

Decision Time.

Judges 6:25-32.

Sunday afternoon, April 10, 2011.

I. Decision time for Gideon.

- A. Before Gideon's encounter with the Angel (messenger) of the Lord (a pre-incarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ) would end, the Lord would place a demand on Gideon that would commit him one way or the other; to follow and obey the Lord, or not to do so.
1. First, the Lord asks him to tear down Baal's altar, and to cut down the wooden image of Asherah which was Baal's wife, and which stood by Baal's altar.
 2. Second, Gideon was to build an altar to the Lord in its place; a properly arranged altar would have meant an altar made of natural stones on which no tools had been used. The fear of the Lord was to be reflected in all the work Gideon would do.
 3. Third, Gideon was to take the wood of the Asherah image, standing by the former altar of Baal, and he was to cut it up and use it for fire-wood on the newly erected altar of the Lord.
 4. Fourth, he was to take his father's second, and seven year old bull, and sacrifice it on the altar of the Lord. Why the second bull? We can only speculate that the first bull had perhaps been taken away by the Midianites. It is also possible that Joash, Gideon's father, had sacrificed it to Baal, for both Baal's altar and the Asherah image seemed to have belonged to Joash. See Vs. 25, 27.
- B. This was a tall order for Gideon. He feared both his father's household and the men of the city of Orah. So Gideon decides to do the work by night while the city and all the men of his father's household are fast asleep. Obedience was not optional; Gideon had to do it, but the heroism of an in-your-face, daring kind of daytime attack on Baal's altar and Asherah's image was optional.
- C. Why did the Lord place this demand on Gideon before the Lord would use him to deliver Israel from the Midianites?
- It is because the Lord was preparing Israel for the deliverance He would work for them through Gideon. In order for the Lord to do so Baal's altar had to be smashed and Asherah's image cut down, and the altar to the Lord God had to be rebuilt.
- As long as Israel insisted on worshipping the Baals and the Asherah's the Lord could not deliver them out of the hands of their enemies.
- Perhaps Baal was a tolerant god, allowing his worshippers to worship other gods besides him, but Jehovah would not; He is a jealous God. Hence the altar of Baal has to go, and Asherah's image has to be cut down. Furthermore Israel has to come to grips with this truth.

Application:

1. For us too there can be no halting between two opinions. If the Lord is God, then serve him; He will not tolerate double mindedness. Baal's altar must be torn down, and the Lord's altar built in its place. The Lord dealt this way with the rich young ruler. He asked him to tear down the altar to his god Mammon, riches, before he could follow

Christ. The rich young ruler left with a profound sadness in his heart, for he had many riches, but he did not have at that time the fortitude of heart Gideon had (albeit by night) in dealing with Baal's altar. We do not know, but it is possible that the rich young ruler later found such fortitude of heart. It is said of him that Jesus loved him. Mark 10:21.

2. There is such a time as a decision time in the life of Gideon, and in the life of the towns-people of Oprah, as there was in the life of the rich young ruler, and as there is in your life as well. It is a time when we must go on the record, and make it clear (by our actions) where we stand. It is a time when we no longer limp between two opinions, but when we declare that the Lord is God and that we will serve Him. That means that the devotions to the Baals and Asherahs are torn down, and that the altar of the Lord is rebuilt in its place.

II. Decision time for the towns-people of Oprah.

- A. The town's-people of Oprah woke up that morning to an awful scene; lord Baal's altar wrecked and Lady Asherah's image cut down, chopped up, and used as fire-wood. Never had Oprah known such sacrilege.
- B. In its place stood a new altar; obviously an altar to the Lord Jehovah, for its stones were natural, without any graven images on them as all other gods had.
- C. There was no missing this new altar, for smoke was rising from it; a bull lay butchered on top, and Lady Asherah's wood lay burning all around and underneath the bull. However there was no one around indicating as to who might be responsible for this heinous act.
- D. Somehow word leaked out that Gideon had done this, and the town council comes to Joash's house to demand that he hand over Gideon that he may die for wrecking Baal's altar and Lady Asherah's image.
- E. Sometimes, at crucial moments; in times of crisis, the Lord comes to the aid of His people and gives them brilliant insights. It so happened with Joash; even though the altar and image had stood on his property, and as such he had more reason than anyone to be offended, Joash is slow to take offence in behalf of Baal. Instead he wishes to put Baal to the test, even to the point of re-naming his son Jerubbaal, meaning "let Baal do with him what he wants."
- F. Joash tells the towns-people as much. Baal is a big boy; he is a god, and he has all the more reason to avenge himself on Gideon now that not only his altar, but even his wife's image has been desecrated in the most awful way. So let's leave this in the hands of Baal. So the towns-people take a wait-and-see attitude.

Application:

Like Gideon earlier, the townsfolk of Oprah are providentially brought to a moment of decision. Baal's altar is wrecked; Lady Asherah's image is cut down; Jehovah's altar has been put up in its place. Now what will they do? Will they tear down Jehovah's altar and rebuild the devotions to Baal and Asherah? It would seem that as the result of Joash's counsel the altar of the Lord remained standing, and that Baal and Asherah were merely given a chance to prove themselves. This also meant that any religious exercises during that time would have been made to the Lord God. So, slowly but surely the Lord guides the hearts of His people back to Himself. So the Lord would guide your heart back to Himself as well. Remember the pattern!