

and confess their sins. He does not punish us as we deserve to be punished and does not scold us.

We must use our time wisely, to seek the Lord and to learn of Him. Moses prayed to the Lord, "Teach me Your ways, so that I may know You and continue to find favour with You" (Ex 33:13). May we have this same desire to know our Lord.

It may seem strange that the writer of the Book of Kings said nothing of Manasseh's repentance, nor does the prophet Jeremiah (Jer 15:4). It may be because the writer of Chronicles always tried to show God's servants in the best light. He took his material as "written in the annals (or records) of the kings of Israel" (2 Chron 33:18).

TALK ABOUT: 1. Who reigned over Judah after King Hezekiah died?
2. Was Manasseh a good king? 3. What happened to him in the end?
4. Where was the record of Hezekiah's life kept (2 Chron 33:18)? 5. What did Moses desire above all else (Ex 33:13)? 6. Do you long to know God better?

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Unit studies

Hezekiah



Written in Easy English
Fred Morris

To the Reader: Have your Bible open as you study these notes. Check the references and try to answer the questions in the "Talk About" sections. If you are in a group, give each person a book of their own.

If you are studying alone, ask a friend to join you. You will be blessed.

Unit 1. THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL

The Old Testament book of 2 Kings gives us a history of God's dealings with the people of Israel. God chose this people group to be His witnesses in the earth at that time (Deut 7:7-8). Moses spoke God's word to them, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deut 6:5).

Our past always plays an important part in our actions. Israel had a rich past. They could point to the mighty deliverances of God when He brought them out of Egypt where they had been slaves for 400 years (Ex 12-14). Moses led them through the wilderness and Joshua brought them into the Promised Land. God promised to care for them if they obeyed His commands and worshipped Him only (Deut 7:10-16).

God raised up Judges and prophets to lead His people, but they asked Samuel, their judge, for a king (1 Sam 8:1-5). They wanted to be like the other nations, so God gave them a king. God said they would be sorry.

Early in Israel's history, civil strife caused the nation to divide. Ten tribes in the north were called Israel. Their king made Samaria his capital. In the south the tribes of Judah and Simeon were called Judah. Jerusalem was the capital of Judah.

Two rival kingdoms – Egypt and Assyria – struggled together and took part in the balance of power in the region. Great powers in the region - Persia, Babylon, Assyria - invaded Palestine and made the kings pay tribute to them.

Israel's kings did not obey God's commands, but turned to idols. God was angry with them. He allowed their enemies to come against them. Israel fell to Assyria in 722 BC. Most of the people in the north were carried away to other countries and foreigners were brought in to repopulate the land. Judah fell to Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in 586 BC.

Hezekiah was one of the good kings of Judah. He remembered what God had done for His people in the past and believed God would again bless Judah if they repented and turned again to worship the living God.

TALK ABOUT: 1. What people group did God choose to bless (Deut 7:7-10)? 2. Was God showing His justice in doing this? 3. Where were the

Unit 13. HEZEKIAH'S WICKED SON

Three years after God healed King Hezekiah, God gave him a son. The King named him Manasseh (meaning made to forget). Manasseh became king of Judah when he was only 12 years old and probably co-reigned with his father for ten years. He reigned for 55 years, longer than any other king. He did evil in the eyes of the Lord (2 Kings 21:1-18).

Hezekiah was very old when Manasseh was born and he failed to train his son in the things of God. The old king started out well, but failed the Lord in many ways. As far as we know he did not end in glory.

Manasseh restored the idol worship his father had destroyed. He set up altars to Baal and erected a hideous symbol of the goddess Asherah in the temple. The most detestable thing the king did was to offer his son as a sacrifice to the Ammonite god, Molech. He had pagan diviners study the stars and worshipped the creation himself.

All who opposed his evil acts were killed and it is quite possible that he killed the prophet Isaiah. His life is summed up in the words, "He seduced them (the people of Judah) to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel (when they went into the Promised Land)" (2 Kings 21:9).

HEZEKIAH'S LIFE IN SUMMARY

"Hezekiah rested with his fathers." The king died in 697 BC and was buried "on the hill where the tombs of David's descendants are buried. All Judah and the people of Jerusalem honoured him..." (2 Chron 32:33).

We wonder at the characters of the two men, Hezekiah and Manasseh his son. The father started well and ended poorly. He did not repent of his pride or his foolish acts. Manasseh started as a very wicked king, but repented. The Assyrian army took him prisoner to Babylon (probably to Nineveh). There Manasseh "sought the favour of the Lord and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers."

When Manasseh prayed, "the Lord was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea; so he brought him back to Jerusalem..." (2 Chron 33:10-13).

God is very gracious. He added more years to Hezekiah's life. Yet Hezekiah did not learn from his mistakes and he did not train his son in righteousness.

God gave Manasseh more years in captivity and the king used them wisely, to seek God's forgiveness and mercy. This is a lesson to all of us. None of us deserve God mercy; He gives to all men liberally to all who repent

King Hezekiah told the palace officials what to say to Isaiah: “this day is a day of distress and rebuke and disgrace.... It may be that the Lord your God will hear all the words of the king of Assyria... to ridicule the living God... therefore pray for the remnant that still survives” (2 Kings 19:1–4).

Isaiah was ready to give the officials the word of the Lord: “Don not be afraid of what you have heard – those words with which the underlings of the King of Assyria have blasphemed Me... I am going to put such a spirit in him that when he hears a certain report, he will return to his own country, and there I will have him cut down with the sword” (2 Kings 19:6–7).

While the officials were visiting the prophet, Hezekiah was in the temple. He laid his case before the Lord in prayer (2 Kings 19:14–19; Isa 37:14–20).

Hezekiah prayed, “O Lord, God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, You alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. ... It is true, O Lord, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste the nations and their lands. They have thrown their gods into the fire and destroyed them, for they were not gods but only wood and stone, fashioned by men’s hands. Now, O Lord our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all kingdoms on the earth may know that You alone, O Lord, are God” (2 Kings 19:15–19).

GOD ANSWERED HEZEKIAH’S PRAYER

God was pleased to answer the King’s prayer. Isaiah sent a messenger to Hezekiah to give him God’s answer: “Because you (Sennacherib) rage against Me... I will put My hook in your nose... and I will make you return by the way you came... He (Sennacherib) will not enter this city... I will defend this city and save it, for My sake and for the sake of David My servant” (2 Kings 19:28, 32–34).

That night the angel of the Lord went out against the Assyrian army and 185,000 men died. So Sennacherib broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh where two of his sons killed him while he worshipped in the temple of his god Nisroch.

TALK ABOUT: 1. After the Assyrians captured the cities of Judah, they told Hezekiah that..... could not save the city of J.....? 2. What did Hezekiah do (2 Kings 19:15-19)? 3. Had the people been trusting in idols (2 Kings 17:40-41)?

people of Israel held as slaves for 400 years? 4. Later Israel became two kingdoms.....in the north and.....in the south. 5. Who are God’s witnesses in the earth today?

Unit 2. KING HEZEKIAH OF JUDAH

King Hezekiah of Judah’s name means “Yahweh, the God of Israel, is my strength.” He is sometimes called “the man who should have died but didn’t.” He was the 13th King of Judah and son of Ahaz. Hezekiah reigned over Judah for 29 years (726 BC – 697 BC). He reigned from the city of Jerusalem.

His father Ahaz was a wicked king, but Hezekiah worshipped the living God with all his heart. Ahaz led the people into idol worship.

Hezekiah destroyed the idols his father had set up and the high places where the Canaanite god Baal was worshipped (2 Kings 18:4).

Right at the beginning of his reign, Hezekiah opened the temple doors which had been closed. He did not turn his attention first to business or civil rights or even to his own household. He put worship at God’s house first (Matt 6:33).

Hezekiah gathered the priests and Levites and told them to clean the Temple. He brought sacrifices to God and told the people to do the same (2 Chron 29:3-36). He studied the word of the Lord and held to its teachings (Prov 25:11).

“OUR FATHERS WERE UNFAITHFUL”

Hezekiah told the priests, “Our fathers were unfaithful; they did evil in the eyes of the Lord our God... they turned their faces away from the Lord’s dwelling place and turned their back on Him. They also shut the doors of the portico and put out the lamps (that burned in the temple)... the Lord has made them (Judah) an object of dread and horror and scorn, as you see with your own eyes. That is why our fathers have fallen by the sword and why our sons and daughters ... are in captivity. Now I intend to make a covenant with the Lord, the God of Israel, so that His fierce anger will turn away from us... do not be negligent now, for the Lord has chosen you to stand before Him and serve Him...” (2 Chron 29:6–11).

There are many parts to the King’s words. The Lord had indeed chosen this place and the temple. God chose the tribe of Levi to serve Him and He commanded His people to worship Him at the temple, to bring their sacrifices and gifts to Him there.

Ahaz, Hezekiah’s father, had rejected the Lord and turned to idols. He worshipped the idol god Molech and offered child sacrifices in the Valley of Hinnom, outside the city of Jerusalem (2 Chron 28:1–4). This was an abomination to the Lord. God created all life and all life is precious!

TALK ABOUT: 1. Who was Hezekiah? 2. Over which country did he reign? 3. Was his father Ahaz a good king? 4. What was the first thing Hezekiah did when he became king? 5. Why had the temple doors been closed? 6. Jesus wants us to open our hearts to Him ___ True ___ False (Rev 3:20)? 7. What did Ahaz do that God hated?

Unit 3. THE PRIESTS CLEANED THE TEMPLE

At Hezekiah's command priests and people sanctified themselves to God and cleaned the temple. This is a picture of the people of God sanctifying themselves and presenting clean hearts and bodies to God. Peter told the believers in Asia Minor, "In your hearts set apart (or sanctify) Jesus Christ as Lord" (1 Peter 3:15).

We worship God in our hearts; the place where we gather or bow in worship does not matter so much. Jesus told the woman at the well, "The time has come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth... God is Spirit, and His worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24).

The priests consecrated themselves to the service of God more carefully than before and there was great rejoicing in the land of Judah. "So the service of the temple of the Lord was re-established. Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced at what God had brought about for His people, because it was done so quickly."

HEZEKIAH'S REFORMS

Hezekiah trusted the Lord with all his heart. "There was no one like him among the kings of Judah...and the Lord was with him" (2 Kings 18:5). He dedicated the clean temple with all his strength. He gathered the city officials and they went to the temple.

The priests and Levites (sons of Levi) made sacrifices to the Lord and sprinkled the blood on the altar "as a sin offering to atone for all Israel" (2 Chron 29:15-24). The blood of the sacrifice covered or atoned for the sins of the people, so that God could meet with them. This sin offering was "for the temple, for the kingdom and for the people of Judah."

Several families of Levites are named – the chief houses of Kohath, Gershon and Merari (2 Chron 29:12-14). The King called them "sons" to show his favour and remind them of their duty to God and the people. (For divisions of Levites see 1 Chron chs 23–26).

The King followed David's plan to station Levites with musical instruments and trumpets at the temple. When sacrifices were made on the altar "singing to the Lord began also, accompanied by trumpets..." The whole assembly of people worshipped the Lord in this manner (2 Chron 29:27-28).

day of siege of the city by Nebuchadnezzar (588 – 586 BC). See also Jeremiah 34:7.

Hezekiah had a tunnel built from the Gihon Springs, outside the city wall, to the Pool of Siloam inside the city (2 Kings 20:20). The tunnel is still there. It is an engineering feat equal to any in the ancient world. The tunnel measures 1700 feet in length and was cut through solid rock without any modern power tools. It brought fresh water into the city.

At last Hezekiah realized that he could not stand against the superior forces of the Assyrians. He sent an envoy with gold taken from the palace and the temple to soften the anger of Sennacherib, but he was not successful (2 Kings 18:14–16).

ASSYRIA THREATENED HEZEKIAH

The king of Assyria sent his supreme commander and chief officer "with a large army" to Jerusalem to deliver a message to Hezekiah. They stopped at the aqueduct of the Upper Pool, on the road to the Washerman's Field. This was the very spot where Isaiah had warned King Ahaz, Hezekiah's father, not to make alliances with his heathen neighbours (Isa 7:3).

The commander shouted to Hezekiah's officials who went out to receive the message. The Assyrians scoffed at Hezekiah's confidence in the Lord God (2 Kings 18:19-22).

They said, "Come now, make a bargain with... the king of Assyria..." But Hezekiah's officials begged them to speak in Aramaic, since we understand it. Don't speak to us in Hebrew in the hearing of the people on the wall."

The Commander did not heed their plea. He stood and called out in the Hebrew language, "Hear the word of the great king, the King of Assyria. Do not let Hezekiah deceive you. He cannot deliver you... Choose life and not death" (2 Kings 18:28-32). The officials went back to tell King Hezekiah "with their clothes torn." They told him what the Assyrian Commander had said.

TALK ABOUT: 1. Why did Hezekiah refuse to pay tribute money? 2. Who came against the cities of Judah? 3. Was Sennacherib able to capture these fortified cities? 4. What did Hezekiah do to soften the anger of the Assyrian general (2 Kings 18:14-16)? Was he successful?

Unit 12. HEZEKIAH'S PRAYER

As a last hope, Hezekiah turned to the Lord and prayed. He knew that only God could deliver the city of Jerusalem (2 Kings 19:14-35). He tore his robes, put on sackcloth and went up to the temple, while his officials looked for Isaiah.

HEZEKIAH REFUSED TO PAY TRIBUTE

There is no evidence that Hezekiah made an alliance with the king of Babylon. He did not join the Philistine city of Ashdod when they rebelled against the Babylonians (711 BC). But when Hezekiah refused to pay tribute to Assyria, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, came against the fortified cities and towns of Judah and captured them (2 Kings 18:13).

History tells us that Sennacherib entered Palestine to crush a rebellion led by Egypt and Judah. (It would seem that Hezekiah went against the wise counsel of the prophet Isaiah and joined a coalition against Assyria led by Tyre and Egypt). The Assyrian army marched south along the sea coast. They captured Sidon and other coastal towns and defeated the Egyptian army at Eltekeh. Then Sennacherib attacked Lachish and burned the city.

During the siege of Lachish, Hezekiah sent gold and silver to the Emperor, hoping to cool his anger.

When the Assyrians surrounded Jerusalem, Hezekiah and his troops were “shut up like a caged bird” according to the Assyrian record found engraved on a prism. Hezekiah refused to surrender, but did agree to pay the Assyrians 300 talents of silver and 30 talents of gold as tribute.

Sennacherib was not able to take Jerusalem because: 1. Hezekiah protected the city’s water supply (2 Kings 20:20). 2. Hezekiah trusted in the Lord God of Israel, rather than in his friends (allies) and weapons.

TALK ABOUT: 1. Why was God so gracious to Hezekiah? 2. Did the King give thanks to God when he was healed? 3. What did the King think? 4. Who came from Babylon? Why did they come to visit Hezekiah? 5. What did Hezekiah show them? 6. Why did he do this?

Unit 11.

HEZEKIAH FORTIFIED THE CITIES OF JUDAH

For several years Hezekiah had built forts in the chief cities of Judah. Lachish was the most fortified city. Hezekiah had done the same in Jerusalem. He recruited a large army led by trained commanders and provided them with shields and weapons.

Archeologists excavated the ruins of Lachish. They found letters preserved in a layer of charcoal and ash. The letters were inscribed on pieces of broken pottery and written in an ancient Phoenician script by a guard of one of the military watch posts. The letters list names common to Old Testament times, tell of troop movements and confirm that turmoil gripped the city in the final

TALK ABOUT: 1. To sanctify ourselves means to..... ourselves to God? 2. Does it matter where we are when we bow in worship to God? 3. Why was the temple so important to the people of Israel? 4. Why was the blood of sacrifice sprinkled on the altar?

Unit 4. ISRAEL KEPT THE PASSOVER

“Hezekiah sent word to all Israel (the northern kingdom) and Judah (the southern kingdom) and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh (two tribes), inviting them to come to the temple and celebrate the Passover (Feast) to the Lord” (2 Chron 30:1).

God brought Israel out of Egypt, where they had been slaves for 400 years. The night they left Egypt, each household killed a lamb and sprinkled its blood on the doorposts of the house. That night the angel of death saw the blood and passed over the houses where God’s people sheltered (Ex 12). This was called the Passover.

God told Moses to keep a Passover feast on the fourteenth day of the first month as a memorial. Israel obeyed and celebrated the Passover the first year after they left Egypt (Num 9:5), but they had not celebrated the Passover for many years. It would take time for the priests to consecrate themselves and for the people to come to Jerusalem. Many priests and Levites were unclean according the Law, and they felt ashamed (2 Chron 30:15).

God told His people to celebrate Passover in the first month. But many were unclean so they had to wait and celebrate Passover on the fourteenth day of the second month (Num 9:11; 2 Chron 30:2).

God is very gracious. He does not demand the impossible, but gives all men time to repent of their sins and claim the cleansing blood of Jesus for salvation and cleansing (1 John 1:9).

BE HOLY BECAUSE I AM HOLY

God said to His people, “I am the Lord who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy” (Lev 11:45). This meant obeying God’s commands.

Moses told the people “He (God) will love you and bless you and increase your numbers. ... You will be blessed more than any other people...” (Deut 13–14).

Moses also told the people what would happen to them if they did not obey God’s commands: “The Lord will send on you curses, confusion and rebuke in everything you set your hand to, until you are destroyed...” (Deut 28:20).

Holiness under the law meant “to fear the Lord...to walk in all His ways, to serve the Lord with all your heart... and to observe the Lord’s commands” which were for Israel’s own good (Deut 10:12-13).

Holiness for the New Testament believer means no less: “Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness” to “pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace... out of a pure heart” (2 Tim 2:19,22).

TALK ABOUT: 1. What great event happened at Passover? 2. God commanded Moses to celebrate the Passover on the fourteenth day of the.....month (Ex 12:14-16)? 3. Why were the priests and Levites ashamed (2 Chron 30:15)? 4. How can we have clean hearts (1 John 1:9)? 5. King Hezekiah set a good example __ True __ False?

Unit 5. ALL MEN HEARD THE KING’S COMMAND

“At the King’s command, couriers went throughout Israel and Judah with letters from the King...” calling the people to “return to the Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel...” (2 Chron 30:8-9).

“The hand of God was on the people (of the many tribes) to give them unity of mind to carry out what the King had ordered...” and a very large crowd assembled in Jerusalem. Foreigners who had been circumcised were always accepted into the assembly of Israel. And God commanded that they receive all the privileges and benefits of His people, born sons of Abraham.

The northern kingdom of Israel had more ‘foreigners’ than sons of Abraham. They had been sent there from other nations after the Assyrian armies invaded the northern tribes. They came from every nation and they established their own forms of idolatry (2 Kings 17:29-33).

THEY PREPARED THE CITY

God’s people prepared themselves to worship a holy God. Many idols still remained in the city. So they “cleared away the incense altars and threw them into the Kidron Valley” (2 Chron 30:14).

The people seemed more ready and zealous to worship the Lord with their sacrifices than the priests. The Levites killed the Passover lambs, the duty of the priests. Many had come long distances and had not had time to consecrate themselves to the Lord or they had been careless and neglected to do this.

The King prayed that everyone “who set his heart on seeking the Lord” be pardoned (2 Chron 30:19). God heard Hezekiah’s prayer and “healed the people.” God forgave their sins and gave them comfort and peace in their

believe God’s word and not doubt. When we act upon it, God honours our faith and our faith grows stronger.

TALK ABOUT: 1. What did God promise Hezekiah? 2. What sign did God give the King (Isa 38:7)? 3. Does God always give us a sign? Why not? 4. What does it mean to “walk by faith” (2 Cor 5:7)? 5. In everything, God wants us to t.....Him?

Unit 10. MEN CAME FROM BABYLON

In other countries men heard of the King’s remarkable recovery. And men who studied the sun and the stars knew the sun had gone back ten paces. Merobach-Baladan, (he ruled as king of Babylon from 720 – 709 BC) sent an envoy to Jerusalem to see King Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:12).

“They brought... letters congratulating Hezekiah and a gift from the king of Babylon and they enquired about the sign in the heavens” (2 Chron 32:31).

Hezekiah received the envoys gladly, but he made a bad mistake.

In his pride the King showed them all the palace treasures and his armoury (Isa 39:2).

Isaiah went to the old king at once and asked, “What did those men say, and where did they come from?”

Hezekiah replied, “From a distant land. They came to see me from Babylon.”

The prophet asked, “What did they see in your palace?”

“They saw everything,” Hezekiah said. “There is nothing among my treasures that I did not show them.”

Perhaps Hezekiah was old and tired, but he missed another golden opportunity to witness to these people. He should have given God the glory and told them how gracious the Lord had been to him.

Isaiah said to the king, “Hear the word of the Lord Almighty: The time will surely come when everything in your palace, and all that your fathers stored up until this day, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left... and some of your own flesh and blood who will be born to you, will be taken away... to the palace of the king of Babylon” (Isa 39:5–7).

Hezekiah said, “The word of the Lord is good.” For he thought, “There will be peace and security in my lifetime.” The king was comforted by this thought, but Isaiah carried the heaven burden of the sure judgment of God that would come upon Judah and Jerusalem (2 Kings 20:13–18).

The king was selfish and short-sighted and so unlike other leaders of Israel who fell down before the Lord and begged for mercy for their people.

TALK ABOUT: 1. Which country attacked Judah? 2. When the King got sick, he sent for..... the prophet. He also prayed for God to him? 3. How did God answer the King's prayer? 4. What medicine did Isaiah tell them to give to the King (Isa 38:21)? 5. Who do you turn to when in trouble (Psa 46:1; Jas 5:13-17)?

Unit 9. HEZEKIAH ASKED GOD FOR A SIGN

Hezekiah could not wait for the third day when God said he would be well enough to go up to the temple. He asked Isaiah, "What will be the sign that I will go up (again) to the temple of the Lord" (Isa 39:23)?

The prophet answered, "This is the sign to you that the Lord will do what He has promised: I will make the shadow cast by the sun go back the ten steps it has gone down on the stairway of Ahaz" (Isa 38:7).

The sign God gave was in the heavens. The "steps of Ahaz" was a sundial used to tell time. It was a private sign for the king only.

As God promised, Hezekiah recovered and, as he watched, the sun's shadow went back 10 degrees on the sundial. This was one of the greatest miracles recorded in the Old Testament.

The king was jubilant and wrote a song of thanksgiving to God (Isa 38:9-20). He promised the Lord, "I will walk humbly all my years... surely it was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish. In Your love You kept me from the pit of destruction; You have put all my sins behind Your back" (Isa 38:15-17).

The extra fifteen years were filled with war against Assyria.

WE MAY ASK GOD FOR A SIGN

Many times in the Bible men have asked God for a sign. When people from the east attacked Israel, God raised up Judges to lead the people. God sent an angel to tell Gideon, "The Lord is with you... go in the strength you have and save Israel..." (Judges 6:14).

Gideon asked the angel, "How can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family."

The Lord (the angel) answered "I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites as though they were only one man." Gideon still felt unsure, so he asked God for a sign. "Give me a sign that it is really You (the Lord) talking to me," Gideon begged (Jud 6:17). And God gave him the sign.

Gideon obeyed the Lord and broken down the idols in his town, but he was still unsure. He asked God for a second sign or test (Jud 6:39). God answered Gideon's request with a second sign.

God wants us to trust Him, but when faith is weak we may ask Him for a special sign. God does not always grant our request. It is more important to

hearts (Mal 4:2).

Grace overcame law, mercy triumphed over judgment (James 2:13).

TALK ABOUT: 1. Why was the Passover not kept in the first month of the year as God had commanded? 2. What did the king do to get everyone to come to Jerusalem for Passover? 3. What did the people have to do before they could celebrate the Feast? 4. Did God forgive the people whose hearts were true to Him? 5. Why (2 Chron 30:19)? 6. Does God demand holiness of His people (1 Peter 1:16). 7. How can sinners be made holy (1 John 1:9)?

Unit 6. HEZEKIAH LED THE PEOPLE IN GIVING

The priests and Levites did not own land. They were supported by the gifts of the people. They ate part of the meat of the animals sacrificed to the Lord and the people brought them grain and oil.

The people had stopped doing this, so the King encouraged them to obey God's word and do this. The King brought the first offerings.

"He ordered the people living in Jerusalem to give the portion due to the priests and Levites so they could give themselves to teaching the Law of the Lord. As soon as the order went out, the Israelites gave the first fruits of their grain, new wine, oil and honey and all that the fields produced. They brought a great amount... of everything... they piled them in heaps" (2 Chron 31:2-6).

Hezekiah asked the priests and Levites about the heaps.

The chief priest answered, "Since the people began bringing their contributions to the temple of the Lord, we have had enough to eat and plenty to spare, because the Lord has blessed His people... this great amount is left over" (2 Chron 31:9-10).

So Hezekiah made store rooms in the temple buildings to store the tithes and gifts dedicated to the Lord. Nothing given to the Lord must be wasted or used in a careless manner.

Kore, the keeper of the East Gate (of the temple) watched over the food given to the priests and Levites and their families (2 Chron 31:14-19). The wives and children were included in the distribution of food, which was made "to all who were listed in the genealogies of the Levites."

THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

After the Feast of Passover, Hezekiah and the people continued to celebrate in what was also known as the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Deut 16:16). Leaven was the same as yeast and all yeast had to be removed from the Jewish houses.

The Feast lasted for seven more days (2 Chron 30:21–27). The King and the people sacrificed many burnt offerings, sin offerings and peace offerings to the Lord.

Hezekiah encouraged the Levites to teach the people “a good understanding of the service of the Lord” (Deut 33:10). And they sang Psalms of praise every day.

People must be taught the law of God and encouraged to live out their faith. This was particularly important because many aliens had come from Israel and Judah to keep the Passover in Jerusalem (Joshua 8:34).

TALK ABOUT: 1. Who gave money to support the Levites? 2. The Levites had enough and some left over. What did Hezekiah do to store what was not used? 3. Who taught the people God’s Law? 4. Passover is also called “the Feast of **U**..... **B**.....(Deut 16:16). 5. Who was required to attend the three Feasts each year (Deut 16:16)? 6. Did the King set a good example in giving to the Lord (2 Chron 31:3)? 7. What does the Lord require (Rom 12)?

Unit 7.

HEZEKIAH DID WHAT WAS RIGHT AND GOOD

Hezekiah did what God directed him to do (2 Chron 31:20-21). He personally conducted the reforms and participated in the sacrifices and worship. He was like a second David in setting up the division of priests and administering their support. Perhaps Hezekiah took pride in his success and was not careful to give God the glory. God knew Hezekiah’s heart; he did not thank God for all his blessings.

Hezekiah’s reforms spread through the twelve tribes of Israel to the farthest parts of the land. His servants destroyed vile images and Canaanite high places. Altars of Baal were broken down. The bronze serpent that God commanded Moses to make (Num 21:5–9) had been preserved and worshipped. It was called Nehushtan and the Israelites had been burning incense in worship to it. Hezekiah had it broken in pieces (2 Kings 18:4).

THE ASSYRIANS ATTACKED SAMARIA

In Hezekiah’s fourth year, Shalmaneezer marched against the city of Samaria and laid siege to it. After three years the Assyrians took the city (722 BC).

Most of the Jews living in the northern kingdom of Israel were deported to other lands, but a remnant remained. Hezekiah had a golden opportunity to reunite the tribes in one kingdom. The king invited the remnant of people to

come to Jerusalem and worship God at the Temple.

Hezekiah kept the Passover Feast at Jerusalem as God had commanded. “Hezekiah wrote letters 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” (2 Chron 30:1–27).

TALK ABOUT: 1. Which Feast followed Passover? 2. Priests taught the people the.....of God? 3. Why did the northern kingdom of Israel have more aliens than Jews living in it? 4. What did Hezekiah do in his reforms? 5. What object had the Israelites carried with them and worshipped (2 Kings 18:4)?

Unit 8. THE KING’S SICKNESS

In those days (sometime before Sennacherib’s invasion of Judah, 701-702 BC) King Hezekiah became sick. He had a fever and felt dreadful. A boil had infected his whole body and he feared he would die (2 Chron 32:24). His attendants called for the prophet Isaiah to come quickly to the sick king.

Isaiah the prophet went to the palace and gave the king God’s message, “Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover” (Isa 38:1).

The king turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord. Tears streamed down his face and he did not want his servants to see him crying. “Remember, O Lord,” he prayed... “Remember how I have walked before You faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in Your eyes” (Isa 38:3).

Before Isaiah left the middle court, the word of the Lord came to him. “Go back and tell Hezekiah, the leader of My people, ‘This is what the Lord, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you. On the third day from now you will go up to the temple of the Lord. I will add fifteen years to your life. And I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria. I will defend this city’” (2 Kings 20:4–6; Isa 38:4–6).

God gave Isaiah the remedy for the king’s illness. Isaiah told the king’s attendants, “Prepare a poultice of figs and apply it to the boil, and he will recover” (Isa 38:21). They did this and the King recovered from his illness.

When trouble comes, where do you turn? The world offers us pills and ‘advisors.’ Some turn to a shaman or priest. Only God can meet our deepest needs. Only He can heal both body and soul. Prayers of faith will heal the sick (Jas 5:14).