

~ Our Spiritual Safari abruptly concluded our previous report as Ahaz assumed the throne over Israel. He came to power at a young age, and reigned sixteen years; but he was just another bad king. We continue in this report through a seemingly uninteresting, dry, dusty section of Scripture on the rocky, unpaved, and uphill road called “revival.” No, we still haven’t veered off of the revival path we have followed for the last eight reports but, here, we’re seeing what looks like a very dismal future for the southern kingdom of Judah as a result of the sins of Ahaz.

God is warning the people of Judah, through His prophets, that they are going to follow suit with the ten northern tribes of Israel who were literally in the process of being taken into captivity at this very time in which we are studying; except Judah will be taken captivity by Babylon, of course. God has now opened the doors for an outside enemy to take prisoners for the first time in Israel’s history. This is the first time the enemy has been permitted to break down the walls and enter the cities of Israel and Judah. Well, all Scripture is given by inspiration – that’s second Timothy chapter three verse sixteen....

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⁵ Wherefore the LORD his God delivered Ahaz into the hand of the king of Syria; and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captives, and brought them to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter.

⁶ For Pekah the son of Remaliah slew in Judah an hundred and twenty thousand in one day, which were all valiant men; because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers.

⁷ And Zichri, a mighty man of Ephraim, slew Maaseiah the king's son, and Azrikam the governor of the house, and Elkanah that was next to the king.

⁸ And the children of Israel carried away captive of their brethren two hundred thousand, women, sons, and daughters, and took also away much spoil from them, and brought the spoil to Samaria.

⁹ But a prophet of the LORD was there, whose name was Oded: and he went out before the host that came to Samaria, and said unto them, Behold, because the LORD God of your fathers was wroth with Judah, he hath delivered them into your hand, and ye have slain them in a rage that reacheth up unto heaven.

¹⁰ And now ye purpose to keep under the children of Judah and Jerusalem for bondmen and bondwomen unto you: but are there not with you, even with you, sins against the LORD your God?

¹¹ Now hear me therefore, and deliver the captives again, which ye have taken captive of your brethren: for the fierce wrath of the LORD is upon you.

¹² Then certain of the heads of the children of Ephraim, Azariah the son of Johanan, Berechiah the son of Meshillemoth, and Jehizkiah the son of Shallum, and Amasa the son of Hadlai, stood up against them that came from the war,

¹³ And said unto them, Ye shall not bring in the captives hither: for whereas we have offended against the LORD already, ye intend to add more to our sins and to our trespass: for our trespass is great, and there is fierce wrath against Israel.

¹⁴ So the armed men left the captives and the spoil before the princes and all the congregation.

15 And the men which were expressed by name rose up, and took the captives, and with the spoil clothed all that were naked among them, and arrayed them, and shod them, and gave them to eat and to drink, and anointed them, and carried all the feeble of them upon asses, and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm trees, to their brethren: then they returned to Samaria.

16 At that time did king Ahaz send unto the kings of Assyria to help him.

~ So, this section of Scripture can be a bit confusing. Israel is being taken into captivity by Syria as Israel simultaneously fights a civil war with Judah. Each are taking slaves from both Judah and Israel; but God expressly told them *NOT* to make slaves of their brethren. It was bad. All while being steeped in gross idolatry.

To put it plainly – it's total chaos in the land. God has just opened the floodgates and pandemonium is ensuing. See, God does not tolerate sin, my friends – let's not make any mistake about it. We have already seen that wars are the result of *S-I-N*. James is the final authority on sin and war on this Spiritual Safari. As long as there is sin in the heart of man, then man can never have peace. It's that simple. Man cannot have peace with God without Christ; there will be no peace in his own heart without Christ; and there will never be peace with his fellow man as long as there is continuing sin. The sin question *MUST* be settled. Ahaz made a huge mistake that cannot be fixed now; so, this will be his end. Judah is simply no match for the nation of Syria; neither technologically nor militarily....

17 For again the Edomites had come and smitten Judah, and carried away captives.

18 The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the low country, and of the south of Judah, and had taken Bethshemesh, and Ajalon, and Gederoth, and Shocho with the villages thereof, and Timnah with the villages thereof, Gimzo also and the villages thereof: and they dwelt there.

19 For the LORD brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel; for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the LORD.

20 And Tilgathpilneser king of Assyria came unto him, and distressed him, but strengthened him not.

21 For Ahaz took away a portion out of the house of the LORD, and out of the house of the king, and of the princes, and gave it unto the king of Assyria: but he helped him not.

22 And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the LORD: this is that king Ahaz.

23 For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him: and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel.

24 And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of the LORD, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem.

25 And in every several city of Judah he made high places to burn incense unto other gods, and provoked to anger the LORD God of his fathers.

26 Now the rest of his acts and of all his ways, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.

27 And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, even in Jerusalem: but they brought him not into the sepulchres of the kings of Israel: and Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead.

XXIX

¹ Hezekiah began to reign when he was five and twenty years old, and he reigned nine and twenty years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah.

~ After Ahaz, the historical account seems to indicate there would be no future hope for Judah. There had been civil war; there had been betrayal; there had been intrusion from outside nations – and now, there seemed to be absolutely no way for them to escape judgment. Well, kings — and God’s men — are Personally ordained by God to rule and reign at just such times as these; and in the middle of this dark and treacherous night for God’s chosen people, a king comes to the throne and brings the greatest revival Judah had yet experienced in their history....

² And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done.

~ With that, we have reached the end of the treacherous road to revival with awesome success. We learned all about Hezekiah in the Book of second Kings, and we know he trusted and obeyed God. To see him come along at this time was a divine gift from the Lord to Judah. Remember, there were very few good kings out of twenty-one total kings in Judah; and of those good kings, Hezekiah is the outstanding example, by far. At this hopeless point in time for Judah, they are going to experience the most potent, virile and uplifting revival in their history. We’re seeing *God’s viewpoint* in second Chronicles and, evidently, God took great delight in King Hezekiah!

In Isaiah’s prophecy, there are several historical chapters – not prophetic; and they cover the life of Hezekiah. He appears on the Scriptural stage *THREE FULL* times in the Bible. If you compare the three accounts regarding Hezekiah, you will notice a remarkable historical record. Even during a time when the people were steeped in gross idolatry and the temple was not even functioning correctly, revival was brought about by the acts of one Godly king.

2 Kings 18: ⁴ *He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan ~*

The children of Israel were worshipping a national relic. It was really just a piece of brass. It had no value. But it was a stumblingblock as an idol taking the place of their relationship with God. Let's just be real and frank: many people worship the symbol of the cross, but they don't even know Jesus. Many people worship many things today: cars, shoes, houses, businesses, spouses, children and friends. Some people worship the window because they give it credit for bringing light! Someone says, "that's absurd;" it sure is — It's as absurd as the myriad idols people worship unaware. Some are worshipping a computer screen right now. Hezekiah put an end to all of that. He was a great man of God, my beloved....

³ *He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the LORD, and repaired them.*

⁴ *And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them together into the east street,*

⁵ *And said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the LORD God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place.*

⁶ *For our fathers have trespassed, and done that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD our God, and have forsaken him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the LORD, and turned their backs.*

⁷ *Also they have shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense nor offered burnt offerings in the holy place unto the God of Israel.*

8 Wherefore the wrath of the LORD was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and he hath delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing, as ye see with your eyes.

9 For, lo, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity for this.

10 Now it is in mine heart to make a covenant with the LORD God of Israel, that his fierce wrath may turn away from us.

11 My sons, be not now negligent: for the LORD hath chosen you to stand before him, to serve him, and that ye should minister unto him, and burn incense.

12 Then the Levites arose, Mahath the son of Amasai, and Joel the son of Azariah, of the sons of the Kohathites: and of the sons of Merari, Kish the son of Abdi, and Azariah the son of Jehalelel: and of the Gershonites; Joah the son of Zimmah, and Eden the son of Joah:

13 And of the sons of Elizaphan; Shimri, and Jeiel: and of the sons of Asaph; Zechariah, and Mattaniah:

14 And of the sons of Heman; Jehiel, and Shimei: and of the sons of Jeduthun; Shemaiah, and Uzziel.

15 And they gathered their brethren, and sanctified themselves, and came, according to the commandment of the king, by the words of the LORD, to cleanse the house of the LORD.

16 And the priests went into the inner part of the house of the LORD, to cleanse it, and brought out all the uncleanness that they found in the temple of the LORD into the court of the house of the LORD. And the Levites took it, to carry it out abroad into the brook Kidron.

17 Now they began on the first day of the first month to sanctify, and on the eighth day of the month came they to the porch of the LORD: so they

sanctified the house of the LORD in eight days; and in the sixteenth day of the first month they made an end.

¹⁸ Then they went in to Hezekiah the king, and said, We have cleansed all the house of the LORD, and the altar of burnt offering, with all the vessels thereof, and the shewbread table, with all the vessels thereof.

¹⁹ Moreover all the vessels, which king Ahaz in his reign did cast away in his transgression, have we prepared and sanctified, and, behold, they are before the altar of the LORD.

²⁰ Then Hezekiah the king rose early, and gathered the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of the LORD.

²¹ And they brought seven bullocks, and seven rams, and seven lambs, and seven he goats, for a sin offering for the kingdom, and for the sanctuary, and for Judah. And he commanded the priests the sons of Aaron to offer them on the altar of the LORD.

²² So they killed the bullocks, and the priests received the blood, and sprinkled it on the altar: likewise, when they had killed the rams, they sprinkled the blood upon the altar: they killed also the lambs, and they sprinkled the blood upon the altar.

²³ And they brought forth the he goats for the sin offering before the king and the congregation; and they laid their hands upon them:

²⁴ And the priests killed them, and they made reconciliation with their blood upon the altar, to make an atonement for all Israel: for the king commanded that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for all Israel.

²⁵ And he set the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet: for so was the commandment of the LORD by his prophets.

26 And the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets.

27 And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the LORD began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David king of Israel.

28 And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded: and all this continued until the burnt offering was finished.

29 And when they had made an end of offering, the king and all that were present with him bowed themselves, and worshipped.

30 Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the LORD with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped.

31 Then Hezekiah answered and said, Now ye have consecrated yourselves unto the LORD, come near and bring sacrifices and thank offerings into the house of the LORD. And the congregation brought in sacrifices and thank offerings; and as many as were of a free heart burnt offerings.

32 And the number of the burnt offerings, which the congregation brought, was threescore and ten bullocks, an hundred rams, and two hundred lambs: all these were for a burnt offering to the LORD.

33 And the consecrated things were six hundred oxen and three thousand sheep.

34 But the priests were too few, so that they could not flay all the burnt offerings: wherefore their brethren the Levites did help them, till the work was ended, and until the other priests had sanctified themselves: for the Levites were more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests.

³⁵ And also the burnt offerings were in abundance, with the fat of the peace offerings, and the drink offerings for every burnt offering. So the service of the house of the LORD was set in order.

³⁶ And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people: for the thing was done suddenly.

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¹ And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover unto the LORD God of Israel.

² For the king had taken counsel, and his princes, and all the congregation in Jerusalem, to keep the Passover in the second month.

³ For they could not keep it at that time, because the priests had not sanctified themselves sufficiently, neither had the people gathered themselves together to Jerusalem.

⁴ And the thing pleased the king and all the congregation.

⁵ So they established a decree to make proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba even to Dan, that they should come to keep the Passover unto the LORD God of Israel at Jerusalem: for they had not done it of a long time in such sort as it was written.

⁶ So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah, and according to the commandment of the king, saying, Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and he will return to the remnant of you, that are escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria.

⁷ And be not ye like your fathers, and like your brethren, which trespassed against the LORD God of their fathers, who therefore gave them up to desolation, as ye see.

⁸ Now be ye not stiffnecked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto the LORD, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever: and serve the LORD your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you.

⁹ For if ye turn again unto the LORD, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land: for the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him.

¹⁰ So the posts passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh even unto Zebulun: but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them.

¹¹ Nevertheless divers of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem.

¹² Also in Judah the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king and of the princes, by the word of the LORD.

¹³ And there assembled at Jerusalem much people to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month, a very great congregation.

¹⁴ And they arose and took away the altars that were in Jerusalem, and all the altars for incense took they away, and cast them into the brook Kidron.

¹⁵ Then they killed the Passover on the fourteenth day of the second month: and the priests and the Levites were ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought in the burnt offerings into the house of the LORD.

¹⁶ And they stood in their place after their manner, according to the law of Moses the man of God: the priests sprinkled the blood, which they received of the hand of the Levites.

~ Our Spiritual Safari's arrival at revival becomes very spiritual in our next report. There is a lot of spiritualism going on in the world and we will consider some aspects of our current state. Hezekiah has opened the doors of the temple of God by a proper teaching of the Word of God, a proper worship, and a correct testimony for God. This is a remarkable return to the Word of God, and the priests and the Levites were ashamed. Only a return to the Word of God can produce this type of revival. What do you really think about yourself? How would you rate your "self-esteem?" Reading the Bible and realizing it in your heart and life means hearing and *doing* it. All Scripture is given by inspiration, my friends — for correction.

Martin Luther said the key to revival is a return to the Scriptures where we watch, study, and attend to reading. We cannot read too much in Scripture; and what little we read we cannot read too carefully. What you read carefully you will never understand too well, and what you do understand well, you cannot teach well. That which you teach, well, you can never live it quite that well. So, read, pray, study, be diligent. Show yourself approved. The point of the Spiritual Safari is to guide you through the *entire* Bible in sound doctrine. I am praying the Lord will lead you to join us ~

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