

## Tear It Down!

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"[...] the LORD said to him, "Take the second bull from your father's herd, [...]. Tear down your father's altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole beside it. 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." (Judges 6:25-26; NIV)

- Wow! Imagine God instructing us to destroy our dad's idolatrous stuff, to replace it with an altar to the Lord and sacrifice our dad's second most valuable asset on it. Boy, would we be in trouble if we obeyed, wouldn't we? I picture my African friends having to make quick work of the whole ancestral worship setup, which is certainly one of their biggest idolatries to get rid off. Or my friends from the western world (including myself) who have to contend with philosophies, intellectual knowledge, or altars like banks, stock exchanges, shopping temples and the like, to replace them with the "real deal" again.

"So Gideon [...] did as the LORD told him. But because he was afraid of his family and the men of the town, he did it at night rather than in the daytime." (Judges 6:27, NIV)

Well, Gideon was afraid but obedient. God clearly demands us to neither have nor worship any other god beside Him (e.g. Exodus 34:14; Leviticus 19:4+31). So, despite trembling with fear in view of possible repercussions from godless people, Gideon still obeyed God more than man (Acts 5:29) and corrected dutifully what had gone completely off track.

- Would we act like him? Are we acting like Gideon? Our Baal altars and Ashera poles look different today, of course, but we still have them around. One of those things we tend to worship more than the Creator Himself is the world's finance system. Naturally, we don't literally kneel down and pray to it, but by putting our hopes and trust into something that wars directly with God for our love (Matthew 6:24) we too practice idol worship. So are we prepared to "tear this altar down" in our lives, i.e. exposing its destructive setup and renouncing in word and deed our dependance on it, turning back to God as our true source and provider, despite fearing nasty backlashes like ridicule, animosity, etc.?

"The men 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." But Joash replied to the hostile crowd around him, "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." (Judges 6:30-31, NIV)

This response was mind-boggling cause culturally the father had to punish his son severely for such insubordinate deed. But Joash stood up for his God-fearing kid. Moreover, he reprimanded the hostile crowd who saw their world shattered. His brazen statement that Baal could help himself if he was a real god, was truly refreshing in such an idolatrous setup.

- Frankly, I'm shocked at times by the hostility shown to me when "tearing down the altar" of our idolatrous world financial system, which more often than not is so uncritically "worshipped" as the solution to almost all our economical problems. Are we just too blinded to see how this system rules our lives and demands our total dedication, yet opposes the Lord our God blatantly in many ways? Or do we simply don't want to know the unpleasant truth? "You cannot serve both God and money", Jesus exhorts us. So as believers we can't steal away from our responsibility to expose and destroy that idol.
- Experiencing the destructive force of our monetary system getting increasingly unleashed today (the worst is still to come!) should surely convince us of how big of an altars this is, our forefathers have built. Its time to tear it down ...