

In God's Honor

by Hendrik Joubert

King Josiah was a good man who initiated some impressive reformations. It is inspiring to read through the list of idolatrous icons he destroyed during his lifetime. (**2 Kings 22-23; 2 Chronicles 34-35**) It is sad to see how quickly people would revert back to their sinful ways. Immediately we have to ask the question whether our generation is any better. When we look at "them" we decide that the answer to this question is a firm "No." We are more susceptible to peer pressure than we care to admit. Consider the following story.

After having the Scriptures read in his presence, and after he made some major changes, Josiah appoints a committee to work on how to prevent the people from backsliding into idolatry and corrupt religion. The committee made up of Sadducees, Pharisees and Scribes has to identify the prevalent practices which have drawn the people time after time. They did not have to merely identify them; they had to determine why the people so easily turned back to idolatry. Hopefully they would find a practical solution to the problem.

A number of things seem to pop up over and over again – Baal, the Asherah, green trees and the high places where sacrifices were made are identified as some of the more obvious distractions. Looking back they were able to establish how some of this started. Jeroboam king of was afraid that if the people were to return to to offer their sacrifices their heart will return to Rehoboam king of . (**1 Kings 12:27**) He consulted and decided to make two calves of God and placed one in Dan and the other in . To sell his idea to the people he explained the amount of effort it takes to go all the way to . These calves were declared to be their gods to sacrifice to.

It is the action of Jeroboam that sparks an idea. All the people owe their existence and everything they have to Jehovah, the Creator. You are not going to keep people from worshipping other gods because of the practicality and beauty of the imagery and the ease with which these may be made and carried around. Why do we not take some of these symbols and dedicate them to the Creator – remove the god and replace it with Jehovah? A feast known as Genesis day will be instituted to remind everyone of their origin. The green tree will be symbolic of creation. It should be known as Genesis Day, and we will celebrate it in spring when everything is renewed. Each family may find a green tree to put up during this time. In recognition of His gift of life we will exchange gifts.

The image of Baal will not be Baal any longer; it will now be a minimum of 18 feet to become a practical reminder of the Great God of Israel who created everything. The Asherah will be introduced to recognize the role of Eve, and every other woman created by God. Come to think of it, this may be helpful in proselytizing Gentiles. They will have a practical alternative for their idols. The message should be in honor of the God of Creation, and the feast should be celebrated annually to recognize and praise Him. Now this will keep the people from reverting back to idolatry.

A small number of people objected when these innovations were announced. How could one use the symbols of idolatry in order to praise God, especially when He has been so outspoken against these idols and symbols. The reply is that it has never been done to His glory as it now will be. Anyone who is a true Jew will celebrate this feast in honor of God. Anyone who objects does not love God, in whose honor all this will be done.

Some decided that the tree thing and the gifts is a neat idea, especially for the children, but since God did not command them to do it, they could not engage in the practice for religious purposes. They will put up a tree and exchange gifts as a family tradition. Others decided they would not even exchange gifts, but that they will put up a Spring Tree merely because they like spring and the decorated tree looks nice.

Those who walked by the houses found it quite difficult to distinguish between the non-religious trees and those who were put up in honor of Jehovah, and the debate continued.