

Judges 08-03-21a

This is Friday, the 21st of March, 2008. It is a day traditionally known as Good Friday. I think Good Thursday would have been appropriate to celebrate yesterday, but we continue tonight our study in the book of Judges.

We're in Chapter 6. We'll resume at verse 11 this evening. We'll take just a moment at the outset to give ourselves a chance to focus our concentration, to cultivate the ministry of God's Holy Spirit, and to thank God for this portion of His Word of which we are about to partake. Shall we pray? Father, it is a great comfort to know with certainty that the way of life to which we have been called is not one that is lived by our strength or by our wisdom, but it is fully enabled and empowered by Your strength and by Your wisdom.

We find those coming into our souls and into our lives through Your Word and through Your Spirit. We're grateful for the gift of the Holy Spirit given to us by the Lord Jesus Christ from You. We thank You for the truth of Your Word and the preservation of it, the availability of so many helps and resources to aid our understanding.

We live in a time of great peace and prosperity, relatively speaking. Looking down through history, there has never been a time when it was easier to be a good student of Your Word than right now. We know that there is a purpose in this, that it is a part of Your overall plan, and we ask Your blessing on us this evening as we seek to improve our understanding as well as our application of the truth of Your Word through this study in the book of Judges.

We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Judges chapter 6, we see Gideon as a member of the tribe of Manasseh.

You may remember that Manasseh has its tribal area split across the Jordan. Some of them are east of the Jordan on the bad side. Some of them are on the west side.

The clan to which Gideon belongs and this town of Ophrah that belongs to his father are located on the western side. We know this as we continue through the story. We'll see that the call for soldiers and so on takes place.

All of this is on the west side of the Jordan. I find it interesting that when God raised up a deliverer, He did it in the land proper. Even when it was someone from the tribe of Manasseh, He did not go to Gilead to raise up this deliverer.

It is someone who lives in the land proper, someone whose family is across the Jordan on the right side. Israel was brought very low because of Midian. They cried out to the Lord.

This is typically the sign of a change of mind, of at least realization that the problem is severe and that God is the answer. When they cried out to the Lord on account of Midian, the Lord sent a prophet in verse 8. Something struck me as I was reviewing the structure of this episode,

this passage that I would like to draw to your attention as we go through it. It begins, the revelation from God, the intervention of God into this distressing situation begins with a message from the prophet.

We saw the details of that in the last week or two. Then in verse 11, the angel of the Lord, the Malak of Adonai, appeared in verse 11. And the Malak Yahweh, it is in the text, but the scribes or the scholars of the law in Israel would never say Yahweh.

They would always vocalize this as Adonai. So they would say Malak Adonai sat under the tree and so forth. But this is the angel of the Lord.

We tend to think of angel in terms of wings and heavenly visage, obvious supernatural presence. But in the Old Testament, the angel of the Lord, appearances are generally not of a remarkable nature. There may even initially be some doubt until the message begins to be delivered as to who this person is.

Malak simply means messenger. And you would think, well, a messenger of the Lord could even be a human prophet in some cases. We notice as we go through this story that this is not the case.

The angel of the Lord proper is a heavenly visitor, but is entirely human in appearance. The same thing is true when the messengers come to visit Abraham. The same thing is true when the same individuals, two of them at least, go to visit Lot and so on.

They seem to be just well-dressed, well-constructed human visitors. They're not completely remarkable. They don't glow.

They don't have wings. They're not obviously supernatural. Until they begin to speak and deliver their message, then they are recognizable.

Now, Abraham seems to have noticed something about God and his two companions right away. But the angel of the Lord came and sat under the oak. And obviously this is in human form.

He's not hovering in mid-air. He's not flapping any wings. He has walked to this location.

Here's a shade being cast by a large, rather remarkable landmark sort of tree. And he has paused and has sat himself down. This implies that he has walked to this destination.

He didn't fly down and alight under the tree. There is nothing given to us that would suggest anything remarkable or supernatural about this arrival. It appears that he walked for some distance, arrives at the shade of this tree, and sits underneath it.

It says that he sat under the oak that was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite. The Abiezrites, this is one of the clans of the tribe of Manasseh. We know this from Joshua chapter 17.

When the lots were cast in allocating the land for the sons of Manasseh, the sons of Abiezer, and the sons of Helech, and the sons of Osriel, and the sons of Shechem, the sons of Hefer, the sons of Shemitah, these were the male descendants of Manasseh, the son of Joseph, according to their families. And what is interesting about this is that, at least it's interesting to me, is that in Joshua 17.2 it says that these were descendants of Manasseh, the son of Joseph, according to their families. And this is basically the root Shaphach.

S-H-A-P-H, or P-A-C-H. Shaphach, it has the comets in the middle there, it has a dot that indicates that's a hard P rather than a P-H sound. But it says there that these are the families, and Abiezer is one of these, what we would call, clans underneath Manasseh.

But as we're going to see, there is a connection here, and I'll talk about it more when we get to it. So he comes and he sits under the tree, and it is Ophrah, it is this city of Ophrah that belongs to Joash, who is one of these Abiezerites, one of these descendants, one of the members of the clans of Abiezer. So he owns this town, the town belongs to him.

And there is another Ophrah that's mentioned that's up in the tribe of Benjamin, it's mentioned when you start talking about boundaries and so on, but this is in the territory of Manasseh. And it says he's beating out wheat, we talked about this threshing idea, but as I went word by word through this this past week, it is also kind of an interesting thing to see that Gideon is actually not at the threshing stage yet. The first thing you have to do to process wheat that has been cut and brought to a particular location, in this case it's been brought to the wine press.

And what they would typically use for a wine press in the ancient world is depressions in the ground. They would dig out, or chip out of rock, these vats. And there would be an upper vat and a lower vat, and into the upper vat they would put the grapes.

And they would stomp the grapes, and there would be a channel that would allow the juice stomped out of the grapes to flow down to the lower vat. So when you get all finished mashing these grapes, the grape juice has flowed down to this lower vat, and the upper vat has the mashed up grape peels and any twigs and stuff that you wouldn't necessarily want in there. And they could take that stuff and do other things with it, but the grape juice itself would flow down.

So you have these depressions, and many times this would be undercover because you don't want evaporation to take place while you're trying to do this. Mediterranean can be hot during the grape harvesting season, and so they might put a cover or a shelter, or even build a temporary sort of building over this. And so Gideon has taken the wheat and has put it in these depressions, and what he's doing is beating it with a stick initially.

When the angel first comes up, you're still going to get a lot of this flying chaff and so on, but the first thing he has to do is separate the heads from the straw, and they would do this with a stick. And this was what the poor people did. If you go over to the book of Ruth, it talks about the same thing.

It says after she gleaned that grain out of the corners of Boaz Field, she took it and beat it with a stick, and this was the poor man's way of processing the wheat because they didn't have servants and great threshing floors and so on. They did smaller quantities, and the first stage of processing the wheat into something usable was to separate the heads from the stalks by beating it with a stick. And it's interesting because we will find out later on in the book that Gideon's actual given name is Jerubbaal.

Jerubbaal. And jeru is an old word form that has the idea of town or city, basically. Jerusalem, you know, it's the city of peace, shalom.

And Jerubbaal would be city of the Lord, so to speak, or city of Baal, depending. Probably city of Baal in this case, since we're going to find out later that Gideon's father is kind of big into the Baal cult. But Gideon has gotten a nickname, and the name Gideon means hacker or guy that beats on things.

That's what it means. And so he is sort of living up to his name as this scene opens because Gideon means the one who hacks or bangs on stuff. He's a hacker or a banger or a smacker or a smasher.

That's what Gideon means. One who is like Bam Bam, you know, in the Flintstones. That's what his nickname is.

And he has gotten this apparently because he's kind of an aggressive. When things don't give, he just starts beating on them. And so he's got this situation with the wheat and the Midianites and all that, so he just kind of suits him.

He's just beating this wheat, all the pieces with a stick, literally, in the wine press. And it says, in order to save it from the Midianites. And it actually means to keep it away.

It has the idea of something actually flying, being away or flying away. But idiomatically, it means to hide it or keep it from, to cause it to fly from the face of. And this is from the face, me-pe-ne.

You know, you talk about from the presence of the Lord or the face of the Lord. Well, this is me-pe-ne, which is from before the face of the Midianites, so that they can't see it, they don't observe it. That's what he's doing when the angel of the Lord.

And so then it says, the angel of the Lord. So the angel of the Lord comes and sits and observes for a while. He watches Gideon, perhaps through one side of this open shed or through the doorway or whatever it is.

But he watches Gideon, and he just sits there for a while and observes him. And he lets him continue beating his wheat. He doesn't rush right up and say, stop what you're doing.

Gideon continues beating this stuff out in the wine press. Then after a while, the angel of the

Lord appears to him, goes over and manifests himself. And we talked about this last time.

The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor. The Gibor Ha-Kahil. Gibor is a warrior, and Kahil means really strong, a mighty one of power.

And there's some speculation about what is being spoken of here. But you'll notice in your King James that you have a word in italics there. He says, the Lord is.

And the word is is in italics. Because what he literally says is, the Lord with you, O Gibor Ha-Kahil. And it is somewhat in doubt whether he's saying, the Lord be with you, or the Lord is with you.

Because there is no verb. The angel of the Lord appears and said to him, Yahweh Im Ata. Yahweh with you.

Mighty one of strength. Powerful warrior. And I would suggest that this, rather than is, should be be.

The Lord be with you. Sort of starting from this point. If the Lord was with him already, we would expect that there would be some history or some reason to say that the Lord is with him.

Every time you say goodbye, you're repeating an old English and middle English blessing. Because when you say goodbye, I love it when atheists say goodbye, because they don't even know what they're saying. It's from the old, God be with ye.

God be with ye. And it's been concatenated and smashed down into goodbye. But, God be with you is basically, you know, Paul McCartney wrote this song, Hello Goodbye.

You say hello, I say goodbye, and all that. Well, the angel starts out by saying goodbye. He comes in and says, goodbye, mighty man of valor.

Basically, God be with you. The Lord be with you, mighty man of valor. Because it is from this point forward that God is going to be with Gideon.

God has decided that he is going to work in and through. And remember, in the Old Testament, there is an enduing power of the Holy Spirit, through which God manifests his presence in and through individuals. Whether it's the tabernacle workman, a king, a prophet, and so on.

Or several of the judges. So, the Lord be with you, mighty man of valor. Gideon says, oh my Lord.

And, I didn't realize this, again, until I was going word by word. But, the word, oh, there, that's translated in verse 13. Gideon said to him, oh my Lord.

Well, in Hebrew, this is B. A hard B, and then I, or I-Y. And, it literally means, excuse me. Excuse me.

And, it is always followed by Adonai. And, it is used when someone comes into the presence of a king. And, it is sort of requesting leave to speak.

Many, many commentators. I've canvassed a bunch of commentaries just to see what they say about this passage. And, everybody says, well, initially, Gideon didn't know who this is.

But, this phrase, the first words out of Gideon's mouth tell you that he immediately knows that this is certainly someone out of the ordinary. Because, this is the form of address used before a king. It is always either used of God or a king in the scriptures.

And, it is, the closest equivalent in English is archaic now. But, you used to read, like in Shakespeare, and long ago, someone would begin addressing the king. And, you've got some trepidation.

You don't want to be tactless. You don't want to rush in where angels fear to tread. So, you say, I prithee, or I pray thee.

And, it's a short form of request. And, it basically means, excuse me, or if I may be allowed to speak, or by your leave, may I speak freely? You know, it's sort of a combination of a request and a formal courtesy to a vast superior that you are about to speak. And, you're recognizing your greatly inferior status.

And, they've smashed that down into a single round letter, O, here. But, this is very powerful in Hebrew. It is a recognition that this is a far senior individual to whom he is speaking.

And, I think Gideon knows right away that this is, when someone says, the Lord be with you, he's in Baal country. His daddy is a big, he's got a big sign in his front yard that says, Vote Baal. He's sponsoring a Baal worship site.

And so, for somebody to come up and say, Yahweh be with you, mighty man of valor. Nobody hears these words anymore. And, Gideon says, whoa, this guy is not from around here.

I think he's, and there must have been something about him that gave Gideon a clue. Because, he is extremely respectful. And, this little exclamation is a mark of great respect.

And, I crave permission to speak, in effect. So, then he says, you know, excuse me or pardon me if I may speak. But, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened? And, he's not being sarcastic and he's not being, I think he's being very respectful in his speech.

It's one of the reasons God chose Jerubbaal, chose Gideon for this mission. Because, of the men available in Israel, he's the closest to having a significant amount of faith. And, he knows he's talking to someone special.

Where are his miracles which our fathers told us about? And, you know, would you just ask these questions to a passing stranger, where are his miracles? I think Gideon says, hey, here's a chance to find out what's up. And, so he's asking these questions. And, it reminds us of what it

says over in Deuteronomy 31.17. God says, if the people become faithless and disobedient and discipline falls on them, my anger, it says in Deuteronomy 31.17, God says, my anger will be kindled against them in that day.

I will forsake them, I will hide my face from them. And, they will be consumed and many evils and troubles will come upon them, so that they will say in that day, is it not because our God is not among us, that these evils have come upon us? This is what the people ought to be concluding. Well, God is not among us anymore, that's why we're having all of these trials.

And, Gideon seems to be kind of not quite to that point yet. And, the rest of the people don't seem to be drawing that conclusion. It reminds me, when you look around in our society today, and you see these high teen pregnancy rates, high teen suicide rates, great violence in schools and in society in general, people shooting themselves and shooting each other, and all kinds of psychotic acts going on.

And, no one in the liberal, secular, humanist, materialist, godless, pagan, yellow journalistic world wants to acknowledge that it is the cultural shift and the abandoning of any sort of biblical morality or any biblically based ethic that is responsible for this. And, God is no longer among us. We have methodically expunged God from the classroom, from the public venues, from courtrooms, from public displays.

We're going to have happy holidays and winter seasonal greetings and so on, and taking Christ and God out of virtually everything. And, our society is plagued with all of these cancerous ills, and no one wants to attribute to the fact that God is no longer in our midst. There's a willful disbelief that that would have anything to do with it.

So, Gideon says, wasn't the Lord the one that brought us up from Egypt? Now He has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. Why do these things happen? God has forsaken us, but there is not an acknowledgement on Gideon's part that the nation has brought this forsaking on. Deuteronomy 31.17 gives the conditions under which God will forsake His own people.

We are not immune. We are not possessed of some sort of a get-out-of-jail-free card to where God will never leave us or forsake us. We have a little memory verse, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.

Take a look at the context. To whom does God speak these words? What are the conditions under which God will never leave you nor forsake? What are the conditions under which, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age. Who was Jesus speaking to when He said that? Was it the upwards of 500 or was it the 11? There are conditions under which God will maintain a presence.

We'll see it in the Gospel of John. Have His words and keep them. You love Him.

I and my Father will come and make our abode with that individual. There are others God

doesn't abide with. So, He says in verse 14, and this is kind of where we stopped last time.

The Lord turned to him and said, Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. And He is Gideon. He is the guy that beats on things.

He is going to take a stick to it. He is going to tear it down, tear it up, beat it to flinders, thresh it. He is also one to whom have been spoken the words, The Lord be with you.

And if God is with you, you have strength. And I think all of these things are sort of bound up in this statement. Go in this might of yours.

You have the might that you need. You've got the experience. You've got the attitude.

God would not be giving you this commission if you didn't have what it takes. This is a wonderful comfort for parents. You would not have the children you have.

You would not have the situation that you have, whether it's work-wise, relationship-wise, spouse-wise, family-wise, any-wise. Anything you can think of that's a big challenge in your life. You would not have it if God was not ready to say to you, Go in this might.

Go in this strength. You've got what it takes to accomplish this mission. Otherwise, God would not assign it.

Now, I am speaking, of course, of believers who are on the road, who are walking in the light. You can have challenges that you cannot face and cannot overcome, and they are going to overwhelm you and carry you down to the depths of the sea with weeds wrapped around your head like Jonah if you are disobeying the Lord. Think of the difference between Peter gazing at the Lord's face and Jonah down there at the gates of Sheol with his head wrapped in old nasty seaweed.

That's the difference between faith and disobedience. But assuming that we are those who are partaking of things that pertain to salvation, Paul says, I am convinced of better things of you, brethren, things that pertain to salvation. And if we are in that category, then everything works together for good.

And even if we are working through a hardship and we are having to beat our wheat with a stick, and this is kind of a great comedown because evidently Gideon's father's house was somewhat well-off. He is one of the more well-off people. He says, I am from a small family, but this is kind of like Moses saying, well, you know, who am I to lead the people of Israel? I mean, come on, Moses, who else in Israel has got the education you've got, the background you've got, raised in the palace of Egypt? But, you know, me thinkest thou protested too much when you say, oh, how can I lead this people? Well, it's the same thing with Gideon.

He says, I'm from the smallest house in Manasseh. Well, it may be small, but his father owns the entire city. He sponsors this Baal place of worship.

He's got some wherewithal. And later on he's going to tell us that Gideon takes ten servants to go do a chore. Well, ten servants? How poor can you be if you've got at least ten servants that you have at your beck and call? So this idea that he's from a small house is a little bit... So God says to him, go in this might of yours.

You shall save Israel. You will deliver Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you? In other words, how can you fail? Does God commission people and they just go and fall flat on their face and their mission is not accomplished? And there's always trends and fashions that come and go.

And in biblical interpretation, our particular, the last several decades, many decades actually, form criticism has been popular where let's find the commonalities in form. And in this case they say, well, there's a form where the divine call, there's a form for a divine call. God approaches and the person responds.

God commissions. The person says, oh, I'm not worthy. God reassures them.

They say, well, okay. And then he goes. And they have this whole back and forth.

I've never found comparing, for example, the call of Moses. You can find similar elements. God speaks to Moses and says, go deliver the people.

Moses says, oh, who am I? God says, look, what's the matter with you? He says, well, okay, fine. And then he goes. You can make comparisons like this.

I have never found that superimposing of a cookie cutter or a mold to be particularly helpful. This happens a lot in Psalms studies. Well, this is a psalm of individual lament.

And here are the elements of a psalm of individual lament. And you start and you say, well, but here's an element that's missing and here's an element that's added. And when you get all done, you haven't really learned anything.

So we could compare Gideon's call to the call of Moses or to the call of several other individuals in Scripture. But what I find interesting is this. As we move forward, he gets his call and it's reaffirmed.

And then he says, how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. One thing that's interesting in verse 15 to me is the word for clan here. Have you got your Hebrew text there, Matt? Can you see the word for clan? It's eleph, E-L-E-P-H.

We've talked about the flexibility of that term. It's often translated thousand, but here it's used for clan. And if you go back to the book of Numbers, and it talks about how the major representatives of each tribe came forward according to their, it's translated tribes over there.

And according to their divisions within the tribe. It's translated divisions over in Numbers. And it's the word eleph.

Well, you can't tell me that there was exactly 1,000 in each division of the tribe. So just as an aside, here is another use of the word eleph that tells us that it was a flexible term for a sizable group. But it isn't necessarily a numeric thousand.

Anyway, he says, My thousand is the weakest in Manasseh. In other words, my subdivision of the tribe is the least. And I am the least in my father's house.

The Lord said to him, Surely I will be with you. That was the greeting to begin with. The Lord be with you.

And it is affirmed here. It is reiterated. I will be with you.

You shall defeat the Midianites altogether, as if they were one man. So now he says, If I have found favor in your sight, show me a sign that it is you who talk with me. And we'll go back and look at this in detail.

You can see in verse 19, he's going to prepare this. This is actually a minkah. The word minkah is used here.

Let me prepare an offering kind of a thing. A minkah is more than just a gift. But it isn't always necessarily a ritual sacrifice.

It's kind of in the middle. And it's a flexible word as well. So the angel of the Lord, the messenger of the Lord, says in verse 17, I will wait until you come back.

Gideon went and prepares a goat, unleavened bread from an ephah of flour. He puts meat in a basket, put the broth in a pot, brought them under the cherubim tree, presented them. The angel or messenger of God said to him, Take the meat and the unleavened bread, lay them on this rock, pour out the broth.

And he did so. Then the angel of the Lord put out the end of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread. Fire rose out of the rock.

Fire rose out of the rock. Fire didn't come from heaven. Fire didn't come out of the staff.

You can see that little fire stick. It's like a flamethrower. And away it goes.

But interestingly, the fire comes out of the rock. Now in Moses' case, water came out of the rock. Salvific, healing, thirst-quenching, life-giving, water comes out of the rock.

In this case, you lay the meat on there, and fire comes out of the rock and consumes it. I suggest this to you in advance just so you can be musing on it. We'll come back to this.

But I want to move forward a little bit to make a point from something that's kind of in the larger structure of this passage. Now Gideon perceived that he was the angel of the Lord, and I think not for the first time. I think now Gideon knows for sure.

He was pretty sure before, and now he knows that he's the angel of the Lord. So Gideon said, For I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face. Now there's nothing in the law that says you're going to die if you see the Lord face to face, but a superstition had arisen in Israel that if you see the Lord face to face, you would die.

It never says that in any of the books of Moses. You can go from Genesis through Deuteronomy, and you don't find anything that says see God and die. But this had arisen, and lots of people are going to see the angel of the Lord.

Later on, Manoah is going to see him, and he thinks he's going to die also. I've seen the angel of the Lord face to face. The Lord said, Peace be with you.

Do not fear, you shall not die. So Gideon built an altar there to the Lord and called it, The Lord is Peace. And this is literally Yahweh Shalom.

To this day, it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. They're not real sure archaeologically of where this city is, but if they ever find it, there's a good chance that this pile of stones may still be there. It came to pass the same night that the Lord said to him, Take your father's young bull, the second bull of seven years old, tear down the altar of Baal that your father has, and cut down the wooden image that is beside it, and build an altar to the Lord your God.

On top of this rock, in the proper arrangement, take the second bull, offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the image, which you shall cut down. And we'll get into that story pretty soon. But, notice, it came to pass the same night that the Lord said to him.

It came to pass the same night the Lord said to him. Now, why didn't the angel deliver this message? The angel was already there talking to him. Why did the angel leave after he touches the meat on the rock, and it disappears in a puff of smoke and flame? And then that night, Gideon has a dream, he has a vision, and God speaks to him in the night.

So I ask myself, wouldn't it have been more efficient for the angel to say, You're going to deliver this, people, and now here's what I want you to do. And just give him the instructions on the spot. Any questions? But he doesn't do that.

Why the gap between the appearance of the angel of the Lord and the voice of the Lord in the night? Well, let me offer you kind of a thought on this. In this passage, in this chapter, and I think the division is a good one, natural, new story with Gideon and so on, but you go back up to the beginning of the chapter, what is the first communication from God that we get in this chapter? Verse 8. The Lord sent a prophet. Can you think of anybody else before this that's been called a prophet? From the time of Moses, Moses died, Joshua, Othniel, Aksav, you know, that whole story, and then you come down with Ehud and Shamgar and so on, Deborah.

This is kind of unique. This is one of the earliest references to a male prophet to the land of Israel, to the people of Israel. Isn't it? Can you think of anybody who had a prophetic ministry before this? He was a prophet, but not to Israel.

He didn't do any ministry to Israel proper. But in terms of showing up in Israel, this unnamed prophet seems to be certainly one of the first. So looking at this passage now and having kind of read ahead a little bit, we have three different revelations of God.

We have a prophet speaking to the nation at large, then we have the angel of the Lord appearing, and then we have this dream in the night. So three different ways in which God has spoken in this chapter. Right? You think about the history of the nation of Israel.

And, of course, hindsight is great. I don't expect that anybody would have gotten this from the book of Judges necessarily in the old days. But think about it.

Think about the nation of Israel. How does the book of Hebrews begin? In many parts and in many ways, God spoke in times past to his people. Primarily how? Through the prophets.

Moses is a prophet. The first prophet to Israel. Moses brings down the law.

The prophets prophesy. The prophets foretell the word of God to the Old Testament nation of Israel. And this prophet is not named, as many of the prophets of God are not named in the Old Testament.

But he sort of embodies all of the Old Testament prophets. The next revelation we have in this chapter is an incarnate messenger who comes and says the equivalent of Emmanuel. Right? God with you.

Right? What was the next iteration of God's revelation to the nation of Israel after the Old Testament prophetic ministry? Jesus Christ himself. The God-man. God with us.

Emmanuel comes. And it is so closely identified with this sort of an archetype that many, many, if not most people, think that the angel of the Lord is the pre-incarnate Christ. He certainly prefigures Christ, because he is an incarnate messenger from God.

He almost embodies God in the Old Testament age. And that's the second message. Then, that night, that same night, meaning very soon after the appearance of the incarnate messenger, Gideon has a dream or a vision.

What does the Old Testament prophesy about the kingdom age that God's Messiah will introduce? I will pour out my spirit on all flesh, and what will happen? Your old men will see visions, and your young men will dream dreams. And I just think it's, perhaps it's only coincidence, but it's interesting to me that you have the entire history of God's revelation to the nation of Israel in Gideon's experience. First, you have the prophet coming and identifying the problem.

He explicitly states, the reason you're oppressed is that you have been disobedient to God. This is what the Old Testament prophetic ministry does. By the law comes the knowledge of sin.

The prophets convicted Israel, prophesied to Israel, were very unpopular for it, which is why

they were sawed in two and lived in caves and holes in the ground. Very unpopular message of conviction. What did the incarnate messenger say? Does he say anything negative about Israel? What did Jesus say when He came? I have not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it.

The Son of Man has not come into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be delivered. This incarnate messenger brings a message of deliverance, doesn't he? Conviction from the prophet. Deliverance from the incarnate messenger.

So now, when we get to the dream at night, what is that message? That message specifically says, take a bull, tear down the altar of Baal that your father has, cut down the wooden image beside it, build an altar to the Lord your God on top of this rock, take the second bull, offer a burnt sacrifice on the wood of the image which you shall cut down, purge out the old leaven, get rid of that which is offensive, and replace it with an altar to God. One of the things we know about the Kingdom Age is that wherever this stuff is sitting in Mount Zion right now, it is going to be knocked down and replaced with the Millennial Temple. And sacrifice and offering will be offered in the Kingdom Age, the age of the vision and dream.

This is Israel's mission. They are resuscitated in greatly enhanced, but nevertheless fleshly bodies, and they are going to live in obedience to God in the Kingdom Age. And what is the purpose of that? They are going to do in the Kingdom Age what we are supposed to be doing now, which is becoming a dwelling place for God, purging out that which is corrupting and defiling, and living a life in the power of the Holy Spirit, to where He communicates to them, you have no need that any man teach you, you will have the Spirit of God, and so on.

So I see here a sort of encapsulation of not only this immediate deliverance from the Midianites and from the corruption of worship in Israel, but it is a capsule of Israel's entire history, from the Old Testament Age through the time of Christ, and of course the Church Age is unforeseen, and so hard upon the appearance of the incarnate messenger, you have the night vision and the commission to purge out that which necessitated the prophetic ministry and the coming of the messenger in the first place. Why does the angel of the Lord have to come and bring deliverance? Why did the prophet have to come and convict Israel? Because there was sin in the camp, there was widespread apathy, indifference, disobedience, and outright idolatry in Israel, and that sin has to be expunged, it has to be removed, and symbolically now, Gideon is going to go to that which his father has built. It's not a shrine that the people of the city have built, it belongs to his father, in the same way that the second generation in Israel that went into the land had to do what their fathers had not been able to do.

The resuscitated generation in Israel that will live in the Kingdom Age is the renewal, it is the rebirth of the old generation. And so in the same way, in the days of our fathers, we failed, we fell short, we did not work as we should. Well now, we can fix that, we can tear down the altar to Baal, and we can replace it with an altar to God, and that's what Gideon is commissioned to do.

Well, I offer you that as a suggestion, we'll pause here and take our break. When we come back,

we'll look in a little more detail at this offering and the stick of fire and the rock and all of that.
Let's pause and take our break.