

Appeasing Molech

Call to Worship: Psalm 127

1st Scripture: 2 Kings 22

2nd Scripture: 2 Kings 23:1-25

Hymn #5 (supp)- *I Sing the Mighty Power of God*

Hymn #145- *Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus*

Hymn #667- *To God be the Glory*

Introduction:

Beyond the shadow of any doubt, Josiah was one of the greatest kings to ever sit on the throne of Judah. Considering that he inherited the throne when he was only eight years old, because of the wicked acts of his father, Amon, whose sin limited his own reign to two years (before he was murdered), and considering that his grandfather was Manasseh, who had committed some of the worst atrocities in Israel's history, all of which, Josiah had to clean up, it is profound to read that Josiah had walked faithfully before God, and with all of his heart.

Josiah was a reformer, in the truest sense of the word. The northern kingdom of Israel had already gone into exile, long before Josiah was even born. In accordance with God's prophetically expressed judgment against Israel (because of their utter idolatry and rebellion) the Assyrians took the Israelites captive and wrenched them out of their land. And Judah, the southern kingdom, had committed every heinous, idolatrous practice under the sun, having idols of all kinds set up everywhere (even throughout the temple). And all of this, Josiah had cleaned up, breaking apart, burning and defiling idols all throughout both kingdoms.

Needless to say, one of the gross and heinous idolatrous practices, in which the people of God had become entrenched, and of which, Josiah had put away through his reforms, was the practice of causing their children to pass through the fire, as an offering to Molech.

We read of Manasseh in 2 Kings 21:6, "Also he made his son pass through the fire..." And then in 2 Kings 23:10, we are told that Josiah had, "defiled Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Sons of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire of Molech." And so, here we are told of a special place in the Valley of the Sons of Hinnom, which was actually designated as a place where Israelites could go and pass their sons or daughters through the fire, offering their infants and young children as sacrifices to Molech. And Josiah

had defiled this place. He destroyed the altar there, such that it was no longer able to be used for such a heinous, idolatrous practice.

This morning, brethren, I want to look at this idolatrous practice of passing children through the fire, so as to relate it to that which goes on at our modern day "Topheth," *Planned Parenthood* (and the abortion mills), which make it private, convenient and acceptable for people to murder their unborn today, likewise to appease a modern day Molech. And to this end, we will find, as in the case with all outward sins, that idolatry is at the root of abortion.

I. Appeasing Molech

Let's consider then, the worship of Molech, which involved causing one's son or daughter to pass through the fire:

1) The earliest Biblical reference to Molech is found in Leviticus 18:21. There, we are told, "And you shall not let any of your descendants pass through the fire to Molech, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the Lord." Now, the interesting thing about this is that this command is inserted right in the context of sins, which are associated with various forms of sexual immorality (incest 6-18; sexual relations during a woman's menstrual cycle 19; adultery 20; homosexuality 22 and bestiality 23). And then, verses 24-29 state,

"Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you. For the land is defiled; therefore I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants. You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations, either any of your own nation or any stranger who dwells among you (for all these abominations the men of the land have done, who were before you, and thus the land is defiled), lest the land vomit you out also when you defile it, as it vomited out the nations that were before you. For whoever commits any of these abominations, the persons who commit them shall be cut off from among their people."

And so, in some way, Molech was associated with some form of sexual rituals, with the addition of child sacrifice. [Also associated with witchcraft in Deut. 18:9-14; used as a means of inquiring from a god]

2) Naturally, as we might expect, the punishment for offering your child to Molech was death. [Read Leviticus 20:1-5]

So serious was this offense, that one was stoned to death by his countrymen, upon committing it. It was to be abhorred by all of the people. And furthermore, it is again noted as a sin which defiled the sanctuary of God and profaned His glorious Name! We can think of this as the very opposite of the very purpose for which all of mankind was created, and for which Israel was separated as a holy nation, namely, to glorify the Name of God. Naturally, this idolatrous practice grossly profaned the Name of God and cast defilement upon the sanctuary, the very place where God's mercy found sinners. It contradicted the whole design, purpose and picture of grace and mercy, found in the temple (which was ultimately a shadow, pointing to the coming sacrifice of Christ), by presenting a murderous, ungodly offering of one's own child, and that in the context of sexual licentiousness.

In all of this, it sought to appease a false god, seeking various blessings in this life, turning the offerer away from the true and living God, who offered the greatest blessings of forgiveness and eternal life (let alone blessings upon the land and financial prosperity), to all who humbly repented of their sins and sought Him in truth, by His gracious providential means. It sought blessing from a so-called god, by the use of heinously, unlawful means, turning the offerer completely away from the means of true blessing, offered freely in Christ.

3) We read in 1 Kings 11, that sadly, Solomon was the one who had begun to set up a high place that was used for Molech worship [Read 1 Kings 11:1-8].

Here, we find Molech was a god, who was associated with the Ammonites, and some of Solomon's foreign wives influenced him in such a way that he set up this high place for Molech.

4) It is also worth noting that the Valley of Hinnom, which was the place where Josiah destroyed the Molech idol, was later the place where the Israelites would continually burn their garbage, along with the bodies of executed criminals. It became known as "Gehenna," that place of continual burning, which Jesus used as an illustration to describe hell (Matt. 10:28).

5) We note the way in which the Molech idol was set up and used by the offerers. If you "Google" Molech, you'll find many pictures of what Molech would have looked like. And though, some of those pictures contain some differences, they all reveal a large brass or metal

statue, generally with a man's torso and a bull-like head. And the abdomen has a large hole in it, within which a fire would be lit.

Rabbinical tradition states that Molech's arms would be extended forward, and they would be greatly heated by this fire. And then, the offerer would place his son/daughter onto the hands of Molech, where the child would burn to death. Some say that the arms were set up, sort of like a ramp, so that the infant would roll down the arms and into the belly of Molech, where he would burn alive. Finally, it is documented that the surrounding peoples (perhaps the priests) would bang drums once the child was placed into the fire, so that the child's cries would be drowned out by the drums, keeping the father from hearing the cries, which could afflict his heart with conviction and sorrow for his child. In short, it was a way of cloaking the conscience from all that was actually taking place.

And so, this is a short list of the general description of Molech worship, which took place, at least, throughout the history of the Old Testament. All in all, the offerer was seeking to appease Molech, for the purpose of some gain or blessing; everything from seeking guidance, to securing a blessing (agricultural/rain and/or financial), to feeding the gluttonous desires of Molech, to atoning for personal sins...etc.

In what way then, can this relate to the modern day practice of abortion?

II. Modern Day Abortion

When considering modern day abortion, it is obviously important to consider the question: "Why do people murder their unborn children?" Obviously, the outward actions of man, have inward motives that drive these outward actions. We would all certainly agree, that generally speaking, women don't just walk through life and somehow haphazardly wind up at an abortion mill, where a baby is murdered inside of them and wrenched out of them. No, obviously there is premeditated thought that leads to the plan of abortion. That's why the most famous, government funded murder mill, which is supported, in part, by our hard earned tax dollars, happens to be named, "Planned Parenthood." In reality, of course, it should be called, "If

you did not plan on having a baby, and you happen to get pregnant, then come here and we'll murder him for you," but that name is too long and too honest.

Needless to say, abortion is planned. Well, what is it that drives the planning? Let's list a few realistic reasons, for why people murder their unborn children. But first, listen to a few noteworthy statistics, which will help us do this:

1- "In 2011, unmarried women accounted for 85.5% of all abortions (CDC)." Now, not to discount the significance of the 14.5%, but 85.5% is a pretty telling number, isn't it? [By the way, note as well that, "One percent (of aborting women) **reported** that they were the survivors of rape (NAF)."]

2- According to the *National Abortion Federation (NAF)*, "Women living with a partner to whom they are not married account for 25% of abortions but *are* only about 10% of women in the population (NAF)."

And so, obviously, based on these statistics alone, we can begin by affirming the obvious:

1) In the great majority of abortion cases, abortion is used as a means of dealing with a consequence of fornication or premarital sexual relations. People are naturally driven by their lusts. They participate in immoral sexual relations. Women get pregnant out of wedlock. And the baby is discarded as an inconvenient consequence of fulfilling lustful desires.

2) "On average, women give at least 3 reasons for choosing abortion: 3/4 say that having a baby would interfere with work, school or other responsibilities; about 3/4 say they cannot afford a child; and 1/2 say they do not want to be a single parent or are having problems with their husband or partner (*Guttmacher Institute, AGI*)."

Clearly, based on these statistics, which would include all women, abortion is chosen as a matter of convenience (raising a child gets in the way of the career, not enough \$, don't want to be a single parent...etc.), which seems then to be the common denominator for virtually all abortions.

[Note as well, 37% of women obtaining abortions identify themselves as Protestant, and 28% identify themselves as Catholic (AGI). Also, at current rates, nearly one-third of American women will have an abortion (AGI)].

Now, as we seek to bring this into the context of Molech, let's pull back the curtain and get to the heart of abortion, from a biblical standpoint. We can do this by breaking down our two conclusions into two general principles:

1) Abortion, as a consequence of sexual promiscuity/immorality, leading to murdering an unwanted pregnancy, stems from mankind refusing to submit to God's perfect design for sexual relations, within the context of a marital union. We mar God's design for sexual relations, serving a different god (a Molech of self), pursuing the lusts that are inherent to our fallen nature. And then, when a beautiful life is produced by that sexual union (outside of wedlock), the child is murdered, because he has no true, spiritual union, upon which he can secure his life. He is a living, breathing product of a defiled union. And he is selfishly murdered because of that.

2) In a more general sense, once again, in seeking to appease the god (Molech) of self, rather than trusting God; rather than subjecting oneself to God, abortion is a tool for destroying an unwanted life that happens to get in the way of personal convenience. I've mapped out my life in this way. I want to live my way. I am my own god. This inconvenience interferes with my plan. If I have this child, he will affect MY schooling, MY career, MY finances, MY life. Thus saith, "Me." I would rather take away a life, than change mine. I will pass him through the fire, and burn him in the belly of my own fleshly appetites.

And so, all in all, abortion, like passing one's child through the fire of old, is a means of appeasing a false god, rather than seeking and trusting the true and living God. At its root is the gross sin of idolatry. It is a means of seeking blessing in this life, while refusing to deal with personal sin and fleeing to the salvation provided by God, in Jesus Christ.

And then, to further silence the conscience, because the conscience will seek to sound the alarm when a woman considers the option of abortion, like the drumming priests, who seek to drown out the cries of the child as it burns in the fire, there are ways of numbing the consciences of those who proceed to murder their unborn children. They are told that the child is not really a life until he exits the womb. They are encouraged by bloodthirsty, money hungry professionals, who have a vested financial interest in murdering infants, to pursue the easier route of being able to live life without the burden of raising a child. Their idols are polished and groomed and the

woman's conscience is stroked unto seeing her decision to abort, as something that is perfectly ethical and moral. They use words (comfort labels) like embryo (early on) and fetus (after two months), both of which imply life, but sound much less troubling than "baby" or "life." All in all, the drums are beat all around the individual, enabling them to make their sacrifice while closing their eyes and ears to the sounds of conviction brought about by their own conscience.

Again, at the root of it all, is gross idolatry; a robbing of God of His right as God, and a sacrificing to the god of self-pleasure. [Also, a covering up of the sin of promiscuity in many cases, rather than dealing with it responsibly before God]

III. What Can We Do?

All of this being the case, brethren; recognizing that idolatry of self is at the heart of this gross and heinous sin of abortion, one question then remains. How do we deal with this growing epidemic that has invaded our country? How do we, as a church, and as individuals, stand against the tide of idolatry that has swept across this nation, unto the demise of our unborn; well over 50 million since Roe Vs. Wade, and over 1 million per year still being murdered?

Ultimately, there is only one way. The idol of self must be replaced with the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, the answer to this problem is the answer to the same problem of sin, which crosses all moral barriers. We preach the Gospel! We expose the sin for what it is (murder) and we reveal the necessary consequences of that sin (judgment by a holy God), and we present Christ as the only hope of forgiveness, change of heart and eternal life! We recognize that only the new birth changes the direction of one's life (from the inside, out) to conform to God's plan. The Molech of "me" and "self" is destroyed and replaced by the Son of God. We present a Christ, who was aborted by His own Father, to deliver us from our wicked ways, leading us to godly living, which includes the preservation and sanctity of all life.

Isn't that what Josiah did? They read the Book of the Law, which was tucked away in the temple for years. They were convicted. They humbled themselves, repented and sought grace. And they cleaned house. And what was the feast that they re-instituted and celebrated with a fervency that had not been done since the days of the judges? [Read vs. 21-22].

Anything significant about that particular feast? What did it mean to the Israelites when they had come out of Egypt? And what does it mean to the Christians as they reflect back on what had happened at a particular Passover celebration, early in the first century? It is the Gospel, isn't it?

[An appeal to the unbeliever...]

Amen!!!

The Lord's Supper!