A Tale of Two Temples: Worship in 1-2 Kings

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“Come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.
For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand.”
Psalm 95:6-7

The scroll of 1-2 Kings was not just history, but history written by the hand of a prophet. Nearly every chapter in 1-2 Kings contains a prophecy given, a prophecy fulfilled, or the description of the ministry of a prophet. The books of 1-2 Kings form the historical framework into which most of the writing prophets fit. While the role of the prophet is often in view, the underlying story of 1-2 Kings is a history of worship during the kingdom period that points to the importance of purity in worship and morality, as well as the regular need for revival.

It is a tale of two temples: the temple of the LORD built by Solomon, and the temple of the golden calf built by Jeroboam. Both temples were built in 1 Kings and then destroyed in 2 Kings. Along the way, Jeremiah, the traditional author, described five of the seven great revivals of the Old Testament. The prophet participated in the greatest of these revivals in the days of the young King Josiah. Josiah was prophesied by name in 1 Kings 13 long before his birth, and long before the reforms he carried out as recorded in 2 Kings during the life and ministry of Jeremiah.

AN OVERVIEW OF 1-2 KINGS

From the death of King David and ascension of Solomon to the fall of the Southern Kingdom in 586 B.C., the author presents the Kingdom of Israel fracturing in relation to the prophetic word in Deuteronomy 17:14-20 (see 1 Kings 10:1-25, wealth; 10:26-29, horses; 11:1-3, wives; and 1 Kings 11:9-13). Of 1-2 Kings, Paul R. House wrote, “These books boldly state that history and theology are inseparable. History gives theology a context, while theology gives history meaning.”

This history was written by a prophet and focused on the ministry of prophets who called the people to single-hearted devotion and worship of the Lord—and who warned them of judgment if they departed from the Lord. Rabbi Israel Slotki wrote:

The account of the rise and fall of Solomon drives home in an impressive manner the lesson that so long as a man walks in the path of righteousness all is well with him; but no sooner does he deviate therefrom than he becomes subject to Divine retribution. This is true of a king as well as of a common man. The sinfulness of idolatry in all its forms, the duty of wholehearted devotion to the laws of God, the maintenance of His worship in purity and the restriction of the sacrificial ritual to the central sanctuary in Jerusalem are fully illustrated; and, as with the individual, a people’s obedience to God is rewarded by national security and prosperity while disobedience is punished by national calamity.

The rabbi’s observations, though written in the mid-twentieth century, are certainly relevant today. One of the reasons history should be studied is to avoid making the same mistakes of the past. After the fracturing of the Kingdom of Israel, God sent revival at intervals over centuries.
When the nation experienced revival, the people received deliverance. Without the consuming fire of revival, the destroying fire of judgment fell. This message is timeless.

**Worship as Prescribed by God at Jerusalem**

The approach to God must be prescribed by God. The Law was the people’s schoolmaster to bring them to the gate of the tabernacle in the days of Moses, just as it is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ who was pictured in the Tabernacle. Centuries before David made Jerusalem his capital, the LORD spoke prophetically through Moses of the future temple site at Jerusalem:

Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the LORD (Deuteronomy 12:11).

Ultimately, the exact spot was marked in the time of David by two witnesses: the angel of the LORD and Gad the seer (prophet). The chronicler wrote, “Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up, and set up an altar unto the LORD in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite” (1 Chronicles 21:18). God ordained the worship at Jerusalem – from the temple being built (2 Samuel 7, 1 Chronicles 21:18), to the composition of the priesthood that would serve (Deuteronomy 21:5, Numbers 17:8), to the festivals to be celebrated (Exodus 23:14-17, Deuteronomy 16:16).

King Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the temple at Jerusalem (1 Kings 8 and 2 Chronicles 6) was marked by seven conditional structures that contain both protasis and apodosis (If… then hear from heaven):

1. Petition regarding supernatural justice in response to prayer (1 Kings 8:31-32).
2. Petition regarding national sin and defeat in warfare (1 Kings 8:33-34).
3. Petition regarding national sin and drought (1 Kings 8:35-36).
4. Petition regarding individual and/or national repentance (1 Kings 8:37-40).
5. Petition regarding the gentile who prays toward the Temple (1 Kings 8:41-43).
6. Petition regarding the prayers of soldiers from a distant battlefield (1 Kings 8:44-45).
7. Petition regarding national sin, captivity, and the prayer of captives (1 Kings 8:46-51).

In immediate response to this prayer, the fire of God fell from heaven (cf. 2 Chronicles 7:1 and Leviticus 9:23-24) receiving the sacrifices and starting the fire for Temple worship (used for the sacrifices, burning incense, and lighting the lamps). As the cloud of glory moved past the holy of holies, beyond the veil, it was visible at the door of the holy place, thus providing an excellent example of the filling of the Holy Spirit.

The private response that God gave to Solomon provides the prescription for revival. The LORD appeared to Solomon by night (1 Kings 9:1-9 and 2 Chronicles 7:12-22) and answered Solomon’s earlier prayer with the words so familiar to believers who study revival (2 Chronicles 7:12-14):

And the LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice. If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people;

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.
Thus, the worship of the LORD at Jerusalem was linked to the need for revival from the foundation of the temple at Jerusalem. The LORD’s response was a call to turn from the sins of pride, prayerlessness, self-sufficiency, apathy, idolatry, and the toleration of every other wicked way. Without such genuine humility and repentance there would be no revival—and no deliverance.

**Worship as Counterfeited by Jeroboam at Bethel**

On the heels of the account of the dedication of the temple at Jerusalem is the story of the dedication of the temple of the golden calf by Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin. As the kingdom divided upon the death of Solomon, Jeroboam took the northern ten tribes, but he began to feel insecure as the Passover approached. The threat was in remembering. Jeroboam’s reflections are recorded in Scripture:

> And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah (1 Kings 12:26-27).

After acknowledging the need for revival, the first step for revival is to remember. The memorial supper of Passover was providentially designed for just such remembrance. The LORD spoke through Moses and said, “And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever” (Exodus 12:14).

The apostasy began in a counterfeit of Passover. Jeroboam devised a bigger, better feast one month after Passover to occur at Bethel in dedication of the golden calves. Perhaps even more surprising and sad was that it was not even original. Such a golden calf was ground to powder at the foot of Sinai. This worship was not ordained by God, but devised by man:

> Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi. And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made; and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense (1 Kings 12:28-33).

One of the earliest Baptist confessions demonstrates an understanding of such apostasies of the past:

Chapter 22: Of Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day

The light of nature shews that there is a God, who hath lordship and sovereignty over all; is just, good and doth good unto all; and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served, with all the heart and all the soul, and with all the might. **But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God, is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the**
imagination and devices of men, nor the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representations, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures (Jeremiah 10:7; Mark 12:33; Deuteronomy 12:32; Exodus 20:4-6). 4

Five of the Seven Great Old Testament Revivals

Following the prescription for revival that God gave to Solomon by night (2 Chronicles 7:14), Scripture chronicles seven great Old Testament revivals. Five of the seven were recorded in the pages of 1-2 Kings:

2. Revival in the days of Elijah/Elishah (1 Kings 18, 2 Chronicles 21:12).
3. Revival in the days of Jehoiada/Jehoash (2 Kings 11-12, 2 Chronicles 23-24).
4. Revival in the days of Isaiah/Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:4-7, 2 Chronicles 29:31).
5. Revival in the days of Josiah/Jeremiah (2 Kings 22-23, 2 Chronicles 34-35).
6. Revival in the days of Zerubbabel/Joshua (Ezra 5).
7. Revival in the days of Ezra/Nehemiah.

Just as the Passover was replaced in the apostasy of Jeroboam in the North, the Passover returns to a renewed significance in the South during the revivals of Hezekiah and Josiah. The revival and subsequent keeping of Passover in the time of Hezekiah was marked by great joy. The chronicler records, "So there was great joy in Jerusalem: for since the time of Solomon the son of David, King of Israel, there was not the like in Jerusalem" (2 Chronicles 30:26). In like fashion, revival in the days of Josiah was marked by a return to the keeping of the Passover unlike any of the past observances:

And there was no Passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a Passover as Josiah kept, and the priests, and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 35:18).

Revival and Deliverance

One of the consistent patterns in 1-2 Kings was that of revival and deliverance. The examples of deliverance that followed revival include the following:

In the days of Asa vs. Kush (896 BC, Zerah of Kush, one million man army, 2 Chronicles 14:9).
In the days of Jehoshaphat vs. Coalition of Moab, Ammon, and Edom (~855 BC).
In the days of Hezekiah vs. Assyria (701 BC, the Invasion of Sennacherib).

However, where there was no revival, there was no deliverance:

In the days of Rehoboam vs. Egypt (931 BC, Invasion of Sheshonq, Sack of Jerusalem).
In the days of Jehoram vs. Arabia and Philistia (~845 BC, 2 Chronicles 21:16-17).
In the days of Ahaz vs. Aram and Israel (~732 BC, 2 Chronicles 28).
In the days of Hoshea vs. Assyria (722 BC, Invasion of Sargon, Destruction of Samaria). The Coming of Nebuchadnezzar (586 BC).

In the days of Hoshea, King of Israel, the Assyrians came and destroyed Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The prayers of Bethel did not avail them. Amos warned of the
fire of God's judgment upon Israel, saying, “Seek the LORD, and ye shall live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it, and there be none to quench it in Bethel” (Amos 5:6).

During the revival in the days of Josiah, the temple and altar of the golden calf were destroyed. In his zeal to stamp out idolatry in the land, Josiah turned north after his reforms in Judah:

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 broke down, and burned the high place, and stamped it small to powder, and burned the grove. And as Josiah turned himself, he spied the sepulchers that were there in the mount, and sent, and took the bones out of the sepulchers, and burned them upon the altar, and polluted it, according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words (2 Kings 23:15-16).

The revival in the days of Josiah waned after his death, and the people returned to the ways of Manasseh and Amon. The LORD warned Josiah through the prophetess Huldah. Long before, God had warned Solomon prophetically about what the result would be of such apostasy:

And if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments: Then will I establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel forever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel. But if ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them: Then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all people: And at this house, which is high, every one that passeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss; and they shall say, Why hath the LORD done thus unto this land, and to this house? And they shall answer, Because they forsook the LORD their God, who brought forth their father's out of the land of Egypt, and have taken hold upon other gods, and have worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath the LORD brought up on them all this evil (1 Kings 9:4-9).

Of the city, Jeremiah would lament, “How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people!” (Jeremiah 1:1). Of the sanctuary, Jeremiah would lament, "How is the gold become dim! How is the most fine gold changed! The stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street" (Lamentations 4:1). Of his personal sorrow as onlookers passed by, he wrote: “Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger” (Lamentations 1:12).

APPLICATIONS FROM THE STUDY OF 1-2 KINGS

Worship and priorities

“Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever”

*Westminster Shorter Catechism*

All of our service should flow out of our worship of God. Worship is the crystal clear fountain of service. Evangelism, missions, Bible study, and service of all kinds should find their source in the overflow of worship. If worship is flawed, then everything else in life is affected.
In the preface to his book, *Worship: The Ultimate Priority*, John MacArthur says “Of all the books I have written over the years, this one holds the record for being continuously in print longer than any other.” When it comes to priorities, MacArthur holds up worship as the “ultimate priority.” MacArthur continued: “We have many activities and little worship. We are big on ministry and small on adoration. We are disastrously pragmatic... We are too many Marthas and too few Marys.”

Believers are temples of the LORD. Worship is the constant activity of a temple. From ceaseless prayer ascending like incense to God, to singing his praises in our hearts, to meditations on His Word, to guarding the gates of the temple of our hearts—worship should be the ultimate priority for our lives.

For believers who are temples of the living God, worship should encompass all of life. Daniel I. Block proposed a definition of biblical worship: “True worship involves reverential human acts of submission and homage before the divine Sovereign in response to his gracious revelation of himself and in accord with his will.”

Warren Wiersbe offered another excellent working definition of worship:

Worship is the believer’s response of all that he is—mind, emotions, will, and body—to all that God is and says and does. This response has its mystical side in subjective experience, and its practical side in objective obedience to God’s revealed truth. It is a loving response that is balanced by the fear of the Lord, and it is a deepening response as the believer comes to know God better.

The *Shema* encompasses all of these reflections, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: and thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deuteronomy 6:4-5).

**Worship, Idolatry and Immorality**

God does not tolerate rivals. He alone is to be worshipped. The original sin of the serpent, and of Adam and Eve, was idolatry. This condition was the reason for the first commandment. Satan thought he was equal to or greater than God. He put forward this very temptation to Eve, “You will be like God...” In the third temptation of the Lord Jesus, Satan tempted Him to "fall down and worship" him (Matthew 4:8-10, Luke 4:5-8).

Worship and morality have a relationship that must not be treated as separate, distant, or compartmentalized. If one’s worship is false, one’s morality will follow suit. If one’s morality falters, it will affect worship – always.

The Apostle Paul described the moral fall of the ancient world related to its descent into idolatry:

Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. (Romans 1:22-27).
In like fashion, 1-2 Kings traces the reoccurrence of homosexuality at the moral low points between revivals. Examples of this include the following:

And there were also sodomites in the land: and they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel (1 Kings 14:24).

And he took away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made (1 Kings 15:12).

And the remnant of the sodomites, which remained in the days of his father Asa, he took out of the land (1 Kings 22:46).

And he brake down the houses of the sodomites, that were by the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the grove (2 Kings 23:7).

Asa endeavored to deal with this problem (1 Kings 15:12), and Jehoshaphat routed them out (1 Kings 22:46). Subsequent corruptions opened the way for the return of this sin, and Josiah had to break down the houses of the sodomites which were actually "in the house of the Lord" (2 Kings 23:7).

Just as yesterday's idolatry led to immorality, so today's images are also related to immorality. These images are carved with light. They are .jpg, .gif, and many other formats. They has been the driving force of the World Wide Web from its early days. Idolatry and immorality walk hand in hand. Yesterday’s fertility cult is today’s online pornography. No wonder this generation is in such need of revival—of a cleansing movement affecting morality that would return vitality to worship.

**Worship, Music, and Unity**

The psalmist wrote that the LORD dwells in the praises of His people (Psalm 22:3). In the dedication of the Temple of the LORD in Solomon’s time, the people sang in unison:

It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers _were as one_, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the LORD; so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God (2 Chronicles 5:13-14).

This psalm was written long before the “in one accord” chorus of the book of Acts. Over and over in the book of Acts, Luke wrote about the church’s supernatural unity by the Spirit and how it was pleasing to the Lord. In revival, music should be guided by principles of reverence and of love—for all ages. The young should show respect and honor to their elders and have patience if hymns are not their favorite. The older members should love the younger members and allow for music that is also a blessing to their worship experience. Humility and love are marks of unity brought about through the work of the Holy Spirit. The only audience that should ultimately matter to the assembly is the Lord Himself.

**Worship, Revival, Passover, and the Lord’s Supper**
“Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?”
(Psalms 85:6)

Prayer, singing, giving, sacrifice, proclamation of the Word, and living response to the Word are some of the facets to the life-opera of worship. Yet as these facets make their contribution daily to the melody, there has always been the critical need for the crescendo of God-sent revival. While worship flows like the regular rhythm of life, the crescendos of revival sweep up the believer as love for God, zeal for His Word, and the desire to do His will consume the revived like holy fire.

Today, revivals—even scheduled revivals—are increasingly rare. Real revival seems even rarer still. Perhaps part of the reason is that the first step toward revival is to admit the need for it.

What real revival is not:
- It is not for the exaltation of man.
- It is not self-generated.
- It is not learned behavior.
- It is not zealous legalism.
- It is not pure emotionalism.
- It does not call a believer to turn off the mind.
- It is not something that comes just because it is scheduled on a calendar.
- It is not something that is confined to a building or dependent on some minister’s presence.
- It is not something that results in confusion or bizarre behavior.
- In counterfeit revival, false manifestations produce only excitement and wonder without a mighty conviction of sin and turning to God.
- In counterfeit revival, there is often a focus on physical healing rather than on the Gospel of Christ.
- Real revival does not result in new revelation.

What real revival is:
- Revival is a work of God’s Holy Spirit illuminating, rebuking, and burning away the dross of transgression, while bringing back the first-love glory to Christian lives that have been tarnished by sin. As God shines His face upon His children, sin retreats, and they are changed further from glory to glory (Psalm 80).
- The fruit of real revival is the fruit of the Holy Spirit (“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” Galatians 5:22-23).
- Real revival comes from God and, by its fruit, reflects His holy nature.
- Real revival, while experiential in nature, conforms to God’s Word as zeal is channeled to God’s glory.
- Real revival results in the anointed preaching and sharing of the Gospel of Christ.
- It is a work of God’s Spirit like a fire that often begins in the heart of one humbled, praying soul.
- Self-sufficiency is abandoned in the light of the Spirit’s revelation of spiritual need.
- The complacent are jolted by God’s Spirit into a realization of spiritual need.
- Through preaching and the movement of the Holy Spirit, the sins of the day tolerated by God’s children are exposed by His Spirit and His Word.
- A mighty conviction of sin begins to dawn with the realization of a great need for forgiveness.
- This comprehension is followed by a tidal wave of confession to God and a flood of deep, cleansing grace.
Idols are cast out of the heart as the shadows disperse in the light of God’s glory.

A hunger for God and His Word grows in intensity as the experience of worship deepens.

Biblical, doctrinal truth is embraced and cherished.

Worldly living loses its appeal, paling in the light of the glory of God.

Toleration of sin is abandoned, and the desire for holy living is consuming.

Love for brothers and sisters in the faith grows stronger.

Christian obedience is unhindered by old besetting sins in the lives of individuals.

As revival fire spreads through the church, backslidden Christians are brought to repentance.

As revival fire spreads through the church, damaged relationships between Christians are restored, marriages are healed, families are strengthened, and family altars are renewed.

As revival fire spreads through the church, the prayer lives of church members increase greatly, and supplication is made for lost sinners.

As revival fire spreads through the church, witnessing to the lost at home and abroad becomes the passion of the saved, and many come to Christ.

The joy that was experienced in the days of Hezekiah and Josiah is surpassed in a Christian fellowship that experiences real revival. The Old Testament saints remembered their deliverance through the memorial supper of Passover. We celebrate the meal that was born out of the Passover in remembrance of Jesus’ sufferings and our deliverance through His sacrifice.

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1Baba Bathra, 15a provides the oldest tradition that, “Jeremiah wrote the book which bears his name, the Book of Kings, and Lamentations.”
2Paul R. House, 1, 2 Kings, in the New American Commentary series, 8 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman) 73.
4London Baptist Confession of Faith, 1689.
6MacArthur, Worship: the Ultimate Priority, 51.