

Sacred Cows Hinder Revival

Most of us have encountered sacred cows. They are the things, programs, even deeply seated beliefs so enshrined in our minds they are blindly embraced as truth or essential to our faith. We may not realize it, until someone questions or tries to change them. Then our opposition can be stiff and vicious. They can drown out the simplicity of the Gospel and take away from follow Christ with all of our heart, soul and strength.

Gold Calves

As I read 2 Kings 9 during devotions one morning, that was not on my mind. But I sensed the Lord saying, “learn from Jehu.”

I reviewed how Jehu was anointed king, seized the throne, and got rid of the wicked queen mother, Jezebel. I kept reading. Chapter 10 recounts Jehu’s zeal in decimating the house of Ahab to fulfill prophecy, and ridding Israel of Baal worship. It seemed like Jehu was on the right track! God even commends him.

But there is a “but”. Jehu *“did not, however, destroy the gold calves at Bethel and Dan, with which Jeroboam .. caused Israel to sin... Jehu did not obey the Law of the Lord, ... with all his heart”* (2 Kings 10:28, 31, NLT).

Those sacred cows had been around 100 years. They were part of Israel’s history and culture at this point. But they kept Jehu from the full blessing of the Lord and prevented Israel from returning to Him whole-heartedly. Ridding Israel of Baal worship should have led to a nationwide revival. But those sacred cows remained. So instead, the nation went into decline.

Why Sacred Cows?

A century before God had anointed Jeroboam the first king of

Israel's divided kingdom. He successfully led a rebellion against Solomon's son and had the allegiance of 10 tribes. But people still worshipped at the Temple in Jerusalem, which was in Judah. Many remembered it's dedication and the glory of the Lord that fell. So, even though God made him king, Jeroboam felt insecure, and he devised a plan to keep his throne.

He made counterfeit gods, recreating the golden calf from Israel's wilderness rebellion. Jeroboam made two golden calves, placing them in convenient locations for people to worship. Rewriting history, he declared that these idols brought Israel out of Egypt. He installed counterfeit priests, built altars, and created festivals to lure the Israelites away from worshipping at the temple, and ultimately away from the Lord.

His attempt to manipulate and control the people worked. Convenience, comfort and cultural acceptability won out. From then on, Israel was in a steady decline as people embraced idol worship and debauchery.

Destroying Idols

A hundred years after Jehu's attempted return to the Lord, Israel was destroyed. But those sacred cows remained.

When Josiah became king of Judah years later, Judah was also entrenched in Idol worship. But Josiah *"did was what right in the eyes of the Lord and followed completely the ways of his father David"* (2 Kings 22:2, NIV).

He renewed Judah's covenant with the Lord. Then he cleansed the Temple; did away with the idolatrous priests; and tore down Asherah poles, high places, and everything else used to worship counterfeit gods throughout the land. He even demolished the golden calf and altar in Bethel. Bethel was not even in Judah, but that golden calf was within reach, so he smashed it. *"Neither before or after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the Lord...with all his heart and with*

all his soul and with all his strength" (2 Kings 23:25).

Josiah's commitment to God forestalled Judah's judgement. And there was a mini revival in the land for those who followed Josiah's lead. But the hearts of many did not truly change. So, 30 years later the people of Judah were also sent into exile.

Top to Bottom

Christian leaders must stand against all counterfeit gods. Anything that draws our hearts, souls or strength away from God must go. But responsibility to tear down idols and sacred cows also rests on every believer. Anything we cannot joyfully lay aside or change if the Lord asks us to, is an idol. The things we most vehemently defend just might be sacred cows.

Revival is coming. But any sacred cow we cling to can hinder the work God wants to do. For sweeping revival to come, we need to lay aside everything that binds us (Heb. 12:1) and tear down everything that sets itself up against the knowledge of God (2 Cor. 10:5).

Like David, ask God to search your heart and point out anything that offends Him (Ps. 139:23-24). Ask Holy Spirit to correct errors of belief and seek the whole counsel of God's Word. Then deal with issues swiftly so revival can come swiftly too!

Dr.

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