

[PP] Judges 6:25-32 (NIV) <sup>25</sup> That same night the LORD said to him, “Take the second bull from your father’s herd, the one seven years old. **Tear down your father’s altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole beside it.** <sup>26</sup> Then build a proper kind of altar to the LORD your God on the top of this height. Using the wood of the Asherah pole that you cut down, offer the second bull as a burnt offering.” <sup>27</sup> So Gideon... **did as the LORD told him.** But because he was afraid of his family and the townspeople, **he did it AT NIGHT** rather than in the daytime. <sup>28</sup> In the morning when the people of the town got up, there was Baal’s altar, demolished, with the Asherah pole beside it cut down and the second bull sacrificed on the newly built altar! <sup>29</sup> They asked each other, “Who did this?” When they carefully investigated, they were told, “Gideon son of Joash did it.” <sup>30</sup> The people of the town demanded of Joash, “Bring out your son. He must die, because he has broken down Baal’s altar and cut down the Asherah pole beside it.” <sup>31</sup> But Joash replied to the hostile crowd... **“Are you going to plead Baal’s cause? Are you trying to save him? Whoever fights for him shall be put to death by morning! If Baal really is a god, he can defend himself when someone breaks down his altar.”** <sup>32</sup> So because Gideon broke down Baal’s altar, they gave him the name **Jerub-Baal** that day, saying, **“Let Baal contend with him.”**

## A. CALLED TO CONTEND

**Gideon: “Jerub-Baal” - “the contender”**... like a boxer who enters the ring to challenge his opponent for the title, Gideon was called into a fight with the idol(s) on his day.

**Who is Baal?** -In short, Baal is a **demonic being(s)** that was commonly worshiped in Canaan. Different regions had different representations of Baal. **Baal is an idol** – one of the many **false gods**.

**What is Idolatry?** *“Idolatry is **worshiping anything created** instead of the Creator.”*

- **THIS was what Gideon was called to confront. Gideon Wasn’t Given A “New” Calling:** But he was simply doing what EVERYONE was told to do. Only difference is, **he obeyed.**
  - o **In His Day:** <sup>7</sup> *When the Israelites cried out to the LORD because of Midian,* <sup>8</sup> **he sent them A PROPHET, who said... ‘I am the LORD your God; DO NOT worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live.’ But you have not listened to me.”** Judges 6:7-10 (NIV)

**A few warnings God gave them about idolatry.**

<sup>13</sup> *Fear the LORD your God, **SERVE HIM ONLY** and take your oaths in his name.* <sup>14</sup> **Do not follow other gods**, the gods of the peoples around you; <sup>15</sup> *for the LORD your God, who is among you, **is a jealous God** and his anger will burn against you, and he will destroy you from the face of the land.*

Deuteronomy 6:13-15 (NIV) → **i.e. EXCLUSIVITY!**

**Gideon is called to contend, but its nothing new!** God had already been **VERY** specific.

- <sup>5</sup> *This is what you are to do to them (i.e. idols)... **Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones, cut down their Asherah poles and burn their idols in the fire.*** <sup>6</sup> *For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. Deuteronomy 7:5-6 (NIV)*
  - o Here we see a clear outline of Gideon’s specific instructions, **written 200+ years** before his time. For Gideon, it wasn’t a **NEW command**, it was a **RENEWED command**.

**God Warned His People:** *“...be careful not to be **ensnared** by inquiring about their gods, saying, “How do these nations serve their gods? **We will do the same.**”* <sup>31</sup> *You must not worship the LORD your God in their*

way, because ***in worshipping*** their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things the LORD hates. They even burn their sons and daughters in the fire as sacrifices to their gods. Deut. 12:30-31 (NIV)

Idolatry doesn't START with, "Burn your child in the fire". The devil is far craftier than that. It starts with promises of **FERTILITY** & ends with requirements of **FATALITY**.

- This is the nature of the dark side... at first it promises you everything with a low bar of entry... it's all yours, just take it! BUT... once it gets you it ensnares you & requires ever increasing loyalty with diminishing return on investment.
- **Ex.** It doesn't start with "Go sleep with someone who's not your spouse, destroy your marriage, your spouse, their spouse, the kids, the reputation of Christ in your life... etc.". It starts with, "They seem nice. I like the way they make me feel. They give me something I don't have at home... let's explore that a bit..."
- It starts with **pleasure** and ends in **pain**.

**B. How Did We Get Here?** Maybe it'd be helpful to zoom out for a moment & trace the path that lead us here... from the **Garden** to **Gideon**. Here's a condensed overview from Genesis → Judges:

### 1a | Rebellion in the Garden

- In the garden Adam & Eve rebelled against God. They didn't bow down to statue or declare allegiance to another god... it started with a seed of doubt; [PP] "*Did God really say...?*"
- The (not-so) subtle undertone was: **CAN GOD REALLY BE TRUSTED?** The implied answer is **no**.
- **Snake Venom:** "*Did God really say? What if He's holding out on you? You should be FREE.*"

### 1b | Rebellion In Heaven (pre-garden)

- That snake is none other than Satan (Rev. 12:9, 20:2). He was present in the garden tempting Adam & Eve, just as he was present in the wilderness tempting Jesus... Jesus stood **resolute & uncompromised**, whereas we **capitulated**.

There was **ANOTHER REBELLION** prior to humanities rebellion in Genesis 3

- Jesus said: "*I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.*" Luke 10:18 (NIV)
- Was Quoting → <sup>12</sup> *How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations!* Isaiah 14:12 (NIV)
- Considering the collective context of Scripture regarding Satan, as well as general consensus throughout church history, he (satan) is a **fallen angel**... the leader of a rebellion & the snake.
  - **Point Is:** The Devil is A **LIAR**, A **TEMPTER**, A **DECEIVER**, AN **ACCUSER**... he desires our worship (Matt 4:9) and wants to lead us away from God into eternal damnation. **RESIST!**

## 2 | Sin Leads To Idolatry

- <sup>5</sup> *The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.* Genesis 6:5 (NIV) → God calls Noah, sends flood, doesn't fix problem
  - **Sin Continues After Flood:** <sup>4</sup> *"Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves."* Genesis 11:3-4
  - → **Tower of Babel**, the "early stages" of idolatry... hopes placed in physical objects to mediate between heaven & earth
- **By The End of Genesis, Israel Enters Egypt, a Land Flowing with Idols & "gods":**
  - **Egypt had many 'gods':** *I will pass through Egypt... and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD.* Exodus 12:12 → **10 Plagues were specifically aimed to decimate the 'gods' of Egypt and display the POWER & SUPREMACY of Yahweh.**

- **After** The Red Sea Crossing, Bread & Meat Provided From Heaven, Water From a Rock, The Glory Of The Lord Appearing On Sinia & The 10 Commandments... **THIS** Happens:
  - o <sup>1</sup> When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down... they gathered around Aaron and said, "Come, **MAKE US gods** who will go before us. Exodus 32:1 (NIV)
  - o <sup>2</sup> Aaron answered... "Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me... <sup>4</sup> He took what they handed him and made it into **AN IDOL cast in the shape of a calf**, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, "These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt." Exodus 32:2-4 (NIV) →

### 3 | Idolatry Ensnares Us In Sin

- <sup>5</sup> The images of their gods you are to **burn in the fire**. Do not covet the silver and gold on them... or you will be **ensnared by it**... <sup>26</sup> Do not bring a detestable thing into your house or you, like it, will be set apart for destruction. Regard it as vile and utterly detest it... Deuteronomy 7:25-26 (NIV)
- **To Summarize:** despite the MANY warnings God gave His people regarding idolatry, they did not listen, and thus were ensnared.
- **Why? Because of SIN.** Complacency. Compromise. Because they would neither **listen** nor **act!**
  - o **Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.** <sup>4</sup> But **THEIR IDOLS** are silver and gold, made by human hands. <sup>5</sup> They have mouths, but **cannot speak**, eyes, but **cannot see**.<sup>6</sup> ... ears, but **cannot hear**, noses, but **cannot smell**.<sup>7</sup> They have hands, but **cannot feel**, feet, but **cannot walk**, nor can they utter a sound with their throats. <sup>8</sup> **Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them.** Psalms 115:3-8
- **Truth:** "We become like what we behold." Samuel Whitefeild → i.e. **DEAD (lifeless)** in our sin!

**SIN → IDOLATRY → SIN** (repeat). We become like the dead, lifeless idols we serve. We lose our sense, sight, hearing, etc. The people in Gideon's day STOPPED CRYING OUT. They were lulled to sleep.

- **The people would not listen, so God went to a person.**
- **To GIDEON:** <sup>25</sup>... the LORD said to him, "...**Tear down your father's altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole beside it.** <sup>26</sup> Then build a proper kind of altar to the LORD your God..." <sup>27</sup> So Gideon took ten of his servants and **did as the LORD told him.** Judges 6:25-27 (NIV)

### C. Idols In Our Day

- there are still MILLIONS of people around the world enslaved to **lifeless IDOLS**.
  - o → **Sadly, it has become somewhat popular today for teachers of the "so called gospel" to assert that all religions lead to the same place... that there are "many paths that lead to heaven."** This is known as **universalism**, and its **FALSE!** It is neither Biblical nor loving!
  - o <sup>6</sup> Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. **No one comes to the Father except through me.** John 14:6 (NIV)
    - <sup>12</sup> Salvation is found in **no one else**, for there is **no other name** under heaven given to mankind **by which we must be saved.** Acts 4:12 (NIV)
  - o <sup>1</sup> I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for **all people**... <sup>3</sup> This is good, and pleases God our Savior, <sup>4</sup> **who wants all people to be saved** and to come to a knowledge of the truth. <sup>5</sup> For there is **one God** and **one mediator** between God and mankind, **the man Christ Jesus**, <sup>6</sup> who gave himself as a ransom for **all people**. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time. <sup>7</sup> And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle... 1 Timothy 2:1-7 (NIV)
    - **TRUTH: YOU ARE NO LONGER PREACHING THE GOSPEL IF** you're not preaching salvation through Christ Jesus alone & exclusivity to the Lord alone.

**Colossians 3...** <sup>5</sup> Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: **sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, WHICH IS IDOLATRY.** <sup>6</sup> Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. <sup>7</sup> You **used to** walk in these ways, in the life you **once lived.** <sup>8</sup> But now you must also **rid yourselves of all such things** as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. <sup>9</sup> Do not lie to each other, since you have **TAKEN OFF** your old self with its practices <sup>10</sup> and have **PUT ON** the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. **Col. 3:5-10 (NIV)**

**Quick Idolatry Screening Test:** *Search me, God, & know my heart; See if there is any offensive way in me...* Ps. 139:23-24

You will be the highest aim of my...

1. **Attention** – what consistently takes priority in your mind & heart?
2. **Affection** – what do you love, cherish, & adore above all else?
3. **Ambition** – what do you strive for? what drives you?
4. **Allegiance** – what are you willing to sacrifice for?

**Common ‘idols’ Of Our Day:** Self (“me”). Pleasure. Sex. Status. Power. Control. Autonomy (“freedom”). Convenience (“ease”). Wealth. Entertainment. And more.

- <sup>1</sup> But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. <sup>2</sup> People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, <sup>3</sup> without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, <sup>4</sup> treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— <sup>5</sup> having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people. **2 Timothy 3:1-5**
- **TRUTH: Brothers & Sisters, we are called to CONTEND against IDOLS in our lives.** As The First Commandments says, **“YOU SHALL HAVE NO OTHER gods BEFORE ME.” Exodus 20:3**
  - o Judgement must begin in the house of the Lord. This is where the Word of God cuts like a scalpel. It may feel uncomfortable, but it is a LIFESAVING operation!

## CONTEND or CONTENT?

**Gideon... much has been said about this example given in Scripture, and much more could be said...**

- Sadly, his story has a tragic ending. In the closing lines of his story we read:
- *“I do have one request, that each of you give me an earring from your share of the plunder.” (It was the custom of the Ishmaelites to wear gold earrings.) Judges 8:24 (NIV)*
  - o **The People Grant His Request:** *Gideon made the gold into an ephod, which he placed in Ophrah, his town. All Israel prostituted themselves by worshiping it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and his family. Judges 8:27 (NIV)*
  - o **Finally:** <sup>33</sup> *No sooner had Gideon died than the Israelites again prostituted themselves to the Baals. Judges 8:33 (NIV)*
- **In the end, his nickname proved true... Baal contended with “Jerub-Baal” and overcame him.**

**TWO EXAMPLES: Gideon vs. Elijah... NIGHT & DAY difference!**

- Both men confronted idols in their day. In fact, the SAME EXACT ONE (750yrs between).
  - o **In Judges 6:** Gideon did so AT NIGHT, in secret, full of **FEAR.**
  - o **In 1 Kings 18:** Elijah did so in BROAD DAYLIGHT, on a mountain, surrounded by 400 armed prophets, full of **FAITH!**

In the end, Gideon ended up in compromise and idol worship... leaving behind a **double standard.** Elijah on the other hand... He left behind a strong legacy, and an apprentice with a **double portion!**