

THE

HARVESTER

"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." [Luke 10:2]

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A STORY OF RESTORATION

Some of the biggest tourist attractions in many Southern towns are the historic antebellum houses. Today they look clean, new and majestic. But at one time most of these structures were run-down. Some were damaged during the Civil War and some were merely forgotten through the passage of time. For most, the maintenance and upkeep went neglected for too many years. Since then, many of the houses have been "restored" to their original construction of the 1800's.

There is no doubt that restoring an entire house can be quite a project. It takes time, money, and good old-fashion sweat! But can

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you imagine what it would be like to "restore" a whole religion? Where would you start? What would need to be done? That was the task that awaited a young man in the O.T. days. From his story of restoration, I believe we can learn a lot of good applicable lessons.

In 2 Chronicles 29 we find his story. Hezekiah became king of Jerusalem at the age of 25 and *"he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord"*. First of all, he saw the need to "restore" the people's religion and he went about this work IMMEDIATELY! In the very first month of his reign, Hezekiah repaired the house of the Lord (v. 3). Such zeal and vigor is definitely lacking today. Many of us probably know right now what needs to be restored but we prefer to travel the way of procrastination. We know which parts of our lives need to be straightened out but we give too many excuses for why we can't get to them today. "Well, after I do such and such, THEN I will obey the gospel ...". We should be more like king Hezekiah and get on the ball immediately!

In vs. 4-15 Hezekiah brought in the priests and Levites and sanctified them. These were the religious servants who needed to be 'set apart' or 'cleansed' before they could become effective leaders. Hezekiah must have surely known that if the people themselves were not 'holy', then their service to God would have been in vain. In the same manner today, all Christian people (and especially those who are leaders - Jas. 3:1) must be sanctified in order to have the proper influence among the secular world. Brethren, we must live a clean and holy life ourselves before we can expect to have much success in converting others to Christ!

Now that the house was cleaned and the priests were sanctified, it was time to restore the worship service. Again I was impressed

with the attitude of the young king because we read in 2 Chr. 29:20, "Then Hezekiah the king rose early, and gathered the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of the Lord!" The fact that he "rose early" should tell us something very important because the Bible does not contain wasted words. Obviously it was not the intent of the king to be late for services. He was eager and ready to begin worshipping God! Too bad the same can't be said about those of us who constantly come sneaking through the doors several minutes after church services have started. Maybe we can take a page out of Hezekiah's book and learn to rise a few minutes earlier?

Verses 21-35 describe the type of service which Hezekiah helped "restore". Being under the Old Law, it was certainly different than what disciples of Christ are commanded to do under the N.T. teachings today. But another lesson can be pointed out in v. 28: "And *all* the congregation worshipped .." Whenever we assemble together with brothers and sisters in Christ, do we ALL worship? Are we really a congregation that worships God "*in spirit and in truth*" (Jn. 4:24)? Or do we have some members who sleep during services? And some who play or others who just show up to be seen? If our religion is truly "restored", then each one of us will be deeply involved with the singing and praying and preaching and collecting of our means and, especially with the observing of the Lord's Supper.

"*So the service of the house of the Lord was set in order.*" (2 Chr. 29:35) Through the efforts of Hezekiah, the people were returning back to God. The next verse then tells us that the king and all the people rejoiced because this restoration movement took place "*suddenly*". Oh, we definitely need more men like Hezekiah today. Because our nation is

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quickly losing sight of the Almighty Father and losing respect for his Word, it is even more important that today we *"ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein . . ."* (Jer. 6:16) We need to "restore" the faith and religion which once existed about 1950 years ago in the book of Acts when the early church consisted of "Christians" only.

The story of Hezekiah's work does not end in chapter 29. Perhaps this serves to give us another meaningful message. Just when we think we have done enough for the Lord and our work appears to be finished, there is always more that can be done! At the close of chapter 29 it would have seemed that Hezekiah put forth enough labor that he could now rest of his laurels, right? Wrong. He went the extra mile! In 2 Chr. 30:1 we next find the king encouraging others to attend the worship service (passover). He wrote letters of persuasion and finally made a decree about it (v. 5). Why? *"For they had not done it of a long time in such sort as it was written."* Part of restoring the religion involved getting back again those who had abandoned the services. Doesn't this sound familiar? *"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching"* (Heb. 10:25)

The reaction to Hezekiah's decree (2 Chr. 30:6-9) is very noteworthy. Some laughed at the notion of worshipping God and others mocked (v. 10). Most people today react in a similar way. When we neglect or ignore God in our lives, in effect we are laughing at him and mocking him. This is not wise. But some of the Israelites did humble themselves and came to Jerusalem to keep the passover (vs. 11-13). *"So there was great joy in Jerusalem: for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem!"* (2 Chr. 30:26) Likewise, there will always be great joy when the prodigal son is "restored" (Luke 15:32) and when we straighten up and return to our Father in Heaven.

Have we drifted so far away from God that we need a "restoration" movement? If so, then remember HOW Hezekiah did it in 2 Chronicles. He started immediately! He sanctified the priests. He rose early. He exhorted others. And he brought great joy to his people. Isn't it time we returned to the *"One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all"* (Eph. 4:5-6) before it is everlasting too late? Like the old forgotten antebellum house, *"how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation"* (Heb. 4:3)?

RAY McMANUS

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. How many sons did Ishmael have?
2. Peter's first denial of Jesus was to whom?
3. In the story of the Rich man and Lazarus, what color did the rich man wear?

4. In Zechariah, what does the Lord want from the people of Bethel in place of their insincere fasting and feasting?

5. Who are the four major prophets?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. When Joshua was invading the promised land, what people saved themselves by making a deceptive pact with the Israelites? THE GIBEONITES (Josh. 9)

2. How does the Lord feel about dishonest scales? HE ABHORS THEM (Prov. 11:1)

3. When your eyes are evil, what fills your body? DARKNESS (Luke 11:34)

4. Was a rabbit or a hare a clean or unclean animal according to Jewish dietary laws? UNCLEAN (Lev. 11:6)

5. What was the craft of Demetrius? SILVERSMITH (Acts 19:24)

JUDGING OURSELVES UNWORTHY OF EVERLASTING LIFE

(Editor's Note: The following article is the last in a series of four lessons. The text is Acts 13:42-46.)

This will conclude our series of studies on this particular subject, the 4th in a cross examination of certain individuals, who by their own choice chose the wrong direction in life, thereby judging themselves unworthy of everlasting life. The Bible abounds with examples of people who wasted their lives on material pursuits, and political ambitions, at the

expense of losing their souls eternally. (1 Cor. 10:1-12)

Paul's appearance before King Agrippa was actually a fulfillment of God's promise concerning him, Acts 9:15-16, Acts 22:15, & Acts 26. His whole defense is made before King Agrippa. Agrippa is a king, but is also a slave addicted to the slavery of sin. Paul is a prisoner in chains, but has been freed from the shackles of sin, through his submission to the Lord Jesus. And he now is preaching the Faith he once destroyed, Gal. 1:23.

Paul knew Agrippa pretty well because he said to Agrippa, *"I know that thou believest"*. Agrippa also knew Paul very well and he knew without a doubt Paul was pointing him in the right direction of salvation. But for political and perhaps other reasons, the record states he was almost persuaded to become a Christian. But as the song goes,

"Almost cannot avail,
Almost is but to fail,
Sad, sad, the bitter wail,
Almost but lost!"

He was so near and yet so far. Deut. 30:14; Psa. 145:18; Rom. 10:8-11.

The same apostle Paul said, *"Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade men"* (2 Cor. 5:11). Paul used all the power of persuasion he possibly could (Rom. 1:16-17), but the final decision had to be made by King Agrippa. And sadly he made an eternal blunder. By being almost persuaded, and not altogether persuaded, he judged himself unworthy of everlasting life, Acts 13:42-46.

Let us all redeem the time for the days are evil, Eph. 5:15-16.

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GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Place & Time</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
Sept. 10-12	Pleasant Ridge Church Woodbury, TN	Thad Eubank (Somerset, KY)
Sept. 10-12 (F-Su)	Fayetteville Road Fairburn, GA 7:30 pm E.S.T.	Bill Prince (Oxford, AL)
Sept. 13-17	Lily Church London, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
Sept. 15-19	Rincon, GA	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
Sept. 17-19	Liberty Church Casey County, KY	Harry Cobb (Wedowee, AL)
Sept. 19-24	Mt. Zion Church Crab Orchard, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
Oct. 1 - 3 (F-Su)	West Broad Street Wedowee, AL 7:00 evenings	Bill Prince (Oxford, AL)
Oct. 1 - 3 (F-Su)	West Gadsden Church Gadsden, AL 7:00 evenings	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)

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THE LORD'S CHURCH . . .

Began on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2)

Was founded by the victorious Christ (Matt. 16:18)

Was founded to save the souls of men (Acts 20:28)

Has no human creeds, but is subject to

Christ's will (Eph. 5:24)

Strives for unity of the Spirit (Eph. 4:3)

*Will be the only kingdom unshaken in the
last day (Heb. 12:27-28 & Dan. 2:44)*