

BOOK OF JUDGES

CHAPTER 6

GIDEON



vs 1 Repeat problem: the 40 years of rest after the defeat of Sisera came to an end. Prosperity and complacency brought idolatry and immorality back.
So God permitted the Midianites to oppress them for 7 years – again this is God’s mercy not **allowing** His People to fall too far so that return is impossible.

2-6 **The Bondage:** Israel was so humiliated by the Midianites that she had to return to being **cave-dwellers!** They were, therefore, driven off the land! What happened? Israelites had become farmers, so the Midianites came each year to either STEAL or DESTROY their harvest.

- They came from the East and would destroy as far as **GAZA** on the West coast!
- They stole their cattle and everything else they could pillage, so the whole land was ravaged and God’s People were left nothing to live on.

Lesson: Sin destroys our lives – it robs us of all spiritual harvest and leaves our souls starving, and our spiritual lives return to **primitive** living.
Hence, St Paul says that **the wages of sin is death**: Rom 6:23.
Why would we risk losing everything – even eternal life – just for a passing pleasure or an apparent gain?

vs 6 **Thus Midian brought Israel to great distress and she cried to the Lord.**
It took **40 years** of humiliations, fruitless labour, poverty and domination by an oppressive power to make God’s People turn back to Him!

7-10 **When the Israelites cried out to the Lord... He sent a PROPHET.**
This is an **unnamed** Prophet (un-named) before God sent the next **Judge**.
This man reminded them of who God was and who they were in Covenant with God.
God spoke through him – so the prophet was **the voice in the (spiritual) wilderness of Israel**
Is 40:3 quoted by John the Baptist in John 1:23
cf Matt 3:3 Mk 1:3 Lk 3:4

His message: **I brought you up from Egypt...** He reminds us that we are conquered slaves to the enemy (Satan) without Him.
(of course Satan will use the Midianites – or any other source – to do his work for him)

- Yet God’s Loving Kindness defeats all evil only if we surrender to His Divine Will
 - that is all evil **INSIDE** and **OUTSIDE** of us.
 - He can use **us** to defeat evil in the world if He reigns within us.
 - So, our relationship with God is essential for personal, national and global reasons!
- We have no excuse:
 - (i) God delivered His People from slavery in Egypt
 - (ii) God delivered the Promised Land to them, defeating their enemies
 - (iii) Jesus defeated **Satan himself** on the Cross, releasing us from all spiritual enemies.

- Therefore what we need to remember is:
 - (1) God's Infinite Power
 - (2) God's Infinite Love and Mercy
 - (3) God's Infinite Wisdom in dealing with His children.

cf **Prov 3:6**

- The problem **is us** **But you have: not obeyed my voice** (KJV)
: not listened to my words (JB)
 - this is the **REAL** underlining **cause** of their distress, oppression, unhappiness
 - Israel thought the problem was the Midianites

But God showed them that the problem **was Israel**
We are our own worst enemies:
the problem is EGO, self-will, refusal to take God's word seriously.

And refusal to surrender to God's Will so that He can reign on Earth
and bring about the Kingdom of God and peace among man.



11-13 The Deliverer and Judge called by God: Gideon: the name means 'he who pulls or cuts down'!!

11a The Angel of the Lord came... while he sat under an oak (terebinth) tree.
This is a theophany – not **just** an angel speaking on behalf of God

Judges 6:14 **Then the Lord said: 'I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive.'**

Judges 6:16 **The Lord answered, but I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man."**

- Since no person has seen **God the Father** at any time (Jn 1:18; 5:27) and the Holy Spirit is pure spirit without bodily form
 - this has to be a manifestation of **THE SON** – who would, in the end, become Incarnate. He is manifesting in the flesh since **nothing is impossible with God**
Lk 1:37, Gen 17:15-17, Mark 9:23, Mt 19:26, Jer 32:17, 27

Remember The Captain of the Lord's Army - Joshua 5:14
This was also a manifestation of the pre-incarnate Christ.

11b Gideon threshed wheat in the WINEPRESS... he couldn't thresh in the open because of Midianite attacks. It had to be done furtively.

- Here God called Gideon in the midst of his work in the winepress –
 - just as He called
 - Moses and David from minding sheep –
 - Elisha from ploughing the soil –
 - The Apostles from their fishing, washing and mending their nets.
 - Paul on the road to Damascus -

12-13 The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valour – the Lord speaks about the **future** here.

vs 13 Gideon replied: **O my Lord, if the Lord is with us** why has **all this** happened?
Where are all His miracles...

Gideon thinks that the problem **is God! The Lord has forsaken us.**
- but it is the opposite: Israel has forsaken God!!

- 14-16** 1) The Lord now tells Gideon to get up in the **power and grace** now available to him and save the Nation: Rom 8:31 **If God is FOR us, who can be AGAINST us?**
- 2) Gideon is now called to be a small redeemer in the long chain leading to the Great Redeemer of Humanity.
- 3) The Lord has made it clear that He wants to save His People, so Gideon can rely on the Power of God as **the Lord of armies** : Ps 46
The Lord of Hosts: this is Yahweh Sabaoth: 300 references in Old Testament!!

vs 15 Gideon admits his littleness and the non-importance of his clan.
He didn't know that **God chooses the weak things of this world to confound the strong.** 1 Cor 1:27

Yet this principle is repeated time out of number in the Bible:

- even Israel itself as a people of God illustrated this: Deut 7:7-16; Ps 90
- they were "nobody slaves" when He decided to redeem them from Egypt.

Yet it is not where you come from, but where you are going that is **VIP**.

How can I save Israel? Gideon **couldn't** save Israel. Only God could and He chooses the weak, small and useless (without God) instruments for His purpose.

vs 16 **Surely I will be with you.** It would be God's Presence with Gideon and his men that would bring about victory – just as it was with Joshua.

(NB)

- it was not SELF-confidence that Gideon needs but simply the realisation of:
(i) who God is and (ii) that this almighty God was **WITH** him!
- this was the same assurance which God gave to Moses in Ex 3:12
and that Jesus gave to His Church before leaving in the Ascension.
Mt 28:20 **Behold, I am with you always even to the end of time.**

17-21 **A SIGN from the Lord:**

Gideon wants to be sure that it really **is** God who is speaking to him.

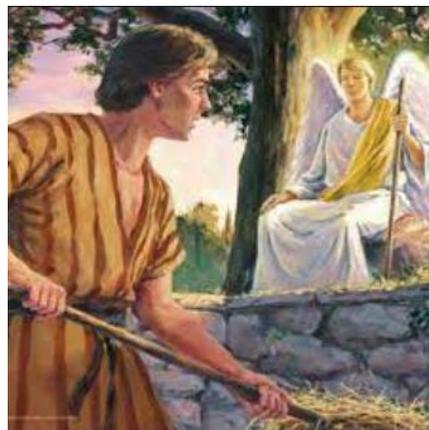
- (i) Gideon offers sacrifice to the Lord.
God accepts the offering
- (ii) Fire from Heaven consumes the sacrifice
– this was **THE** Sign that God was present.

cf Abraham Gen 15:17
Elijah 1 Kgs 18:38

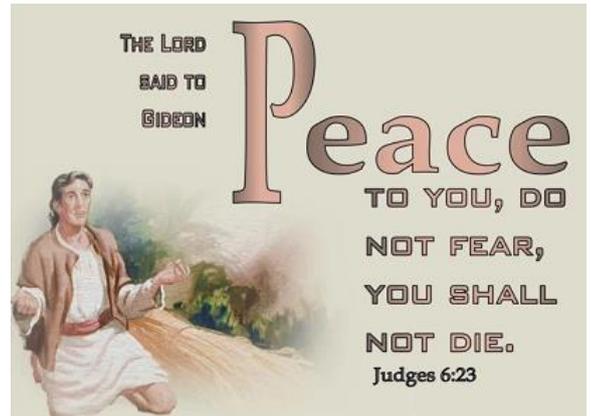
This is **the miracle** that **should** have satisfied Gideon.

22-24 **Gideon reacts with Awe**

- (i) He realises he is in God's Presence
- (ii) He was terrified
I have seen the Angel of the Lord face to face
Ex 33:20: **For man cannot see Me and live**
Jn 1:18 1 Tim 6: 14-16 1 Jn 4:12



- We can only see God in His Essence after death so the Lord puts Gideon at ease with His Promise **Peace be with you; do not fear; you shall not die.**
- Yet Gideon had only seen a manifestation of God, but His True Presence was demonstrated in the fire from heaven consuming the sacrifice.



vs 24 **So Gideon built an altar there** which he called: **THE LORD IS PEACE**

- Ⓝ This personal encounter with God changes Gideon forever.
– he cannot remain the man he was.

Since he is now strengthened by God's Presence and Peace, he must go to war against the enemies of God and His People.

Lesson: Once we have entered a personal relationship with God; once we have settled our own situation with Him by entering the sacrifice of Jesus and allowing its redemptive powers to work in us; once we have built an altar to God in our hearts and once He can truly live in us and He is **truly Lord** of our lives then we go as His Representatives to deal with the issues concerning His Kingdom on Earth.

- Ⓢ We make space for God in our own lives and then help to make space for God in our world.

25-27 **Beginning of Gideon's Ministry**

The final stage was to get his own house in order. After that he could see to National affairs.

- Ⓝ If Satan has a foothold either in our personal lives or in our families, then he has the power to pull us down so that we have no success in our public ministry for the Kingdom of God.
- Ba'al was being worshipped in Gideon's compound – where several generations of a family lived together in the same place but in different tents.
- Since the young adult men had the authority in the family, Gideon was told to deal with the idol in his father's house. Why? Because the younger generations followed whatever the senior male did.
- Gideon obeyed and pulled down the pagan altar.
Two bulls (KJV) **fattened calf** (JB) were sacrificed to God in reparation. Septuagint has **2 bulls** also.
- The second bull was **6 years old**: the length of time the Midianites oppressed Israel
 - this sacrifice would cancel the sins of those years and ensure victory for Israel
 - Tear down the altar of Ba'al.**
 - God brooks no rivals – since **He** knows they are representations of the Enemy who wants to rule in God's place. cf Heb 12:14
 - All our idols must be torn down also if the Divine Will is to reign.

28-32 Gideon obeyed God under cover of darkness – out of fear
- but the culprit was easy to locate!

vs 30 - Since ancient people worshipped Ba'al to ensure rain for crops.
The people demanded that Gideon be put to death as punishment.

vs 31 Gideon's father got a wonderful inspiration: if Ba'al really was a god, shouldn't he defend himself? Why does he stand there like a dumb idol? cf **Ps 115**

- vs 32** As a result Gideon was given a new name: **Jerubaal**.
The name means “a man against whom Ba’al is to struggle with”
- This was a title of honour!
 - Saints are those with whom Satan contends.

33-35 **Gideon gathers an army to fight Midian**

- (i) At this point the Midianites and Amalekites crossed Jordan from the East and encamped in the Valley of Jezreel.
 - (ii) There the Spirit of God came upon Gideon and he made his call to arms
 - he called the tribes of the **North** to come to his aid.
- (NB) • This is a specific anointing for a specific work – it doesn’t imply a life of holiness or life-long grace – as we will see later.
- Later prophets promised the Holy Spirit would come upon **ALL FLESH** cf Joel 2:28-29 and its fulfilment at Pentecost: Acts 2:17-18
 - When Gideon blew the trumpet – the Ram’s Horn (Shofar) – an impressive 32,000 men answered the call – as we will see in Judges 7:3.

36-40 **Gideon’s Doubts answered by God**

- (i) God already gave Gideon a sign in his offering of sacrifice.
- (ii) God assured him that He would be Present with him (6:16) but now he wants more assurance – this is a failure to **Trust God or** His Word!

Warning: Jesus was against people seeking signs in order to believe:

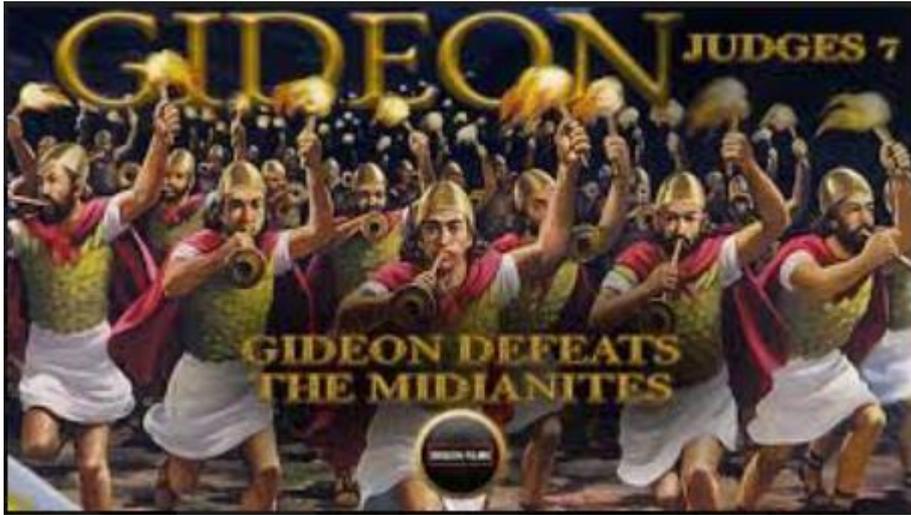
- Jn 4:48 **Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe**
- Lk 11:29 **This generation is a wicked generation; it seeks for a sign, and yet NO sign will be given to it except the SIGN of JONAH**
(i.e.) the Death and Resurrection **WAS** the sign!
- In exceptional circumstances God **does** give a sign.
Examples:
Lk 1:18 Zechariah, John the Baptist’s father asked for a sign and it **was given**
- he was mute until God’s message was fulfilled!
Lk 1:36 a sign was given to comfort Jesus’ Mother – **But she** didn’t **ask** for it.

The sign of the Fleece: God fulfilled the conditions of the sign
- it **should** have been enough.

- But Gideon **then** asked for the sign to be reversed: this is tempting God:
 - there is no humility here – no awe before the Divine Majesty of the Supreme Being!
- God shows extraordinary patience with a **non-trusting** judge here.
Yet Heb 11:32 puts him on the register of the **great** people of faith!!

BOOK OF JUDGES

CHAPTER 7

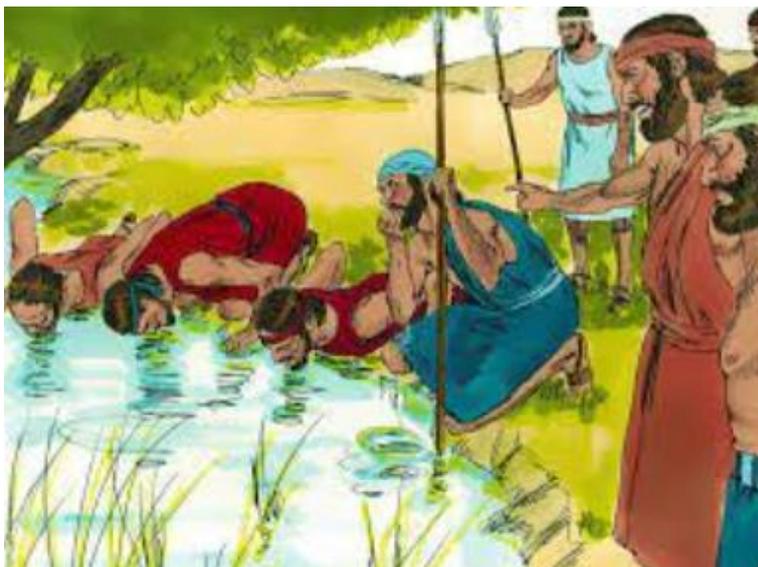


The Battle against Midian

This chapter shows that the way God **THINKS, ACTS** and **DECIDES** is very different to ours.

Is 55:8-9 **“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways” says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts!**

- 1-3**
- (i) Gideon’s army was 32,000 men to fight 135,000 Midianites. So looking at this from a **human** level, Gideon doesn’t stand a chance, yet **God** said 32,000 was too many! This number would mess-up God’s plans!! And God was Lord of the Battle. cf 2 Chron 20:15 **This is what the Lord says to you: Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is NOT yours, but God’s.**
 - (ii) Gideon and his army were on a hill looking down upon the enemy camp in the valley. Therefore a surprise attack by a few could do the job. There was no need for a lot of blood-letting.
 - (iii) God gave another reason for the new arrangement. He didn’t **want Israel** to claim victory which belonged to God! **... lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me...**
- Ⓝ (a) If we **really** accept the principle **Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts** (Zec 4:6) then **our LITTLENESS** and nothingness doesn’t matter!
- (b) If we accept that **some trust in chariots, some in horses but WE trust in the Name of the Lord, our God**, then smallness doesn’t matter. If you go to 1 Kings 17, you will see a small 15-year old boy, who later became King David, facing a mighty giant, Goliath, and he said to him: you come against me with sword and spear and javelin, all the armour of the earth, but I come against you in the name (in the person) of the Lord our God.’
- (c) If we **know** that God **chooses the weak things of the world to confound the strong**, then we forget ourselves and let **God act.** cf **2 Cor 12:9**
- vs 3** The separation of the men began:
- (a) Those fearful and afraid – go home! **Result:** 22,000 went home!! **The majority!** Fear is Satan’s weapon to enslave us...



4-8 (b) Tested by drinking at the stream! **Result:** the army is reduced to **300** Guerrilla warfare was needed, so the **FEARLESS** were needed.

vs 7 **By the 300 men... I will save you and deliver the Midianites into your hands.**

9-11 **Gideon sent by the Lord to spy on the Midianites**

God wanted him to be encouraged by what he would **HEAR**.

When we work **FOR** and **WITH** God. He is there to guide and encourage and strengthen us.

cf Deut 32:12 (KJV)

12-15 All the enemies from the East were gathered in the valley.

- Gideon overheard a man speak about **A DREAM** in which a loaf of barley tumbled into the camp of Midian. His companion replied: **This is nothing else but the sword of Gideon... into his hand God has delivered Midian and the WHOLE camp...**
- Barley bread was given to dogs – or the very poor
 - but bread in the hands of the Lord **is mighty. 1 Cor 1:27** (weak → strong)
- Here Gideon discovers that the enemy is afraid **of him!**

Lesson: The devil and his evil angels are **afraid of us** when

- (i) we live in grace (ii) pray (iii) above all, live in Divine Will

Why? a) Because we are then **God's ambassadors** (2 Cor 5:20) to do **His** bidding.

b) Because God works **with** us and **through** us to reign on Earth.

c) Because God defeats the enemy through **His** very weak and **useless** instruments.

vs 15 Gideon takes courage **on your feet, for the Lord has delivered the camp of Midian into your hands.**

- The **sad thing** here is that Gideon got more encouragement from this dream than from **God's own** promise in 7:7!
 - Sadly we rely on the words of men but not The Holy, Divine, Word of God!

16-18 The army is small enough for God to use it in battle!



- (i) Gideon divided his men into 3 companies – to attack Midian from **3 sides** at once.
- (ii) This was to be **a surprise** attack in the middle of the night!
- (iii) The battle cry was: **The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon!**
- (iv) The 300 were to blow the Shofar (trumpet) from all sides at once, giving the impression of a huge army, when, in fact, it was a very small number taking advantage of **the darkness**...

19-23 **The Battle:** The Midianite army awoke to the sound of trumpets, the noise of broken pitchers and the sight of torches surrounding them – then they heard the battle cry.

vs 21 The Midianite army – who were unprepared and asleep – got up and fled.

vs 22 In the darkness the Midianites turned on each other!

Lesson If we truly walk in **Divine Union** we can be **more than conquerors through Him who loved us**
(Rom 8:39)

With the Divine Presence with us and the Divine Will reigning in us, the devils will turn on each other in panic and confusion while we wield **THE SWORD** of **God's Word** to overcome the enemy.

Heb 4:12 **For the Word of God is Alive and Active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.**

vs 23 At this point more men from the Northern Tribes helped to rout the foes.

24-25 **Working towards total defeat of Midian**

- To clear the enemy from the whole region Gideon sent **a call to arms** out again and the men of Ephraim responded.
- They captured **and** killed the two princes, Oreb and Zeeb.