

# The Tears of Bochim

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**Bible Text:** Judges 2:1-5  
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We turn in God's word tonight to Judges 2. Judges 2. In Judges 2,

1 And an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you. 2 And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this? 3 Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you. 4 And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept. 5 And they called the name of that place Bochim: and they sacrificed there unto the LORD. 6 And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land. 7 And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel. 8 And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old. 9 And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathheres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash. 10 And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. 11 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim: 12 And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger. 13 And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth. 14 And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. 15 Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed.

16 Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them. 17 And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; but they did not so. 18 And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them. 19 And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way. 20 And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice; 21 I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died: 22 That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not. 23 Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out hastily; neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua.

This is God's word holy and inspired. May he bless it to our hearts this evening.

Our text is verses 1 through 5 which we will read again.

1 And an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you. 2 And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this? 3 Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you. 4 And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept. 5 And they called the name of that place Bochim: and they sacrificed there unto the LORD.

Beloved congregation in our Lord Jesus Christ, this is quite a scene that the word of God records for us here at the beginning of Judges 2. The place in which the events of this scene occur is the place Shiloh, that place where the tabernacle of God was kept during the end of the days of Joshua and for much of the history of the Judges. It's called Bochim here in the text because of the weeping of repentance of the people of Israel at the word of the angel of Jehovah, but this place that's called Bochim is Shiloh, the place where the people of God came together to worship at the tabernacle, where the altar of

burnt offering was, so that at the end of the rebuke and as they repented, they could offer there at Bochim, which was Shiloh, sacrifices and offerings unto the Lord at his altar.

An angel of the Lord, who is Jehovah himself, comes from Gilgal to Bochim where all of Israel was assembled for worship and the angel addresses his people and says to the Israelites, "I am your God which brought you out of Egypt. I am your God which brought you into this land that I swear to your fathers to give. And I am your God which has said I will never break my covenant with you. And my command to you, Israel, was that ye make no league," that word literally is "covenant," "that you make no covenant with the people of this land but that instead you throw down their altars, throw down the altars of their gods, throw down the altars of the Canaanites but ye have not done so. You have left those altars to stand. Why have ye done this? And now I tell you, Israel, that my judgment upon you and chastisement upon you is that their gods will be a snare to you. You tolerated their gods and their altars in your midst, and now those gods will overcome you. This is the judgment that I visit upon your toleration of the altars of the Canaanites." And when all of the people of Israel assembled for worship at Shiloh heard the words of the Lord, they lifted up their voice and they wept. It was the weeping of a godly sorrow, a weeping of a true repentance of the people of God rebuked by their covenant God who loved them and came to them in that love and gave them those beautiful tears, now they were painful tears but beautiful tears to his own people by his word and by his love. They wept in their true repentance for their sins of tolerating the altars of the Canaanites, and at the end of their weeping after which the place was named Bochim for a time, which means weepers, at the end of their weeping, they sacrificed to the Lord so that at the beginning when the angel of Jehovah came in his rebuke, there was a testimony of the love of God for his covenant people, and at the end there was a testimony of the covering of all their sins in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That place, then, that Bochim, was a special place. That place was a blessed place. Really it was a happy place though it is called Bochim, that is, weepers. It is the place of salvation, a place where the Lord came to turn the hearts of his people away from the altars of the Canaanites and unto himself in his sovereign covenant love and mercy, and that's still a good place today. It's a good place for the church to go today, the church which is always tempted to tolerate the altars of Canaan. It's good for us to go to Shiloh, to the house of God, to the place of worship, and there have the angel of Jehovah meet us and expose all our sins, uncover the iniquity of our hearts and the toleration of the altars of Canaan, and exposing us and rebuking us for that toleration of the altars of Canaan and bring us the good gift of repentance, true repentance which is the fruit of this faith that the Lord works in our hearts in our Savior Jesus Christ, that angel of Jehovah. And so tonight as a congregation, we make our way to Bochim where the angel of the Lord meets us and rebukes us and works in us this gift of true godly repentance.

Let us consider this word of God tonight, then, under the theme "The Tears of Bochim." In the first place, consider Israel's apostasy. In the second place, consider Jehovah's rebuke. And in the third place, consider Israel's tears. The tears of Bochim: Israel's apostasy; Jehovah's rebuke; and Israel's tears.

The sin for which Israel was rebuked at Shiloh or at Bochim was the sin of tolerating the altars of the Canaanites that littered the land of Canaan. The Israelites had not thrown down the altars of the Canaanites but had tolerated those altars and allowed those altars to stand. That was the charge of the angel in verse 2, "I said, ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice." An explanation of this charge. When the Israelites came into the land of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua, the land of Canaan was filled with the altars of the Canaanites. There were altars on the tops of the hills. There were altars under the green trees of the forest. There were altars by the rivers and the lakes in the land of Canaan. The land was filled with the altars of the Canaanites and these altars of the Canaanites each represented a Canaanite god, a Canaanite idol. There were altars to Baal. There were altars to Ashtaroath as the rest of chapter 2 makes plain. And there were altars to other Canaanite gods as well.

The Canaanites, which were made up of a number of powerful tribes such as the Hivites and the Jebusites and the Perrizites and the Girgashites, these Canaanite tribes all went to the altars in the land of Canaan in order to worship their god Baal, or their goddess Ashtaroath, or their other gods that were no gods but idols. The command of God to Israel was that when they came into the land of Canaan, their holy and solemn duty was to throw down the altars of the Canaanites. They were not to allow these altars to stand but were to destroy them and that was by the explicit command of Jehovah God himself. That command is recorded in Deuteronomy 12:2 and 3,

2 Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree: 3 And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place.

That means, then, that the command of God to Israel when they entered the land was not to tolerate the altars of the Canaanites but to throw them down, and by throw them down God meant do violence to those altars. Cut them into pieces. Hew them to the ground. Burn the splinters of those altars in the fire. Leave no place for those altars. Leave no memory of those altars in that place, but throw down the altars of the Canaanites. And because the Canaanites were devoted to their gods and to their altars, the Canaanites would oppose the Israelites in this call to throw down the altars.

The Canaanites would fight back in many cases and therefore the call of God was not only throw down the altars but kill the Hivites and the Jebusites and the Girgashites, and all of the other "ites" that made up the Canaanites. That command to kill is implied in our text, Judges 2, when the angel says, "ye shall make no league," no covenant, "with the inhabitants of this land," but that call to kill the enemies is explicitly taught in Deuteronomy 7:1-5.

1 When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; 2 And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: 3 Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. 4 For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. 5 But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire.

The solemn calling of the Israelites upon their entrance into Canaan was to throw down the altars of the Canaanites. The reason for that solemn calling of Israel as she entered into the land of Canaan was nothing less than the everlasting covenant of God with his people. The reason that they may not tolerate the altars of the Canaanite gods is because Israel did not belong to the Canaanite gods. Those gods were not the gods of Israel. Those gods were not the saviors of Israel. Those gods were rivals to the God of Israel, to the true God, Jehovah God. It was not the gods of the Hivites or the Girgashites that brought Israel out of the land of Egypt and brought them into the land of Canaan, it was the one true living God, Jehovah God, who had brought his people to himself in covenant love and mercy and the angle of Jehovah speaks of that covenant reason at the very beginning as the first thing in his speech to Israel at Shiloh in Judges 2:1 the angel says, "I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swear unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you."

The people of Israel belonged to Jehovah and to Jehovah alone and part of their covenant life with Jehovah, then, was to live the antithesis over against the people of the land of Canaan, over against all of the Canaanites. They were to make no league with the Canaanites but instead smite the Canaanites. They were not to tolerate the altars of the Canaanite gods but they were to throw down the altars of the Canaanite gods. There was enmity between Israel and the Canaanites, enmity that is due to the covenant love of God for his people that had redeemed them as the offspring of the seed of the woman, and that had put enmity between them and the wicked seed of the serpent that the Canaanites represented in the land of Canaan. The reason for the call of God to throw down the altars was his covenant love and possession of his people which meant an antithetical stance over against the Canaanites and their altars, and it is that covenant reason that would have made the Israelites, and that did make the Israelites zealous with a holy zeal for throwing down the altars of the Canaanites. Those altars of the Canaanites were intolerable to the Israelites because those altars of the Canaanites were a direct challenge to Jehovah God. The altars of the Canaanites said, "Our Canaanite gods have given us this land," whereas Jehovah, the only true God, had said, "This land is for my people and I give it unto

them." The children of God in Israel, the true Israelites according to the promise would have holy zeal for this project of throwing down the altars of the Canaanites.

How could they not when it was their God who had redeemed them by his strong arm and brought them into this land so that from the throats of the godly Canaanites would erupt a holy roar against all of the altars of Baal and the altars of Ashtaroah. They could not be tolerated in that land for these people of Israel belonged to the Lord and the Lord alone, and God has intended this project of throwing down the altars of the Canaanites to be a generational project. It was not meant to be over during the days of Joshua. In fact, we read in Deuteronomy 7:22 this word regarding the Canaanites and their altars,

22 And the LORD thy God will put out those nations before thee by little and little: thou mayest not consume them at once, lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee.

That was one of the reasons that God left some of the Canaanites, some of the tribes, and some of the altars after the death of Joshua and after the death of the elders that outlived Joshua, it was so that the beasts of the field who were not challenged by any man would not proliferate and become a danger to the Israelites. There were other reasons too but the point here is that God intended this to be a generational project for the children of Israel. The war was not finished with the conquest of Jericho. The war was not finished with the conquest of Ai. The war was not finished in all the campaigns of Joshua. The war was not finished in all the battles of the elders that outlived Joshua. The war was not finished generation after generation but this was the constant project all the days of Israel in the land of Canaan, throw down the altars of the Canaanites.

And Israel had begun well. She had entered into the land under Joshua and had slain the tribes that stood against them. They slew all the inhabitants of Jericho when God by that mighty miracle caused the walls of Jericho to fall flat. They slew the inhabitants of Ai. They slew many in the days and the campaigns of Joshua. We read of that in Joshua 10:39-40,

39 [Joshua took the city of Debir] and the king thereof, and all the cities thereof; and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and utterly destroyed all the souls that were therein; he left none remaining: as he had done to Hebron, so he did to Debir, and to the king thereof; as he had done also to Libnah, and to her king. 40 So Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings: he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the LORD God of Israel commanded.

Israel began well in throwing down the altars of the Canaanites, but by and by Israel became lax, by and by Israel put down her sword, by and by Israel beat her swords into plowshares and took possession of the land that was given to them by lot and began tilling and plowing and planting and harvesting that land. Israel had begun well but after a time she forgot the call of Jehovah God to throw down the altars of the Canaanites.

When she became strong, we read at the end of Judges 1, she did put the Canaanites to tribute and the Canaanites paid an annual tax to the Israelites under the threat of annihilation if they did not pay that tax. But the Israelites were not called to put them to a tax, the Israelites were called when they were strong to throw down the altars of Canaan and to destroy all of the Canaanite tribes. Israel by and by forgot her calling and allowed the altars of the Canaanites to stand and they tolerated them, they allowed them, knowingly allowed them to stay in the land. That was despising the covenant of Jehovah and Jehovah himself instead of a holy roar in the throat of the Israelite when he saw an altar of Baal, there was a hushed indifference to that altar of Baal, he allowed it to stand and tolerated it in the field next to his, that adjoined his, and in that village where the Canaanites had been strong, in which the Israelites were now strong to overcome but refused to overcome. This was no mere oversight on the part of Israel. This was covenant apostasy, despising the God of the covenant who had said, "You shall make no covenant with the nations of the land," and despising the covenant that God had made with his people by tolerating the altars of the Canaanites.

That was the apostasy of Israel, her failure to throw down the altars of the Canaanites. The church in the New Testament goes apostate the very same way that Old Testament Israel did. She goes apostate by failing to throw down the altars of the Canaanites, by tolerating those altars in her midst as the church. The apostasy of the church is not this, that she tolerates idols in the godless culture, although as Christians have opportunity they may speak out against those altars in the godless culture, but the apostasy of the New Testament church is that she tolerates the altars of Baal in Canaan, the altars of Baal in her own midst so that when an altar of Baal appears, there's no holy roar in the throat of the church of Jesus Christ but a muted indifference and toleration of that altar.

What specifically in the New Testament church does tolerating the altars of the Canaanites look like? And to understand that question, we have to understand the significance of the altar. There are really only two altars in all of history, the only two altars in all of history are the altar of Cain and the altar of Abel recorded in Genesis 4, and even though Genesis 4 does not use the word "altar" of Cain and "altar" of Abel, it does say that Cain and Abel both brought an offering to the Lord, and offerings of that sort are made on altars. Those are the only two altars that are possible in the history of the world, the altar of Cain and the altar of Abel.

The altar of Abel is the altar of God. The altar of Cain is the altar of man. The altar of Abel has upon it a lamb who has been slain, whose blood has been shed and drained out of its body, and whose dead body is placed upon the coals and the fire of that altar to be burned. The altar of Abel has upon it the Lamb of God who is our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the altar of Abel and the altar of God has upon it righteousness, the altar of God has upon it faith, the altar of God has upon it salvation, the altar of God has upon it eternal life, the altar of God has upon it heaven, the altar of God has upon it the grace of Jehovah God to his sinful people and the blood of the Lamb who is the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the altar of Abel. The altar of Cain is the altar of man and has upon it the works of man. That's what Cain's offering was, an offering of the fruit of the ground which

represented Cain's labor. God had said, "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou till the earth and bring forth out of it fruit." Cain's altar has upon it all of the good intentions of Cain to feed his family by his hard labor. Cain's altar has upon it the sweat of his brow in the heat of the sun. Cain's altar has upon it his own blood shed as he tore the thorns out of the ground in order to plow it and to till it and to plant seed. Cain's altar has upon it man and all that man represents and all of man's work and all of man's pleasure in the things of this earth. And so Cain's altar has upon it pride, Cain's altar has upon it Satan, Cain's altar has upon it eternal death and damnation and the grave.

Those are the only two altars and God has respect only unto one of those altars and one of those offerings, and does not have respect unto the other. He has respect unto Abel's and rejects Cain's. Those are the only two altars in all of the history of the world and you can find that altar of Abel throughout the Old Testament. That altar of Abel is found wherever the people of God came together to worship and confess their sins and acknowledge that they were nothing and that all of their salvation depended upon God providing the seed of the woman represented in the sacrifice of blood. The altar of Abel was found in Shiloh as the offer of burnt offering outside the tabernacle. The altar of Abel was found in the temple. The altar of Abel is found today in the New Testament church, in the true church of Jesus Christ, in the preaching of the Gospel of the Lamb of God and salvation through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and the grace of God that rescues sinners from their sin and misery, and by his own arm of strength takes them to heaven and takes them to salvation. The altar of Abel can be found all through the Old Testament and the New.

The altar of Cain can be found all through the Old Testament as well. That altar of Cain is found wherever man is celebrated. The altar of Cain was found in the altars of Canaan because those altars of Canaan which were to Baal and Ashtaroth and other gods and goddesses of the Canaanites were really altars to man. Baal represented all of the good powers and things of the earth that the people could enjoy. Ashtaroth represented the sexual prowess and fertility and pleasure that man could enjoy and display. And all of the other gods of the Canaanites likewise represented man and what man strives for and in what man desires. They were altars of Cain, they were altars of man, and the altar of Cain can be found in the New Testament church today wherever the church departs from the Gospel of Jesus Christ and teaches man and the salvation of man by man, at least in part, and all of the labor of man and the sweat of his brow and his good intentions and all of the sacrifices that he makes. That's the altar of Cain. It's the altar of man.

And the command of God to the New Testament church remains what it did in the Old Testament, throw down the altars of man. Throw down the altars of the Canaanites when you find them within the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. The New Testament church is not called to throw down those altars in a physical sense today. Our calling is not to go to a Roman Catholic Church, let's say, and burn it. That's not the calling. That was the Old Testament type burn and hew down and hack down the altar, the New Testament reality is that the church of Jesus Christ throws down the altars of man through the preaching of the Gospel that exposes the works of man as unable to save and that shows Jesus Christ as the only Savior. When the Gospel of Jesus Christ is preached antithetically over



against man as his own Savior, the church throws down the altars of man and the altars of Canaan.

The church throws down the altars of man today also by her Christian discipline, another mark of the true church of the Lord Jesus Christ. When an altar of Baal shows itself within the congregation, then the church with a holy roar against that altar hacks it down and hews it down by disciplining those who teach or promote that altar within the bosom of the church. This is how God himself in the New Testament describes the throwing down the altars of man. First of all, in 2 Timothy 4:1-4 we read,

1 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; 2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

By the preaching of the word in season and out of season and the rebukes of the preaching of the word, the church of Jesus Christ throws down all those who turn away from the truth with itching ears and who will not endure sound doctrine but introduce the doctrine of man.

Then in Galatians 1:8 and 9 Paul says,

8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

And if "let him be accursed" means anything, it means "get away from that man upon whom destruction is coming except he repent; let him be accursed; let him be put out from among your midst if he is impenitent."

The calling of the church to throw down the altars of Canaan in the New Testament is through the preaching of the truth over against the lie and through Christian discipline which is given to support that word, and the church of Jesus Christ is always tempted to tolerate the altars of man, to leave the altars of Canaan intact in her own midst. That's done today when Reformed churches embrace the idea of a well-meant offer of the Gospel, that God makes a well-meant offer to all but that it depends upon the choice of those who hear. That's an altar of Baal in the midst of the church and must be thrown down by preaching and by discipline.

Reformed churches do that today by their embrace of a conditional covenant which says that God on his part desires to establish the covenant with all of the children of believers and by promise does establish it, but that it's up to the children of believers to fulfill their

part and fulfill the condition. That conditional covenant is an altar of Baal in the bosom of the church and that means that our congregation must be warned against the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council of Churches, NAPARC, because NAPARC churches tolerate Federal Vision teachers which Federal Vision is the conditional covenant brought to its fullest expression. There's no unity in the truth that we can find as churches in NAPARC, which is why in 2017 the Protestant Reformed Synod did not apply for membership in NAPARC. There are altars of Baal that are tolerated in those churches and we may not by our membership join them in tolerating those altars of Baal, but are to throw them down with holy zeal to the glory of our covenant God. And this is a word and a rebuke that the Protestant Reformed Churches must also hear. The Protestant Reformed Churches as a denomination tolerated altars of Baal in our midst. The altars of Baal that we tolerated for years was the teaching that the experience of the child of God in some way depends upon the work of the child of God, and the teaching that the way to the Father is the way in part of the good works of man. That's an altar of man. That's an altar of Baal.

Our churches were called generation after generation to throw down those altars, not to tolerate them. The battle was not finished at the Reformation. The battle was not finished at the Synod of Dort. The battle was not finished in 1924. The battle was not finished in 1953. But every generation anew is called to throw down the altars of the Canaanites that appear in our midst. The Synod of 2018 judged that the preaching that came before it compromised the Gospel and displaced the perfect work of Jesus Christ, thus compromising justification by faith alone and compromising the unconditional covenant.

But now what about us specifically here in Byron Center? What is the rebuke that comes to us? What is the apostasy that threatens us? And here it is: the threat to us is that we succumb to the enormous pressure that there is upon us as a church, as well as a denomination, to minimize the error that was exposed in 2018. The threat is that we say, "That was no big deal." The threat is that we have no holy roar in our throats regarding those errors but an unholy silence, an unholy hush that falls over the church and over the denomination. That's a real threat to the church of Jesus Christ. That's a real tolerating of the altars of Baal if the errors of the altars of man are minimized.

And it's easy to see how the pressure to minimize it is felt from our own hearts. Imagine, for example, two Israelites plowing their adjoining fields in Canaan, and they come to the edge of their adjoining fields at lunchtime and both sit down on their plows to enjoy their lunch together, and as they look from their fields on the hillside down into the valley before them, the first Israelite says to the second Israelite, "God has made us strong. Now it's time that we beat our plowshares into swords and that we go against that Jebusite who's there in the valley, that we throw down his altar to Baal and kill him and drive out his family. It's time for us to throw down the altars of Baal." And the second Israelite replies to the first Israelite, "You want to kill the Jebusite? But he's my father-in-law. I married his daughter and we were married in front of his altar of Baal, and my wife and I worship before the altar of Jehovah on the Sabbath, but we found a nice life for ourselves worshipping before that altar of Baal the rest of the week. You want to kill the Jebusite? You want to raise a sword against the Jebusite? Look around you at life in the valley. Life

is good here in the valley. Our crops are bursting and thriving. Our fields are productive. Everything is going well for us. If you'll pull out your sword now, you know what's going to happen? Instead of this peaceful day we're enjoying, the din of battle will be in our ears, and instead of that unbroken horizon with a blue sky, there will be the smoke of all kinds of burning altars and war and ash rising to the heavens. If we take out our swords now, then what will happen is we'll lose part of our fields. Someone else will come in and possess them. We will suffer loss for the sake of drawing our swords and throwing down the altar of Baal. You know what the real problem is here, you first Israelite? The real problem here is not the altar of Baal, we can live with the altar of Baal, the real problem here is you and drawing your sword and threatening what we have going on." That's the pressure that we can feel coming from our own hearts. What do we stand to lose as churches, to see the altars of Baal for the great threat that they are?

And so Jehovah comes to Israel and to the church with a rebuke. There are three parts to it. We'll have to be brief in this second point only of the three parts of the rebuke. First, there is this: the proclamation of the covenant love of God for his church. That's first in the rebuke. Who is it that comes to the people of Israel at Shiloh after all? It's the angel of Jehovah who is, himself, Jehovah. He brought the people out of the land of Egypt. He brought them to this land. That was no created angel. That's Jehovah, but he's the angel of Jehovah, the messenger of Jehovah, and therefore, in a sense, distinct from Jehovah. What we have here is the pre-Incarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ who came to his people at Shiloh, and who is that pre-Incarnate Christ but the one who was ordained from all eternity by God to be the Savior of this people now met at Shiloh. That's who comes to the people and that's who comes to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, no one less than Jesus Christ himself by his word. That's a testimony of his love because he's ordained from all eternity to save you and to save me from my sins, and to save us even from our toleration of the altars of Baal.

It's the Lord Jesus Christ and that Lord Jesus Christ comes from Gilgal. Interestingly, he came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and the reason he came up from Gilgal is because Gilgal was the first place where Israel's foot landed after they crossed over the Jordan River into the land of Canaan. That place where they stood was Gilgal and at that place where they stood, they were circumcised, all of the men who had not been circumcised in the wilderness by the way but were now circumcised at Gilgal as a testimony of their love for the covenant God who had brought them by his mercy into the land of Canaan. The angel comes from Gilgal as if to say, "My people, I see your sin but I remember my covenant with you and I keep my covenant with you."

The Lord in his mercy also announces to them what he had done in his saving work, "I brought you out of Egypt. I brought you into the land of Canaan and I said I will never break my covenant with you." That's the love and the mercy of Jehovah, and how that love lays its finger on the heart of the child of God who has been guilty of tolerating an altar of man, of despising the covenant of God, of not living in that covenant and loving that covenant and that God as he ought. That love of God, that eternal mercy of God, lays its finger on our hearts and makes us cry out, "What am I doing? What am I doing in my folly, in my ignorance, in my sin?"

The mercy of God is the very first thing in the rebuke. The second part of the rebuke is the actual rebuke itself in which the angel says, "Why have you done this?" And that question is effective as a rebuke. God often rebukes with a question because that question pins us down, that question calls us to account before Jehovah. That's the way he rebuked Adam when Adam was hiding in the garden, "Adam, where art thou? Where art thou?" That pinned Adam down and made Adam give account. That's the way Paul rebuked the Galatians in chapter 3, verse 1, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye have not obeyed the truth?" And that's the way God addresses his church. He pins us down with the question, "Why have you done this?"

And that's a question to the nation, not only to the second Israelite who had married the Jebusite's daughter but a question to the nation assembled at Shiloh. And there were men assembled at Shiloh who had been killing the Jebusites and the Hivites, and who had been throwing down the altars, but as part of the nation assembled at Shiloh, the question came to them, yea, even to Joshua himself, "Why have you done this?" There's no excuses. There's no making reasons why we couldn't or shouldn't or didn't. When the Lord Jehovah calls us to account, "Why have you done this," we stand naked and exposed before him in our sin.

And the third part of the rebuke is the warning that God gives to the people that the gods of the Canaanites would now become a snare to the people. God judges tolerating the altars of Canaan by filling the land with the altars of Canaan. God judges the New Testament church that tolerates the altar of man by filling the church with the altars of man so that more and more what's crowded out of the preaching and of the discipline is the truth that Jehovah saves by Jesus Christ alone, in his grace alone, and what takes its place more and more is the teaching the doing of man and the working of man and the responsibility of man obtains something from Jehovah, so that those who are put out are no longer the Canaanites but those who are put out are those who worship at the altar of Jehovah. God judges toleration of the altar of man by filling the churches with the altar of man.

When Israel heard that rebuke, her response was tears. She lifted up her voice and she wept so much so that the place was called Bochim, weepers. That weeping of Israel was a testimony and an evidence of true repentance worked by this merciful visit of Jehovah to his people at Shiloh. It was a heartfelt repentance. It was not a repentance merely going through the motions but it was a repentance that instead of an unholy hush regarding the altars of Baal, now was filled with a zeal and a holy roar against those altars of Baal. It's the kind of repentance that is described in 2, now I forgot the passage. I think it's 2 Corinthians 7. It's the passage that talks about the indignation and the zeal that God's people have when they repent. It is 2 Corinthians. You have to look it up on your own. My apologies.

That's the zeal, that's the holy righteous indignation against all of the altars of Baal that now would characterize the hearts of the people, and it must be heartfelt repentance. It's no good that someone is finally pushed into merely covering over the altars of man or

covering over the altars of Baal, an altar here and an altar there, because in a few years when everything settles down, those altars of Ball will be uncovered again. The people of God are smitten to the heart with this arrow of Jehovah that finds its mark and it shows us the love of God that calls us to this repentance, and the testimony of God to the broken people of Bochim is his testimony that your sins are forgiven for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The whole incident ends with the offering of a sacrifice in Judges 2:5, "and they sacrificed there unto the LORD." The Gospel was declared to them in that sacrifice on the altar of God, "Through the shed blood of the Lamb, you are forgiven and my covenant is not broken, not because of your faithfulness but because of mine who love you and who call you back to myself again and again."

And all of this happens at Shiloh in the public assembly of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. It happens here in Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church when the word of God is proclaimed. This is Bochim, this is the place of tears and of holy indignation against our own sins, a fervent supplication for the mercy of the Lord in Jesus Christ. And how blessed, how blessed is that life of the church. What folly to think that beating one's plowshare into a sword will bring ruin. Life is good in the valley when the sword is drawn because there are no altars of Baal but only the altar of Jehovah and the testimony of his mercy. And so it is in the church of Jesus Christ when the altars of man are thrown down, there are no more trustings in the works of the doings of men but trusting in Jehovah God alone, by faith in Jesus Christ alone.

This was quite a scene at Shiloh. This was Israel's Bochim in the days of the Judges. May God grant us such weeping of true repentance and give us the joy of our salvation in Jesus Christ here at our Bochim. Amen.

*Our Father which art in heaven, we thank thee for thy word which is precious to us and for thy love which is great and powerful, and for thy salvation which is dear and beautiful. We pray, Father, that thou will be merciful to us, that thou will not deal with us after our sins or reward us according to our iniquities but according to the greatness of thy love and thy mercy, forgive us and heal us for Jesus' sake. Amen.*

Psalter #140. I know we are past time but I'm going to ask that we sing the four stanzas. They're not that long, the four stanzas of the penitential prayer and confession of the church. 140.

"God be merciful to me,  
On Thy grace I rest my plea;  
Plenteous in compassion Thou,  
Blot out my transgressions now;  
Wash me, make me pure within,  
Cleanse, O cleanse me from my sin.

My transgressions I confess,

Grief and guilt my soul oppress;  
I have sinned against Thy grace  
And provoked Thee to Thy face;  
I confess Thy judgment just,  
Speechless, I Thy mercy trust.

I am evil, born in sin;  
Thou desirest truth within.  
Thou alone my Saviour art,  
Teach Thy wisdom to my heart;  
Make me pure, Thy grace bestow,  
Wash me whiter than the snow.

Broken, humbled to the dust  
By Thy wrath and judgment just,  
Let my contrite heart rejoice  
And in gladness hear Thy voice;  
From my sins O hide Thy face,  
Blot them out in boundless grace."

The Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord make his face shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace.  
Amen.