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GLENLOCK BIBLE CAMP 1981

HEZEKIAH - A ROOT OUT OF DRY GROUND

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Study #2

Opening the doors of Yahweh's house.

Reading: 2 Chronicles 29

My dear brethren and sisters and our dear young people.

For 16 years, Ahaz the king of Judah had almost buried the temple in a mountain of heathen pollution. And in 16 days, Hezekiah threw it into the brook Kedron. Now there's a contrast for you! Sixteen years of desecration, cleaned up in a fervor of excitement and zeal in 16 days! and there were those 15 men, the 14 that Hezekiah had appointed and himself, those 15 men that went forward to set the example for the nation, and to set them on a course of action and faith, b&s, that was going to be tested in the very near future, very severely. This was all done the first year of Hezekiah's reign, in the first month of his reign. The last verse of that chapter we read says, 'the thing was done suddenly', and so it was, very suddenly. The people had to go in a reverse direction, Hezekiah was quick off the mark, he sought his God early, as our opening hymn says, he was hungry for the things of God, he'd walked too long in a dry land. He wasted no opportunity at all, to get that thing moving again, and as we come down to about the 18th verse of 2 Chronicles 29, we read these words, 'that the temple having been cleansed, the Levites and the priests went into Hezekiah the king and said, We have cleansed all the house of Yahweh'.

Now there's a very interesting play on words in that verse, b&s, because what they'd done really, in verse 16 it says, 'and the priests went into the inner part of the house of Yahweh to cleanse it'; when they had finished that work, in verse 18 it reads, 'and they went in to Hezekiah', exactly the same Hebrew word is used there, and the Hebrew says, 'they went into the inner sanctuary of the king'. And there he was as it were, sitting in his kingdom in his palace, with a clean heart and a right spirit, waiting for them to clean that temple up. And when that temple had been cleaned up, they came in within the king's palace, the same word is used. But God had cleansed his heart, he didn't need any man to carry the filth out of his heart, b&s, he had determined in his heart, long ago, that he would cleanse himself and he was prepared for that great day. And when they came back to the king, the words were there, the temple is now cleansed because the king had already been cleansed. And by the inspiration of that

king, those men went forward to do that wonderful work of cleansing. And Hezekiah wasted no time at all; he was too late for the Passover, two days to late, he knew that, but he had already determined in his mind, that the next month the Passover would be kept, according to the allowance of the Law of Moses. He'd made allowance for that, I believe, he knew that was the case, he's too late for the Passover, unfortunately it took the men 16 days to cleanse the temple, but you know, b&s, as we come to this very thrilling section of the Word this evening, we're going to see the actions of a man, who seized every opportunity that came his way, to breathe spirituality into the life of that nation. He didn't miss a trick, he sought every single opportunity he could to bring to bear upon the minds of that people, all the wonderful festivals of Yahweh that had been held before. And although it wasn't the right time for some of those festivals, there were overtones in Hezekiah's work, of the Passover, of the feast of trumpets and of the feast of Tabernacles, all crowded in together. Not that he kept them according to all the details of the Law, but there were overtones in here of all of them, because he sought that opportunity to bring back to the remembrance of the people, the wonderful days of old when the festivals of Yahweh were kept. And never imagine for a moment, b&s and young people, that it was an altogether solemn, mournful occasion for those festivals; it wasn't at all. Yahweh never intended that, and though there were those very solemn moments of positive and particularly, and of course, on the day of Atonement, yet even 5 days after the day of Atonement, they were commanded to rejoice, and given every incentive to do so. And they came together to share communal meals, not with themselves only but with Yahweh Himself as the Head of the table; and they sat down at the table of their Father as it were, and came together as a huge family, and they laughed and rejoiced together at all the glories that God had done for them; and Hezekiah wanted to capture that with all the fibre of his being.

And one can see the anxiety of the king, having gone through that 16 years of darkness that his father had brought into Judah. Now as a boy, a young man of 25 years of age, he was keen to rekindle the flame of joy in Israel. And the truth is a joy, b&s, we are always exhorting each other about the evils of the days and the dangers of our own nature, but there's a spontaneity about the truth; it should breathe into us a spirit of rejoicing and joy as we come together with our Heavenly Father, to glory in His power! And that's what Hezekiah wanted to do! And so taking the opportunity in verse 20 of 2 Chronicles chapter 29, 'Then Hezekiah the king rose early' (I'll bet he did! I'll bet that sun hadn't got above the horizon, that Hezekiah lept out of that bed, because why? because everything was ready, b&s) The end of verse 19 says, 'behold, they are before the altar of Yahweh'. The last report of the priests was, not only had the temple been cleansed but they had set it up. You know, you can cleanse a building, you can sweep it out, you can vacuum it, you can what you like, but whatever festival you're going to hold, be it a kitchen evening or a wedding reception, you've got to set that thing up for that occasion. And what they had done, was not only cleanse the altar and so on, but they'd set it up; everything was ready and they'd said to Hezekiah, 'look, we've cleansed it and everything has been fully ordered; away you go!' And I can imagine him next morning, he would have shot out of bed like a rocket, early in the morning because this was the day! And he was going to use every second of that time, b&s, to bring home to the nation, the tremendous things that belonged to the truth; and do you know

something? look, there's a tremendous exhortation in that; I've found in my life that that is a never ending principle, that it's spelled out to me one way or the other, that depending upon my attitude, that you get the most out of the truth when you've been to it; if you go home to study the Word and say to yourself, 'I've got a few hours tonight I might get down to the Word or I might not' (you'll get nothing out of it!) but if you're at work watching the clock till 5 o'clock and you're all fired up like a rocket to get into that book, and you can't wait; you swallow a cup of coffee with your wife, kiss her and say, 'see you later, dear' zoom into your study and stick into something, you'll get something done; but if you go in there with a divided heart, a half-hearted attitude you'll get nothing done. Get out of bed, b&s, spring up and get going! That was the message of Hezekiah.

And he got the rulers of the city; why did he get the rulers of the city? nothing was going to go wrong that day! He had a spiritual day prepared for Israel, and he wanted the civil rulers there, he wanted no hitch whatever in that day! He left no stone unturned, that nothing might hinder that day. So he got the rulers of the city and he consulted with the council first to see if there were any by-laws in operation, so that there would be no hindrance over that day that anything was going to take place. And up they go to the house of Yahweh.

And then he brings 7 bullocks, 7 rams, 7 lambs and 7 he-goats. And when you read verse 21, 'He brought the 7 bullocks, 7 rams, 7 lambs and 7 he-goats for a sin offering', you make a mistake, b&s, if you think all of them were sin offerings, because they weren't. The term 'for a sin offering' belongs only to the last 7, the he-goats. The others were burnt offerings and there's an enormous difference between the two. And that difference, Hezekiah wanted everybody to understand; the proof that they were sin offerings, of course, is in verse 23, 'and they brought forth the he-goats for the sin offering before the king and the congregation and they laid their hands upon them: and the priest killed them, and they made reconciliation with their blood upon the altar' (only the blood of the goats was used for the sin offerings; the other 21 animals, of course, were for the great burnt offering that Hezekiah was going to make) and between the two there's a great difference! What we read in the early verses, of course, is a generalization of the whole offering; then we get the way in which it was divided. And we make a mistake if we read those things and imagine that they're all sin offerings because they're not all sin offerings; there are sin offerings there and burnt offerings.

And, of course, Hezekiah knew the Law and you know, b&s, whenever a man made a sin offering, if he didn't make any other offering, there was always included in that sin offering, the principle of the burnt offering. And if a man made a burnt offering and he made no other offerings, there was always included in the principle of the burnt offering, the sin offering. And there's a profound reason why that is so, because what is a sin offering? but seeking God's forgiveness of any crimes that we may commit against Him. And what is the basis of Yahweh's forgiveness, only that we not only say we're sorry for our sins, but are determined to go ahead and do the right thing! without which there is no sin offerings. So there's got to be a determination to get on with the job after we have confessed our sins; no good going to Yahweh with a mournful expression and being very, very sorry for your sins, and having no sense of dedication to do that which is

right! And so you find, b&s, very often these two are used in conjunction with each other; always the sin offering first followed by the burnt offering. So I've done the wrong thing, I've neglected the work of the truth, never mind what I might have done wrong that hurts me, I've done a wrong thing and I've neglected the work of the truth; that's the real issue. Now, no good me going to Yahweh and feeling sorry for John Martin, forget about him; let's feel sorry for the ecclesia, my brethren and sisters, God's work in the earth, and when I go to God and say, 'I'm sorry', I've got a prayer on my lips and once I finish that prayer I'm up on my feet and into that work! (Now, I don't always do that, of course, but that's what I should be doing) and that's the basis for God's forgiveness, and He knew it! and therefore, he'd got the 7 goats for the sin offering but he's got 21 other animals, the bullocks, the rams and the lambs, b&s, that he might teach Israel to get on with the business of the truth.

And those animals that he had, look how the expression is used; in verse 21, 'and it says, he had 7 bullocks, I believe, for the kingdom, 7 rams I believe, for the sanctuary, and the 7 lambs for Judah. If you're marking up your bible, put them down like that and put those expressions along side, 7 bullocks for the kingdom, 7 rams for the sanctuary, 7 lambs for Judah, I believe you'll have it right, you'll have it equated right, for here's the reason. What was a bullock? it was a major animal, it was the biggest animal under the Law, it therefore, stood for the kingdom. It stood for Hezekiah and his cause! Why the rams for the sanctuary? because when Aaron was consecrated to the High Priesthood, it was a ram for the burnt offering and the peace offering that consecrated him to Yahweh, which was called in Leviticus chapter 8, 'the ram of consecration'. So, consequently the ram then stood for the priesthood! And why lambs for Judah? well, aren't God's people the lambs? Aren't the common folk under the rulership of kings and priests, aren't they the lambs of God's fold? And so Hezekiah had those animals waiting, he was going to assert on that day, he, representing the kingdom would throw himself into the work of the truth. The priests would come in behind him and throw themselves into the work of the truth, and Judah like a flock of sheep would follow that lead, and they would hurl themselves with vigour, into re-invigorating the whole of the nation with the power of God's truth. Marvellous, b&s, and one is never happier when they're doing that! You know, it calls for a lot of sacrifice, it calls for a lot of dedication; you can't always go and see your friends, you can't always go where you want to go, and even the good things in life, which are legitimate things, sometimes have got to be forgone, to get down to that book and to dedicate oneself to the truth. And there's a sense of heaviness in spirit and heart sometimes, as you cut yourself off from your fellows, and go and close yourself behind some door that you might get down to that book and help others. And you come out of that room bounding with joy, and you think to yourself, 'what a terrible thing they've all missed, how poor they all are!', and how rich it is to live with God, and to know the power of that Word!' And that's the thing, isn't it? it's a happiness and a joy that I can't describe; a happiness and a joy, b&s, that the frivolities of this age absolutely dissipate by comparison.

And Hezekiah knew that and he was going to get the people back that day, come what may! And so they brought the sin offering as we have it in verse 23, 'And they brought forth the he-goats' which in the Hebrew indicates 'the rough and shaggy goat' the

stubborn, assertive creature, the one they would use on the day of Atonement, to represent the nature of flesh which is always 'shaggy' in its appearance and 'stubborn' in its ways. And there it is and it will assert itself above all, and that's the animal that's going to be slain, whose blood is going to be spurted towards the altar, to indicate that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. We've got to take charge of that nature, b&s, by the power of God's Word, and put down the assertiveness of that creature. That was the idea of it! And who's going to make that offering? 'And they brought forth the he-goats for the sin offering before the king and the congregation, and they (that is the king and the congregation) laid their hands upon them. And with what wonder and awe would the nation witness the leader in that occasion, go forth to be first to put his hand upon the head of the animals. Do you think, b&s, that Hezekiah did that as a matter of show? Do you really believe that having the assertion that, of course, he was a wonderful king, that he was only doing that as a show? I believe, he was absolutely genuine in that!

You know, when Hezekiah laid upon his sick bed, and he thought of that wall, to look at that wall with tears streaming down his face and to pray to Yahweh, he prayed to be forgiven of his sins! and he had them! And sometimes it's a wonder to us, that men like that could pray like they did, I suppose they had a heart of hearts, we tend to think they only represented the people, and it was the people's sin; they prayed for their own sins, and do you know, b&s, what use to be a wonder to me at one time, is no longer a wonder, because I can understand that, much better today than ever before; I'm older now, but one comes to realize that whatever the Word of God says about a man like Hezekiah, David, Abraham, Isaac or Jacob or any of them, when we fess up to the awe-inspiring majesty of God, to what God really is and who He really is, and what is demanded of all of us? but says Paul, 'all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, that's sin! Never mind what going to the pictures or dances is, that's sin too! but there it is, b&s, we might think that we might rise to a wonderful occasion in the truth, we might think we've done a tremendous service until we look God in the face, and we know what He is, and who He is, and what sin is to fall short of that glory! And a man like Hezekiah knew full well what God was and who He was! and when he put his face in the wall, he didn't see himself as some great person above others, who had superlative virtues and others didn't, he never thought that at all. And I can imagine when he came forth and put his hands upon the head of that goat, he was thinking of nobody else but the king, and he knew full well, whatever he had done, he had fallen short of the glory of God. And he was a genuine character when he went forth to identify himself before all the people.

You know we haven't got time to draw you back into the Law, but the details of the Law are fantastic; you know, when they got the sin offering, there was a sin offering for the priest, there was a sin offering for the ruler, there was a sin offering for the common person, the poor person and the very poor person. And each section has its own phraseology; when they came to the sin offering for the king, it says, 'if the king has sinned and done anything against the commandments of Yahweh, his God' that phrase is not used with anybody else but the king; and it was reminding the king that whatever he might be in the kingdom, nobody in the kingdom could call him in question, because

nobody was his lord, but God was! And if the king had done anything that wasn't in accordance with the commandments with the LORD his God, he was a sinner. And the law of the LORD his God, b&s, is that we should dedicate ourselves to God with ALL the soul, ALL the mind, and ALL the heart'. Hands up, the innocent? That's what the glory of God demands, not some of the time, ALL THE TIME! and that was the ideal set before Israel, and what other ideal could be set before them? And Hezekiah hadn't matched that, and he knew full well that he hadn't, and he came forward to identify himself with that animal.

And they were to make reconciliation, it says in verse 24, 'to make reconciliation with the blood of the goat upon the altar'. The word 'reconciliation' has in it the Hebrew word 'chata' the word for sin. Rotherham has it, 'they made a sin cleansing sacrifice'; it was to cleanse them from their sins, this was a real sin offering and of course, the words are emphasized there to discriminate between the goats and the other animals that were not sin offerings. And then, b&s, they made that reconciliation for all Israel. 'For the king had commanded that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for all Israel', ALL Israel, and we are now in the 3rd year of Hoshea; he's got another 6 years to go before the kingdom in the north is gone! Six short lived years and....either, and Shalmaneser is going to take them away into oblivion virtually; 6 short years and raging apostasy had set in there, b&s, incurable apostasy, and the king ordered that sacrifice to be made for all Israel! And I want you to make this note, as I had to make this note in my mind, we all want to be standing with Judah when that's done, don't we? but that works both ways, because if that sin offering included all Israel, and we put our hands upon the head of the animal as well, to identify ourselves with it, then if we are saying that Israel needs a sin offering, we are joining hands with them having exactly the same needs; and Judah was greatly humbled that day to be joined with Israel and Hezekiah made absolutely certain that they all understood that! that there was a joining together, not only that Israel was included because they were great sinners, Judah's in that, b&s, and they were no different.

For all those great reforms, remember this, it was only a few of the people that followed Hezekiah; you know, you get a constant expression throughout this book, verse 29 is one case in point, the king and all that were present with him, the margin says 'found with him' and that occurs 3 or 4 times; not all Judah followed him, b&s, ostensibly, of course, they all did. Looking from the outside it looked like a wonderful occasion, but only those found with the king who were genuine, so when he joined Israel and Judah together, it was a sedentary lesson to both houses of Israel. And you know, that's what Isaiah had said, 'that He shall be for a gin and a snare and a trap to both the houses of Israel, and Hezekiah joined them together in that day, in the great national sin offering, so that they might all recognize that everyone has sinned and come short of the glory of God.

And sin offerings always came first; and then from verse 25 onwards, of course, we have this wonderful occasion when the burnt offering is made. And there was something very wonderful about burnt offerings, b&s, perhaps because they had an unique feature above all others. They weren't the most joyous or even the most important, for that

matter, but they were singularly marvellous, and the way they called upon people to come to God and to dedicate themselves to God's service. There are wonderful things said about burnt offerings in the Word, which Hezekiah by the very detail here, was keenly aware of, more keenly aware than we would ever appreciate, and I want to show you some fine touches that Hezekiah has in this section, as far as the burnt offering is concerned. You see, he sees the opportunity, he's going to have a burnt offering; now of course, when you had made a burnt offering in Israel, it had to be accompanied with the blowing of trumpets, the Law says that. In Number 10 and verse 10 which we will look at a little later, it made the point that when you made a burnt offering or a peace offering, they sounded the trumpet to God because they were offering dedication and fellowship. And Israel was commanded to call God's remembrance to them, so that God might look down kindly upon their acts of dedication. Not that they blew a trumpet before their fellow men, but they blew it before God. Nothing wrong with that, b&s, nothing wrong with going to God like Nehemiah did, and blowing his trumpet over the burnt offering and saying unto God, 'remember me for good, for all that I have done for this people', by which he implied that he didn't always do good, so it was a statement of humility! And it was before God in private, no one else heard that, but all that Nehemiah wanted was that God would be cognizant of what he was trying to do in God's service. And so the Law commanded that they blew these trumpets over the burnt offerings and the peace offerings. No need, no need for Israel to blow their trumpet over the sin offering; because the trumpet was sounding loud in their ears, God was blowing! 'Lift up your voice like a trumpet, and show my people their sins'. I'll blow that one even though it was Isaiah that said that even though now it's history, as the trumpets of Hezekiah were sounding loud over the burnt offering, Isaiah's voice is sounding over top of them all, God's voice, over the sin offering, and they were in conjunction, b&s, that God might remind them in the midst of all their dedication, that He had the prerogative of blowing the other trumpet.

But nonetheless, that's what the Law commanded; now the first day of the seventh month (this is the 16th of the first month) but on the first day of the seventh month, Israel had what they called, the feast of trumpets. And it wasn't that it was a feast where they blew trumpets, that's not the point that's being made; the point that is made is this, that on that day they multiplied the burnt offering which naturally increased the blowing of trumpets. So it's called the feast of trumpets not because it was called that they might blow trumpets, but it was called that they might offer burnt offerings that when the burnt offerings were multiplied they might hear more sound of the trumpets. That's told us in Numbers 29 verses 1 and 2. And do you know what they offered on that day? one bullock, one ram and 7 lambs. Hezekiah just filled them all in, and he had 7 bullocks, 7 rams and 7 lambs; you can see what he was doing; he wasn't following the letter of that Law, but he was determined that there should be a rededication of Israel, not on the basis of the first month, but also the 7th month principle, because Israel had 2 years. The religious year started on the month Abib, and their civil year started in the 7th month of Ethanim; so they had, you might say, two beginnings in one year; Hezekiah seized the opportunity cleverly to incorporate the two.

So he had these 21 animals, which answered roughly to those animals offered, the

bullock, the ram, and the 7 lambs of Numbers 28 verses 1 and 2. And he got that matter going; that Israel might come together to rejoice and it warranted having two New Year celebrations in one. And we read, b&s, in verse 27, 'And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of Yahweh began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David the king of Israel'. How marvellous was that! the instruments ordained by David king of Israel, you know if you look in the margin it says, 'the hand of the instruments', that's interesting; more interesting than what meets the eye, the hand of the instruments ordained by David. You see, David invented the musical instruments, you know, b&s, that men write music for instruments, they don't write music which is then played by instruments, they write music to the instruments. You have that in our day, for example, you can hear a Mozart symphony played by the Berlin Philharmonic orchestra conducted by Herbert von Karajan, marvellous; but you listen to that symphony played by the ancient instruments for which that music was written and it's doubly marvellous! because it's scored up for those instruments. And that's what David did, when he wrote the Psalms, he wrote them for those instruments; he knew the quality of the instrument and he wrote according to the quality of that instrument; and you know, b&s, every instrument invented by David was played with the hand. And that's the point that Chronicles is making, it's an instrument in which your hand is involved. And David used two words in the Psalms or not only two but seven or eight, but there are two words in the Psalms which he uses for praise that are used in conjunction, one word means 'to sing' and another means 'to pluck with the fingers'. And Paul in quoting those two words in the Ephesians in chapter 5 and verse 19 tells us 'that we're going to sing making melody in our hearts to the LORD, and the two Greek words means exactly the same as the two Hebrew words, to sing and to pluck with the fingers. So you see, the instruments ordained by David means that you sing music in which you are practically involved!

That's what Hezekiah did, and he got out the ancient instruments, you know why? because in his day as Amos the prophet had pointed out, they made their own. They had their own pop music, they had their own blaring instruments, idiotic music, senseless music; they made their own instruments, he got them back to the originals. And they got personally involved and as a man's voice went up to Yahweh, so his heart got played in tune with his voice. Absolutely beautiful, and do you know something else, b&s, Psalm 150 lists all David's instruments, and they fall into three categories; they're wind instruments which involve the hands, there are stringed instruments and there are percussion instruments. So they're instruments that they blew with, they're instruments in which they used their fingers to strum the strings and their hands to beat the drums and the percussion instruments. And they did that over the burnt offering, and they had to worship God, with all the mind, and the stringed instrument, of course, was a symbol of the heart which to the Hebrew was his intelligence, so they pulled the strings of their heart-felt intelligence with all the soul, with wind which came out of their beings, and as the fingers played upon the keys and the wind instruments, and they blew their soul into those instruments, and with all their might as they banged those cymbals; there was the burnt offering, b&s, if ever there was! And if we think that's a stretched application, I'm basing this upon what Jesus said was an intelligent understanding of that. The Lord said

this, you see, a scribe came to Him, and he said, 'Which is the greatest commandment of the Law?' To worship the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. And the scribe said to Him, 'truth, Lord, for to worship God with all the heart and with all the soul and with all the mind is more than whole burnt offerings and sacrifices'. And the Lord said, 'you're not far from the kingdom of God', because they put the head on the altar first, then the fat, then the body; the mind, the soul and the strength, and they blew with those trumpets and they joined in with the other instruments, and there was a fervor of spiritual activity and the music went to God, b&s, breathing, beating and strumming the hearts, minds and strength of that people. That's what Hezekiah was doing on that day! What a wonderful man that he was, a marvellous man.

And you know, it was the priests that blew with those trumpets; you see, b&s, it was only the priests in Israel that blew trumpets. Trumpets were blown, of course, in war by commandment, I'm talking about ceremonial trumpets, they were specially made for the men who were then priest. Aaron had 4 sons but 2 of them he lost, Eleazar and Ithamar were the only 2 boys left, so they made 2 silver trumpets. In the days of Solomon, he had 120 priests, so they made 120 trumpets, and the evidence is clear that if you go through scripture you'll find as many priests as trumpets. Why would the priests only have trumpets? because he was the voice of the people, representing them to God, and he was the voice of God to the people. As you know, b&s, you find a remarkable fact that when you come to Psalm 150 you find couplets of instruments; two stringed instruments, two percussion instruments, 2 wind instruments, and 1 trumpet! Two of everything except the trumpet, one trumpet because that trumpet is the voice of our Lord, and when John was on the isle of Patmos, he heard a voice behind him, 'answer the trumpet saying', and the voice of the Lord came to him by the voice through His angel, to dictate the message to the ecclesia. And the Lord Jesus Christ is our High Priest, and He will play with the trumpet singularly, and we'll join in with our instruments, heart-felt instruments and sing the songs of Yahweh.

That's what Hezekiah was doing, and he did it according to Asaph, to David, to Gad, to Nathan, the commandments of Yahweh; he dragged from every authority he could, he got every single authority, you know, b&s, there's nowhere in the Word that it gives a greater list than there, of what a man did to sing songs! because on that day, he left no stone unturned. Look, he went to bed, making I believe, that a minute study; when he sprang up next morning he had everything in his mind of what he wanted. He got original instruments, original players, he got every mortal thing he could, every authority was consulted. And when that song went to Yahweh, b&s, it went up as a sweet-smelling savour, if ever it did! It was a lovely day!

'And when the burnt offering began', verse 27, 'the song of Yahweh began'. That's interesting, you see, the definite article would be in the Hebrew, 'the song of Yahweh began', and when I read that I thought to myself, I wonder what it was they sang? and I reckon I know; I reckon I know what that song was, what was the song of Yahweh they sang? Well, let Isaiah tell us, he was the contemporary prophet, he knew what it was, in Isaiah 26 we have that song, b&s, and you see how this slots into this context. In Isaiah

chapter 26 and in verse 1 and 2, and there the prophet says, 'In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah' (and here it comes) WE have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in'. Now you just drink in the implications of that song, you know, b&s, that all Israel to the north of the country, were going to get an invitation to come down next month to keep the Passover, in less than a month's time; work it out in your mind what that would involve in terms of arrangements for farms, and for travel, Hezekiah must have known he was going to send that, when he was having that song sung. If he didn't, they would never had got there in time; he knew they were coming! and so on that day, the song of Yahweh was sung, and there was Hezekiah's invitation to the Passover, and the song said this, 'that we're going to sing this song today in the land of Judah, nowhere else. It can't be sung in Israel, it can't be sung in Syria, Assyria, Babylon, or anywhere else. It can't be sung in the Roman Catholic church, the church of England, the Methodist, the Baptist or anywhere else. It can only be sung in Judah, b&s, it can only be sung in strong ecclesias, we have a strong city, and everyone getting that invitation in the morn, would have got it in that way, and they would have to eat humble pie to come to that feast!

And many of them wouldn't do it, 'we have a strong city, that a nation keeping the truth may enter in'. Now I've heard comments on Hezekiah's Passover as quoted to say, 'we ought to bend the principles of the truth to save our brethren and sisters'; GOD FORBID! You show me where Hezekiah did that! I want to show you tomorrow, b&s, that Hezekiah kept that feast far beyond the letter of the Law! He kept it in the spirit of it, and the principles that made men and women participate in his feast went over and above and through and around the Law; and the principle was they had to come to that city and frankly admit that the truth was no where to be found but in Judah, and the only way they could go through those gates was to keep the truth! and that was the song that resounded over that burnt offering, and what other song could it be? because that was the very principles of that burnt offering, we have a strong city, that the nation keeping the truth may enter therein. What a remarkable song that was, and what a tremendous challenge that presented to all that came down to meet with Hezekiah on that great occasion.

Now back in 2 Chronicles 29, see what he then next did, in the end of verse 28. It says, 'all this continued (that is the blowing of the trumpets) until the burnt offering was finished'. And you see what I said before, b&s, those trumpets were calling God's attention; God says, 'blow them as a memorial unto Me over your burnt offerings and over your peace offerings', and here was Hezekiah inviting God to inspect his offering; and that b&s is done by very courageous or very foolish men. To blow up and draw God's attention to your dedication; now we wouldn't do that and there are obvious reasons why we don't, because we wouldn't dare! It would be a very brave man and a very incredible man that could sincerely bow his head to God and say, 'I want to call your attention to what I'm doing at the moment in your service'; in no sense of pride of achievement or arrogance at all, in humility to that with God! And Hezekiah was doing that, and while that offering smoked unto God, the trumpet blew in continuance with the smoke, that God's attention might come down; and God looked into his heart, b&s, and

found it to be genuine.

And it says in verse 29, 'And when they had made an end of offering, the king and all that were found with him bowed themselves, and worshipped'. Not everybody, all that was found with him, having done that b&s, what did Hezekiah next do? Of course, the solemn moment had come, there had been the awe-inspiring inspection of that offering, their hearts were laid bare before God. 'Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto Yahweh with the words of David and of Asaph'. Isn't that interesting! You know, when you're studying the scriptures like that, you don't miss anything like that; you know when I read there that they would sing praises unto Yahweh with the words of David, I'd think they'd love it because the psalms of David are full of praise, why Asaph? That's my question, why Asaph? why not Jeduthun, why not some of the psalms of Korah, why Asaph? And I know why Asaph, it's just a happy co-incidence that I happened to study one of the psalms of Asaph and I know what he wasn't; and when I read that my heart leapt in me, because I knew why it was Asaph, because there was one psalm that Hezekiah would dearly love on that day, it's Psalm 81, of course. What else? this is the one he wanted obviously, and it's written by Asaph; and if he had just said David they could never have got this one.

The very thing that Hezekiah was doing and the psalm of Asaph says, Psalm 81, and the heading says, To the chief musician upon Gittith, a psalm of Asaph. 'Sing aloud unto God our strength (Hezekiah, the strength of Yahweh): make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp, with the psaltery. Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.' That's why he wanted that one, b&s, there's the New Year Day psalm of Asaph. Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, and as the sliver of the moon appeared in the sky, for the word 'moon' or 'new moon' and the word 'month' in the scriptures is the same Hebrew word. A new moon is a month and a month is a new moon, and as a sliver of silver appeared in the sky, what was this, but the ecclesia was coming alive! In a few days time, fullness, and they blew the trumpet towards God to watch that moon; and it grew and grew and shone forth with the brilliance of the sun. And there, b&s, reflecting the brilliance of the sun and drawing God's attention to that faithful witness in the heaven, the ecclesia had once again waxed to fullness, and risen above the affairs of darkness, and would shine forth and would reflect the glory of the heavenly sun. What a magnificent thing, 'blow up the trumpet in the new moon'.

You know, we are a poor people, we're a conservative lot, they would not like us! They threw themselves into these things with a fervor and a meaning, b&s, and they got the most out of the occasion on the solemn feast days; and they had that done, they sung with the psalms of Asaph, and that part of the offering was finished with an acclamation of praise and joy, which is reflected in Psalm 4. And these words of Psalm 4 of course, I'm not suggesting that they were used on that day, but they certainly summarize all that Hezekiah felt in that wonderful occasion when that burnt offering came to an end. And these words summarize the whole spirit of that occasion, Psalm 4 and verse 5, 'Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in Yahweh. There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Yahweh, lift up the light of thy

countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time of their corn and wine increased. I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Yahweh, only makest me dwell in safety'. Yes, b&s, there are times of adversity when many say, 'well, what can you hope for? Well, says the Psalmist, Yahweh is what we can hope for, lift up the light of thy countenance, put gladness in my heart, gladness that goes above the gathering in of material goods. Let people come streaming in and shouting in acclamation for all the good things that they've got; but I don't care, says the Psalmist, you put in my heart a gladness, and I will sing praises to you above all the material good that men can bring. And I don't care about people who say, 'well, Yahweh can't do us any good', HE CAN! and there are no circumstances, b&s, that He can't handle, and so we go to bed at night and put our head on the pillow, we sleep in perfect peace, because we put our trust in Yahweh. And those words would have had some meaning to Hezekiah, believe me, as times of stress and strain came upon him.

These were things all done by the king. But you see, he was getting at the people, and in 2 Chronicles 29, he invites personal participation, spontaneity, b&s, and he got it! He invited the people to spontaneously come forward; that isn't what he said, you listen to this. Verse 31, 'Then Hezekiah answered and said, now ye have consecrated yourselves unto Yahweh, come near'. Now the margin says for the word 'consecration', 'filled your hand' that's an expression, b&s, it's the meaning of the Hebrew for the word rendered 'consecration'; It's used of course, for the people of wealth, but in most senses, it is used for the priesthood, because the priesthood alone would draw near unto God and they had to be consecrated to God's service. Consecration is to fill your hand, Yahweh said this, 'three times a year shall all males come before Me in Jerusalem and none shall appear before Me empty'. Think of that! none shall appear before Me empty, we're to fill our hands, that's what we're doing in the Law of Moses, filling hands, b&s with filling the mind and the heart, wasn't it? What's in your hand doesn't matter, it's what's inside that counts, of which what is in your hands is but a symbol.

When we go to our Lord Jesus Christ as we shortly will, conducted there by the angelic messengers who will be sent into the four corners of the earth; and the voice of the trumpet will be heard, b&s, and we'll be called to God's remembrance alright, and we'll go to God; will we be empty? Is your hand full? is mine? have we got our hearts filled with the truth? hands filled with its actions? Aren't we empty before God, b&s? 'Woe, woe, woe, unto us if we go to God empty! NONE SHALL APPEAR BEFORE ME EMPTY, was the stringent commandment. But fill their hands like the priests had filled their hands; 'come near' said Hezekiah, you know what he is inviting them to do, don't you? following out insidiously the remarkable details of the Law, and he called upon them, of course, to make 'thank offerings', how else could they come near? Do you know the details of the Law? Well, of course, they couldn't come near unless they made a peace offering, one of which was a thanksgiving offering. Why? well you see, this is what happened, we're dealing with animals now of which they were divided. If you brought a sin offering, they divided it up, part went upon the altar, part went to the priests, the other part was burnt. You got nothing! If you made a burnt offering, of course, they burnt the whole thing upon the altar, the priest and you got nothing! The

trespass offering similarly was divided between priest, God, and outside the camp. You got nothing of that either! The only offering that you or I could eat, b&s, was the peace offering, that's the one that we actually ate with God, in a fellowship meal, and because we were joined to God by the peace offering, lo and behold, Leviticus chapter 7 and verse 30 says, 'that we could bring the fat with our own hands to God', so we could walk across to the altar, we could, and walk across and place it on God's table! We could do that! and because we did it, we could sit down and eat our own meal. You know, you can talk of all the profundities of the Law as long as you like, it's very simple. Reduce it down to a level of common understanding, b&s, and we won't be wrong, it will be the piece of marrow of the thing; what are we learning? There's a father sitting at the head of the table, what do you do for your father? or rather, what should you do? We don't do it in our society, of course, our society is as far removed from the truth as time is, because we know at the end of Gentile times, we've got as far away as we can from the traditions and principles of truth, b&s, but there was a day which I can vaguely remember in my mind as a child, when not one of us children in our house would dare, under the threat of death, pick up a fork or knife before my dad did! And I'll tell you now and the members of my family can support me in this, if we did, we'd be knock flat on our back! Or if my father taught me nothing else, he taught a very severe lesson in our house, that he was head of the house. We were never permitted, b&s, to talk at our table unless given permission by my father. And dare my mother put a plate before anyone before he got his, and see what happened in that house! and yet he was a wonderful man for all that!

And we come to our Heavenly Father, and He says, 'I want you to eat with Me today, for you to do; the God of the universe, b&s, the God of Israel who only doeth wondrous things, says 'eat with Me today!' You bring the meal, who do you see? and with your own hands, what do you bring? The internal fat of your offering, the inner man developed by the power of the Spirit Word, and you bring that in your own hands and you put it on the Father's table. And when He's eaten, then you eat! That's as simple as it is, b&s, and I'll tell you something, search the scriptures and that's all it means; that's the totality of what it means. And a child can understand that but it's a marvellous thing. And Hezekiah had invited the people to come forward and come near to God! They were going to bring offerings now that they weren't going to lose entirely, they were going to eat them together, but never before God. And on the Father's table were His portions, and all Israel joined together, b&s, in a remarkable fellowship renewed. It's a wonderful thing, a glorious thing, but you know, there were even b&s on that day, who lived above the peace offering, if that were possible!

You see what happened, and reading now through verse 31, 'Come near and bring your sacrifices (and the word 'sacrifice' is the word 'zebach' used of the peace offering) and thank offerings (which was the highest form of peace offering) into the house of Yahweh, and all the people brought in their peace offerings and their thank offerings, and as many as were of a free heart brought burnt offerings', that's interesting; you see, b&s, if we want to go through the sacrificial schedule, we would know that the peace offering was the climax of the thing! First, sin offering then the dedication, and then, of course, fellowship with God, forgiven in Christ, dedicated to God's service, fellowship

was the basis of that, that's the process, b&s, by which we participate with God, and yet there were those there of which the record says, were of a free heart brought burnt offerings. You know, in the progression of ideas, they were less important than the peace offering. But, b&s, for the occasion they were far greater, do you know why? I've told you why! because you see, if a person brought a peace offering, he could or could not be, genuine; because you see, he got a portion of it back. He got something in return, as a matter of fact, if you wanted to eat on that day, if you didn't make an offering you wouldn't get a meal, because the whole day was given over to those sacrifices. So a person bringing a peace offering, may or may not be genuine; well, I'll tell you something, anybody who brought a burnt offering was genuine! He got nothing back, he was of a free heart, and therefore, there was stamped over those burnt offerings a genuineness and a sincerity, b&s, above the peace offering though, of course, the peace offering was a progressional. But they were of a free heart, they wanted to say to God, 'look, we want to demonstrate our genuineness, we don't want anything back here, take our burnt offerings, and they lost it because it was all consumed upon the altar. We may not think anything of that, b&s, we'd go down to the end of the street and buy some more meat, but you see, those commodities were more precious in those days; they were not living in an affluent society, they were in need of that from heaven, they didn't have it like we have it today, they were precious things, they were the sustenance of their families, and here were people coming giving above that which was required, giving burnt offerings and expecting nothing in return. Those are the offerings that God wants! You know, He told the prophet Isaiah, and Isaiah repeated it, and I believe the history rings with this, Isaiah said, 'I hate robbery for burnt offering'; God hates robbery for burnt offering. If we are going to dedicate ourselves to God expect nothing in return; if we are going to get down to the truth, b&s, don't think about the little bit that we can save for the world! If the ecclesia calls upon us to dedicate ourselves to do something for the ecclesia, don't think what we can do in our spare time when we get a bit of a breather. It's all or nothing at all, get into it! and never mind about anything in return. That's what the principle of the Law was, and those with free hearts did that! They were free alright, free from all the entanglements of the world. Free from the greediness of tyranny, free from selfishness, free from all the hateful things that God hates, and they were free men and women to give what they wanted to God and never expected a thing back. They were free in every sense of the word! no shackles around people like that, and what did they bring to God? 70 bullocks!

Among other things, 70 bullocks; that's the exact number of bullocks that they would have offered during the course of the Feast of Tabernacles. And they were a generous group there on that day, who joining with Hezekiah to seize every opportunity, added to the feast the 70 bullocks which would have spoke very clearly to all those there who had ears to hear and eyes to see, that number would have told them ever so clearly of the joyfulness of the Feast of Tabernacles when Yahweh would deluge their land with glory and beauty and bring forth the fruits of the ground, that all Israel may have an abundance. Marvellous, b&s, absolutely marvellous!

And you know, as the chapter comes to a conclusion, we went through the verse which said, 'The priest were too few', they hadn't responded as the Levites had, so the Levites

had to help with the work which would normally fall to the priests, and so the work went on, b&s. 'They were more upright in heart', and the chapter closes in a remarkable fashion. And in verse 35, 'And also the burnt offerings were in abundance, with the fat of the peace offerings, and the drink offerings for every burnt offering. So the service of the house of Yahweh was set in order'. Now you're going to see a touch of greatness in Hezekiah, this is a fine touch of greatness, b&s, here is true greatness! 'And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people', and the word 'prepared' is exactly the same word as 'set in order' the house of Yahweh; and you know, there's a touch of greatness; I want to dwell upon that, b&s, because here's the characteristics that you can squeeze out of the lives of these men. Here's where you can live with them, live and breathe with them; look you see the spirit of that man. He looks at the temple, everyone sees the wonder of what is going on, brethren and sisters are thrilled with the exposition of the Word of the Levites; they are participating in the burnt offering, they are getting first class exposition of the details of the Law, going along with them, the trumpets are blowing, God is looking down upon it all. And as it finished, I suppose, all the nation stood there gasping for breath at the glory of that day, and are looking back at the temple and thinking about it in their hearts, that Hezekiah and the priests and the Levites and the appointed 15 strong men, had set in order the house of God, and the king stood behind them and said, 'Look, I don't know about the house of God', but the people are set in order, that's what the king rejoiced about! Who cared about that temple really except that it was a symbol of God's presence? a symbol of God's greatness, but it was only brick and mortar, b&s, what really mattered was the people. And Hezekiah rejoiced because Yahweh had set the people in order. Who could do that? I can cleanse an altar given a rag and a cloth, I could build a door, b&s, I can sweep a floor, but I can't change minds and hearts! Minds and hearts that have been blackened for 16 years, it took God to do that, and Hezekiah with a touch of greatness, looked at those people and thought, 'look how they are rejoicing about that temple; that's what thrills me!'. God had set up in their hearts a sanctuary, that's what thrilled him, and do you know, b&s, he was the son of David. He was the son of David because if you read 2 Samuel 7, which we teach all our candidates, the climax of that chapter comes when David throws himself on the ground and prays to God sincerely and thanks God for changing the hearts of Israel. And that's what's the greatest thing that we can ever hope for; big ecclesial halls, b&s, the very best equipment, lovely speakers, good cry rooms, come what you will, but if you can't get a decent congregation of people in there, who love the LORD their God with all their heart, with all their soul and with all their strength, then it's nothing but a shell.

And we can't change that, we can build our hall, we can do wonders, but we can't do that! And the record says, 'for all the thing was done suddenly', and it was done suddenly. And that's what thrilled Hezekiah, and settling back he would have looked at that as the sun died away and the hearts of the people warmed up in gratitude, he'd have thought to himself, 'who could ever believe that it could happen in 16 days?' And he would know, b&s, that it wasn't him that had done that at all; and he'd thank God in his heart that He had set the people in order. I can't tell you what that verse meant to me, to come across that verse! And do you know what the word 'suddenly' means? 'to wink the eye' it means 'in the twinkling of an eye'; and there's a day coming, b&s, when

the Lord Jesus Christ will look at His loyal followers, who in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, and we shall be changed. And who's going to do that? That's a miracle! and that's what Hezekiah saw, in the twinkling of an eye, the voice of those trumpets had changed the people. And he knew there was only One who could do that, and when the Lord Jesus Christ, with a heart bigger than David and Hezekiah, looks down upon His congregation, He will say as Psalm 22 says 'I will sing praises in the midst of my brethren, will I sing praises to thee'; what's he saying? That he's going to show off that he loves his God? NO, he's going to sing praises because we are with Him; He will look down upon His congregation, 'I and the children which the Father has given Me' and He'll sing praises with the great congregation because God has set in order, in the twinkling of an eye at the sounding of the trumpet, and we shall all be changed, b&s. That's a miracle, and that's what Hezekiah thought, and he rejoiced with all his heart!

There's a touch of greatness in that verse! Whenever do we feel like that? When do we thrill, b&s, over the work of the truth? What gives us the greatest thrill, is it not the people who say, there's a good talk John! gee, that was mighty! Is that the big thrill? Yes, I suppose it is, but you see, we've got to grasp the bigness, the largeness; it isn't those things that constitute the greatest things in the world. The greatest thing in the world is a person to write to you and say, 'Dear bro. John, I was leaving the truth but when I heard this or that, I was encouraged to change my mind'. There's the thing to rejoice in, b&s, that God performed that work! We can do none of that; this book is mighty to the pulling down of strongholds. Let that get a grip of people and let's see what will happen. You can console them, you can talk till you're blue in the face, you can run yourself ragged for people, but if you get that book in the middle, it will change them! And you'll stand aghast at what could happen in a few days that you couldn't accomplish in 12 years! And you'll say the thing was done 'in a twinkling of an eye'. It's a remarkable experience to see that happen, and we pray God, b&s, that as the days roll by, we will be changed, not only when the Christ comes, but now, as it were, in the twinkling of an eye as we go through that book, and we see the power of that message. And it doesn't matter how long we've worked in the truth's service, if we come out of this camp having lived a life in the truth of wasting our time, then it's gone in the twinkling of an eye, then we leave tomorrow to blaze a trail; and never mind anybody saying, 'shall Yahweh do any good?' YES, He will! dedicate yourself with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind, b&s, and nothing will withstand it.

They're the issues of life, and that's what Hezekiah did when he got up early, and he got that day started. And you can imagine him going to bed that night in the words of Psalm 4, 'I will lay me down to sleep, for I shall be safe in Yahweh'.