

The Books of 1 and 2 Chronicles, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 20: Ahaz's Apostasy and Hezekiah's Renewal

2 Chronicles 28:1–31:21

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Doctrinally, these chapters put two truths side by side that the church must always hold together: the seriousness of apostasy and the readiness of God to restore. Ahaz shows that turning from God is never static; it gathers speed and drags others down, until a man is sacrificing his children and bolting the temple shut. Hezekiah shows that worship matters to God on God's own terms, not ours; the king does not invent a renewal but restores the appointed priests, Levites, offerings, and feast exactly as God had directed. For a people committed to following the New Testament pattern of worship, this is fertile ground: God has always cared not only that we worship but how. Be careful to keep Ahaz's guilt his own (Ezekiel 18:20), and to draw the line forward to the worship in spirit and truth that Christ now establishes, without binding the Old Covenant Passover on Christians.

But this lesson also aims squarely at the student's heart. Most of us are not Ahaz in one dramatic plunge; we are Ahaz in slow motion, closing one small door at a time until our devotion has quietly gone dark. The aim here is to make the closed doors visible and to stir Hezekiah's urgency to open them in the very first month, today, not someday. Let the class feel both the warning and the welcome: that wandering is real and costly, and that the God who watched Hezekiah seek Him with all his heart, and prosper, is the same God who stands ready to receive each of us the moment we turn home.

Question 1

Student Question:

What does Ahaz's progressive descent into idolatry (cast images, child sacrifice, shutting the temple) reveal about the nature and direction of apostasy when a heart turns from God?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Ahaz reigned roughly 735 to 715 B.C., and the Chronicler paints his apostasy in unsparing strokes. He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, made molten images for the Baals, burned incense in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, and burned his children in the fire after the abominations of the nations God had cast out (28:1–4). This is not casual neglect; it is a deliberate, escalating embrace of everything God hates.

Notice the trajectory. Apostasy in this chapter is progressive: from idols, to the high places, to child sacrifice, to sacrificing to the gods of Damascus because they had struck him down (28:23), to finally cutting up the temple vessels and shutting the doors of the house of the LORD (28:24).

Each step made the next easier. Sin has a downhill momentum; the heart that excuses a little soon excuses much.

The Chronicler underscores the irony that Ahaz turned to the gods of those who defeated him, reasoning that because the gods of Syria helped them, he would sacrifice to them so they would help him (28:23). Unbelief is not more rational than faith; it is often far less so. Ahaz trusted what had just destroyed him.

Teach Ezekiel 18:20 here to keep the doctrine clean: Ahaz was guilty because Ahaz sinned, not because guilt was inherited. Chronicles never excuses him by his ancestry; the responsibility is personal. This guards the class against any notion of inherited guilt while still showing how one generation's sin shapes the next.

The pastoral point is the shape of apostasy itself. We rarely renounce God in a single act. We close one door, then another, until the house is dark and bolted. Help the class see that the way back begins by recognizing the direction of travel before the doors are fully shut.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Apostasy is progressive, not static; small compromises gather momentum.
- Idolatry is fundamentally a transfer of trust from God to something that cannot save.
- Personal accountability for sin (Ezekiel 18:20), not inherited guilt.
- The seriousness of leading others, especially children, away from God.

Discussion Prompts

- Trace Ahaz's downward steps in chapter 28; where does the slide begin?
- Why is it dangerous to trust whatever seems to be 'winning' instead of God?
- How do small surrenders prepare the heart for large ones?

Question 2

Student Question:

Where have small, repeated compromises in your own life begun to move you in a direction you would not have chosen all at once, and what is the first step back?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-directed question presses Ahaz's pattern into the student's own life. Few of us wake up intending a major fall; we drift by increments. The aim is honest self-examination about direction, not just isolated acts.

Encourage students to name a specific area where compromise has become a habit: a neglected discipline, a tolerated attitude, a relationship pulling them off course. Vague confession produces vague repentance.

The first step back is almost always the same one Hezekiah took: open the door you closed. Repentance is not merely feeling sorry; it is a deliberate turn in the opposite direction (Acts 17:30; 2 Corinthians 7:10–11).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Drift happens by increments and must be caught early.
- Genuine repentance is specific, not vague.
- Godly sorrow leads to a change of action, not just feeling.

Discussion Prompts

- What is one direction your life has quietly been heading?
- What single, concrete step would reverse that direction this week?
- Who could help you stay accountable to that step?

Question 3

Student Question:

Why does Chronicles emphasize that Hezekiah reopened and cleansed the house of God in the very first month of his reign, and what does the timing tell us about true priorities?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Hezekiah came to the throne and in the first month of the first year of his reign opened the doors of the house of the LORD and repaired them (29:3). The timing is the message. He did not study the problem for years; he acted at once. What we do first reveals what we value most.

His charge to the priests and Levites is striking: sanctify yourselves and sanctify the house of the LORD, for our fathers have been unfaithful and have shut the doors (29:5–7). He names the sin plainly and links the nation's troubles to the abandonment of true worship. Renewal begins with honest naming, not denial.

Chronicles consistently treats the house of God as the center of national life under the Old Covenant. When worship was right, the nation was oriented rightly; when worship was abandoned, everything unraveled. The principle endures: a people's relationship to God shapes everything else.

For application, contrast the urgency. Ahaz took years to dismantle worship; Hezekiah needed one month to begin restoring it. The kingdom of God always rewards the one who acts on conviction now rather than waiting for a more convenient season (compare Hebrews 3:7–8).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- First actions reveal true priorities.

- Renewal begins with honest naming of sin, not denial.
- Worship of God is central, not peripheral, to a faithful life.
- The danger of postponing obedience to a 'better' time.

Discussion Prompts

- What does it say that Hezekiah acted in his very first month?
- Why does renewal require naming the failure out loud?
- What keeps us from acting on conviction immediately?

Question 4

Student Question:

What worship or obedience to God have you been putting off until a more convenient season, and what would it mean to act on it now rather than later?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question turns Hezekiah's urgency on the student. Almost everyone is harboring some obedience filed under 'later': a conversation, a confession, a habit of worship, a reconciliation. 'Later' is where good intentions go to die.

Help students distinguish wise timing from sinful delay. Hezekiah did not act recklessly; he acted promptly on what was clearly right. The issue is not impulsiveness but the refusal to postpone plain obedience.

Invite a concrete commitment. The transformational power of this passage is lost if it remains admiration of Hezekiah; it lands when a student opens a real door this week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The difference between wise timing and sinful procrastination.
- Plain duty delayed is duty denied.
- Conviction is meant to produce prompt action.

Discussion Prompts

- What obedience have you been postponing, and why?
- What would acting 'in the first month' look like for you?
- What is the cost of continuing to wait?

Question 5

Student Question:

What does Hezekiah's careful restoration of the Levites, the offerings, and the appointed worship teach us about worshiping God in the way He has actually directed rather than as we please?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Hezekiah did not improvise worship; he restored it according to the commandment of David and Gad the seer and Nathan the prophet, for the commandment was from the LORD through His prophets (29:25). He set the Levites in their places, restored the burnt offerings, the singers, and the order of service. Worship was to follow God's revealed pattern, not human preference.

This is one of the great themes of Chronicles and a natural place to teach the authority of God in worship. Under the Old Covenant the pattern was given through Moses and the prophets; under the New, it is given through Christ and the apostles. In both, the question is the same: has God authorized this, or are we acting on our own taste?

Be careful and accurate here. We do not bind the Old Covenant offerings, Levitical priesthood, or Passover on Christians; those were shadows fulfilled in Christ (Hebrews 10:1; Colossians 2:16–17). The enduring principle is reverence for God's authority over how He is worshiped, which Jesus states directly in John 4:23–24, that the Father seeks worshipers who worship in spirit and truth.

Application: many today assume worship is whatever moves them. Hezekiah teaches that the proper question is not 'what do I prefer' but 'what has God directed.' This trains the heart toward humble submission rather than self-expression in the things of God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God cares not only that we worship but how we worship.
- Worship follows divine authority, not human preference (John 4:23–24).
- Old Covenant forms were shadows fulfilled in Christ; do not bind them (Colossians 2:16–17).
- Reverence and order in worship reflect reverence for God Himself.

Discussion Prompts

- What was the source of Hezekiah's pattern for worship (29:25)?
- How do we determine today what God has authorized in worship?
- What is the difference between worshiping by preference and by pattern?

Question 6

Student Question:

How carefully do you examine whether your own worship and service follow what God has revealed, or do you tend to rely on what feels right or familiar to you?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question moves the authority-in-worship principle into self-examination. It is easy to affirm the principle and quietly live by feeling. The aim is honest reflection on how the student actually decides what pleases God.

Encourage students to test their assumptions by Scripture rather than by tradition or emotion alone. The Bereans were commended for examining the Scriptures to verify even an apostle's teaching (Acts 17:11).

This need not become cold or legalistic. Hezekiah's reform overflowed with joy (30:21–26). Submission to God's pattern and wholehearted gladness are not enemies; they are companions in healthy worship.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Worship can drift into preference unless it is examined by Scripture.
- The Berean habit of checking everything by the word (Acts 17:11).
- Reverence and joy belong together, not in opposition.

Discussion Prompts

- How do you personally decide what God approves in worship?
- Where might familiarity have replaced careful conviction?
- How can worship be both reverent and joyful?

Question 7

Student Question:

Why did Hezekiah invite even the rebellious northern tribes to the Passover, and what does that say about God's heart toward those who have wandered far?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Hezekiah sent couriers throughout Israel and Judah, even to Ephraim and Manasseh, urging them to return to the LORD so that He might return to them (30:6–9). The northern kingdom had largely fallen, yet he reached out to the remnant. Some mocked the messengers, but some humbled themselves and came (30:10–11).

This reveals God's heart toward the wanderer. Hezekiah's appeal echoes the gospel logic: return, for the LORD your God is gracious and merciful and will not turn His face from you if you return to Him (30:9). The door home is never barred from God's side.

Note the mixed response. Faithful invitation does not guarantee acceptance; some laughed the couriers to scorn. We are responsible for the sincerity of the invitation, not for the response. This guards earnest evangelists against discouragement.

Application: Hezekiah refused to write off even the rebellious north. The church must keep the door open and the invitation warm, reaching toward the very people the world would consider beyond hope (Luke 15:1-7).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's heart is to receive the wanderer who returns (30:9).
- Faithful invitation is our duty; the response is not in our control.
- Some will mock; some will humble themselves and come.
- No one is beyond the reach of a genuine call home.

Discussion Prompts

- What does 30:9 reveal about God's disposition toward returners?
- Why did Hezekiah include even the fallen north?
- How should the mixed response shape our own outreach?

Question 8

Student Question:

Who in your life has wandered from the Lord, and how might Hezekiah's example move you to extend a genuine, humble invitation rather than to write them off?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question makes the invitation personal. Most students know someone who has drifted from the Lord. Hezekiah's example presses us past resentment or resignation toward genuine, humble outreach.

Stress the tone of the invitation. The couriers did not scold; they pleaded with the promise of mercy. People rarely return to a God who is presented as harsh. They return to grace.

Encourage one concrete act: a call, a note, a meal, a sincere word. Transformation here is not a feeling of concern but a deliberate, kind reaching out.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Outreach to the wandering is fueled by mercy, not condemnation.
- Resentment must give way to genuine invitation.
- Concrete acts of love often open closed hearts.

Discussion Prompts

- Who has wandered that you have quietly given up on?
- What tone does a real invitation home require?
- What is one concrete step you could take toward them this week?

Question 9

Student Question:

Chronicles says Hezekiah did what was good and right and faithful before the LORD his God and sought God with all his heart, and so he prospered (31:20–21); how does this passage call us to return to true, God-directed worship and to seek God wholeheartedly rather than halfheartedly, and how does such renewal point forward to the worship the New Testament church offers in spirit and truth through Christ?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Here the lesson gathers to its doctrinal center. Chronicles summarizes Hezekiah's whole reform: he did what was good and right and faithful before the LORD his God, and every work that he undertook in the service of the house of God and in keeping the law and the commandments, seeking his God, he did with all his heart, and prospered (31:20–21). The reform was not partial or grudging; it was wholehearted, and it was directed by God's revealed will.

Three things stand together in this summary. First, the object: he sought God Himself, not merely the benefits of religion. Second, the standard: good and right and faithful before the LORD, measured by God's word, not by Hezekiah's preference. Third, the manner: with all his heart. Renewal that pleases God is wholehearted obedience to God's own directions for worship and life.

This is the place to draw the line forward to Christ. The reordered worship Hezekiah restored, the cleansed house, the appointed service, the great Passover, all pointed beyond themselves. Under the New Covenant, Christ is our Passover sacrificed for us (1 Corinthians 5:7), He is the great High Priest (Hebrews 4:14–16), and through Him the church draws near to worship the Father in spirit and truth (John 4:23–24; Hebrews 10:19–22). Hezekiah's reform foreshadows the cleansed, ordered, joyful worship the church now offers through her risen Lord.

Guard the doctrine carefully. We do not revive the Levitical system; it was a shadow fulfilled and removed in Christ (Hebrews 10:1–10; Colossians 2:16–17). What endures is the principle Hezekiah embodies: worship God as He has directed, and seek Him with the whole heart. That principle binds on us through Christ, not the Old Covenant forms.

The application is searching. Halfhearted worship has always grieved God (Malachi 1:6–14; Revelation 3:15–16). Hezekiah prospered not because reform was a technique for success but because a heart fully given to God is set right with the source of all life. Press the class: is your worship wholehearted and God-directed, or partial and self-styled? The summons of this passage is to come home all the way.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- True renewal seeks God Himself, not merely religious benefits.

- Worship and life are measured by God's revealed will, not personal preference.
- Wholehearted devotion, not halfhearted compliance, is what pleases God (31:21).
- Old Covenant worship foreshadows the church's worship in spirit and truth through Christ (John 4:23-24).
- The Levitical forms were shadows fulfilled in Christ; do not bind them, but keep the principle of God-directed worship (Hebrews 10:1; Colossians 2:16-17).
- Christ is our Passover and High Priest, through whom we draw near (1 Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 4:14-16).

Discussion Prompts

- What three things does 31:20-21 say about Hezekiah's seeking of God?
- How does Hezekiah's restored worship point forward to worship through Christ?
- Where is your own worship halfhearted, and what would wholehearted worship require?

Question 10

Student Question:

Looking back across the ruin of Ahaz and the renewal of Hezekiah, name one specific door Jesus is asking you to reopen, and how you will let Him form a wholehearted, worshipping heart in you.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone invites the student to stand between the two kings and choose a direction. Ahaz closed doors; Hezekiah opened them. Discipleship is the daily decision of which way to face.

Ask each student to name one specific door, a practice of worship, a neglected obedience, a relationship to be reconciled, that Jesus is asking them to reopen. Specificity is the difference between inspiration and transformation.

Close by lifting eyes to Christ. The renewal Hezekiah began in the temple is completed in the believer through Jesus, who cleanses, restores, and gives a wholehearted love for the Father. Let students leave not merely admiring an ancient king but surrendering a real door to the living Lord.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Discipleship is a daily choice of direction toward or away from God.
- Transformation requires naming one specific, concrete change.
- Christ completes in us the renewal Hezekiah began in the temple.

Discussion Prompts

- Which king are you currently imitating, and in what specific way?
- What one door is Jesus asking you to reopen?

- How will you let Him form a wholehearted, worshiping heart in you?