting the people of God to come to the Temple of God in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover.

Verses 6-9

At the king's command, couriers went throughout Israel and Judah with letters from the king and from his officials, which read:

"People of Israel, return to the LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, that he may return to you who are left, who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria. ⁷ Do not be like your parents and your fellow Israelites, who were unfaithful to the LORD, the God of their ancestors, so that he made them an object of horror, as you see. ⁸ Do not be stiff-necked, as your ancestors were; submit to the LORD. Come to his sanctuary, which he has consecrated forever. Serve the LORD your God, so that his fierce anger will turn away from you. ⁹ If you return to the LORD, then your fellow Israelites and your children will be shown compassion by their captors and will return to this land, for the LORD your God is gracious and compassionate. He will not turn his face from you if you return to him."

- This was Hezekiah's message to Israel. He called the Hebrews, the people of God, to return to God. He called them to come to God's sanctuary and to re-consecrate themselves to the service of YHWH. He promised that if they did so, God's blessing would fall on them again.

Verses 10-12

The couriers went from town to town in Ephraim and Manasseh, as far as Zebulun, but people scorned and ridiculed them. ¹¹ Nevertheless, some from Asher, Manasseh and Zebulun humbled themselves and went to Jerusalem. ¹² Also in Judah the hand of God was on the people to give them unity of mind to carry out what the king and his officials had ordered, following the word of the LORD.

- In many places, the messengers sent by Hezekiah were scorned and ridiculed by the Hebrews. Many of them did not want to humble themselves before their God. They remained stiff-necked and rebellious.

- But others listen to the message. Those who listened were united in their desire to serve God.

Verses 13-17

A very large crowd of people assembled in Jerusalem to celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread in the second month. ¹⁴ They removed the altars in Jerusalem and cleared away the incense altars and threw them into the Kidron Valley.

¹⁵ They slaughtered the Passover lamb on the fourteenth day of the second month. The priests and the Levites were ashamed and consecrated themselves and brought burnt offerings to the temple of the LORD. ¹⁶ Then they took up their regular positions as prescribed in the Law of Moses the man of God. The priests splashed against the altar the blood handed to them by the Levites. ¹⁷ Since many in the crowd had not consecrated themselves, the Levites had to kill the Passover lambs for all those who were not ceremonially clean and could not consecrate their lambs to the LORD.

- Many people came in answer to Hezekiah's call.
- Before sacrificing the Passover Lamb, they consecrated the city of Jerusalem by destroying the shrines to other gods. They threw the idols in the Kidron Valley, the place where the city dumped its garbage.
- The priests and Levites, the religious leaders of the nation, humbled themselves before YHWH, ashamed of their past behavior.
- Then the Passover Lamb was killed, and the priests took up their rightful positions before God. God's order was reestablished.
- The probability that day was that many came to the Lord's meal without having properly prepared themselves to eat the Lamb. The priests then had to make special intercession for the people.

Verses 18-21

Although most of the many people who came from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun had not purified themselves, yet they ate the Passover, contrary to what was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, "May the LORD, who is good, pardon everyone ¹⁹ who sets their heart on seeking God—the LORD, the God of their ancestors—even if they are not clean according to the rules of the sanctuary." ²⁰ And the LORD heard Hezekiah and healed the people.

²¹ The Israelites who were present in Jerusalem celebrated the Festival of Unleavened Bread for seven days with great rejoicing, while the Levites and priests praised the LORD every day with resounding instruments dedicated to the LORD.

- Hezekiah also prayed for the people who were not prepared to come to the Passover table. And the Lord heard his prayer. God's spirit moved over all Israel with blessing.
- The Passover was celebrated for seven days with rejoicing!

Verses 22-24

Hezekiah spoke encouragingly to all the Levites, who showed good understanding of the service of the LORD. For the seven days they ate their assigned portion and offered fellowship offerings and praised^[c] the LORD, the God of their ancestors.

²³ The whole assembly then agreed to celebrate the festival seven more days; so for another seven days they celebrated joyfully. ²⁴ Hezekiah king of Judah provided a thousand bulls and seven thousand sheep and goats for the assembly, and the officials provided them with a thousand bulls and ten thousand sheep and goats. A great number of priests consecrated themselves.

- When the first seven days of the feast were concluded, the joy of Israel was so intense, that the feast was continued for another seven days.
- The king offered a thousand bulls in sacrifice to YHWH and 7,000 sheep.
- There was a wave of spiritual renewal throughout the nation.

Verses 25-27

The entire assembly of Judah rejoiced, along with the priests and Levites and all who had assembled from Israel, including the foreigners who had come from Israel and also those who resided 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.

- God heard in heaven and there was renewal among God's people on earth.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *The Great Convocation*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Interim Senior/Lead Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by *Cornerstone Fellowship* & The Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. They are used here by permission.)