

The year 2000! What is going to change, and what do you desire to change in the coming year? This is a time when we make resolutions and think about life in one year intervals. There can be value in that, although I think the Christian regularly assesses where they are at with the Lord. We should always know we are walking in the Spirit and that the Lord holds our future as long as we are faithful moment by moment. He should reign in our hearts at all times. I want to look at another king as we look again at new beginnings.

2Chron 29 The last king of Judah was the wicked Ahaz. He fed his sons to the Baal altars, closed the temple and stole its sacred instruments. Three armies that were each victorious invaded Judah. In one day a third of his army was slaughtered. Families were separated and taken as slaves. Judah was on it's last leg and that leg was wounded.

Ezra is again driving home the point that if we forsake God, He will allow our demise to draw us back. Ahaz' son, Hezekiah is now on the throne. In verse two we breath a huge sigh of relief because we have seen this verse over and over and it indicates what is about to happen to the nation. Just when it looks like it is too late for any hope, God sends someone that has a heart after Him, a new beginning for Judah.

Hezekiah's first act is to open the Temple doors and repair them. This has to be our first act as children of God. We have to open the doors of the Temple. You are the Temple of the Holy Spirit. Are your doors opened? Is God welcome in every corner of your life? Will you give Him complete access to every recess, every desire, every dream and plan? **PSALM 34** Lift up your head oh ye gates! Has the King of Glory come in? Who is on the throne? The only reason you would not let Him have access is that you don't understand the love He has for you – how He longs to see you freed.

Let me speak for a moment on repaired gates. Gates that are shut too long don't swing freely. Their natural position is closed. We may have to apply the oil of the HS to the hinges. Love may need to pry the door from its closed position. It may take some replacement of attitudes, like hardware, to see it moves freely again. And then it must be worked back and forth until the rust is worked out, closed to what should not be allowed to enter, open to the Lord, closed and opened again and again till they swing freely. Are you willing? Or is 'locked and closed' a more comfortable position?

We read the book of Acts and wonder, don't you wonder? What happened? Where did the power go? Where is the zeal and life of God today? Why don't we see a church that is as dynamic today? Last Sunday we mentioned the Barna poll and how like the world most of American Christianity is. It sounds much like verses 6 – 9. The Temple our fathers turned their faces from is that in their very

hearts, to have a living worship that is a work of the HS. That is how all the great moves of God began and soon we turn them into rigid structures that are no longer able to be moved by the HS for we have drawn parameters as to how God is allowed to work and no longer walk into the Temple to see and hear. Our backs are toward Him and our faces toward the things of the world. We may have snuffed out the light or it may have died for lack of attention. No light for our path remains so we read about someone whose path was lit and imitate their method.

The incense is prayer that has stopped flowing from the heart. Oh we pray our perfunctory prayers because we are suppose to, but they are full of memorized phrases that we repeat without much thought or heart. Burnt offerings, we know Christ died for us but it is certainly not fresh for us today. And so we have our difficulties that are from our own actions, allowed by God to wake us up and draw us back, to purify and purge.

God wants to restore that life and living relationship with the God who is on the throne so that we walk in that newness of life. Hezekiah is about to restore the true worship of God to Judah through obedience to the Word. I am going to challenge you today to begin living this chapter in spiritual reality of the type it represents. This restoration we are about to read is a mere shadow of the restoration of worship in spirit and truth that the Lord wants to restore today to his bride.

I truly believe the heart of God aches for this for our sake. His desire is to bless us and make us into that church that reveals His love to the world. But we must do in reality what was done in shadow by Hezekiah.

Let's read on: verse 4,5 If you have flung the doors open and repaired them, then as priest of the Lord – and you are – consecrate yourselves and the Temple. Lay yourselves again on the altar and declare our lives are His and we desire to be His instruments out of loving adoration and obedience. If those polls are correct then many Christians are fooling themselves when they say they are consecrated. Are we fooling ourselves as to our consecration? If someone watched our life like the Truman Show, would it be obvious you were consecrated? Why or why not? We have to be serious about facing these questions honestly.

Those things that would make them wonder or doubt you were consecrated are the defilement of the sanctuary in verse 6. Verses 15,16 They tossed all the unclean things they found in there into the Kidron Valley. They trashed it, whatever was not for the Lord's service. Are there things in the Sanctuary of your soul that must go? According to the Word of the Lord: It is the Word that brings conviction and shows us what should be in the Sanctuary and what should

not. But are we reading it and letting it speak to us. I am asking you to decide this year to take time in the Word every day. The gate can be open but we need to let the King of Glory in. Read the Word and let Him speak, yes Him, the Word made flesh – Christ Jesus is the Living Word.

It took 8 days to get the outer area cleaned up and another 8 the inner area. You have an outward life of actions and an inner life of thoughts and ideas and desires. It took as long to clean up one as the other. Both had to be taken care of. In verse 18 they tell the King the entire Temple has been purified. This is what restoration is needed today. Verse 11 We are not to be negligent for we are a chosen priesthood. He chose you to stand before Him, to minister before Him, to burn incense. Does this describe you?

Now look at the life in the worship after they are faithful to open the doors, consecrate themselves, remove the defilement. Verse 20 – Early – they can't wait 25 every one is in their assigned ministry, 27 As the offerings begin the singing begins, 28,29 Kneeling in worship. Verse 30 Singing the Psalms, they praise the Lord with gladness, for they understand in the sacrifice that God himself will provide the sacrifice, and after praise for what He has done and will do they bow their heads and worship. We have praise songs followed by worship songs because it is a natural order for our spirits. We praise Him for who He is and what He has done and then we worship Him for who He is.

Verse 31 – I didn't read any dedication ceremony but as they entered the Presence of God in praise and worship they all must have had the sense that they were dedicating themselves to God. Don't we experience that?

Look at verse 35 – reestablished, restored. Again God is after a restoring work for his bride. He wants her worshipping in Spirit and Truth, gates flung open to Him, consecrated to Him alone, all the garbage tossed out. In this restored state the incense is burning and the sacrifice is on the altar. Then you have verse 36. Is there rejoicing in what God has done or are we still waiting? 2000, lets get serious with God and take time this year to be in His Word each day. Let us dedicate ourselves this year to 'conscientious consecration' as mentioned in verse 34. Then God can bless us with LIFE, with overflowing Joy, with praise and worship that is sincere and in an undefiled Temple.

Look at verse 10 – I intend to make a covenant with the Lord, will you join me? I will be in his Word, daily my gates will be open to Him, I will take time to clean the Temple of all defilement, I will burn the incense and his sacrifice will be fresh to me daily. I will conscientiously consecrate myself to the Lord. Not just to feel good today, this day of worship but because His love deserves no less than a sincere life transforming committed response.