

SECOND CHRONICLES

Chapter 30

Hezekiah Celebrates the Passover

Hezekiah sent word to all Israel and Judah and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, inviting them to come to the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem and celebrate the Passover to the LORD, the God of Israel.² The king and his officials and the whole assembly in Jerusalem decided to celebrate the Passover in the second month.³ They had not been able to celebrate it at the regular time because not enough priests had consecrated themselves and the people had not assembled in Jerusalem.⁴ The plan seemed right both to the king and to the whole assembly.⁵ They decided to send a proclamation throughout Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, calling the people to come to Jerusalem and celebrate the Passover to the LORD, the God of Israel. It had not been celebrated in large numbers according to what was written.⁶ At the king's command, couriers went throughout Israel and Judah with letters from the king and from his officials, which read: "People of Israel, return to the LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, that he may return to you who are left, who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria.⁷ Do not be like your fathers and brothers, who were unfaithful to the LORD, the God of their fathers, so that he made them an object of horror, as you see.⁸ Do not be stiff-necked, as your fathers were; submit to the LORD. Come to the sanctuary, which he has consecrated forever. Serve the LORD your God, so that his fierce anger will turn away from you.⁹ If you return to the LORD, then your brothers and your children will be shown compassion by their captors and will come back to this land, for the LORD your God is gracious and compassionate. He will not turn his face from you if you return to him."¹⁰ The couriers went from town to town in Ephraim and Manasseh, as far as Zebulun, but the people scorned and ridiculed them.¹¹ Nevertheless, some men of Asher, Manasseh and Zebulun humbled themselves and went to Jerusalem.¹² Also in Judah the hand of God was on the people to give them unity of mind to carry out what the king and his officials had ordered, following the word of the LORD.¹³ A very large crowd of people assembled in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the second month.¹⁴ They removed the altars in Jerusalem and cleared away the incense altars and threw them into the Kidron Valley.¹⁵ They slaughtered the Passover lamb on the fourteenth day of the second month. The priests and the Levites were ashamed and consecrated themselves and brought burnt offerings to the temple of the LORD.¹⁶ Then they took up their regular positions as prescribed in the Law of Moses the man of God. The priests sprinkled the blood handed to them by the Levites.¹⁷ Since many in the

crowd had not consecrated themselves, the Levites had to kill the Passover lambs for all those who were not ceremonially clean and could not consecrate their lambs to the LORD.¹⁸ Although most of the many people who came from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun had not purified themselves, yet they ate the Passover, contrary to what was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, “May the LORD, who is good, pardon everyone¹⁹ who sets his heart on seeking God—the LORD, the God of his fathers—even if he is not clean according to the rules of the sanctuary.”²⁰ And the LORD heard Hezekiah and healed the people.²¹ The Israelites who were present in Jerusalem celebrated the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days with great rejoicing, while the Levites and priests sang to the LORD every day, accompanied by the LORD’s instruments of praise.^a²² Hezekiah spoke encouragingly to all the Levites, who showed good understanding of the service of the LORD. For the seven days they ate their assigned portion and offered fellowship offerings^b and praised the LORD, the God of their fathers.²³ The whole assembly then agreed to celebrate the festival seven more days; so for another seven days they celebrated joyfully.²⁴ Hezekiah king of Judah provided a thousand bulls and seven thousand sheep and goats for the assembly, and the officials provided them with a thousand bulls and ten thousand sheep and goats. A great number of priests consecrated themselves.²⁵ The entire assembly of Judah rejoiced, along with the priests and Levites and all who had assembled from Israel, including the aliens who had come from Israel and those who lived in Judah.²⁶ There was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the days of Solomon son of David king of Israel there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem.²⁷ The priests and the Levites stood to bless the people, and God heard them, for their prayer reached heaven, his holy dwelling place.

30:1–27 Unique to the Chronicler; cf. the famous Passover under Josiah (35:1–19; 2Ki 23:21–23). Hezekiah allowed two deviations from the law (Ex 12; Dt 16:1–8) in this observance: (1) the date in the second month (v. 2) and (2) exemption from some ritual requirements (vv. 18–19). (CSB)

Like Josiah (35:1–19), Hezekiah begins a restoration of the Passover celebration (Ex 12; Dt 16:1–8 describe the Mosaic regulations). (TLSB)

30:1 *all Israel and Judah.* With the northern kingdom now ended as the result of the Assyrian invasion and deportation (which surprisingly is not mentioned), the Chronicler shows “all Israel” once again united around the Davidic king and the temple (see vv. 5, 18–19, 25). (CSB)

Israel had fallen to the Assyrians in 722 BC just before Hezekiah’s reign. Hezekiah reaches out to the people of Israel who had not been deported by the Assyrians. He envisions a nation united as it had been when it crowned David at Hebron and celebrated

Solomon's coronation. The Chronicler intends this as an invitation to the descendants of Israel in his own day to reunite as one people around the festivals and the temple. (TLSB)

30:2 *second month*. After the division of the kingdom, Jeroboam deferred the sacral calendar of the northern kingdom by one month (1Ki 12:32), possibly to further wean the subjects in the north away from devotion to Jerusalem. By delaying the celebration of Passover one month, Hezekiah not only allows time for the priests to consecrate themselves (v. 3) and for the people to gather (vv. 3, 13), but also achieves unity between the kingdoms on the date of the Passover for the first time since the schism more than two centuries earlier. Delaying the date reflects Hezekiah's concern to involve "all Israel." For the first time since Solomon the entire nation observes Passover together, reflecting the Chronicler's view that Hezekiah is a "second Solomon." Passover was prescribed for the 14th day of the first month (Ex 12:2, 6; Dt 16:1–8), but could not be celebrated at that time due to the defilement of the temple and the purification rites under way (29:3, 17). For celebration of Passover by the restored community shortly after the dedication of the rebuilt temple see Ezr 6:16–22. (CSB)

Passover. As soon as possible after the rededication of the temple, Hezekiah restored the observance of Israel's great festivals. The first on the calendar was Passover, also called the Feast of Unleavened Bread (vv 13, 21; cf Lv 23:4–7; Nu 28:16–17; Dt 16:1–8; see calendar, p 262). Its observance under Hezekiah reestablished Israel's covenant relationship, reconstituting the nation as God's chosen people (cf 29:10). (TLSB)

30:3 *at that time*. The 14th day of Abib, the first month (Ex 34:18; Lv 23:5). In Ex 12:2, 6; Dt 16:1–8, the Passover was commanded to be celebrated on the 14th day of the first month of the sacred year. However, the Law provided for a later celebration if it was impossible to be ready by the regular date (Nu 9:10–11). Sixteen days of the month had been taken up with cleansing the temple (29:17). Hezekiah, the leaders, and the assembly agreed to celebrate it in the second month. This apparently was due to a lack of consecrated priests and to travel time for the people. (TLSB)

30:5 *large numbers*. Another comparison with the time of Solomon (see v. 26). At the time of its inception, Passover was primarily a family observance (Ex 12). It later became a national celebration at the temple (v. 8; see Dt 16:1–8). (CSB)

30:6 *Israel*. Hezekiah reminded the northern tribes (called Israel to distinguish them from Judah) that they, too, were descendants and heirs of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel. But they needed to repent. Because of their apostasy, God had punished them in "His fierce anger" (v 8). Many had been taken into exile by kings of Assyria such as Tiglath-pileser (2Ki 15:29; 16:9). (TLSB)

30:8 *Come to the sanctuary*. Passover was one of three annual pilgrim feasts requiring attendance at the temple (see Nu 28:9–29:39). (CSB)

30:9 *shown compassion by their captors.* In Solomon's prayer in 6:39 the Chronicler omitted the phrase found in the parallel account (1Ki 8:50) that their conquerors would "show them mercy." Here the phrase is found in the speech of Hezekiah, again portraying him as a kind of "second Solomon" (see Lev 26:40–42). (CSB)

will come back to this land. Those who repent will have hope of return, even those from the Assyrian captivity. (CSB)

30:10 *Zebulun.* Northernmost of the tribes mentioned. Apparently, the couriers did not get beyond its borders, but cf vv 11, 18. (TLSB)

30:11 *humbled themselves.* The proud would continue in the religions and politics of the Northern Kingdom (v 10), but these men sought a return to the previous faith and life that had existed under the leadership of Davidic kings. (TLSB)

30:14 *altars.* Ones Ahaz had made (28:24). People followed the king's example, extending the cleanup of the temple to the entire city and making it a fit place to celebrate the Passover. (TLSB)

30:15–22 The Passover celebration (cf Ex 12:6; Dt 16:6). Because some participants were not ritually clean, the Levites slaughtered the lambs for them (v 17). Further, they participated in the eating of the Passover meal even if they were not ritually clean (v 18a; cf Jn 11:55). Hezekiah interceded for them (vv 18b–19), and the Lord healed them (v 20; cf 7:14). God received His people, welcoming those with repentant hearts to His table. (TLSB)

30:15 *ashamed.* The laity, by their greater readiness to worship, shamed the clergy into action. (TLSB)

The priests and the Levites ... consecrated themselves. The reproach previously directed against the priests (v. 3; 29:34) is here broadened to include also the Levites—an exhortation to the priests and Levites of the restored community to be faithful. (CSB)

30:17 *Levites had to kill the Passover lambs.* See Ex 12:6; Dt 16:6. According to the law the heads of families were to slay the Passover sacrifice. The Levites perhaps acted for the recent arrivals from the northern kingdom who were not ceremonially clean. Cf. Jn 11:55. (CSB)

30:18–19 Faith and obedience take precedence over ritual (see Mk 7:1–23; Jn 7:22–23; 9:14–16). (CSB)

30:19 *cleanness.* Worshipers did not "die in their uncleanness" (Lv 15:31) because they did not willfully disregard the ritual prescriptions. As "the Sabbath was made for man,

not man for the Sabbath” (Mk 2:27), all other ceremonial laws were not an end in themselves. (TLSB)

30:20 The response to Hezekiah’s prayer recalls the prayer of Solomon (7:14). (CSB)

30:23–27 The Passover observance is extended for a second week. (TLSB)

30:23 *another seven days*. The festival was observed for two weeks, just as the observance of the dedication of Solomon’s temple had been (7:8–9). (CSB)

For a similar extension of festivities when Solomon dedicated the temple, cf 1Ki 8:65–66; 2Ch 7:8–10. This feast was greater than any since Solomon’s feast (v 26), and at its conclusion the people received the blessings of the priests and Levites. (TLSB)

30:24 *bulls ... sheep*. Total of 19,000 sacrificial animals. The generous offerings would help feed the visitors. (TLSB)

30:25 *sojourners*. Hbr word is translated “stranger” in Ex 12:48, which stipulates that such a non-Israelite could eat the Passover if he was circumcised. (TLSB)

30:26 *since the days of Solomon*. An explicit indication of the Chronicler’s modeling of the reign of Hezekiah after that of Solomon. (CSB)

30:27 *prayer reached heaven, his holy dwelling place*. Another echo of Solomon’s dedication prayer (6:21, 30, 33, 39). (CSB)

Ch 30 Hezekiah renews the Passover celebration to call the people back to the Lord. Today, we regularly celebrate the new Passover—the Holy Supper of Christ, who offered Himself in compassion for our salvation. • Grant that I return to You, blessed Lamb of God, and have one heart with my brothers and sisters. Amen. (TLSB)