Kings and Prophets 15-07-16

This is Thursday, the 16th of July 2015. In our study of Kings and Prophets, we are looking at the reign of King Hezekiah in Judah, and we will resume tonight in 1st or 2nd, perhaps 2nd Chronicles chapter 31. 2nd Chronicles chapter 31.

We will first be in 2nd Chronicles, second we will be in 2nd Kings. Let's take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer before we begin. It's an opportunity to focus our concentration, ensure that there's no impediment to the ministry of God's Holy Spirit in our hearts as we spend this time together in fellowship in the study of God's Word.

Father, we are often and regularly reminded that it is not by might nor by power but by your Spirit that we can live a life that is pleasing in your sight, that redeems the time, that invests the hours of our day in eternal things. We thank you for that privilege and that opportunity. We thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ who has granted us those great gifts, and we pray that as we look at this portion of your Word tonight, that each one will receive a blessing, will find it personally meaningful and helpful, that the inspired truth of your Word in the hands of your Holy Spirit will enlighten and encourage each of us, and that both individually and together as a church, we will improve our walk before you and the fervency of our commitment and our dedication as those who represent the Lord Jesus Christ on this earth in these days of increasing darkness and increasing challenge.

We pray it in Jesus' name, amen. Well, King Hezekiah, as we have seen over the preceding weeks, is off to a great start as king. We saw what he did on his very first day, how he organized the labor force, directed them, he knew exactly what needed to be done and who needed to do it.

We saw the rather significant timing beginning in the month of Nisan and extending past the time of the regular Passover and noticing that in that month, the time of completion of the cleansing of the temple and the opportunity to open the doors happens on the future anniversary, as it were, of the opening of the grave and the emergence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Concentration, concentration. So, there is a lot of significance, especially in and during the reign of Hezekiah's time, or actually the reign of Hezekiah in his time, a lot of things are significant.

We've seen when we study Isaiah, you remember that we're coming up on the deal where he's sick and there's going to be the steps and the shadow and that, but now we're beginning to realize that even before that time, as soon as Hezekiah comes to the throne, on the first day, there are clocks that start moving and it has significance well beyond his day. He does so many things right and he encourages and builds up his people in an unprecedented way. The Bible says, there never was a king before Hezekiah like unto him and there never was another one like him afterward, which is high praise considering that there were some other pretty good kings to include his father, David.

So, it is with interest that we look at exactly what he did because his actions, the priorities that he sets, the goals that he achieves, the teaching that he establishes in Israel, the encouragement and gathering together of the people so that they have willing hearts and so on is quite astonishing. I'm not going to review what we've already covered because I would never be able to move enough forward to finish what we want to cover tonight. So, just think back quickly and remember all of the stuff that he did last week and how significant those eight-day periods were and what the date was when they came to him and said it was finished and he arose early the next morning and offered those sacrifices, the four sevens.

Remember that? Okay, that's as much review as we have time for. In 2 Chronicles chapter 31, we have the further adventures of King Hezekiah, if you will, in terms of the additional reforms, improvements and restoration that he did in Judah. Now, why do we care about this? Because all of it is a paradigm, it is a pattern, it is a comparative account that has repercussions in our own lives.

We saw last time that he figured out how important the priestly function was for his kingdom. He is the king, he can set all kinds of policies, he can make all kinds of laws, he can influence people in many ways, but until relationship with God, the presence of God and the power of God is central, none of that is going to make a difference. We saw some of his predecessors do great things in terms of fortifying cities and building up armies and it didn't last and it didn't persist and it didn't ultimately do any good.

You can be the man that has his houses and barns and making his plans to put more grain in his silos and then this night your soul is required of you, what are you going to do then? So Hezekiah has this figured out and from day one he is focused on restoring national relationship with God in terms of the covenant. So restoring, opening the doors to the temple, getting the temple cleaned out, getting it reorganized, rehabilitated and functional again, that's what occupies the month of Nisan and interestingly that is such a priority. He knows that they can't celebrate the Passover on its scheduled day without these other things happening first.

Flexibility, is it important to celebrate Passover? Would that be somewhere in his thoughts and in his ideas of what needs to be done? Of course, but first things first. So the first principle we can draw tonight as we look at Hezekiah coming to the throne is, many times there are improvements and tasks that we want to make and accomplish in our lives that reflect our spiritual priorities, but you can't always do them all at once. As with any effort that you organize, you have to decide what comes first.

How could you possibly have the high priest and the rest of the priests and Levites trying to organize and execute a Passover feast in Jerusalem when the temple itself is in shambles, when those men are not sanctified, they are not cleansed, the tools and accoutrements and the altar and the rest of it are not ready? Those things have to be ready first. And he says, well, we're not going to get that done by the 10th of Nisan when it is time to pin up the Passover lambs and begin to examine them for purity. We're not going to be ready in time.

So what does he decide to do? Well, let's just do some kind of a slip shod, the half-baked Passover anyway and God will forgive us for it not being perfect. No. He says, first things first, we will cleanse the temple.

And if we have to miss another Passover, so be it. This comes first. As we look at our priorities, and this is a difficult thing, we are so busy living life, you know, your phone goes off, it rings, it texts, you can't even drive anywhere without the thing going off.

I am always in a quandary because I have a strong principle against operating a phone while I'm behind the wheel of a car. But sometimes it's just necessary. You can't get around it.

And you can pull over, you can try to take an exit, but you at least need to check and see, is this important enough that I need to do that? So sooner or later, you have to look at your phone. And I have to make these small compromises to my principle because if I refuse to look at my phone until I get to my destination 25 minutes later, it may be too late. Maybe I was supposed to do something 25 miles ago, and now I can't because I didn't look at my phone.

And we just live in this kind of pressurized world where there's constant demands, expectations, opportunities, challenges, requirements, responsibilities. And with the advent of technology, these press in on us on a almost minute by minute basis. And as idealized as we might like to frame our approach to life, the real world is different than the ideal.

Ideally, chickens wouldn't ride in columns and rows in trucks that I pass on the highway so that I can have fried chicken like we had last night. Fried chicken was delicious, but I feel bad for the way chickens are treated in the industrialized and a lot of other animals in our beef and fish. I don't like going to seafood restaurants and seeing the little lobsters and crabs in there with rubber bands on their claws.

And it's just, you know, they're on death row and somebody's going to pick them up and throw them alive into boiling water. I think, seriously, you're boiling this animal alive. It goes in fully functional, all of its nerve ends tingling, and you're going to boil it to death.

Well, people don't give that a second thought. I've never ordered one of those. I've a few times had, you know, surf and turf and stuff at the Naval Academy.

I don't know how they treated the lobsters, but here's the thing. There is an ideal. I would love there to be a world where chickens were all like Lucky Plucky or whoever it was that thought the sky was falling on her head.

Lucky Lucy or whatever that chicken's name was, you know, Henny Penny, thought the sky was falling, right? Wasn't it Henny Penny? Chicken Little. Okay, well, one of those. One of those chickens, you know, there's an idyllic farm.

Old McDonald's there throwing out scratch, and they just have this wonderful life, and just about the time they start to kind of creak and groan and don't enjoy their life anymore, you just

gently lay them to sleep and then pluck them and chop their heads off and, you know, cook them and eat them. It would be great if every animal had an idyllic life, but they don't. And in my ideal world, it would be great if they did.

It would be great if we didn't throw great seines into the ocean and scoop up fish by the schools. It would be great if we didn't treat beef the way we do, turkeys the way we do, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. And the fact that things are not ideal means that we have to choose between lesser evils.

To the extent that we can avoid being a direct agent of an evil, I would never take a chicken and put it in a one-by-one cage and just keep it there for weeks on end. I know other people do that, and part of the reason they do it is because I eat chicken. But I can't change the world at second or third or fourth hand.

I can only control what is in my immediate purview. If I'm really concerned about the chickens in a one-by-one-by-one box, I can write letters to whoever I want, you know, Colonel Sanders or, you know, the people that sell those things, Stouffers or, you know, and argue for humane treatment. Me simply refraining from eating them does nothing, and I'm fantasizing if I assign myself some kind of right to, well, I'm not a part of that.

I'm a part of so many things just by being in this world. Reminds me of my thoughts about time travel. You see these accounts all the time of somebody that travels back in time.

They went back to 1976, and they got in a car and drove down the road to go somewhere and save the whales or whatever they might have done. Well, as soon as you breathe air, you're changing history. As soon as you occupy space in traffic, you're changing history.

A car is one car further back than it was if you weren't there. Somebody stops that wouldn't have stopped. Somebody makes a light that they wouldn't have made, or they don't make a light that they would have made just because you're there.

There could never be any legitimate time travel where they walk among us and they're from the future because it would inevitably and without any doubt alter history. Your presence changes things, and it is always for the worse. We're conceived in iniquity.

We're born in sin, and us being here, we create waste. We create trash. And to try to say, well, I'm going to try to go through with my elbows tucked in and my eyes in front of me and make as little impact on the environment as possible, as little negative impact on other people as possible.

You missed the point. As I mentioned last Sunday, we need to acknowledge our responsibility for being here. We need to take.

They're always talking about taking ownership of stuff, take ownership of sin, take ownership of fallenness and corruption, because it is that admission and that acknowledgement and that

recognition that is the foundation and basis for redemption, for faith, for looking to God and saying, I can't fix this. It doesn't matter what I do. I can become a strict vegan and eat nothing but tofu and and soy and and grass clippings and things that no impact.

Look, do you know what happens when you go and eat only plants? Where do they grow the plants? They plant vast fields where they have had to clear out the environment of animals and the little animals that used to live there can't live there anymore, because the more people that eat vegetables, the bigger the fields have to be. The more people eat grain, the larger they have to be, and the more pesticides are sprayed. So, OK, well, I'm only going to get my vegetables at the farmer's market where they tell me that they don't use any pesticides and they don't.

Look, the farm is still taking up space where animals used to live. They are killing gophers. They're killing moles.

They're killing voles. They're killing rabbits. They're killing anything that attacks the crops.

They're killing all kinds of insects. Don't insects have rights just because they're insects and not animals? It's a grasshopper. I mean, how small do you have to go before it's OK to kill them? What about mice, mice eating the grain? They've got mouse traps.

They poison the mice. They wipe out whole mouse civilizations trying to grow your grain. What about the birds? The birds are trying to come down and live.

They kill the birds. They electrocute the birds. They poison the birds.

And you're killing birds. So there is no escape from the fallenness of the world. The whole creation groans, waiting for our redemption.

The fact of our existence is enough to perpetrate the curse. So own it. Believe it.

And you can't look to yourself to fix it. We can't fix it any more than when we try to cure something that's wrong with us. We fix that and break two other things.

Yes, I don't have any pain, but now my liver is shot. Yes, my hormones are up, but now I'm 10 times as likely to get cancer. Yes, I fix this, but now I'm going to have a stroke.

Instead of a heart attack, I have a stroke. Instead of a stroke, I'm going to have arthritis. Instead of arthritis, I'm going to have organ failure.

Instead of organ failure, I'm going to—my skin's going to slough off. My hair is going to fall out. I'm remediating the cancer, but I've shortened my life by 15 years and every hair on my body has fallen out.

Our human solutions are so human. They're so short and short-sighted. When we look at Hezekiah and we see these wonderful things that he's doing, his priorities and his goals and his values are spiritual.

He didn't start a great campaign to educate the poor or to heal the sick or to improve the crop yields. What does he do? Let's invite the Lord God back into our nation. Let's restore recognition of who He is and what He means to us.

Everything else is in God's hands. Let God handle crop multiplication. Let God handle taking care of the poor.

Not to mean that charity is not a good thing or that we shouldn't look out for one another. Look out for the widows and orphans, of course, but that is only ultimately meaningful if it is done in God's name for the Lord's sake. Feeding widows and orphans as a secular materialist, humanist, atheist really accomplishes no good.

That orphan and that widow is going to be just as dead 50 to 100 years from now as if you didn't feed them. Did they die sooner or did they die later? If it's all a materialist, secularist, humanist world, what does it matter? Some people die early. Some people die late.

Some people are hungry. Some people aren't. We're all dead and dust and it's all forgotten.

And when the living memory of all of that dies, what's the significance? What did it all mean? What does it mean if you help somebody but you're dead, they're dead, nobody's ever coming back, and it's all forgotten, there's no record of it anywhere? If a guy named Fred helped a widow named Orpah in 1672 in some village in France, so what? If there's no God, if there's no future, if there's no reckoning, if there's no ultimate righteousness, if there's no future for them or for us, what difference does it make if the lady ate an extra meal or not, if the guy helped her or not? Well, it made him feel better about himself. What's the use? What's the good? If we're just here to gratify ourselves, there's plenty of better ways than charity to gratify yourself. There is such a circularity and such a meaninglessness to life without prioritizing the presence of God, the future that God promises.

Things matter here. What we do and what we think, what we say and how we live matters. Hezekiah understood that.

And so on day one, that is the focus, that is the goal, that is the priority. And notice, by the way, that 2700 years later, Hezekiah with those actions and with those priorities is still making a difference. It matters because it is in the spiritual realm.

It is in and of God. That's what we do that lasts. That's what we do that matters.

That's what God invests with eternal significance and eternal power. Hezekiah is in God's word, not because some dusty old Jews managed to keep his story alive in some scrolls. It's because God magnifies his word above his name and Hezekiah is in and a part of God's word.

And this is just an excerpt. This is just a fragment of the ultimate capital W word of God that is written in heaven. The Lamb's book of life is a part of the word of God.

The book of the living is a part of the word of God. The further actions of all of the believers that have ever lived are in the capital W word of God in heaven. We just have a sample.

We just have a preview here of the word of God. This is enough and sufficient for our life here. But there is a vast Bible, if you will, in heaven.

And many of us have our story being recorded in that book. And what you do matters. What you think matters.

The priorities and the goals and the values that characterize life here for us matter. Hezekiah figured that out. He read Ecclesiastes.

He knew the frustrations of bumping against the glass ceiling that Solomon wrote about. And he said, you know what? I know how to get past that. I know how to bring a whole nation with me.

And that's what he does. And he does a fantastic job. No king like him before or after, the Bible says.

But look at chapter 31. When all this was finished, all of this what? The first two months of his reign, when he reestablished worship and reordered priorities and put God first. When all this was finished, all Israel who were present went out to the cities of Judah and broke the sacred pillars in pieces, cut down the wooden images and threw down the high places and the altars from all Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim and Manasseh until they had utterly destroyed them all.

This is not just a matter of building in positive things, setting new priorities and constructing and restoring worship of God as the first and foremost thing. It is also eliminating those alternatives that were evil, that had been a part of life in Judah for decades and generations. It is not enough to turn toward the good, we have got to turn away from what is bad.

Remember in Hebrews, not laying in the foundation of what? Change of mind away from dead works and faith toward God. They are two sides of the same coin. You don't have a coin that is heads and when you flip it over, the coin disappears because there is no other side.

They are two sides of the same coin. It is kind of like faith and repentance. You can't really exercise faith if you don't change your mind about everything that is not faith.

Whatever is not a faith is sin. Well, I have got to change my mind and I am not going to choose sin anymore. And because I am not choosing sin, that opens up the opportunity for faith.

They are linked. They are two parts of a whole. Repentance and faith.

Change of mind away from dead works and faith toward God. So, faith toward God, we are inviting Him in, we are restoring His house, we are restoring worship, we are honoring Him, we are putting Him first, we are offering these sacrifices, we are observing the Passover and recognizing that our deliverance and our salvation and our hope beyond death, which by the

way, the Passover lamb is a central and vital picture of, we are under sentence of death but there is a substitute. The firstborn is not going to die because the lamb has already died.

The blood of the lamb stands instead of the blood of the firstborn. That is what Passover is. They recognize that.

They celebrate it. The time is secondary to the principle. First things first, change of mind away from dead works, faith toward God.

Well, He has done all of the cosmetic improvements to the temple. He has recommissioned and re-sanctified the priests. They have had a big inaugural worship.

Now what? He says, it is not just a flash in the pan, it is not an occasion, it is not a one-week revival at the church and a week later we are back to doing the same old things. We are changing. So, everybody went to all of the cities beyond Jerusalem.

The temple is only in Jerusalem. The priests only function in Jerusalem. The assembly feasts are just three times a year.

What about the rest of the time? You can say, well, I am going to renew my dedication to Bible class or to have my quiet time or my time of reflection and prayer every day and that is great. That is a wonderful start. But what about the rest of the day? What about the rest of the week? What am I going to do there? I need to clean that up also.

It is great to worship God in instruction, in fellowship, in reflection and meditation on God's Word, in praying and coming before the presence of God, coming boldly before the throne of grace to find that grace to help in time of need. That is all great. But what about the rest of the time? Hezekiah understands that.

So, people go throughout the land, all of the land that he has got any control over at all, not just Judah but Benjamin and Ephraim and Manasseh. And they utterly destroy the wooden images and the pillars and the altars, Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim and Manasseh until they had utterly destroyed them all, not just most, not just the seemingly important ones, all. Find it, destroy it, eliminate it.

What do doctors do when they find a malignant tumor? How much of it do they try to take out? Some of it? Most of it? Eh, we got, we think we got most of it. They will take good tissue to be sure that they got it all because if you leave any of it, it is going to multiply. It is going to re-establish its presence.

And sometimes very quickly these metastasizing cancers that they have got, if you don't get all of that out, it is going to be back and worse. All the children of Israel return to their own cities, every man to his possession. So, he has not just made a change in Jerusalem and in the capital city.

All of the cities are changed. When every man goes back to his home and to his possession, it is different. I look up on the hill and I don't see the Asherah poles and I don't see the altars and I don't see a bunch of godless, pagan people going up there and offering sacrifices anymore.

It is different. The Statesman Quartet had a great song on the Peace O Lord album, it is called Now It Is Different. It is oh so different now.

It is different now since Jesus saved my soul. It is different now since his cleansing blood made me whole. Satan had to flee when Jesus rescued me.

It is all different now. It is different. If God is present in our lives, it ought to make a difference.

If you don't see a difference during the week, if you don't find yourself less and less interested in things that corrupt and defile and drag your mentality down into the dirt, if you don't find yourself more and more occupied with the Lord Jesus Christ and with the wonderful things that we are seeing revealed in God's Word, if you don't find things changing for the better, if you don't find improvement, if it is pretty much business as usual, something is wrong. You cannot have the living presence of God in your heart and in your soul and there not be positive change, sin diminishing, righteousness multiplying, righteousness by faith, inheritance, preparation for the future, interest in the God and the things of Christ. If things are kind of plodding along, something is wrong.

Find it and fix it. Life is short. Find it and fix it.

They went to the towns, they found what was wrong and they destroyed it. They eliminated it. It is different now.

When every man goes back to his city and to his possession, it's not the same. If you've got channels on your television set and even in cruising by trying to get from one to the other, bad stuff comes up on the screen, block them. There are ways in your TV you can never see those channels.

If there's stuff on your computer that shouldn't be there, block it, delete it, get rid of it. Get a safe browser. There's plenty of ways that you can eliminate what corrupts and what defiles and what draws and drags.

If your homepage, I was never so incensed in all my life and this is years ago when we lived in Garland, when I would try to just pull up my internet service off of Comcast and the homepage was pitching evil. I wrote them, I said, look, I'm not going to keep your service if you force me to look at this stuff on your homepage. I try to change my homepage, you keep changing it back.

I try to go to my email, this is on my email page. I will not use your service if you keep doing this. Well, of course they didn't change it.

They were pro-evil lifestyle and putting salacious things on my page. So, canceled that service,

got a different service. Turned out to be a better service anyway.

Make a change. It ought to be different when you go back and return to your own city and every man to his own possession. Verse two, Hezekiah appointed the divisions of the priests and the Levites according to their divisions, each man according to his service, the priests and Levites for burnt offerings and peace offerings to serve, to give thanks and to praise in the gates of the camp of the Lord.

There are right people at the right times doing the right things. Second point of application. What was the first point? If it needs changing, change it.

Secondly, identify what is right at the right time and the right place with the right people and do that. Identify what is right, the right time, the right place and the right people. Do that.

The King also appointed a portion of his possessions for the burnt offerings, for the morning and evening burnt offerings, the burnt offerings for the Sabbaths and the new moons and the set feasts as it is written in the law of the Lord. Hezekiah invested of his own possession. It cost him something.

Remember what David said up in the field of Arona? Arona said, well, look, I'll give you this land. I'll give you the oxen. I'll give you my plow.

You can just bust this stuff up and make an offering. What did David say? Great. Thanks, Arona.

Appreciate that. I will not offer to the Lord that which cost me nothing. If you want to do this, it is going to cost and it should cost and we should be glad to invest that resource, spend that time, reallocate that energy, whatever it might be, right? Is God so trivial that we really can't reallocate? Sorry, but I can't miss my program.

Sorry, I can't take that time. I've got a regular appointment with this or that or the other. It's my hobby.

It's my friend. It's even my family. It's my this.

It's my that. Remember what the Lord Jesus said? If you love father, mother, sister, brother, houses, lands more than me, you can't be my disciple. You don't have to utterly divest yourself of wonderful and good things.

These are the venues where we exercise faith, where we make good decisions. But the Lord God in heaven had better be first and we had better be willing to do what Hezekiah does here. He allocated everything.

Remember, you know, people always go to the extreme. Well, you know, when the rich young ruler came, Jesus said, sell all you have and give it to the poor and come, you know, be a pauper and be my disciple. Did Jesus tell that to the other disciples? Did he say, Peter, sell all you have and give it to the poor and then keep on.

John, if you guys still got that business up there with Zebedee, you need to divest. Andrew, Matthew, you guys got any savings? You have anything tucked away? You need it. Did he tell all of the disciples, get everything you have, give it all the way to the poor and we're all going to walk around with nothing.

Who did Jesus tell, sell all you have? One guy. Why? Because that was his point of weakness, materialism. Not only could he not give away all of it, he couldn't give away any of it.

He went away. He didn't say, well, Lord, how about I do 90% and just keep a little bit so that I can afford to follow you. He didn't even compromise.

He went away sorrowing because he didn't want to give away one shoe, one farthing, one shackle, one calf, one kid of the goats. He didn't want to give away a bit of it. That's why the Lord said, sell all you have.

If the Lord had said, sell 50%, he might've said, well, you know, I could probably use the other 50% and make that back. You know, I'm a good investor. It was a test and he failed.

From, it's a portion of his possessions. How much is a goodly portion? It's different for everybody. For some people, it's a 10th.

Some people tithe, God bless them. If the tithe is the way you want to go, do the tithe. You don't have to tithe.

Bible doesn't teach a required tithe. For many people, it makes sense. That's what they do.

And God blesses them and blesses them in extraordinary ways. Nothing wrong with tithing. If you understand what you're doing and why you're doing it, take a portion, whatever it may be.

It doesn't have to be your material possessions. For some people, their portion is their time, their energy. A part of their day is devoted to service.

Some people go down and serve in the soup kitchen. Some people find ways to be generous where they work or in their business or in their relationships. They find ways to be of assistance and to help.

It is a portion of possessions, of resources, of what we have. Time is a part of our possession. Some people just devote time to prayer and very carefully and diligently and regularly and faithfully pray for other believers.

I would rather have prayer than almost anything. What a tremendous gift that people give when they pray for us and when they do it regularly and faithfully. And it is a part of what they do.

Remember now, it is observation, interpretation, application and physical things in the Old Testament. We're not kings. We don't have treasuries.

We don't have personal possessions that we've gotten by whatever means. This is an analogy. It is a pattern.

It is a type of what we do. Tangible things are often intangible things when it comes time for application. So think it through.

Pray. Go before the Lord and say, Lord, show me what my possessions are and which ones you would have me invest as a part of my worship, as a part of my sonship and heirship, as a part of my opportunities as a priest and a minister and an ambassador. You can't pray that prayer and not get an answer.

Do you seriously think if you go before the Lord and say, Lord, I'm not real clear, I'm not real sure. I want to do this and I want to do it the very best way. I want to use the things you've given me and the way you want me to use them.

Please illuminate my path. Give me wisdom. Give me insight.

Help me understand how I can do this. It doesn't look to me like I've got anything, but what I have, I want to, I want to do the Hezekiah allocation of possession. Help me figure it out.

Can you imagine God in heaven not answering that prayer? The reason that he doesn't answer it is it doesn't get prayed very often. Do you think Hezekiah was a man of prayer? How did he know how to do these things? He understood the value of relationship with God and you could see it in what he did. And of course he was a man of prayer.

Of course he researched the available word of God and he consulted with the priests and the Levites and those who were knowledgeable and said, find out how we're supposed to do this. That's why it says, according to what is written in the law of the Lord, verse three, you can't ignore the law of the Lord and just say, Lord, please show me. He went to the law.

He went to every scripture that was available. And if he couldn't figure it out there, go to the Lord in prayer. Moreover, he commanded the people who dwelt in Jerusalem to contribute support for the priests and the Levites that they might devote themselves to the law of the Lord, not just to service, not just to wiping off shovels and, you know, cleaning off the altar and carrying off the bits and pieces of sacrificed animals that they might devote themselves to the law of the Lord.

You see that in the New Testament in Acts. Remember, we need these deacons to take care of the distribution for the widows and orphans so that we can devote ourselves to prayer and the teaching of the word. It's a priority.

As soon as the commandment was circulated, the children of Israel brought in abundance the first fruits of grain and wine, oil and honey, and of all the produce of the field. Remember, this is still the springtime. This is still right after Nisan.

This is in that hiatus leading up to Pentecost. It's in the spring and early summer. So there's first fruits.

The early crops are coming in. The bees are making honey because the flowers are in bloom. So they bring those things, oil and honey, the produce of the field, and they brought abundantly the tithe of everything.

And the children of Israel and Judah who dwelt in the cities of Judah brought the tithe of oxen and sheep, the tithe of holy things which were consecrated to the Lord their God. They laid in heaps. They brought it in heaps.

They didn't say, well, it looks to me like they've got plenty. I think I'll just take what I brought back home. They laid it there anyway.

In the third month, they began laying them in heaps. After two months, how many days have gone by? How many days in a month? 30 days. This is post Passover.

This is after the Passover. So in the third month, Nisan was the first month, then you move into the next month, then you move into the third month. So have we passed the 50 days after 14 Nisan, 17 Nisan? Count seven weeks.

Seven times seven is 49 days, right? That's where you get Pentecost. This is in the third month now. So Nisan was 30 days.

Next month is 30 days. That's 60 days. In the third month, we're between 60 and 90 days after Hezekiah became king.

In the third month, they began laying them in heaps, and they finished in the seventh month. In the seventh month, when Hezekiah and the leaders came and saw the heaps, they blessed the Lord and His people, Israel. Then Hezekiah questioned the priests and the Levites concerning the heaps.

Azariah, the chief priest of the house of Zadok, answered him and said, Since the people began to bring the offerings into the house of the Lord, we have had enough to eat and have plenty left, for the Lord has blessed His people, and what is left is this great abundance. So the people that set this priority and decided that they would come and contribute to the worship of the Lord and to the support of the priests and Levites, that they would fulfill what the law of the Lord required of them in terms of contribution, did they suffer? Were they short? Were they at home, well, were eating gruel and water and barely getting by? Because they set this as their priority, what has God done? God has blessed them. This is a much abused truth when people are putting pressure on believers to give to ministries and so on, but there is a legitimate sense in which when you give, when you prioritize the Lord, and when you give whatever those resources may be, time, prayer, attention, fellowship, whatever material support is included in that, we are blessed with abundance.

You do not put God first and end up in the ditch, end up short, end up lacking, end up without. God honors those who honor Him. So the people have been blessed and they brought in this great abundance.

So in verse 11, Hezekiah commanded them to prepare rooms in the house of the Lord and they prepared them. Notice, he doesn't say, well, let's have a big feast and just use all this stuff up before it goes bad. He says, we need to store this up for the future.

We're thinking ahead. We're laying up for ourselves treasure in the day when maybe there isn't so much abundance, when maybe there is hardship. Savings is a good idea.

Thinking about the future, making provision for the future is a good idea. If it is a time of surplus and abundance, make a plan, think ahead. It isn't always in this corrupt and fallen world going to be a time of abundance.

If God is blessing and there's a super abounding blessing, figure out a way to lay it up. Figure out a way to save it. He built storerooms.

They didn't have storerooms, so he built them. They prepared rooms in the house of the Lord and they prepared them. Notice, Hezekiah doesn't put up with disobedience.

When he says, prepare a thing, they prepare it. He sets a priority. He gives a command and it is executed.

This is important that there is order and there is diligence and there is obedience where there needs to be obedience. It's not an accident that it says Hezekiah gave the command and his command was followed. He said to prepare them and they did it.

This is the mark of a good leader in any organization. You set a policy, you make a decision, you give a command, and it is carried out. It's essential.

You can't have a good organization without it. They faithfully brought in the offerings. I want you to start watching here.

I'm going to read this real quick because we're just about out of time. They faithfully brought in the offerings, the tithes, and the dedicated things. Konaniah, the Levite, had charge of them.

Notice, somebody has responsibility. Someone is being held accountable. It's not just a group communism kind of a thing where, well, we've all got keys and we can all come in and get what we want.

There's a guy designated, there's structure, there's order, there's accountability. There is monitoring taking place. He is in charge.

Shimeiah, his brother, was over the next. Jehiel, Azaziah, Nahath, Asahel, Jeremoth, Josabed, Eliel, Ishmachiah, Mahath, and Benaiah. Again, we could spend two weeks just looking at these

guys and their names.

What I would suggest right now is count them. Count them. Start with Konaniah and his brother Shimeiah.

That's two. Jehiel, three. Azaziah, four.

Nahath, five. Asahel, six. Jeremoth, seven.

Josabed, eight. Eliel, nine. Ishmachiah, ten.

Mahath, eleven. Benaiah, twelve. Interesting number, twelve.

There are twelve people involved in the oversight and care of this building into the future. Koreh, the son of Imnah the Levite, the keeper of the east gate, was over the freewill offerings to God to distribute the offerings of the Lord and the most holy things. Under him were Aden, Menehemen, Yeshua, Shimeiah, Amariah, and Shekiniah, his faithful assistants in the cities of the priests to distribute allotments to their brethren by divisions to the great as well as the small.

Organization, delegation, accountability. Beside these males from three years old and up who were written in the genealogy, they distributed to everyone who entered the house of the Lord his daily portion for the work of service by his divisions. And the priests who were written in the genealogy according to their father's house and to the Levites from twenty years old and up according to their work by their divisions to all who are written in the genealogy, their little ones and their wives, their sons and their daughters.

Accurate record keeping, good paperwork, organization, dedication, accountability. This is the way every Christian organization ought to be, large or small, whether it's your family household, whether it is a non-profit doing some kind of ministry, whether it is a large church or small. Organized, consistent, accountable, faithful.

Notice again in verse 18, in their faithfulness they sanctified themselves in holiness, in doing these mundane jobs. It wasn't just when there was a sacrifice on the altar, it wasn't just when they were singing psalms and waving branches and so on in worship. In the carrying out of mundane tasks, in their faithfulness they sanctified themselves in holiness.

If I was going to make myself a fresh refrigerator magnet today, I would take the last half of verse 18 and that's what I would put on the wall. This is what I want to do. This is what we as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ should do.

In faithfulness, sanctify ourselves in holiness. Faithful in little things, he that is faithful in that which is least will be faithful also in that which is much. When we are faithful and diligent in this life, God is going to give us opportunities in the next beyond what we could ask or think.

I have no idea how the little phonograph needle moving in a groove here on earth is going to

produce thunderous orchestral music at the other end of the circuit. What we do here that seems small and insignificant has enormous repercussions potentially in the kingdom of the Father in days to come. Don't underestimate how important daily faithfulness, daily dedication, daily accountability, daily consistency is to the future kingdom of God.

Do you think these guys had any idea that they were going to be written down in a book and that 2,700 years later you and I would be reading about them, be inspired by them, be educated and drawn closer to the Lord God in heaven by their actions? Do you think Konaniah had any notion that his name was going to be in a scriptural book reprinted in Bibles by the tens of millions? Do you think Konaniah and his brother Shimei had any notion as they were doing this sort of drudge work, figuring stuff out, making apportionments, allocations? They had no idea, just as you and I have no idea what God has in store for those who love him. Well, this is our example. This is written for our instruction, for our inspiration, for our encouragement, for our zeal.

Remember the Lord Jesus when he fashions the whip of cords and he says, he quotes the scripture, the Old Testament scripture, zeal for the house of the Lord has consumed me. Well, you know where the house of the Lord is today? Right inside our hearts and souls. Do we have zeal for the house of the Lord? Are we ready to go in and cast out and destroy the profane things, break down the high places, get rid of the altars and the idols and clear out room for daily dedicated service and function and worship of the Lord God in heaven who gave his son to save us, who is preparing a place for us even now? Are we readying ourselves using the grist and the fodder of this life for its real purpose, which isn't an end in itself.

These are our story problems. These are our preparatory challenges. This is what gives us exercise.

This is how we build up our invisible spiritual selves. This is just happenstance. This is just temporary.

This is ephemeral. This is school preparing us for our real life in the ages to come. Well, all of this is great.

And as you look at the rest of this chapter, the sons of Aaron, the priest, and look down at verse 20, doing their thing and then Hezekiah in verse 20, did throughout all Judah and he did what was good and right and true before the Lord his God. What a testimony, what an epitaph. Wouldn't you like to show up at the judgment seat of Christ and some angel opens a book, unrolls a scroll and says, thus fill in your name here, did throughout his life, he did what was good and right and true before the Lord his God.

Can't ask for more than that. In every work that he began in the service of the house of God, in the law and in the commandment to seek his God, he did it with all his heart and therefore he prospered. Can't ask for more than that.

Gets no better than that. I don't care if you're Noah, Daniel, Moses, David, Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada, one of my favorites, Caleb, son of Jephunneh. Nobody in the Old Testament gets any higher accolade than Hezekiah does right here.

It's doable. It's reachable. You and I have everything we need to be similarly judged, to be similarly accounted.

What's stopping us? Well, this is important because with this great, incomparably great start, Hezekiah is about to face a tremendous test, a significant challenge. He's a tall spirit at the beginning of his reign. The question now is, is he also possessed of a long spirit? We'll revisit our verse in Ecclesiastes.

He's standing tall at the beginning. Is he going to endure? Is he going to persist? What will he do when he faces the greatest challenge of his reign? The incursion of the Assyrians. Sennacherib is going to send the Rabshaka and the Rabsaris and the general of the armies down there to test whether all of this done in the benefit of peace will stand and last and survive the pressure of this external threat.

Internally, Hezekiah has met every challenge. Internally, he's gotten the people on his side. Internally, he has cast down the high places, gotten rid of the idols.

Internally, he has fixed up the house of the Lord. What's going to happen in chapter 32 of 2 Chronicles? External threat, external challenge, external pressure. I'm fine when I'm dealing with the stuff inside.

What about this from outside? Well, that's what we'll pick up next time. And interestingly, the account changes. Interestingly, the response isn't the same as it has been throughout these previous couple of chapters.

Why? What do we learn from this? How can we benefit from it? That's what we'll undertake next time. Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank You for this tremendous example of how we can serve, how we can worship, how we can establish a kingdom and a temple in our own lives and in our own hearts with this incomparable example from King Hezekiah.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will make it a source of fruitful reflection and meditation that as we consider our own circumstances, as we look at our own resources and look at how best to take that portion that belongs to You and dedicate it to You on a regular, consistent basis. We pray that Your Holy Spirit will encourage and guide each one of us as we do that analysis, as we make our decisions, as we seek to live our lives in a way that glorifies the Lord Jesus. We pray these in His name.

Amen.