

#71

CUT DOWN THE GROVES

Seeking The LORD God

SONGS
 DELIVERANCE MINISTRY.ORG
PO Box 804 Kenosha, WI 53141 Psalm 32:7

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Seeking The LORD God

TEXT:	Judges 6:25-32
KEY VERSE:	2 Chronicles 14:2-5

And Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God: For he took away the altars of the strange gods, and the high places, and brake down the images, and cut down the groves: And commanded Judah to seek the LORD God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment. Also he took away out of all the cities of Judah the high places and the images: and the kingdom was quiet before him. 2 Chronicles 14:2-5 [KJV]

Neither give place to the devil.

Ephesians 4:27

*I'm going to come to your city,
and I'm going to walk down your street,
and I'm going to knock on your door,
and I'm going to walk into your bedroom,
and I'm going to look under your mattress.*

READ: EZEKIEL 8.

¹⁻⁴ *In the sixth year, in the sixth month and the fifth day, while I was sitting at home meeting with the leaders of Judah, it happened that the hand of my Master, GOD, gripped me. When I looked, I was astonished. What I saw looked like a man—from the waist down like fire and from the waist up like highly burnished bronze. He reached out what looked like a hand and grabbed me by the hair. The Spirit swept me high in the air and carried me in visions of God to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the north gate of the Temple's inside court where the image of the sex goddess that makes God so angry had been set up. Right before me was the Glory of the God of Israel, exactly like the vision I had seen out on the plain.*

⁵ *He said to me, "Son of man, look north." I looked north and saw it: Just north of the entrance loomed the altar of the sex goddess, Asherah, that makes God so angry.*

⁶ *Then he said, "Son of man, do you see what they're doing? Outrageous obscenities! And doing them right here! It's enough to drive me right out of my own Temple. But you're going to see worse yet."*

** * **

⁷ *He brought me to the door of the Temple court. I looked and saw a gaping hole in the wall.*

⁸ *He said, "Son of man, dig through the wall."*

I dug through the wall and came upon a door.

⁹ He said, "Now walk through the door and take a look at the obscenities they're engaging in."

¹⁰⁻¹¹ I entered and looked. I couldn't believe my eyes: Painted all over the walls were pictures of reptiles and animals and monsters—the whole pantheon of Egyptian gods and goddesses—being worshiped by Israel. In the middle of the room were seventy of the leaders of Israel, with Jaazaniah son of Shaphan standing in the middle. Each held his censer with the incense rising in a fragrant cloud.

¹² He said, "Son of man, do you see what the elders are doing here in the dark¹, each one before his favorite god-picture? They tell themselves, 'GOD doesn't see us. GOD has forsaken the country.'"

¹³ Then he said, "You're going to see worse yet."

* * *

¹⁴⁻¹⁵ He took me to the entrance at the north gate of the Temple of GOD. I saw women sitting there, weeping for Tammuz, the Babylonian fertility god. He said, "Have you gotten an eyeful, son of man? You're going to see worse yet."

* * *

¹⁶ Finally, he took me to the inside court of the Temple of GOD. There between the porch and the altar were about twenty-five men. Their backs were to GOD's Temple. They were facing east, bowing in worship to the sun.

¹⁷⁻¹⁸ He said, "Have you seen enough, son of man? Isn't it bad enough that Judah engages in these outrageous obscenities? They fill the country with violence and now provoke me even further with their obscene gestures. That's it. They have an angry God on their hands! From now on, no mercy. They can shout all they want, but I'm not listening."

A Mark on the Forehead

¹ Then I heard him call out loudly, "Executioners, come! And bring your deadly weapons with you."

² Six men came down the road from the upper gate that faces north, each carrying his lethal weapon. With them was a man dressed in linen with a writing case slung from his shoulder.

They entered and stood by the bronze altar.

³⁻⁴ The Glory of the God of Israel ascended from his usual place above the cherubim-angels, moved to the threshold of the Temple, and called to the man with the writing case who was dressed in linen: "Go through the streets of Jerusalem and put a mark on the forehead of everyone who is in anguish over the outrageous obscenities being done in the city."

⁵⁻⁶ I listened as he went on to address the executioners: "Follow him through the city and kill. Feel sorry for no one. Show no compassion. Kill old men and women, young men and women, mothers and children. But don't lay a hand on anyone with the mark. Start at my Temple."

They started with the leaders in front of the Temple.

⁷⁻⁸ He told the executioners, "Desecrate the Temple. Fill it with corpses. Then go out and continue the killing." So, they went out and struck the city.

While the massacre went forward, I was left alone. I fell on my face in prayer: "Oh, oh, GOD, my Master! Are you going to kill everyone left in Israel in this pouring out of your anger on Jerusalem?"

⁹⁻¹⁰ He said, "The guilt of Israel and Judah is enormous. The land is swollen with murder. The city is bloated with injustice. They all say, 'GOD has forsaken the country. He doesn't see anything we do.' Well, I do see, and I'm not feeling sorry for any of them. They're going to pay for what they've done."

¹¹ Just then, the man dressed in linen and carrying the writing case came back and reported, "I've done what you told me."

The Temple, Filled with the Presence of GOD

¹ When I next looked, oh! Above the dome over the heads of the cherubim-angels was what looked like a throne, sky-blue, like a sapphire!

²⁻⁵ GOD said to the man dressed in linen, "Enter the place of the wheels under the cherubim-angels. Fill your hands with burning coals from beneath the cherubim and scatter them over the city."

I watched as he entered. The cherubim were standing on the south side of the Temple when the man entered. A cloud filled the inside courtyard. Then the Glory of GOD ascended from the

¹ KJV "In the chambers of their imagery" [imagination]

cherubim and moved to the threshold of the Temple. The cloud filled the Temple. Court and Temple were both filled with the blazing presence of the Glory of GOD. And the sound! The wings of the cherubim were audible all the way to the outer court—the sound of the voice was like The Strong God in thunder.
Ezekiel 8:1 - 10:2 [The Message]

¹⁹ *What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?*

²⁰ *For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*
1 Corinthians 6:19,20
[KJV]

The Demon.

¹⁰ *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*
John 10:10

THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD.

The enemy is but a fallen Angel. He is not a god. “He is a liar and the father of it.”² He wants to be like God.³ He wants to create and rule and decide, but he does not have that authority.

BUT YOU DO!

Under the old covenant, man had dominion on the earth.

Genesis 1: 26-31

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God allowed Adam to name everything in His creation, not out of curiosity, but because it was Adam's domain.

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God created the world and put it in the hands and under the authority of man. It was his dominion. He was to rule it, control it, populate it, and maintain it.

He allowed the devil to take away his dominion and authority by convincing him that he needed something that he already had. The devil said, “You will be like God.” Adam already *was* like God! He was made in God's image. He was given God's authority on earth. He had been allowed to name God's

own creation. Everything God made he handed to Adam “to see what he would call it⁴.” God did not do that out of curiosity. He did it because this was Adam's domain. God himself had said so.

Adam gave that away!

Under the new covenant, man has dominion on the earth *and* in heaven.

Luke 10: 17-20

When Jesus brought in the new covenant, he brought back our dominion, but he added to our dominion. Because of the blood of Jesus Christ, the dominion that Adam once had has been returned to us, but now we also have dominion in the spiritual realm.

² John 8: 44

³ Isaiah 14: 12-15

⁴ Genesis 2:19

- Luke 12: 32
- Matthew 16: 19
- Ephesians 1: 20, 2: 6, 3: 10-20
- Revelation 1: 6, 5: 10

Twice in Luke 10, Jesus used the word, “power.”

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He has only ever had one
method of doing that!

He convinces God's people to
give their authority to him!

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“I give unto you *power*...”
“*exousia*.” It means, “authority.”

The word is

“The *power* of the enemy...”
“*dunamis*.” It means, “might, or strength.”

the word is

Somewhere in Arizona or Nevada, there is a deep silo built into the ground in which sits a missile that carries the ability to nearly wipe out our enemy in a single attack. It is *dunamis*. It is might. It is strength. It is incredibly destructive force when it is unleashed.

Only one man has the *exousia* to push the button that launches that missile. That is authority!

Under the new covenant, we have that kind of authority within the Kingdom of God.

The enemy wants to take that authority away from you.

He has only ever had one method of doing that! He convinces God's people to give their authority to him! To do so, is to worship him. When we give Satan the right to tell us what to do, when we listen to what he says, we deny what the word of God says about us. We deny the authority that we have over the devil, and by doing that, we worship him instead of God.

So, it is a messenger of Satan, a demon that convinces you to bow to another god. Behind every false god is a demon. No matter what people have named their idol, throughout history it has always been an image, a picture of the devil that they are truly worshipping.

The idol.

Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Exodus 20:3

His name, Baal, means “Master.”

Her name is Asherah [or Ishtar, or Ashtoreth], the sex goddess.

His name is Moloch, the God of destruction.

They are the unholy Trinity of false gods. Again, they merely represent the unholy Trinity of the devil.

1. It began in the imagination.

In Ezekiel chapter 8, the King James Bible, God told Ezekiel, “Do you see what they're doing in the chambers of their imagery (their imaginations)?” In their imaginations was something other than God. What they imagined was what they truly worshipped. *In the temple of God!*

What you and I imagine is what we truly worship!

In the temple of God.

2. It progressed to outward idolatry.

In Ezekiel chapter 8, the women were weeping for Tammuz. In the mythology, Asherah had a lover, Tammuz, who had spurned her, so she had her lover killed. Yet she wept for her lover. Thus, weeping for Tammuz became a part of the worship of Ashura. *In the temple of God!*

What we allow in our imaginations never stays there! It demands to be worshipped. It demands to be brought out into the open; to “come out of the closet” you might say.

What you and I imagine in secret, we will one day worship in the open!

3. It ended in complete rejection of the true God.

In Ezekiel chapter 8, twenty-five men sat in the very temple of God with their backs to the temple of God, worshipping creation, worshipping eastern mysticism, *worshipping Satan*.

The groves.

It was against God's law to worship idols. God had told his people not to mingle with the people of the land because they were idolaters. He warned them that if they did, their sons would marry their daughters, and they would drag them into idolatry⁵. So, they built groves, secret places to worship Baal, and Asherah, and Molech. The groves were in the woods, where no one could see.

The mighty man of valor.

1-6 Yet again the People of Israel went back to doing evil in GOD's sight. GOD put them under the domination of Midian for seven years. Midian overpowered Israel. Because of Midian, the People of Israel made for themselves hideouts in the mountains—caves and forts. When Israel planted its crops, Midian and Amalek, the easterners, would invade them, camp in their fields, and destroy their crops all the way down to Gaza. They left nothing for them to live on, neither sheep nor ox nor donkey. Bringing their cattle and tents, they came in and took over, like an invasion of locusts. And their camels—past counting! They marched in and devastated the country. The People of Israel, reduced to grinding poverty by Midian, cried out to GOD for help.

7-10 One time when the People of Israel had cried out to GOD because of Midian, GOD sent them a prophet with this message: “GOD, the God of Israel, says,

I delivered you from Egypt,

I freed you from a life of slavery;

I rescued you from Egypt's brutality

⁵ Exodus 34:13-17

and then from every oppressor;

I pushed them out of your way

and gave you their land.

“And I said to you, ‘I am GOD, your God. Don’t for a minute be afraid of the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living.’ But you didn’t listen to me.”

11-12 One day the angel of GOD came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, whose son Gideon was threshing wheat in the winepress, out of sight of the Midianites. The angel of GOD appeared to him and said, “GOD is with you, O mighty warrior!”

13 Gideon replied, “With me, my master? If GOD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all the miracle-wonders our parents and grandparents told us about, telling us, ‘Didn’t GOD deliver us from Egypt?’ The fact is, GOD has nothing to do with us—he has turned us over to Midian.”

14 But GOD faced him directly: “Go in this strength that is yours. Save Israel from Midian. Haven’t I just sent you?”

15 Gideon said to him, “Me, my master? How and with what could I ever save Israel? Look at me. My clan’s the weakest in Manasseh and I’m the runt of the litter.”

16 GOD said to him, “I’ll be with you. Believe me, you’ll defeat Midian as one man.”

17-18 Gideon said, “If you’re serious about this, do me a favor: Give me a sign to back up what you’re telling me. Don’t leave until I come back and bring you my gift.”

He said, “I’ll wait till you get back.”

19 Gideon went and prepared a young goat and a huge amount of unraised bread (he used over half a bushel of flour!). He put the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot and took them back under the shade of the oak tree for a sacred meal.

20 The angel of God said to him, “Take the meat and unraised bread, place them on that rock, and pour the broth on them.” Gideon did it.

21-22 The angel of GOD stretched out the tip of the stick he was holding and touched the meat and the bread. Fire broke out of the rock and burned up the meat and bread while the angel of God slipped away out of sight. And Gideon knew it was the angel of God!

Gideon said, “Oh no! Master, GOD! I have seen the angel of God face-to-face!”

23 But GOD reassured him, "Easy now. Don't panic. You won't die."

24 Then Gideon built an altar there to GOD and named it "GOD's Peace." It's still called that at Ophrah of Abiezer.

25-26 That night this happened. GOD said to him, "Take your father's best seven-year-old bull, the prime one. Tear down your father's Baal altar and chop down the Asherah fertility pole beside it. Then build an altar to GOD, your God, on the top of this hill. Take the prime bull and present it as a Whole-Burnt-Offering, using firewood from the Asherah pole that you cut down."

27 Gideon selected ten men from his servants and did exactly what GOD had told him. But because of his family and the people in the neighborhood, he was afraid to do it openly, so he did it that night.

28 Early in the morning, the people in town were shocked to find Baal's altar torn down, the Asherah pole beside it chopped down, and the prime bull burning away on the altar that had been built.

29 They kept asking, "Who did this?"

Questions and more questions, and then the answer: "Gideon son of Joash did it."

30 The men of the town demanded of Joash: "Bring out your son! He must die! Why, he tore down the Baal altar and chopped down the Asherah tree!"

31 But Joash stood up to the crowd pressing in on him, "Are you going to fight Baal's battles for him? Are you going to save him? Anyone who takes Baal's side will be dead by morning. If Baal is a god in fact, let him fight his own battles and defend his own altar."

*32 They nicknamed Gideon that day * Jerub-Baal because after he had torn down the Baal altar, he had said, "Let Baal fight his own battles."*

Judges 6:1-32

*Jerub-Baal

The one who contends with Baal, "the master."

READ: THROUGH JUDGES 8:21

God thinks more highly of you than you think of yourself!

¹² *And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, The Lord is with you, you mighty man of [fearless] courage. Judges 6:12 [AMPC]*

God chooses men who are hiding in a cave, overwhelmed with shame, hoping that the devil won't find them. He takes those men, get rid of their idols, and wins a mighty victory.

Cut down the groves!

God has a mighty victory that he wants to place in your hands!

14 His friend said, "This has to be the sword of Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite! God has turned Midian—the whole camp!—over to him."

Judges 7:14

19 Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you.

Luke 10:19

Cut down the groves!

Nothing between my soul and the Savior,
Naught of this world's delusive dream;
I have renounced all sinful pleasure;
Jesus is mine, there's nothing between.

Nothing between my soul and the Savior,
So that His blessed face may be seen;
Nothing preventing the least of His favor,
Keep the way clear! Let nothing between.

Nothing between, like worldly pleasure;
Habits of life, though harmless they seem,
Must not my heart from Him e'er sever;
He is my all, there's nothing between.

Nothing between, like pride or station;
Self-life or friends shall not intervene;
Though it may cost me much tribulation,
I am resolved; there's nothing between.

Nothing between, e'en many hard trials,
Though the whole world against me convene;
Watching with prayer and much self-denial,
I'll triumph at last, with nothing between.

DON'T GO BACK!

- Judges 6:22-32
- Judges 3:7,8