

The Road to Reform

Among the kings of Judah, there are two who stand out as a result of their faith in God: Hezekiah and Josiah.

These two kings are regarded for their loyalty to God and their reform of Judah.

During their time, idolatry was rampant among the nations. When Hezekiah began to reign, Israel to the north was still engaged in the idolatry of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat wherewith he made Israel to sin, and it is said of Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah, that “he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yea, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the nations, whom Jehovah cast out from before the children of Israel. And he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.” (2 Kings 16:3-4)

Israel was ultimately taken captive by Assyria just six years after Hezekiah began to reign.

Josiah, the 15th king over Judah, and Hezekiah's great-grandson, began to reign 80 years after Israel had been taken away into captivity. At the young age of eight, he sat upon the throne of Judah.

Although separated by five decades, Josiah and Hezekiah shared a common malady: they were both sons of fathers who turned away from Jehovah to serve idols.

As we look at their lives, we see two men that broke the cycle of idolatry and attempted to purge it from the land.

As we consider these two kings, let us consider our own lives. Being the offsprings of our fathers, we may also be faced with the influence of idolatry in our lives. One well known passage (Col. 3:5) expresses this danger in such a way that we cannot avoid it's application: “Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”

Idolatry is often closer to us than we want to imagine. It's easy to look at Israel and see where they failed to serve Jehovah and put their trust in the works of their hand. Ezekiel spoke against such when Jehovah said, concerning the rulers of Israel (Ezek 14:3-8) “Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all by them? Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the LORD will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols; That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations. For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel, which separateth himself from me, and setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a

prophet to inquire of him concerning me; I the LORD will answer him by myself: And I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.” How often do we petition God according to the idols of our heart? Should we not follow the example of Hezekiah and Josiah and put idolatry away from us?

Of the two reforms, Josiah's was most successful. Josiah “put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah,... them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven. And he brought out the grove from the house of the LORD, without Jerusalem, unto the brook Kidron, and burned it..., and stamped it small to powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the children of the people. And he brake down the houses of the sodomites, that were by the house of the LORD...And he defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech. And he...burned the chariots of the sun with fire. And the altars that were on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the LORD, did the king beat down, and brake them down from thence, and cast the dust of them into the brook Kidron... And he brake in pieces the images, and cut down the groves, and filled their places with the bones of men. Moreover the altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he brake down, and burned the high place, and stamped it small to powder, and burned the grove.” (2 Kings 23)

I've often wondered if we ourselves do not have “idols of the heart” that need to be purged from our lives? Break the cycle: “turn unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven...who delivereth us from the wrath to come.”

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