

2 Kings 18:1-6 (LD 35) “Tearing Down Idols”

For the Children: Gideon tore down the Baal statue in his town. King Hezekiah also tore down various idol-images in Judah. Israel had been commanded by God to destroy these likenesses of false gods, as well as likenesses of Himself (like the Golden Calf). Today, we do not want to damage the property of others. But we can make sure we are taking our understanding of God from His Word, not from pictures, statues etc. We can also warn others that God is a “jealous” God: He does not want to share His glory with pictures and statues.

Questions: What is the difference between the 1st and 2nd commandments? What were the 2 types of images that Hezekiah destroyed? How can we know and feel close to a God who is invisible?

Introduction:

First Point: What Hezekiah Did with the 2nd Commandment

- 1) The First Two Commandments: The 1st commandment forbids having other gods. The 2nd forbids making, worshipping or serving any image of God; or of any creature as if it were a god. LD 35 adds prohibitions against *having* any such images for the purpose of service or worship; or, using them for teaching purposes re God. Pictures of creatures are permitted, but not if the intention is to use them in the above, prohibited ways. Ex. 34:13-14 orders Israel to tear down false altars because they tend to result in the worship of false gods. Dt. 4:10-20 warns against making images of God from visible manifestations of His glory, lest this lead to worship and service of the *image* in place of God.\
- 2) Two Types of Iconoclasm: Hezekiah destroyed the things associated with pagan religion in Judah – shrines in high places, sacred pillars and Asherah. He also broke up the Bronze Serpent described in Num. 21:6-9. This Nehushtan was given by God as a symbol of salvation from death through faith in God. In that sense, the figure pointed to Christ. But now the symbol itself was being treated as a god.
- 3) Application to Pictures of Jesus: As with Nehushtan, God Himself gave His Son to the world in visible form. Some argue that since He was sent in visible form, with a human body, it cannot be wrong to portray Him visibly. However, Christ is not only man, but also God. The God-man *cannot* be visibly portrayed and so we *may* not attempt to do so. As in Dt. 4, the fact that God gave something visible does not entitle us to use it as an image of the Divine. For as our text shows, it is too easy for images to be treated as if they were the Divine. Nor is this justified by arguing that children (or the unlearned) need pictures to be educated in the truth. God wants His people to be taught to relate to Him by Word and Spirit, in Christ – not by “pictures that cannot even talk.”

Second Point: Why Hezekiah Acted as He Did

- 1) Five Reasons: Hezekiah took action first because he wanted to cling to the Lord, follow Him and keep His commandments (v. 6). Second, he saw what God did to the Northern Kingdom because of their idolatry and disobedience. Third, he wanted to reform Judah. Fourth, he took David as his model of the ideal king (v. 3). Fifth, he trusted in Yahweh (v. 5). Those who trust in God, His Son and His Word, do not need images to enable them to relate to God, to assure them of His help or to teach them about Him.
- 2) An Even Better Reason: Hezekiah gave an excellent example of a good, faithful Davidic king, trusting in the Lord (v. 5). Josiah was another (23:25). Yet these men were flawed and sinful. They pointed to the need of a Greater Son of David. He is the Perfecter of faith. Knowing Him, we should be even less likely to want images.
- 3) Iconoclasm Today: We are not called upon to destroy the property of others to uphold this command. Our “iconoclasm” should start with ourselves, removing idols and warped views of God from our own hearts. Also learning to trust God and learn from His Word and Spirit how to worship Him. The church also has a role to play in teaching and preaching against idols and images in all their forms.

Conclusion: