

A New Year

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[0 : 0 0] 2 Chronicles chapter 29, we read the verses 17 to 19. 2 Chronicles chapter 29, we read the verses 17 to 19.

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Now, what had been going on before? In the reign of King Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah, the kings of Judah tended to sort of fluctuate between those who were good, who would sometimes be followed by one who was bad.

Sometimes the one who was bad would be followed by another one who was bad. But every now and then, in the grace of God, an evil king would be followed by a good one. And that's what's happened with King Ahaz when he died.

He slept with his fathers, we see at the end of chapter 28. He slept with his fathers and they buried him in the city, even Jerusalem. But they brought him not into the sepulchres of the kings of Israel.

[2 : 0 8] And Hezekiah, his son, reigned in his stead. Ahaz was a bad king. 20 years old when he began to reign, verse chapter 28 tells us. And he reigned 16 years in Jerusalem.

But he did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord, like David's father. He followed the ways of paganism. He sought to defile the house of the Lord. He sought to set up other gods and worship them.

Now, the other gods that the nations worshipped and that the Israelites sometimes worshipped in their foolishness are referred to in the Bible as the Baalim. That's the plural of Baal.

Now, Baal is not one particular god necessarily. Sometimes the name is given to a particular pagan deity. It's really just a generic term that means emptiness, vanity, that which is useless.

In the worship of these false gods, whatever they called them, or whatever the different gods of the nations round about were, with which the Israelite kings sometimes became obsessed, they were, at the end of the day, useless.

[3 : 1 1] They were empty. They were vain because they could not help. They could not do any good to the kings or the people of Israel or Judah. So, worshipping and setting up altars to all these false gods never did any good to anyone, especially not to the kings of Judah or of Israel.

It simply meant that they drifted further from the only source of their help, and as they actively pursued sin, so they neglected what is good.

Now, it's unclear whether or not the house of the Lord had been purposely locked and shut up to prevent people worshipping in it, or whether it was just neglect.

It had become sort of barred up and closed off and neglected, but rather what we read here at the beginning of Hezekiah's reign, that he began rather to open up the doors of the house of the Lord, to bring in the priests and the Levites.

He, in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them, and he brought in the priests and the Levites and gathered them together. Now, the house of the Lord had become filled with filthiness.

[4 : 24] We don't know whether or not that means because there were pagan altars in them and all the debris and detritus that was in there because of it, or whether it's just the accumulation of dirt through neglect.

I mean, if you have a house, for example, and we see houses in our own island and villages and so on, which, you know, they're in perfectly good order, but then, you know, maybe the families move away, maybe there's a property dispute or whatever, and they don't get sold, they don't get impaired, they're still all closed up, and no doubt if you went through the rooms, everything would be in them just as they were left, or whatever hadn't been taken out, still get curtains in the windows and so on, but the dirt has accumulated, not just dust, but grime, maybe cobwebs, maybe if the leaves are blown through an open window, or a crack or a hole in a window, or maybe a door's come off its hinges, and dirt gets blown in, or beasts come in and they bring dirt with them or whatever.

It just accumulates. The negligence and the lack of attention to a property, if it is left, will mean that dirt and dry land, dust accumulates.

And as it is with the physical property of the house of the Lord in Jerusalem, so it is with the spiritual property of our own hearts and our own minds.

So many in this world, often including ourselves, we actively pursue things which may in themselves not necessarily be wrong.

[5 : 56] You know, the things of this world God has given us, either to pursue in our employments, or careers, or leisure activities, or hobbies, or whatever, none of which are harmful in themselves, but if they become our veil, if they become our gods, with a small g, if they become that to which we give greater attention than to the things of the Lord, oh, I couldn't be at a prayer meeting because I had to take the boy off the football practice, or I couldn't be at church, oh, because I was doing this, or I was doing that.

It doesn't really matter what the thing is. If it has a higher priority than the Lord, it has become our veil. It has become our false god.

And as we pursue these things, which cannot ultimately profit us, cannot ultimately do us any good. You know, I mean, who's going to remember seven years down the line, oh, we're so-and-so, oh, he's working here in office now, or he's at engineering, or he's at senior, or whatever.

Oh, do you remember how good he used to be at football practice seven years ago? Do you remember how he used to do the keepy-uppies, and all the things he could do on the training day? It wasn't that brilliant on the match stage, but at training, he was fantastic.

It's so good that he went to training all those times, or the particular leisure pursuit we might follow, or particular attention to our careers. As somebody has once said, you know, nobody ever said on their deathbed, I wish I'd spent more time at the office.

[7 : 24] If we are neglectful of the one thing that is important, then all the things we pursue will be seen ultimately to be vanity.

because the house of the Lord, that spiritual house, which ultimately we are, that's what the New Testament tells us, 1 Corinthians 6, verses 19 and 20, what?

Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

Then 2 Corinthians 6, verses 15 and 16, what concord hath Christ with Belial, or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel, and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?

For ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said. I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

[8 : 25] So the temple of the living God, is that which we are meant to be. It's not talking simply about an attention to church, or to the outward worship, though that is important.

You know, that is a symptom, that is an outward expression. When Hezekiah is repairing the doors of the house of the Lord, when he is getting the Levites and the priests to go in, to take out all the garbage, to clean the place, to sanctify it, to set it apart again, for the worship of God.

That is a witness. It is a witness in and of itself, to all the people of Jerusalem, that God is going to be worshipped again, in this city. The Lord Jehovah, is again on the throne, of this kingdom.

Not Baal, not the false gods of the nations round about. The neglected temple, is being restored. The filth is being cleansed out. The Lord, is to be restored again, to his central place, as the king of kings.

And of course, we read that they are doing this, in obedience to the king's command. Yes, okay, that's what we read. They arose and took away, the altars that were in Jerusalem.

[9 : 34] They did it. They gathered their brethren, sanctified themselves, and came, verse 15, according to the commandment of the king, by the words of the Lord, to cleanse the house of the Lord, verse 15.

But, you know, we might say, well, that's all very well, if you've got the law on your side, if you've got a king, or a parliament, or whatever, is encouraging you to do it, that then, that's one thing.

But we don't have that, in this country. We've got godless rulers. We've got those who are, antagonistic, to the gospel. So, what chance have we got, of turning our country, or our nation, or our own lives, back to the Lord?

What can we do? Well, Hezekiah, remember, is not seeking to change the direction, of the empire of Babylon, or the empire of Assyria, or the superpower of Egypt, or the empire of the Hittites.

He has no authority, no jurisdiction there. He cannot control, these great empires, of the pagan countries, round about him. He's not going down, to the Edomites, and saying, right, we're going to do things this way.

[10 : 39] He's not going to the Philistines, and saying, right, you're all going to follow, our God, here in Judah. What is he doing? He is focusing, on where his jurisdiction runs.

He is focusing, on the now, much reduced, and small kingdom, of Judah. He is looking, at his own capital Jerusalem. He is looking, at what he does, have authority over, and where his writ, does run.

And he is, resolving, that he is going, to use, what authority, or jurisdiction, he has, over where, he can be, an influence, to make, a difference, for the Lord, and for his people, for himself, and his kingdom, and also, for his people, in terms of their, relationship, to the Lord.

This is what he says, that he is resolved. Hear me, he revives, sanctify yourselves, and sanctify, the house of the Lord, God of your fathers, and carry forth, the filthiness, of the Lord.

For our fathers, have trespassed, and have done that, which was evil, in the eyes of the Lord. And wherefore, the wrath of the Lord, was upon Judah, and Jerusalem, he hath delivered them, to astonishment, to hissing, to trouble.

[11 : 52] 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. This is what Hezekiah, sets out to do, at the beginning, of his way, to make a covenant, afresh, with the Lord, God of Israel.

Now, prior to the death, of Ahaz, his father, Hezekiah, was still there. He was a prince, of Israel, of Judah. He perhaps, had some influence, some authority, but he didn't have, the jurisdiction, to act, until his father, had died, and was taken away.

He didn't have, the jurisdiction, to act, until, if you like, the obstacle, had been taken, out of the way, the old, evil king, albeit, no doubt, he revered him, as his physical father, the evil king, was the obstacle.

And not until, the evil king, had been taken, out of the way, could the true, king of kings, be enthroned, where he ought to be. We can't say, you see, oh well, we don't have, we don't have authority, we don't have power, look we're ruled over, by heathens, what chance do we have?

Remember what we said, Hezekiah, exercised, his jurisdiction, not for the Assyrians, not for the Egyptians, not for the Babylonians, for himself, for his own, wee little kingdom.

[13 : 11] Now you and I, we don't rule over kingdoms, we are not kings, and queens, we're not princes, we're not, we're not lords, of great empires, where do we have, that jurisdiction? Well it may be, shrunk down very low, it may only be, in your own home, it may only be, your kingdom, maybe, within the little, confines of your house, and even in your house, you may be, the only Christian, and so it may only be, within your own room, in your own closet, but you can decide, you can resolve, first and foremost, at the beginning, of another year, they began, verse 17, 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, and so on, a week later, they had reached, the doorway, now, if we only have, jurisdiction, over our own lives, our own hearts, our own little space, that is where, we can make a start, that is where, we may rededicate, and sanctify, ourselves, to the Lord, and from that, little pebble, being dropped, in the pond, there will be ripples,

I guarantee you, there will be, the outward flow, of that influence, and we may not be, very conscious, of it, but it is impossible, for the presence, of a gospel loving, Christ honoring person, to be, in an office, or a workplace, or a family home, and for it not, to have an effect, it will have an effect, however gentle, however, unconscionable, that effect may be, sometimes, it is only, when the Christian, or the Christian influence, is taken out, of a place, that one realizes, afterwards, just how much, of an influence, it was being, in one sense, you might say, by then it's too late, but I guarantee you, however small, or modest, or insignificant, our own, jurisdiction, they seem to be, the important thing, is not, how much, do we control, how powerful, or influential, eventually, in the idea, but rather, what do I do, with the liquor, that I have, remember, that the Lord says, you know, if you have not, been faithful, with that, which is your own, who will give you, that which is in others, and if we are, faithful in that, which is least, we will be faithful, also in that, which is much, you see, whether or not, the king of Judah, is giving them, this command, it doesn't really matter, because our ultimate king, is the Lord himself, and that is not, that's not just sort of, you know, piety, post New Testament, sort of piety, we read of course, in Revelation 19, verse 16, he hath on his vesture, and on his thigh, this is when we see, the Lord coming, with the armies of heaven, he hath on his vesture, and on his thigh, a name written, king of kings, and lord of lords, whether or not, our own Queen Elizabeth, continues to live, throughout this year, for however many years ahead, our ultimate king, is King Jesus, and that is the case, throughout scripture, we read,

Isaiah 6, and verse 5, then said I, woe is me, when he sees the Lord, lifted up on his throne, sitting on that throne, high and lifted up, his train filled the temple, Isaiah says, woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man, of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst, of a people, of unclean lips, for mine eyes, have seen the king, the Lord, of hosts, and Psalm 145, that we began, by singing from, the opening verse, is that, I will extol thee, my God, O king, and I will bless, thy name, forever and ever, and this has been, the case all the way back, even before, Israel had kings, of its own, because when the people, first wanted a king, what does Samuel, say to them, first Samuel chapter 12, verse 12, when ye saw, that Nahash, the king, of the children, of Ammon, came against you, ye said unto me, Nah, but a king, shall reign over us, when the Lord, your God, was your king, if the Lord, your God, is your king, you have all the authority, that you need, to begin the work, within your own sphere, of jurisdiction, within your own, little temple, remember your body, your whole life, your life, your witness, is the temple of the Lord, that's what we read, in first, and in second,

Corinthians, and if that is the sole extent, of your jurisdiction, begin there, and begin on the first day, of the first month, of a new year, it will make a difference, it will have an impact, you may not be conscious of it, but it will do, because where the Lord, is alive and at work, there will be, an impact, there will be, an effect, where the smallest, little candle is lit, if all there has been, is darkness, it will make a difference, and it will shed light, and when it becomes, two candles, it's double the light, when it becomes three, when it becomes four, as the light spreads, so the influence spreads, now the light of a candle, is a very small, insignificant light, you don't look at it, and think, wow, oh, it's so blinding, it is a tiny, small little light, you look at it, and you see, how can this possibly, make a difference, and yet, if you take the light, of a candle, into any dark corner, it will illuminate, with a gentle light, a dim light, not the brightest of light, not like stadium flag lights, or something like that, but it will nevertheless, make a difference, that is what we are called, upon to do, to sanctify, the temple, of the living God, to take out, the filthiness, now we said, how the obstacle, had been removed, the evil king, had been defeated, the evil king, who held all, in thrall, he had died, so he was removed, now we might think, okay, so what's the evil king, in our lives, well, if it is not the Lord, who controls us, then it is somebody else, the worldling, fondly likes to think, that if God, is not in control, of his life, he himself, is in control,

I am my own master, I rule, my own life, I take my own decisions, nobody tells me, what to do, I'm the one, in charge of my own life, no you're not, son, if it is not the Lord, who is pulling your strings, and who is guiding your life, it will be the devil, and he will be doing it, quietly, and he will be doing it, surreptitiously, and in the background, he is quite happy, for you not to believe, in his existence, he is quite happy, for you not to know, that he is at work, he doesn't really believe, whether you follow, a false religion, or whether you're a communist, or an atheist, or just an indifferent, sort of cultural, Christian, occasional church, or who doesn't really, think about the need, to put their trust in Christ, but just thinks, I'm a good person, I'm okay, he doesn't mind, what you do, because, you can all, go to hell, in your own way, as far as he is concerned, he's very happy, for you to choose, whatever method you like, because the ultimate end, will always be the same, he doesn't care, which part of the cliff, you choose to jump off, because the only way, we are going to be saved, is through the precious blood, is through the precious blood, of Christ, the only way, we're going to be saved, is by having Jesus, as our king, and our savior, and all other means, and methods, the devil is delighted, for people to follow, if you think, you're the one, pulling your own strings, the one taking your own decision, that's great, you just keep on thinking it, the devil will say, but you know, how free, how in control, is anyone, in their lives, if the obstacle, if the problem, is that the devil, controls your life, sin, controls your life, you are the servant, of sin, because we always, serve the things, that we are inclined to, that we desire, and that have the hold, over us, and until that is removed, we will never be free, and the good news, for sinners, is that that evil king, has died, has been put to death, upon the cross, of Christ, the power of the devil, has been broken, it no longer, controls, those who are under grace, who are under Christ, and I say, well that's all very well, but I, how do I get under Christ, how do I get free, you flee to Christ, you put your trust in him, not in your own strength, anymore, but in Christ, you acknowledge, that the old evil king, is dead,

[21 : 55] Christ is alive, he has risen, victorious, over the grave, and over death, if he is your king, king of kings, and lord of lords, then it doesn't matter, who is on the throne, it doesn't matter, whether we are ruled, from Westminster, or Hollywood, or indeed Brussels, it doesn't matter, whether we are a monarchy, or a republic, or whatever else, variations in between, it might be, as long as Christ, is your king, then all else, will follow, in its place, if Christ, be your king, then you are protected, by him, you are under, the shadow of his wings, you are under his guidance, under his grace, and by his grace, you have the strength, the authority, the protection, to go into the house, the inner house, of the lord of your heart, and take out, the filthiness, or let him, take out the filthiness, because remember, it's not just any, Tom, Dick, or Harry, who goes into the temple, of the lord, into the inner sanctum, only the priests, come God, and into the outer court, the Levites go, and they take away, the filthiness from there, and so maybe, if you think, well how do I enter my heart, maybe you think, you can't, plumb the depths, of your heart, so let your great, high priest, go in, let Christ, the only true priest, come into your heart, and take thence out, all the filthiness, all the sin, all the lingering resistance, to his grace, of his will, take out all that filthiness, take out all that defilement, take out all that, which has accumulated, through neglect, because that's all you have to do, to let filth accumulate, and to let evil come in, just neglect, the means of grace, just neglect, the living God, just like a property, falls into disrepair, not through somebody, coming along, and trying to smash it to bits, but just by, being, left, just by, neglect, it will fall, into disrepair, and the same is true, of the temple of your heart, if it is neglected, for the life, and the love, the all to dwell in it, it will fall, into disrepair, the filthiness, the filthiness, will accumulate, let your great high priest, go into the inner sanctum, of your heart, let him take out, the filthiness, let those, who seek the Lord, be a quote, of the Levites, help and take away, the filthiness, made up, from the outer courts, sanctify yourselves, in the love, of the Lord, because having made a start, they then get on with it, with great strength, and ability, they began, on the first day, of the first month, to sanctify, and on the eighth day, of the month, came they to the courts, of the Lord, so they sanctified, the house of the Lord, in eight days, and on the sixteenth day, of the first month, they made an end, now I wouldn't want us, to read too much, into the arithmetic here, the arithmetic, whilst it applies, in its original context, in a mathematical sense, yes it took them 16 days, great stuff, we should say, so if I, make my resolution, right now today, like the minister said, is then, that's great, by about the sixteenth, seventeenth of January,

I should be a holy saint, that'll be great, no, let's just consider, what we might take, as a wider application, here, there is a physical temple, here, in Jerusalem, in second, Chronicles 29, but we've already read, in the New Testament, Corinthians, first and second Corinthians, that the temple, of the living God, now, is what we are meant to be, and those 16 days, are not 16 physical days, they are rather, the time it takes, to sanctify, the house of God, how long does it take, to sanctify, a follower of Christ, how long does it take, to sanctify, the temple, of the living God, of your heart, well, I would suggest, to you that, whilst we know, justification, that is the taking away, of our sins, once and for all, that is a work, of an instantaneous work, when somebody is converted, that's been justified, right away, by the blood of Christ, it's paid, it is finished, but the work, of sanctification, that is, of making holy, of preparing, for heaven itself, of making us, more like Christ, that is an, ongoing process, you might compare it, for example, if you plant, a few apple seeds, under the earth, that's the day, you did it, you can write in your diary, the day you planted the seed, but the day after, the germinating, the little roots, going down, the shoots, coming up, the little stalks, and then a bough, comes up, then a trunk, comes up, and then branches, spinning, still very fragile, still just a wee sapling, and then, after several years, you know, a little bit of blossom, and a little bud, comes out, and so on, and it will be years, before fruit, will actually appear, in it perhaps, but you can identify, the date, that maybe the seeds, were planted, but you can't say, what is the date, that we will say, finally, this is the apple tree, complete, this is the fruit, right, this is its perfection, the day, there is perfection, in your life, that you are finally, fully sanctified, and ripened, will be the day, you are ready, for glory, and the Lord, will not leave you, one day longer, just as when the fruit, is perfectly ripe, on the branch, you pluck it, you pick it, and it is ready, to be consumed, so likewise, when we are ripe, for glory, we are ready, in a physical sense, to be consumed, what happens, when the equivalent, which might take, these 16 days, as being a metaphor, for the rest, of our lives, the sanctifying, of the house of God, the true house, of God within, what do we read, when it is finished, all the vessels, that King Ahas, chopped away, we brought back in, all that had been discarded, we have started, to apply, the Bible, that was gathering, dust on the shelf, we have taken down, and we have started, to read, and we are discovering, new truths, out of it every day, we are getting hungry, for it, thirsty for it, we are using it, the house of God, that seemed to be, so boring, and empty, now we can't get enough, of it, the ordinances, of the Lord, that once were a chore, are now rather, the punctuation, of our week, that by which, we seek, desire, and thirst for, not because, these ordinances, have somehow, become more exciting, but rather, they are about, someone, more exciting, now, there's no great, excitement, for example, about, clothes, or pillowcases, or whatever, but let's just say, without wanting, to be morbid about it, let's just suppose, that somebody, you love, very dearly, was taken away, from you, taken away from you, then, you might find, for example, that every little, thing about them, maybe the socks, they wore, or the pillow, they lay on, or clothes, in the wardrobe, or something else, might still have a scent, of them, or whatever,

suddenly became precious, to you, in a way, that they weren't before, there's nothing special, about these garments, or bed sheets, or pillows, or socks, or a little note, they wrote, maybe when they were, at school, or whatever, all these things, they don't have, any more power, in them than once they, but now, they speak, and they speak, loudly, and they speak, with truth, of the person, that is so beloved, and you see, that's the difference, with the ordinances, of the Lord, the things of his word, the Bible, the singing his praises, the being in church, and so on, when the Lord, is at the center, of our hearts, and all these things, are infused, with new meaning, and new preciousness, because they're about him, you see the difference, something, an artifact, a piece of clothing, or whatever, that was just a piece of clothing, it was just, it was just a book, or just a piece of paper, they'd written on, or something else before, now, when perhaps, we have a longing, after that person, which cannot now, be satisfied, that desire, cannot now, be fulfilled, these things, become precious to us, now,

Christ is one, who of course, is with us, but we don't see him, and whom, as Peter says, whom having not seen, he loved, yet we, hopefully, we ripen towards the day, when we are ready, to be plucked, ready to be, sanctified, completely, and brought, to where he is, after the work, is done, after the vessels, are restored, after the house, is sanctified, what do we make, then Hezekiah, the king, rose early, and gathered, the rulers of the city, and went up, into the house of the Lord, now, the ultimate house, of the Lord, is not, a building here on earth, the ultimate house, of the Lord, is where he dwells, it is his throne room, it is his holy presence, the lamb, is all the glory, of Emmanuel's land, and when the temple, here is fully cleansed, when all the filth, is taken out, when the fruit, is fully ripened, on the branch, we are ready, like Hezekiah, to go up, to the true house, of the Lord,

Hezekiah, the king, rose early, it was his priority, to go up, to the house, of the Lord, just as our Lord, himself, took his own, beloved son, and ended, his agony, upon the cross, in a time, that was so, early, as to have amazed, Pilate, and the Romans, that he was already dead, the Lord, will not leave us, lingering, or suffering, or trying, or slinging away, here, for a moment, longer, than is necessary, the moment, the fruit, is perfectly, right, the moment, the house, of God, is perfectly, cleansed, and sanctified, the moment, we are fit, and ready, for the ultimate, Lord's house, and the true, temple of Christ, and his presence, it will be time, to go up, then, Hezekiah, the king, rose early, and gathered, the rulers, of the city, and went up, to the house, of the Lord, you see, obstacles, had been taken, away, the old, bad king, that had held them, in thrall, and in slavery, and the power, of his darkness, was removed, he was dead, and the one, who ruled, in our past, before, is likewise, his power, is put to death, upon the cross, you're free, in Christ, if you are, trusting in Christ, and having, been made, free, having that, jurisdiction, having that, authority, which may not, be the authority, of vast empires, it may be a, small, limited authority, it may be, so small, and insignificant, you think, well what difference, can this make, this can't, possibly make, a difference, to the rest, of the world, friend, you will not, be called, to account, for the rest, of the world, the servants, who were given, the pounds, or the talents, were not called, to give an account, for what the other, servants did, with theirs, but they were, called to give an account, for what they had done, with the ones, they were given, and you and I, will be called, to give an account, for what we have done, with the days, the Lord has placed, in our hand, for the jurisdiction, he has placed, under your authority, for the pedal, you could drop, in your pond, for the influence, you could be, in your family, in your workplace, in your little day, so we read, verse 17, now they began, on the first day, of the first month, to sanctify, here we are friends, on the first day, of the first month, and the temple, of the living God, is what you are, if you are in Christ, that's what God's word, tells us, and the king, who sets you free, and commands you, to follow this practice, you know, who that king of kings is, so it's a question, now of obeying, it's a question, now of following, it's a question, now of going forward, and preparing, for the king himself, to bring us up, to the ultimate, house of the Lord, let us pray, that much.