

Judges 08-03-28a

This is Friday, the 28th of March, 2008. We continue our study in the book of Judges. We're in chapter 7, or actually chapter 6, looking at Gideon.

Let's take a moment as we begin to go to the Lord in prayer. It's an opportunity to focus our concentration, make sure that there are no impediments to the ministry of God's Holy Spirit in our souls. I depend heavily on the knowledge that God's Holy Spirit superintends the process of our study and fellowship in the Word, and He is able to transcend the presentation and any shortcomings that may be my fault, and the time is worthwhile, and we are built up and edified almost entirely through His ministry.

Shall we pray? Father, we're grateful for another opportunity to examine the truth of Your Word and have it incorporated into our souls through the ministry of Your Spirit. We thank You for His presence. We thank You for the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Him as a gift to us and established the foundation upon which our entire spiritual life and relationship with You rests.

We pray that we will have insight and understanding into these particular passages tonight, and that as a result, we will be thoroughly equipped for every good work. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen. As I said, we are picking up in the story of Gideon here, and he has met the angel of the Lord as he was trying to thresh.

He has received a commission, go in this strength and deliver Israel. He wanted a sign, so he prepared that giant meal, put it on the rock, fire came from the rock, consumed it, angel disappeared. That's sort of where we left him last time.

And then he was worried that he might die because he had seen the angel, and he got assurance on that. So then he built an altar to the Lord, called it the Lord is Peace, Yahweh Shalom, and it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites as of the writing of this book, the compilation of the book of Judges. Now we pick up in verse 25 tonight.

And it says in the New King James, Now 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, and 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, and take the second bull, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the image which you shall cut down. So Gideon took ten men from among his servants, and did as the Lord had said to him.

But because he feared his father's household and the men of the city too much to do it by day, he did it by night. Well there are a couple of things we want to take note of here. First of all, it says that, and we talked about this last time, that the revelation is subsequent.

It comes at night, and it is in a nightly visitation. It may or may not have had a visual component, but he certainly heard the word of the Lord speaking to him in the night. And he

gets this specific mission, take your father's young bull.

Now let's just stop for a second. This whole book of Judges is about the nation of Israel, right? They have come into the land, and now they've kind of gotten away from their spiritual heritage and their responsibilities before God. They have become apathetic and indifferent.

Now they're engaged in idolatry. They have compromised and integrated themselves with the Canaanites of the land, which they were expressly told not to do by God. They are in disobedience, and now they are under judgment from God because of that disobedience.

So what is the purpose of Gideon being raised up? It is to deliver Israel, particularly that area of Israel that is suffering under these incursions of the Midianites and the sons of the east. So that's the goal. The goal is for this entire region of Israel to be delivered through Gideon.

But that's not the way it starts. The first thing that happens is, and this is basically the pattern, I'll just say it now and we'll see it unfold. But if you think about this, before the nation can be delivered, first Gideon has to be spiritually on the mark.

His relationship with God has to be established and bolstered and affirmed. So he receives this personal visit. The angel of the Lord comes and speaks with him face to face, greets him, and this is, he essentially has a one-on-one conversation with God.

It's just Gideon. That happens before anything else. Now, when the Lord comes to him by night, because Gideon has built this altar, and he has peace with God, Yahweh, or Adonai, Shalom.

His worship life, he built this altar, this is his personal altar that is a mark and a sign of his personal relationship with God. So now, what's the next step? Is he ready to go deliver Israel? Not yet. God doesn't come to him in the night and say, go and grab some swords and men and go attack the Midianites.

He says, tear down this altar of Baal that is on your father's land. So we move from the individual, Gideon, and squaring his spiritual life away, to his family and his clan, his city, basically. And this is Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

This is his family town. His daddy is sort of the mayor, or the big cheese, the major proprietor and landowner there. And the altar of Baal, which is this blight on the landscape of Israel, is on his father's land.

His father's house supports this thing. Now that Gideon is squared away, Gideon's got to get his house in order. And interestingly, the angel of the Lord does not appear to Gideon's father.

He appears to Gideon, and he says, you've got to fix this issue that your father put in place. It's Gideon's father's fault that this altar is there. But he doesn't say, oh Gideon, go talk to your father and get him to tear it down.

He says, you tear it down. And there's quite a bit of application in this that we'll see as we go

forward. But that's what he's going to do next.

And he built an altar personally to the Lord. He established his own. Now he's going to build an altar that is going to serve as a replacement for the family and for the whole town, Gideon's periphery.

Everything that's within his purview as the son of his father has got to be squared away. Then he will be ready, as we begin the next section, to be the deliverer for the entire nation. But it's sort of concentric circles.

He has to square himself away, then his family, and then he'll be ready to help the nation. So it says, take your father's young bull, the second bull of seven years old. You think, well, we talked about this whole idea of reflecting human history and 7,000 years and completeness and so on.

There's another issue here as well, if you think about it. How long have the Israelites been oppressed by Midian now? How long has the judgment of God rested on them because of this idolatry and compromise with the Baal cult? What did it tell us at the beginning? Seven years. So this bull basically was born right at the time that Israel fell off the spiritual wagon and his sacrifice essentially is an atonement for these seven years.

There's a pretty close match-up of these two issues. So this is, you've got to repent, this basically reflects repentance and atonement for the sins of the last seven years reflected in this seven-year-old bull. Now it is hard to know for sure if this is the second bull, and we talked about what that might signify last time.

In the same way that you have the first generation, there's been speculation that maybe the first bull was already dedicated to Baal by Gideon's father, or it was not of the right age, and also that the second bull would symbolize the second generation. Gideon's father caused this problem, Gideon and his generation, so to speak, is going to be the solution. And the second bull sort of speaks to that.

But it is also possible, because this does seem a little bit awkward to talk about the second one and say nothing about the first, the word that is translated second here may actually come from a different and somewhat obscure root that means of very high quality, the finest. This would be the prize bull. This would be the best one in the herd.

And the phraseology here sort of supports that idea because it says take your father's young bull, the second bull of seven years old, this is the bull of the herd here. And the idea being that this would be the best, which of course is what is supposed to be sacrificed to God anyway. This is the bull of the cattle, literally, in Hebrew.

The bull of the cattle or the bull of the herd, which is your father's, and then it says the bull, the second, or the bull, the finest one, the bull, the prize one. And that may be an intentional obscurity. I think sometimes these words are covalent, they have two, or bivalent, they have two different meanings and both of them pertain.

It's just part of the richness of the text. But I tend to lean, after doing a little more work on this, to the idea that this was the prize bull. It was a very well-known bull that had been there seven years, no doubt was the sire of many of the calves and younger members of the herd there.

But this is the one that is going to be sacrificed. But first it is going to be used to tear down the altar, because it's basically a tractor. We've talked about the ox as a symbol of strength and the nature of that whole burnt offering that we studied in the first chapter or two of Leviticus.

And so the idea here is that he's going to take this tractor and use it to pull down the Canaanite altar. These Canaanite altars from the surviving records we have, they were pretty ornate, fancy deals. This is not just a pile of rocks.

This is a great platform, like a small ziggurat perhaps. And that's why Gideon is going to need ten men to tear it down. It's not something you can just back a bull into and knock over.

They're going to be using this bull and they're going to have to work for several hours with eleven men and an ox to get the thing torn down. And they've got to pull this asherah, which is actually a tall pole that may or may not have had a female form carved into it, but it's basically a great totem and a memorial to Baal's consort, Asherah. And so you've got the altar to Baal and then you've got his consort right there in the form of this large wooden totem or pole.

And so the bull is probably going to pull that thing over and out of the ground as well. So that's the drill. Build an altar to the Lord your God on top of this rock.

And then it says, in the proper arrangement. This is also a really obscure, remember Judges again is some of the earlier Hebrew that we have in the Old Testament. We don't really know what it means by in the proper arrangement.

It literally says, according to the Arak, the A-R-A-K, which basically is a word that means layers. Build it with the proper layers doesn't really make a whole lot of sense. And so this is a working understanding of what the word means.

But there is some doubt as to what this entails. It could be a reference back to the specifications of the law for an altar to God. Gideon was able to build whatever kind of altar he wanted when it was his own free will decision.

But when he's going to build a public altar on top of this rock that is going to be in full view of all of the people, apparently God says you need to be sure that this thing is right. Remember that it was supposed to be constructed of uncut stones that had not been touched by a hammer or chisel. It's not the work of man.

These rocks are shaped by God himself through the forces of nature and you don't chisel them into any kind of a shape and so forth. And again it says take the second bull. This would only be necessary if there was some other bull in the scenario and there is not.

So again I think take the prize bull might be a good translation here. Take the prize bull or the finest bull that you brought along and offer a burnt sacrifice. This is a menka.

That's the word used here. It's a menka. With the wood of the image which you shall cut down.

The wood of the Asherah which you shall cut down. And so that's the fuel for this sacrificial fire is this idol. Gideon took ten men from among his servants and did as the Lord said to him.

But because he feared and just if everything had stopped right there after the Lord had said to him we would be thinking boy this Gideon he's like Othniel, he's like Caleb or Joshua. Boy God gives him a command and he just goes and does it. But we see that there is a leavening and remember and we understand, we sympathize with Gideon.

He has been living in a society far from God. There has been no practice of worship of the Lord God. The Levites evidently are not doing anything in his region.

Amongst the tribe of Manasseh there is no Levitical function at all. How do you build an altar? And you're really swimming against the cultural tide and all of his family lives in this area. You know there's a lot of times when people say well I don't want to give any offense to my family or to my co-workers or to my fellow students or whatever group we happen to be in.

We don't want to make an issue out of faith or an issue out of obedience because someone may be offended, someone's eyebrows may be raised. Well imagine Gideon tearing down the central worship center for the whole region. This is, I don't know what this would be the equivalent of, going down and tearing down your local TV transmitter or something.

I mean it's going to affect everybody. Everybody comes to this thing. And it is understandable although we still kind of wish that Gideon had a little more faith.

Gideon seems willing and Gideon is obedient but Gideon's faith seems to need bolstering. The angel of the Lord comes and says well I need a sign. We know all about the fleece and here he's going to be obedient but he's going to do it at night.

He's full of fear. God has not given us a spirit of fear. But to his credit he still obeys.

He works through his fear and this is how he does it. And it does in effect accomplish something because in the morning there's this fait accompli that the thing is done. Nobody can interrupt him in the middle of pulling it down.

It's not going to gather a big crowd. No one is going to drag him away in the midst of his work. So it works out okay.

And you'll notice that nowhere in this story does God ever rebuke Gideon. He doesn't rebuke him for asking the angel of the Lord for a sign. There's no rebuke associated with the fleece.

The two fleece incidents. God never chastises Gideon. He works with the faith that Gideon has.

And this is one of the first principles that we see tonight. You don't have to be perfect for God to use you. All of us tend to think, well, like Moses says, I'm slow of speech and of a slow tongue.

Or I'm no hero of the faith. I've got issues. I have weaknesses.

I know myself. And I'm not fit to be an instrument for God's use. He'll start hammering and chiseling with me and my edge will dull and my point will break off and I won't be any use to God.

God knows us. And if he gives us a call, he knows what we're capable of. And he will work with us and through us.

And in spite of us, he will accomplish his purpose if we are just willing. And you can see that there are frailties and there are weaknesses in Gideon. God still uses him to accomplish a great deliverance.

He's one of the most famous men in the Bible. He is in the roster of the faithful in Hebrews chapter 11. Time would fail me to mention.

And he's there, Gideon. And yet we see that he's flawed. He's a little bit shaky.

But it doesn't keep him from being incorporated into the eternal plans and purposes of God. So he gets his instructions. And you will notice that Gideon carries these instructions out to the letter.

God didn't say what time of day to do it. And because of his fear, he's going to do it in the middle of the night. But he gets it done.

Gideon took ten men from among his servants and did as the Lord had said to him. Because he feared his father's household and the men of the city too much to do it by day, he did it by night. So now in verse 28, When the men of the city arose early in the morning, there was the altar of Baal.

And this is weak in English. In Hebrew it says, behold. It says, look.

When the men of the city arose early in the morning, look. The altar of Baal torn down. The wooden image beside it cut down.

The prized bull offered on the altar. He had offered this sacrifice. Of course, he did that last.

And he lit that asherah and that made a fire and there's smoke and so on. Well, it's still smoldering. The remains of that bull are still up on the altar.

And you remember that depending on the kind of sacrifice, there are pieces and parts that may be laid aside as you offer this offering. So they can tell. They say, wow, look.

There's the prized bull up there on the altar. So they said to one another, who has done this thing? And when they had inquired and asked, they said, and this again is a Hebraism that doesn't come across too well in English, but the people of the city that had arisen early in the morning, they are the ones who inquired and asked. And the ones of whom they inquired and the ones that they asked said.

They said. This is a different they. There's some theys that are asking and some theys that are replying.

And you get the idea that perhaps, I mean, who would know this except some of the ten men. So as they inquired around, they finally found some baggy-eyed servants that said, hey, why are you smudged up with ashes and why are your hands all blistered and why are you so sleepy this morning? Well, I was helping Gideon tear down this. Oh, Gideon.

So they find out. They said, Gideon, the son of Joash, has done this thing. So the men of the city said to Joash, bring out your son that he may die because he has torn down the altar of Baal and because he has cut down the wooden image that was beside it.

Now, in verse 29, when they are presented with this act, it's a done thing in the morning. They go out and somebody says, well, I believe we'll go down there and light a candle to Baal or something. Well, here's this thing that's totally destroyed and torn down.

It was a big job. It took ten men to do it, several hours. It took a tractor, and now the tractor has been offered on the altar.

It's a smoke ascending, a whole different altar up there that's been made evidently according to the arrangement. It's very clearly a Yahweh altar. It's not a fancy Baal altar.

It's uncut stones and so on. Well, what would be the right question to ask as you gaze at this? What is the question they ask? Who has done this thing? What's the right question to ask? Why has this been done? Why has the altar of Baal been torn down? That's the question to ask. What is the matter with Baal worship that this thing should be torn down or was torn down? What is the issue here that has replaced a Baal altar with a God of Israel altar? That's the question.

Sadly, these men don't ask that question. They're not smitten in their hearts and say, I should have done that. We should have done this a long time ago.

This is the God that brought us out of the land of Egypt. Why didn't we do this sooner? Why has someone done this? Well, it's clear. Remember, Gideon at least asked why.

Why are we under the oppression of the Midianites? Why has God forsaken us? It's not the greatest. The prophet had already come and given the answer, but at least Gideon is asking why are things the way they are. These men don't ask why.

They're looking for someone to blame. They want somebody to lynch. Somebody's messed with

the status quo.

Second point of application for tonight. We have to be careful about this sort of knee-jerk reaction. Someone has disrupted the status quo.

Who's to blame? Who can I hang this on? Instead of asking, has this been done for a reason? Is there a problem that has been fixed here? Or is this a symptom of something that needs to be addressed? Examine yourselves, Paul says, to see if you are in the faith. In a very striking episode, look, the altar's been torn down. Look, the Asherah pole has been cut down.

Look, there's a sacrifice burning on the altar. Look. Pay attention.

Think. Draw some conclusions. Make an analysis.

Don't just hunt down somebody to blame. Hey, something's different today than it was yesterday. Who did this? That's a human frailty that we need to watch for.

So the men of the city go to Joash, and they say, Bring out your son that he may die, because he has torn down the altar of Baal, and because he has cut down the wooden image of the Asherah that was beside it. Well, Joash gives a very courageous answer here. He says to all who stood against him, Would you plead for Baal? Would you save him? Let the one who would plead for him be put to death by morning.

If he, Baal, is a god, let him plead for himself, because his altar has been torn down. Well, I'm going to suggest a little better understanding of this verse. Joash said to all who stood against him, Would you contend? If you remember, if you've run across a passage in the past, there is a word in Hebrew, RIV, R-I-V, or B, that means a court case, an issue, a contention, and the verb is related.

And this, to contend, is from that word, RIV. So that's what Joash says here. He says, Would you contend for Baal? And the U is doubled here.

It's would you, you, fight for Baal? Would you contend for Baal? Would you defend or save him? And this is Yeshav, Yeshua, delivered, salvation, Messiah, the whole idea. Are you going to be the deliverer for Baal? Are you Baal's bodyguard? Are you Baal's deliverer? Are you going to go out there and defend Baal? What's the purpose of a god? Baal is the storm god. Baal is the god of strength, and the god of the armies of the Canaanites.

And Joash basically says, So are the roles reversed now? And instead of Baal fighting for you, and Baal being your deliverer, you've got to defend him, and you've got to deliver him? Is this what it is now? And it's the next sentence that I think needs some correction. You have to make a slight modification of the Hebrew text for this to work. But it says, Let the one who would plead for him be put to death by mourning.

Well, in the first place, remember that Joash is talking to his family members. These are the

Abiezrites. All of these people are in the same clan.

They're all related. They are brothers and sisters and cousins and in-laws. This is a family matter.

These people that live in the town, they're all Abiezrites. This is Ophrah of the Abiezrites. They all know each other.

There's places in Oklahoma where everybody's related to somebody. There's only like five families, and there's all different kinds of combinations. Everybody's related.

Well, that's the Abiezrites. They're all related. And Joash is not... I find it difficult to see him threatening a fellow family member with death if anybody wants to speak up for Baal.

I mean, this would be a huge reversal of attitude. But again, plead for. Every place you see the New King James saying plead for, this is the word riv, which means contend or fight with.

And the difference between fight with and fight for is one letter in Hebrew. Fight for is the lamed. It's the two or four prefix.

It's like bait and maim. These are prepositions that are single letters. Maim means from.

Bait means in, by, or with. Lamed is two or four. And so this is for him.

But if you put a letter in front of that, then it's all, and it's against him. And I believe, I can't prove it, but I believe, just as there was a corruption a little bit earlier in this text, I think that we've lost a letter here. And what Joash said is, would you contend for Baal? Would you yashav him? Would you be his deliverer? Let the one who fights with Baal die by morning.

In other words, whoever tore down Baal's altar last night should have been dead by morning. If Baal is God, then why are we even having this discussion? There ought to be a dead guy laying out there. What would have happened, remember later on when David's going to move the Ark of the Covenant, one guy touches it, Uzzah touches it, he dies.

And basically Joash says, why are you trying to fight for Baal? Why are you trying to be his deliverer? Let the one who fought against Baal, actually, let the one is an interpretation also. Basically what he's saying is, the one who fought with Baal should have been dead by morning. The one who fought with Baal should have been dead by morning.

Why is there not a corpse out there by this desecrated altar? Why is there not a corpse or two laying out there by this cut down Asherah? Why are you having to fight for Baal and defend him? He should be able to defend himself. And he goes on to say, if he is Elohim, let him contend, let him fight for himself. Plead and contend translate the very same word here.

Because his altar has been torn down. So I do not believe that Joash is threatening anybody with death here. He's making a logical argument.

And I'll have more to say about that in just a moment. So, where is my verse here? Therefore on that day, verse 32, he called him Jerubbaal saying, let Baal plead against him because he has torn down his altar. And basically it's either let him fight Baal or let Baal fight.

And it's another one of those double word plays in Hebrew that they are so fond of. It means both things. It means the Jeru part, I think I said something about a city on the analogy of Jerusalem last week, but that's incorrect.

The Jeru part here means to fight with or contend or strive with. And Baal of course is the word that means Sir or Lord or Baal proper with a capital B. And so it basically means fight Baal or Baal fights. Either way.

And it's a reminder that Baal doesn't fight for himself and Gideon is the guy who fought Baal and lived. Gideon was worrying about seeing God and living. And God said don't worry and Gideon built an altar there and God is peace.

Well here Gideon attacks Baal and Baal is helpless to defend himself or to fight back. So that's the word play and that's the meaning here. The one who fought him should be dead by morning.

Why are you having to lynch a guy? What's the matter with Baal that he can't kill one guy for tearing down his altar? If Baal's no stronger than that, if he's God, let him fight for himself. And what you see here, because you know the fleece story is coming up, and by way of anticipation if you think about this, there are three signs in this section. The first sign is the goat and bread meal disappearing.

The second sign is a negative, it's an anti-sign. God causes the meal to disappear. God is going to cause the fleece to be wet and dry alternately.

Baal does nothing. Who gets to see the powerful signs from God? The man of faith, the man of obedience, Gideon. Gideon is the only one that sees the meal disappear off that rock.

Gideon is the only one that checks that fleece and finds out that it's wet one night and dry the next. The people who are busy trying to find somebody to blame, what do they see? They see an anti-sign. They see the negative sign that Baal does not provide.

Their God, the God that they're holding up and trying to defend his altar and so on, there is no sign. And of course you immediately think of Elijah with this very same God. Well, maybe he's busy, maybe he's away, maybe he's on a trip, maybe he fell asleep, he forgot that you were down here dancing.

You remember that mocking? It doesn't sound very spiritual, but that's what Elijah does. And so it's bracketed by these two miraculous signs from God. And notice, neither one of the signs from God are signs of power.

They are signs of significance. God does not take the top off of a mountain like he does with Elijah. God does not stop the waters of the Jordan River.

God does not create a mighty pillar of cloud and fire. God does not shake the top of a mountain. These are recognition signs.

These are affirmations that are meaningful to one man, Gideon. And the thought that occurs to me anyway in thinking about that is, it is a reminder that God has individual relationships with his people. God evidently never made a meal disappear for Joshua.

God apparently never did a wet and dry fleece effect for Caleb. At the beginning of a new era in God's plan, you remember there were signs that were done for Moses when he was still on Sinai, talking at the burning bush, the leper's hand, the staff, and so on. These signs were affirmations for a called man.

And they're for him alone. They're sort of between him and God. We all have an individual relationship with God ourselves.

And God many times affirms his presence in a way that is somewhat unrelated to the issue at hand. Maybe we're concerned about our men. Typically we're worried about providing for our wives, our families, our job, and our leadership in our household, leadership in our business, or whatever it might be.

And we may see an affirming sign of God's involvement and God's presence when he provides in an extraordinary way. Something shows up at just the right time. There have been missionaries, many, many missionaries, people going into some sort of ministry that stepped out on faith not knowing where their money was going to come from.

I'm thinking of one particular individual who really felt called to go to seminary and be a preacher. And he quit his job and he traveled and used up his last dime getting there. And he didn't have money for tuition.

He just knew that God wanted him to go to school. And God put it in the heart of two ladies. I think they were sisters who lived together.

And they some kind of way found out that he was going to school. And they decided that they would write a check. They were reasonably well off.

And they wrote a check. They had no idea. They didn't know any of the details.

But they wrote a check to him and it was exactly the amount he needed for his tuition. And it came to him just when he needed it. He had never spoken with these ladies.

They didn't know him. They didn't know any of his details. They had no idea how much the tuition was or anything else.

But they just felt in their hearts. And this was the leading of the Lord. And this was an affirmation for that individual that he should go on and engage in this ministry.

And it was somebody on the order of D.L. Moody that this happened with. I believe that's how Moody got his start. But my point is that these are personal affirmations.

And we don't necessarily get to throw out a fleece. Or Gideon didn't even specify what was going to happen to that meal. He basically asked for a sign and then he went to prepare this meal.

And it was the angel who decided how that sign was going to come out. But it greatly strengthened Gideon's faith and his confidence that he was indeed speaking. You think about the pagan day in which he lived.

How do you know that you're not being led down the primrose path by somebody? And there isn't a Levite. There isn't a prophet. The prophet has traveled around and said that you're under discipline.

But there's no prophet to say, yes, this is the angel of the Lord. Yes, God is going to use you personally to deliver. And he needed some affirmation.

And I will go so far as to say I think that there are times when God still does extraordinary things today. If you've read that book I've mentioned before, One Bright Shining Path, about the situation down in South America. And in places of darkness where there's great opposition to Christianity, I think God still does miraculous things.

I don't doubt it for a moment. I've spoken with missionaries who have seen demon oppression in back jungle areas. And God fights fire with fire.

And where there's demon activity, God will counter with great supernatural force. And I'm not going to stand up and tell God that he can't do something miraculous if he chooses to. But it is typically for a specific occasion, specific people, it isn't something that we can call down from heaven any time we feel like it and say, well, God, do this miraculous healing.

God uses it for affirmation. God uses it in times of a dearth of revelation. Well, so his father calls him Jerubbaal, saying, let Baal fight.

Or let him fight Baal. It kind of works both ways. And this nickname is going to stick.

And he's going to be known as Jerubbaal from then on. But it's interesting that Joash realizes this was a catalyst moment. When Gideon does this act, you would think, well, Joash would be incensed.

If Joash was a man who was really deeply invested in the Baal cult, he's got a financial investment in this thing. It's on his land. He's the sponsor of it and so on.

You could expect that he would be incensed and would come looking for his own son, much as Saul does with Jonathan later on. But this is a turning point. And Joash seems to recognize, well, what kind of a God are we serving here that he can't even defend himself? If this had been the God of Israel and somebody had come to desecrate the tabernacle, what do you think would have happened? If somebody had come in there and started messing with the Ark of the Covenant, what would have happened? So Joash comes to realize, and this is a catalytic moment.

This is a mind-changing moment. God uses Gideon and this specific action to convert and to turn back this clan in Israel. The Abiezrites realize that Joash is right.

Well, you're right, and I don't think that it's a death threat that turns them back. I think his logic is inescapable. What kind of a God is this that we've got this altar to that one guy can come in here and tear his stuff down and live? How come he's not dead on the ground? He should have been dead by morning.

And it convicts them, and it smites them in their heart, and they say, well, yeah, maybe we've gone down the wrong road here. One individual. Paul talks about this in the New Testament.

A woman can win her husband without a word just by being faithful and being obedient. And the example can spread within a family. It can be convicting.

God can use it to make change, and you don't have to preach, and you don't have to harangue, and you don't have to cajole, and you don't have to try to convince and argue and do a lot of apologetics. Just be obedient, be faithful, and let God work it out. People will draw their own conclusions.

Joash doesn't need a sermon from Gideon. Joash doesn't need a visit from the angel of the Lord. He draws his conclusions.

He says, wow, this Baal is no great sheikhs. Somebody come down and cut down his wife and burn her on the altar and destroys his temple and everything. I think I've been worshipping the wrong God.

I think my son's on to something here. He gives his son an honorific. It's a recognition that his son did the right thing.

This is an honor. Just as when God renames Jacob and calls him Yisrael, He says, good job, son, I'm not sore at you at all. I think you pointed out something here.

And you have to give credit to Joash. And once again, harking back to what we talked about last week, the generation that goes into the land under Joshua, when they all rise up at the resurrection to go into the Millennial Kingdom, those who dropped in the wilderness are going to look at their sons who had the faith and had the obedience to go into the land, and they're going to say, you know what? I think you all had it right and we had it wrong. And the Korah,

Dathan's, and Abiram's that dropped in the wilderness and those who all died during the 40 years of wandering are going to look at their sons and daughters and say, well done.

You all did what we couldn't do. That's great. And they're going to be proud of them.

They're going to learn something from them as they go into that Millennial Kingdom. They will be the Joash to that Joshua generation's Gideon. Well, this brings us now, we are finally ready.

Gideon's personal spiritual life has been squared away. Now the clan has been smitten in their conscience and has realized that this Baal worship thing is hollow and empty and has no power through this negative sign, this non-action by Baal. Now we're ready to go fight the Midianites.

Now this oppression, this seven-year discipline from God can be lifted. There have been two sacrifices already. Gideon has dedicated a personal altar.

Now there has been a seven-year bull, the prize bull, offered on the altar for the clan. And Gideon has sort of served. He's kind of like back in the family priesthood almost because the Levites are off the scene.

Now they're ready. So this is what we'll pick up after the break in verse 33.