

Judges Chapter 6 Part 8

On Sunday, Herman talked about the will of God. He quoted:

Romans 12:1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

As he said, “We must daily transform our minds by the power of the Holy Spirit in our study of the Word of God.” We are here to study the Word of God that we might transform our minds and know the will of God. The Word of God is comprised of both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

I spend a lot of time in the Old Testament because there are many stories that illustrate spiritual principles.

Sometimes, when teaching the Old Testament, and even the New Testament, I know what I want to say but don't have the words in my mind to express that thought. On occasion, I run across someone who has said almost exactly what I want to say. That person has the words that have alluded me. Here is an answer to the question, “Why study the Old Testament.” This answer is from Robbie Dean in his study of Judges in 2000/2001. It explains better than I did the usefulness of studying the Old Testament.

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“One of the great principles in using the Old Testament is that often the principles that we see in the New Testament that are explained in the epistles as more mechanics, more exhortations and commandments, mandates, for the spiritual life we see displayed worked out in flesh and blood. We look at people who are not dissimilar from us and we recognize that as James says of Elijah, "they are men like us," they have the same problems, they have the same sin nature, they have the same struggles that we do and as we look at them we gain a greater perspective, I think, of how God works in our own lives and of the depths of His grace.” [<https://deanbible.org/old-testament-menuitem/judges-menuitem/message/2000-judges-030/read>]

Here is what James said:

James 5:16b ...A prayer of a righteous person, when it is brought about, can accomplish much. (Preparation, Petition, Pursuit)

James 5:17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.

James 5:18 Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.

The faith heroes in Hebrews chapter 11 are human beings just like us. Gideon, one of those faith heroes, was in many respects flawed. But God’s grace working through Bible instruction plus the power of the Holy Spirit can manifest itself in amazing events.

Judges 6:25 Now on the same night the Lord said to him, “Take your father’s bull and a second bull seven years old, and tear down the altar of Baal which belongs to your father, and cut down the Asherah that is beside it;

In the Middle East there used to be a great reverence for age. Those with years of learning and experience were deferred to. So, when a young “whipper snapper” challenges his father, there has to be some concern.

Have you ever “corrected” your father? When I was a teenager, in the mid-1960’s, my father was in the Navy stationed in Naples, Italy. During the summer months, my father would take leave and we would travel in Europe. My mom didn’t want to lose the opportunity to see what many only dreamed of visiting.

One summer, my father drove the family to France, got on the ferry to the UK, visited the UK and returned. My dad had parked the car at the port of Calais in northern France. When he tried to start the car, nothing happened. He put the key in the ignition, turned it and nothing happened. My father was an aircraft mechanic able to take apart aircraft engines and car engines in his sleep. With the hood of the car up, my father traced the wires from the battery to various parts of the engine. He couldn’t figure out what was wrong. He thought of having to get a French mechanic to work on the car. How embarrassing that would be. The car was perhaps a Fiat 2300 with an electric automatic clutch.

I was never very good with mechanics. I preferred other areas of science. Eventually, I was attracted to software. I knew nothing about the inner workings of the car. However, I had taken a summer course on drivers education. We moved to Naples, Italy before the course completed. But, I did learn that in the newer cars, those with automatic transmission, that in order to start the car it had to be in Neutral or Park. Now, while in

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Europe, I did not have a license and was forbidden to drive. European drivers, especially in Italy were a different breed than American drivers.

Gently, I suggested to my father that the car needed to be in Neutral or Park. It was currently in drive. My father was used to driving a manual shift. He was convinced that it didn't matter what gear the car was in. And for a manual shift car, that was true. But, my father was out of options mechanically, so reluctantly he put the wiring back in place and got in the car. He put it in Park and the car started up immediately. There was that second when you could see my father's surprise. How did his kid know more about a car than he did? He turned to my mother and said that I had just saved the day.

So, in the following biblical story, Gideon teaches his father a spiritual lesson. It was one that Gideon just learned from the Pre-Existent Christ, the second person of the Trinity, God Himself.

Per Robbie Dean, "What we learn from this is that Gideon's father has a Baal temple in his backyard so that Gideon's family is deeply immersed in Baal worship, in fact, his father is the lead promoter of the Baal religion and the Canaanite religion in their region. So God is basically saying to Gideon, okay, we handled the first part, I gave you a commission, we're learning a few things about doctrinal orientation, but it's not just academic truth. You don't just learn that I have a plan for your life; that plan involves application and before you can function as a servant of me you must first start applying some truth."

The basic problem is that the nation has rejected, abandoned Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of the covenant, their God. They violated the first and second commandments:

**Exodus 20:1 Then God spoke all these words,
saying,**

Exodus 20:2 “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

Exodus 20:3 “You shall have no other gods before Me.

Exodus 20:4 “You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth.

Exodus 20:5 You shall not worship them nor serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, inflicting the punishment of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,

Exodus 20:6 but showing favor [Hebrew: chesed] to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

There is an issue in the Hebrew with the bulls. I will let Robbie Dean explain it:

“So God commands him to take his father's bull, and a second bull seven years old. Now the interesting thing here is that this second bull is, in the Hebrew it's what's called a homophone or a homonym, it's a word that is similar to, looks like another word. It is the word *sheniy*, which is the standard word for second, but why, the question should occur to us, why is he to take this second bull. There's also an indication that this is a seven year old bull, that it's a son of the older bull, why this second bull, what's going on here, because it's the second bull that is sacrificed.

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What's the significance of it being "second?" From cognate studies, those are related languages, it appears that there was another word, spelled the same way, in Aramaic and that tells us by looking at other languages like Aramaic and Phoenician and Ugaritic and Akkadian we can learn some things about the Hebrew language because the only surviving documents that we have on ancient Hebrew is the Hebrew text and sometimes there are words that are used only one time, or two or three times, that have certain meanings and we're not aware of them because we just don't have enough documents from the ancient world to come to a firm conclusion so we look at how these cognate languages use a similar word. There is a homonym in Aramaic spelled the same way that refers to that which is superior, that which is of high rank, that which is of high quality and so that would seem to fit the context better because it's not just the second bull that's sacrificed, what's significant of second, but what is sacrificed is a bull of high quality, of sacrificial quality. Just like the lamb that is without spot or blemish, this is a prize bull, this is not just any old bull that he pulls out of the herd."

And here is the issue with "seven years old," again from Robbie Dean:

"So he is to take his father's bull and a bull of high quality that is seven years of age. Now why is it supposed to be of seven years of age; what does that have to do with it. Well look back at Judges 6:1, "Then the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD gave them into the hands of Midian for seven years." So this bull is as old as the time of the oppression, so this bull is identified in his life with the period of discipline in Israel's life. So therefore it is fit to be a substitute, a sacrifice for the people. In the same way the Lord Jesus Christ was a true man, He was fully human, He was undiminished deity, united with true humanity in the hypostatic union so that He could go to the cross as our substitute, and that's the function of a sacrifice, is to serve as a substitute."

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Cut down the Asherah. The word “cut down” besides being used for cutting things down, can also be used for “cutting a covenant.” In other words, it also has a theological component in its usage.

Judges 6:26 and build an altar to the Lord your God on the top of this stronghold in an orderly way, and take a second bull and offer a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah which you shall cut down.”

Stronghold. Robbie Dean has a good explanation of what this is. “...the Hebrew word for stronghold is *maoz*, and this refers to a Canaanite temple sanctuary that is fortified with both walls and towers. Now that doesn't mean it's a large area, probably not half the size, from what we know of archaeological remains it's probably but not half the size of this meeting house, but it was built up, there were clearly walls that were 8 or 10 feet tall and there were towers on the corner and so there was more to this than just coming up with a couple of bulls and pulling a few things apart. It involved other men as well.”

Burnt Offering. Previously, Gideon had prepared a meal and the Angel of the Lord essentially converted it into a burnt offering. It is almost as if the first offering was for Gideon. Now, it is as if the offering is for the nation.

Judges 6:27 Then Gideon took ten men from his servants and did as the Lord had spoken to him; and because he was too afraid of his father's household and the men of the city to do it by day, he did it by night.

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Gideon used two bulls and ten men to first tear down the structure for Baal and construct an altar to God. He did it by night because he was afraid.

If Gideon's family had more than ten servants, then he was from a wealthy family.

Judges 6:28 When the people of the city got up early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal had been torn down, and the Asherah which had been beside it had been cut down, and the second bull had been offered on the altar which had been built.

Judges 6:29 So they said to one another, "Who did this thing?" And when they searched and inquired, they said, "Gideon the son of Joash did this thing."

This thing. The word translated "thing," can mean "thing." But it is a theologically charged word. It is the word for "word." Like the Word of the Lord or the Word of Scripture. The writer of Judges is having fun throwing Scriptural rocks at the idolators.

Searched and inquired. Wow! These are two words that also have a theological slant. They are very similar in meaning.

Searched is one of our Hebrew friends, *darash*.

Inquired is another of our Hebrew friends *biqesh*.

We encountered them when we studied Zephaniah some time ago. Here is a quote from a commentator on the book of Zephaniah, Kapelrud:

"The first positive demands which appear in the book are those in 1:6, *biqes*[^] yhw^h and *daras*[^], to seek Yahweh and to strive to find him.

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These expressions were mentioned above as central in the prophet's preaching, to designate worship of Yahweh and obedience to his word. The verb *bqs*[^] is used three times in 2:3 and can be neutral in its meaning, simply indicating 'to search'. In religious use, however, it has a more special meaning: to search in order to find help and guidance. The search is often supposed to go through cultic channels: prayers, offerings, sacrifices, or use of psalms (Deut 4:29, 2Sam 12:16, 21:1; Ps 24:6, 27:8 40:17, 69:7, 105:3f., Jer 29:13, Hos 5:6, 15, Amos 8:12)."

These idolators, instead of seeking and inquiring of God, they are inquiring and seeking to find who defiled the altar of Baal so they can kill him. The world was upside down and backwards...much like today in the world.

Judges 6:30 Then the men of the city said to Joash, "Bring out your son, that he may die, for he has torn down the altar of Baal, and indeed, he has cut down the Asherah which was beside it."

I find great irony in this verse. The men of the city want to kill Gideon because he tore down the altar of Baal. Yet, they are the ones that should be put to death.

Leviticus 24:15 You shall also speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'If anyone curses his God, then he will bear the responsibility for his sin.

Leviticus 24:16 Moreover, the one who blasphemes the name of the Lord must be put to death; all the congregation shall certainly stone him. The stranger as well as the native,

when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death.

Indeed, in the following verses, Gideon's father is now onboard with worship toward Yahweh instead of Baal and is ready to kill those who try to kill his son.

Judges 6:31 But Joash said to all who stood against him, "Will you contend for Baal, or will you save him? Whoever will contend for him shall be put to death by morning. If he is a god, let him contend for himself, since someone has torn down his altar!"

Save. This is rich! Gideon is going to save Israel from the Midianites. But the opposition to God, the Baal-worshippers, want to kill him and save Baal.

Judges 6:32 Therefore on that day he named Gideon Jerubbaal, that is to say, "Let Baal contend against him," because he had torn down his altar.

Contend. Here is another word with a theological slant. The noun form is used of a court case against someone. In Hosea and other prophets, the Lord has a case against Israel.

Hosea 4:1 Listen to the word of the Lord, you sons of Israel, Because the Lord has a case against the inhabitants of the land, For there is no faithfulness, nor loyalty, Nor knowledge of God in the land.

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At times, the Israelites avoided saying the name “Baal.” So in 2 Samuel 11:15, there is a reference to Gideon as “Jerubbesheth,” which means “contender with shame,” according to Merrill Unger.

Here is Robbie Dean’s take on Gideon’s names.

“Now the interesting thing is, I've always been fascinated by the use of Biblical names and how they are used to communicate certain things. Everywhere else in the Bible except for Judges and the reference to Gideon in Hebrews 11, Gideon is referred to by the name Jerubbaal, but when you get into other passages, sometimes the Baal is changed to bosheth, where it's changed to Jerubbesheth; Jerubbesheth means let shame contend. We have other examples of compound names with Baal, like Ish-baal is changed to Ish-bosheth; Merib-baal is changed to Mephibosheth in 2 Samuel 4:4. All of that seems to suggest that Jerubbaal is Gideon's real name. He wasn't named Gideon; Gideon means to hew down or to cut down, that Gideon was his second name but the name that his father had given him from birth was Jerubbaal and that here his father is referring to that and this is all an ironic statement that's saying just let the kid live, Baal will contend for himself and it'll all work itself out.”

Judges 6:33 Then all the Midianites, the Amalekites, and the people of the east assembled together; and they crossed over and camped in the Valley of Jezreel.

At some point, the hostile forces were aware of what was going on in Israel. There was organized opposition growing inside Israel. Like other texts in the book of Judges, there is no narrative explaining how this happened. That is not important to this story.

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Valley of Jezreel. Another name used of this valley is the valley of Armageddon. Looking forward into future history, a great battle will occur at the end of the Tribulation here.

Judges 6:34 So the Spirit of the Lord covered Gideon like clothing; and he blew a trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called together to follow him.

So the Spirit of the Lord covered Gideon like clothing. Here Gideon is endued with the Holy Spirit. It is interesting to note, this is not an “indwelling.” It is a temporary enablement.

Judges 6:35 And he sent messengers throughout Manasseh, and they also were called together to follow him; and he sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and they came up to meet them.