



Lesson 78

Jerubbaal the Iconoclast

Story Elements

- **Text:** Judges 6:25-32
 - **Setting:** circa 1260 B.C. near Ophrah, a city about 20 miles southwest of the Sea of Galilee
 - **Main Characters:** God and Gideon (Jerubbaal)
 - **Plot:** Gideon earns the nickname “Jerubbaal” by destroying his father’s pagan altars.
- **Key word(s):** “Will ye _____ for Baal?” (v 31)
 - **Climax:** **Judges 6:30** *Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die: because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that was by it.*

Review

1. (vv 1-24) The angel of the LORD visited Gideon while he threshed wheat in a hiding place.
 - a. The LORD, speaking through the _____, called Gideon to lead the Hebrews to battle against the Midianites.
 - b. Gideon, ever fearful and _____, asked for a sign from the angel, whether he truly spoke for God.
 - c. The angel touched his staff to the food Gideon had placed on a rock, and _____ came up from the rock, consuming the food, and whisking away the angel out of sight.

Pulling down Baal

2. (vv 25-26) God spoke to Gideon that same night after he encountered the angel. The LORD told Gideon to...
 - a. ...take his father’s (Joash’s) bullock¹ and prepare it for sacrifice.
 - b. ...throw down his father’s altar to Baal and to cut down the _____ (Asherah pole).
 - c. ...build an altar to the LORD and burn the bullock upon the altar using the wood from the grove.

APPLICATION → Israel needed more than deliverance from Midianites, they needed deliverance from the sin of idolatry. Before Gideon can lead Israel in the former, he must first lead his family in the latter. Matthew Henry points out that Gideon, because he destroyed Baal’s image before he led the army into battle, became “a type of Christ, must first *save his people from their sins*, and then save them from their _____.”²

3. (v 27) Gideon was obedient to the LORD’s command. With servants to help (and under secrecy of _____) Gideon smashed the altar of Baal and sacrificed unto Jehovah.

Pleading for Baal

4. (vv 28-30) The following morning, as the village began to stir, some of the townspeople noticed that Joash’s altar to Baal was smashed, the grove was cut down, and a sacrifice had been made atop a new altar. The men were enraged at the destruction of the altar and grove and demanded that Gideon die for his iconoclasm. Why do you think they would be so angry about property that didn’t belong to them? _____

¹ Commentators disagree about whether there were two bullocks mentioned or just one. I have gone with the KJV translation that this “second bullock” was the one intended for offering – called “second” perhaps because it was the best of the herd after the Midianite plunderers had decimated the stock.

² Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 342.

APPLICATION → The Bible said the altar belonged to Gideon’s father, and yet it is not Joash who is angry. Howsoever the altar became a part of Gideon’s family, its presence shows the danger of turning a blind eye to sin. Joash’s compromise with idolaters was a blot on his testimony and a sin against God. God’s people cannot commune with _____ and God at the same time. We must choose who we will serve.

*2 Corinthians 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? 15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17 **Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,** 18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*

5. (v 31) To Joash’s credit, he defended his son by boldly challenging the Baal worshippers to let their false god _____.

APPLICATION → Joash challenged the Baal worshippers to let Baal defend his own honor by punishing the offender. Can you think of times when God defended his holy name by answering with fire? _____

- a. Joash asked, “Will ye plead for Baal?” His words sharply rebuke his fellow citizens. It is bad to worship idols, but how much more wicked to _____ the sin of it!
- b. Because of the events of that day, Gideon earned the nickname *Jerubbaal*, which means “Let Baal _____ against him.”

APPLICATION → It’s encouraging to see Joash defend his son’s virtuous actions. Matthew Henry notes, “Many that have not courage enough to keep their integrity themselves yet have so much conscience left as makes them love and esteem those that do.”³ Gideon probably felt very alone, but his courage (as little as there may have been) spread to others. God’s power is a force multiplier – little faith and little strength can be mighty things when God blesses.

1 Corinthians 1:27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the _____ things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

Answer Key: Key word(s): plead • 1. a. angel; b. doubting; c. fire • 2. b. grove → enemies • 3. night • 4. answers will vary; → idolatry • 5. defend itself; → Korah’s company in Num. 16:35; Nadab and Abihu in Lev. 10:1-2; the captains and their fifty that tried to capture Elijah in 1 Kin. 1; a. defend; b. contend; 1 Cor. 1:27 *weak*

³ Ibid.