

DECK THE HALLS... WITH HOLINESS

Sunday, November 23, 2025 – Pastor William Lawler

THE BACKGROUND OF BIBLICAL HOLIDAYS:

- In the Bible, holidays are called **HOLY CONVOCATIONS**, and they were instructed by **GOD**. (*Lev. 23:1-2*)
- The weekly holy convocation was the **SABBATH** day. (*Lev. 23:3*)
- Additional **PERIODIC** holy convocations include the Passover/Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, the Festival of Trumpets, and the Day of Atonement.
- The **PURPOSE** for these Holy Convocations were...
 - To **REST** from normal activity
 - Holy days were days set apart for the Lord, resting from regular work. Sometimes these holy days required fasting from food, and sometimes the holy convocation lasted for many days (*Lev. 23:29-31,34,36*)
 - To **REMAIN** together with spiritual family
 - Holy days were public, corporate gatherings of God's people (*Lev. 23:34-35*)
 - To **REMEMBER** what God has done in the past
 - Holy days were days of memorial, and included remembering God's work in previous generations (*Lev. 23:24,43; Deut. 16:12*)
 - To **REJOICE** in God's character and provision
 - Holy days celebrated the Lord with joy and feasting (*Lev. 23:40,41; Deut. 16:11; Neh. 8:10*)
 - To **REPENT** of sin against God
 - Holy days gave opportunity to make atonement for sin (*Num. 29:5*)
 - To **RETURN** our resources to God as an offering
 - Holy days usually included presentation of offerings to the Lord, and sometimes included giving gifts of food to one another or gifts of resource to the poor (*Lev. 23:20,22,25; Num. 28:19-25; Esther 9:19,22*)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND to 2 Chronicles 29-30:

- King Hezekiah was a **GOOD** king reigning over Judah (1 of 8 good kings of Judah, 12 evil kings of Israel)
- He "did what was **RIGHT** in the eyes of the Lord." (*2 Kings 18:3*)
- His reign comes after **ISRAEL** entered exile under the Assyrians (*2 Kings 17:22-23*)
- Hezekiah reigned after his father, Ahaz, who was a very **WICKED** king (*2 Chr. 28:1-3, 22-25*)
- Consequently, following his reign, Judah's temple was **CLOSED** and non-functioning. (*2 Chr. 29:7*)
- Ahaz had made metal images throughout the land, had cut up the vessels of the temple, and had created high places in every corner of Jerusalem. Judah was generally in **RUIN** because they had been raided by their enemies. (*28:2,17-18,24*)

PREPARING FOR A HOLIDAY

2 Chronicles 29:3-5

English Standard Version (ESV)

3 In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them. **4** He brought in the priests and the Levites and assembled them in the square on the east **5** and said to them, “Hear me, Levites! Now **consecrate yourselves**, and **consecrate the house of the Lord**, the God of your fathers, and **carry out the filth** from the Holy Place.

HOW DID KING HEZEKIAH/JUDAH PREPARE?

1. **He consecrated the PRIESTS** (2 Chr. 29:5a)
(Set them apart for a holy purpose)
 - a. They recognized that God had called and chosen the priests to enter God’s presence, to minister to Him and to make offerings to Him.
(2 Chr. 29:11)
2. **They consecrated the TEMPLE** (2 Chr. 29:5b)
(Set apart the place of worship)
 - a. “They began to consecrate on the first day of the first month, and on the eighth day of the month they came to the vestibule of the Lord. Then for eight days they consecrated the house of the Lord, and on the sixteenth day of the first month they finished.”
(2 Chr. 29:17)
3. **They removed the FILTH from the Temple**
(Elimination of impurity) (2 Chr. 29:5c)
 - a. “The priests went into the inner part of the house of the Lord to cleanse it, and they brought out all the uncleanness that they found in the temple of the Lord into the court of the house of the Lord. And the Levites took it and carried it out to the brook Kidron.”
(2 Chr. 29:16)

HOW SHOULD WE PREPARE?

1. **We must set OURSELVES apart for God’s holy calling and purpose.**
 - a. “But you are a chosen race, **a royal priesthood**, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” (1 Pt 2:9)
 - b. As followers of Christ, **we ARE called and commissioned by God.**
2. **We must set our BODIES apart for God’s holy purposes.**
 - a. “What agreement has the temple of God with idols? **For we are the temple of the living God**; as God said, “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing...”
(2 Cor. 6:16-18)
3. **We must remove the moral filth from our HEARTS, from our inner parts.**
 - a. “Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.”
(2 Cor. 7:1)
 - b. “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.” (Rom. 13:14)

PARTICIPATING IN A HOLIDAY

2 Chronicles 30:21-22

English Standard Version (ESV)

21 And the people of Israel who were present at Jerusalem kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with great gladness, and the Levites and the priests praised the Lord day by day, singing with all their might to the Lord.
22 And Hezekiah spoke encouragingly to all the Levites who showed good skill in the service of the Lord. So they ate the food of the festival for seven days, sacrificing peace offerings and giving thanks to the Lord, the God of their fathers.

HOW DID THE PEOPLE OF JUDAH PARTICIPATE IN THE HOLIDAY?

1. **The Holiday called for everyone to leave their privacy and gather TOGETHER.** (2 Chr. 30:1,22,25,30)
 - a. They joined together in Jerusalem
 - b. They ate festival meals together
2. **The Holiday centered around THE LORD and returning to Him** (2 Chr. 30:5,6,8,11)
 - a. The Holiday demanded cleansing, consecrating and removing idols (2 Chr. 30:14,17)
 - b. The Holiday centered around redemption by the Passover Lamb (2 Chr. 30:15)
3. **The Holiday provoked GLADNESS and worship** (2 Chr. 30:21,26,27)
 - a. The people sang and praised God together
 - b. The people's hearts were filled with joy
4. **The Holiday required active RESPONSE to God** (2 Chr. 30:22,24)
 - a. The people served the Lord and gave offerings to Him
 - b. The people obeyed the command of God's Word (2 Chr. 30:12)

HOW DOES OUR AMERICAN HOLIDAY CULTURE MIRROR THE BIBLE'S?

1. **REST.** Ceasing normal activity. Taking time off work.
2. **GATHER TOGETHER.** Holidays aren't meant for isolation or loneliness. The Biblical picture is fellowship. This could be with immediate and extended family. But also, it could be with church family.
3. **GLADNESS AND CELEBRATION.** These are good things, particularly when they are rooted in a godly foundation. Our ultimate joy and celebration are found in Christ and His redemption for us.
4. **COMMUNAL MEALS.** Eating and feasting together is a God-given natural thing. It is good to fellowship and feast TOGETHER.

HOW MIGHT WE BE COUNTER-CULTURAL IN OUR HOLIDAY PARTICIPATION?

	<u>OUR CULTURE:</u>	<u>HEZEKIAH:</u>	<u>ME:</u>
1.	Holidays tend to be about <u>ME</u> .	Holidays are about <u>GOD</u> .	<i>Am I intentionally directing holiday time toward the Lord?</i>
2.	Holidays are about my <u>PLANS</u> .	Holidays are yielded to <u>GOD'S</u> plans.	<i>Am I using holiday time to repent and surrender my heart to the Lord?</i>
3.	Holidays are <u>ME-TIME</u> .	Holidays are <u>GOD-DIRECTED</u> .	<i>Do I begin my holiday days in God's Word?</i>
4.	Holidays reinforce my <u>IDOLS</u> .	Holidays kill my <u>IDOLS</u> .	<i>Do I use my holiday time to feed the idols in my life, or to intentionally put them to death?</i>
5.	Holidays are <u>CHRIST-LESS</u> .	Holidays remember <u>REDEMPTION</u> .	<i>Is my goal knowing Christ? Even on my holidays?</i>
6.	Holiday time worships my <u>PREFERENCES</u> .	Holiday time worships <u>GOD</u> !	<i>Does worship come first on my holiday days?</i>
7.	Holidays <u>MINIMIZE</u> others.	Holidays <u>SERVE</u> others and God.	<i>Do I use my holiday time to serve myself? Or the Lord? Or other people?</i>
8.	Holidays spend <u>MONEY</u> on my desires.	Holidays give to God as an <u>OFFERING</u> .	<i>Do I take time on holidays to give additional gifts to the Lord?</i>