

Josiah Idol Killer

Valleys Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 10th Feb 2013

Intro

- Revival is where something that once was alive, and has since died, lives again! Israel had various times in it's history where it experienced revival after long seasons of decay. The Church has likewise experienced times of apathetic deadness but also wonderful times of revival.
- Many a time you hear Christians longing for revival in their generation, but the question comes- would they actually like it if revival came? Would they be willing to pay the price that comes with having revival?
- Every once in a while a truly remarkable person comes along who is willing to pay such a price. Evan Roberts could be seen as one, although he later sadly shrank back and became reclusive but today we are going to look at a truly remarkable man who paid the price for revival and saw it powerfully in his generation. His name is Josiah.

Read 2Kings 22:1–23:27

Background

- The amazing story of king Josiah is a breath of fresh air in the sad history of the kings of Israel and Judah appearing in this book of Kings in the Bible. To understand this story better we need a bit of background to the book of kings.
- The Israelites were given the land of Canaan because the Canaanites were heavily into idolatry and were under God's judgement as a result. They would even sacrifice their sons and daughters for the sake of their gods.
- Once the Israelites were in the land of Canaan it became known as Israel and God gave Israel laws to keep them in order, and to keep them from God's judgement and from being expelled from the land as had happened to the Canaanites before them. Crucial to this was their obedience to the law against worshipping idols, the Lord was to be their only God. Eventually the Israelites wanted to have their own king like other nations had. We know that David was a good king of Israel (except the situation with Bathsheba).
- David's son Solomon followed him and started off well. But then he had his heart led astray by his many wives and ended up building altars for foreign gods and allowing idolatry into the land of Israel.
- As a result of this the kingdom split in two after his death. The Northern Kingdom was called Israel and was composed of 10 tribes. The Southern Kingdom was called Judah and consisted of two tribes, Benjamin and Judah.
- The Northern Kingdom was the worst of the two. It had a total of 19 kings, none of whom did what God wanted, but rather they worshipped idols. The first king of this kingdom was Jeroboam. He started the ball rolling by worshipping two golden calf idols and telling the children of Israel that these gods rescued them from Egypt. All the kings after also worshipped idols, until God finally brought this kingdom into judgement by allowing them to be taken into captivity by the Assyrians. The Assyrians replaced the people with others they had conquered in foreign nations. The northern kingdom people then became known by their capital city, Samaria, and were called the Samaritans.
- The Southern Kingdom of Israel was also bad, although not quite as bad as the northern kingdom and so it lasted a little longer before the Babylonians came and took the people into captivity. It consisted of 20 kings, eight of whom did what was right in God's sight, however, even the kings who were good did not really sort out the problem of idolatry as much as they could have, they left the high places where idols were worshipped intact, all that is except this king, Josiah.

Josiah had a passion for God

- Seen in his desire to rebuild God's house. Gatekeepers took collection for God's house to be restored. It had fallen into ruin through non-use.
- It was said prophetically of Jesus 'zeal for your house consumes me'- this was seen when Jesus drove the sellers of wares out of the temple and overturned the tables of the money-changers- Jesus was passionate that the temple be used as a place to meet with God rather than rip people off. The house of God symbolised the presence of God, it was a zeal for the presence of God which consumed Jesus.

- The only way to truly deal with idolatry is to replace it with a true and sincere love for God. Josiah had this love for God.
- We get this love by truly understanding His love for us- we love Him because He first loved us. To understand His love we have to invest something to find it- 'you will find Me when you seek me with all your heart'. Jesus set aside time to get away from the crowd, the hustle and bustle and be alone with the Father. We need to do the same.
- One of the symptoms of backsliding is a lack of desire for the presence of God, lack of desire to be in God's presence or with His people. If this is true of us let's ask God for His forgiveness and return to Him in repentance.

Josiah had a hunger to live by God's word.

- God's word, the Bible, is the torch lighting our path, it shows us the path we need to walk in order to please God and bear good fruit in our lives. It is significant that the scrolls containing God's word were found in the temple at this time, if they had not been perhaps Josiah would have slipped into the idolatry that the previous kings had practised.
- Although it was painful for Josiah to hear how far away from pleasing God the nation had drifted it resulted in life change in Josiah and the his kingdom. We heard last week of the importance of the prophetic, but also the dangers to avoid. If we are to discern the voice of God and not be led into sin, or error then we need to both know and obey God's word. On one of the examples given last week, if they had known the word of God they would not have been led astray by a false prophetic word, as the word spoke about reincarnation, knowing God's word will save us from all sorts of mistakes in life. Do we know God's word, and are we spending time daily reading it?
- Spending time regularly in His word will make us both more prophetic and also more discerning, as God's word is our primary revelation and personal words are secondary revelation, they take second place to God's revealed word and must fall in line with it.
- It's not just enough to know God's word, we also need to obey it, this is what Jesus warned us of when He said about the man who built his house on the sand and the one who built his house on the rock, one symbolised obedience to Jesus, the other disobedience. The mark of a false prophet is not bearing good fruit, i.e. not putting the word of God into practise, but living with a disregard for what God says. If we continually silence our conscience when God convicts us of sin eventually we end up hardened, losing the conviction of our conscience, having a conscience seared as with an iron. We need to learn to have our conscience governed by God's word and respond quickly and decisively when it pricks us, just as Josiah did.
- Is there anything God has been saying to you that you have not done yet? Is there something you started to obey God in, but have neglected to do? Why not make a choice today to turn back to Him.

Josiah dealt with idols

- When we read Josiah's reaction to idolatry it may seem to us to be extreme. However, he was leading a nation on the brink of disaster due to idolatry, he had to act decisively to change things.
- Josiah both knew what the idols were and also how to deal decisively with them. A common god was Baal, which means lord, master or husband, he was a storm god often appearing with his hand raised with a lightening bolt. He was often accompanied by Asherah who was thought to be responsible for fertility. In the culture of the time there was a whole pantheon of gods thought to be responsible

for different functions. Different places in Israel had different gods, but they often took the general name 'Baal' anyway.

- Sacrifices to these gods were thought to invoke blessings on the people, but in reality the various gods were actually demons and the sacrifices made to them had brought not a blessing but a curse upon the people. Divination (fortune telling) was rife, as was consulting the dead, just as these practises are today. Although people got comfort then as they do now they were really getting comfort from demons and opening themselves up to demonic control.
- An idol can be anything which becomes more important to us than God or ascribing what alone belongs to God to something else. It can be something bad which we need to give up, or it can be something good which we need to get back into the right perspective in our lives.
- What are the chief idols of our culture today? Jesus warned much about Mammon. Mammon is the Aramaic word for **money**. Jesus said a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. In the West there is the belief that more possessions will make us happier but in reality this is not the case, with possessions comes a lot of other stuff, worry about the possibility of theft or loss being one. Jesus said where our riches are there our heart will be, in other words what we spend our money on indicates where our heart is. For many in the west it is self. For Zacchaeus following Christ meant attacking the greed he saw in himself by paying others back and giving money to the poor.
- So materialism can be an idol, but another idol can be Hedonism, living for **pleasure**. Hedonism is 'if it feels good do it'. This form of idolatry turns good things into idols, food becomes an addiction, leisure becomes our lives, sport and recreation takes over, the T.V rules us, sex becomes an obsession and is practised out of the confines of marriage. Alcohol becomes abused. Drugs misused. Paul speaks about learning to control our members and submitting all our members to God. This means surrendering the mind to God, the tongue to God, our temper to God, what we look at, what we listen to, our feet to God where we choose to go, our sexuality to God that we will learn to handle our passions, our mouths what we choose to eat and when. Self control is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Fasting and prayer can break addictions in our bodies, as can confession and repentance, deliverance and renewing our minds as well as accountability. Being filled with the Spirit means good fruit will flow into our lives.
- Identity is a key area as pursuit of **status** can become an idol in our lives. People become obsessed with fame or significance thinking it will bring them happiness, but when they get there they find it meaningless, a chasing after the wind and they become depressed and try drugs instead. We need to know the security that comes from being God's son or daughter. Before I am a pastor I am God's precious son whom He sent His Son to die for. Jesus was baptised and the Holy Spirit rested on Him like a dove and John the Baptist testified that this was the Son of God, and the Father testified that this was His beloved Son in Who He was well pleased, then in Luke the genealogy proved that Jesus was the Son of God Messiah, going deliberately back to Adam the son of God and using that phrase deliberately. The very next thing that happens, after 40 days of fasting satan speaks 'if you are the Son of God...'. Satan tries to get Jesus to doubt His identity and to get into the idolatry of finding other paths to significance. A knowledge of who we are in God will save us from idolatrous pride, arrogance, power struggling, position seeking, workaholism, name dropping, people using, gossip mongering, people and self worship and will instead be replaced by a true worship of God Who has lavished His abundant grace and love upon us as His children.
- What are your idols? What is more important to you than God?

Like Josiah, like Zacchaeus, what decisive action are you going to take from this moment on?

Josiah changed his generation

- What a difference Josiah made when he chose to get rid of idols. He brought a revival to the nation during his generation.
- If we want to see a rival in our generation it will mean a willingness to confront the idols in our own lives first. Revival often has started in the Churches history when God's children were bold enough to confess to and deal with the idols in their lives.
- The apostle John said 'Dear children keep away from idols'. Not only deal with them, but continue to keep away from them.
- If we are to see this generation changed it will mean that we live a lifestyle free from idolatry. Shall we begin today?

Summary

Josiah:

- Had a sincere passion for God
- Had a hunger to live by God's word
- Sorted out idols- (some areas we need to watch are *money, pleasure, status*)
- Turned his generation back to God

Song

I lift my hands to the coming King