

STUDIES IN THE LIVES OF GIDEON & SAMSON

STUDY NUMBER TWO - Judges 6:25-40

TEXT:

- v.25 Now the same night it came about that the Lord said to him, "Take your father's bull and a second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal which belongs to your father, and cut down the Asherah that is beside it;
- v.26 and build an altar to the Lord your God on the top of this stronghold in an orderly manner, and take a second bull and offer a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah which you shall cut down."
- v.27 Then Gideon took ten men of his servants and did as the Lord had spoken to him; and it came about, because he was too afraid of his father's household and the men of the city to do it by day, that he did it by night.
- v.28 When the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was torn down, and the Asherah which was beside it was cut down, and the second bull was offered on the altar which had been built.
- v.29 And they said to one another, "Who did this thing?" And when they searched about and inquired, they said, "Gideon the son of Joash did this thing."
- v.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."
- v.31 But Joash said to all who stood against him, "Will you contend for Baal, or will you deliver him? Whoever will plead for him shall be put to death by morning. If he is a god, let him contend for himself, because someone has torn down his altar."
- v.32 Therefore on that day he named him Jerubbaal, that is to say, "Let Baal contend against him," because he has torn down his altar.
- v.33 Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the sons of the east assembled themselves; and they crossed over and camped in the valley of Jezreel.
- v.34 So the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon; and he blew a trumpet, and the Abiezerites were called together to follow him.
- v.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.
- v.36 Then Gideon said to God, "If Thou wilt deliver Israel through me, as Thou hast spoken,
- v.37 behold, I will put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I will know that Thou wilt deliver Israel through me, as Thou hast spoken."
- v.38 And it was so. When he arose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece, he drained the dew from the fleece, a bowl full of water.
- v.39 Then Gideon said to God, "Do not let Thine anger burn against me that I may speak once more; please let me make a test once more with the fleece, and let there be dew on all the ground."

v.40 And God did so that night; for it was dry only on the fleece, and dew was on all the ground.

INTRODUCTION:

In our previous study we met the judge that the Lord has chosen to use, by the name of Gideon, to deliver the children of Israel from the bondage of the Midianites, we found Gideon in very humble dwelling, and also very fearful. And yet the Lord called him "a valiant warrior," and indicates to him that it is going to be through Gideon that deliverance from the Midianites is going to take place.

We left the hero of our story worshipping the Lord at the altar which he had named, "The Lord is Peace." ISA.26:3

This second study, then, is just a continuation of the prior study, and the following events:

v.25 "Now the same night it came about that the Lord said to him, 'Take your father's bull and a second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal which belongs to your father, and cut down the Asherah that is beside it;'"

Here the Lord is preparing Gideon for usefulness. It is going to have to be first things first. For the Lord cannot bless a land or people until they respond totally and completely to him. He will have no other gods before him.

I John 5:21 "My little children, keep yourself from idols."

Matt 6:33 "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

II Chron. 7:14 "And ^{if} my people who are called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

The Lord can't bless Gideon or the people with deliverance until first He deals with the idols in their land. You will notice that the Lord said to him several things. "Take your father's bull and a second bull seven years old." The first one was to be used to pull down the altar of Baal, and the second was to be used as a sacrifice to the living God.

Gideon was also instructed to "cut down the Asherah that is beside it."

The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be.
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
And worship only Thee.

Cleansing process whereby He comes to have 1st place in all things

- ① Creation
- ② Church
- ③ Christian

Col. 1:18

Why?
Where?
How?

See us
as we are
going to be.
Gideon will
live up to this
name.

1st the
worship then
the war.
1st Baal then
the Battle
I Sn. 1:7
Cleansing in
getting closer

Gen 35
Josh
Cir. 1
Passover

First the altars of Baal must be ruined before God's altar is built. Both may not stand together. The true God will have no society with idols. Neither will he allow it to us. He will have no rival to his cause, and will receive no worship until there be no idolatry. He first commands that the monuments of superstition be torn down, and then enjoins his own service.

little
before big

Two main reasons may be cited for God's giving this assignment to Gideon prior to the principle task respecting the Midianites. One is the psychological value it held for the hesitant man. He had expressed reluctance at the time of his call, and then later showed it again in asking for reassurance with the sign of the fleece. This task of first destroying the Baal high place was needed to give him confidence for the main challenge that was ahead.

The second reason is still more significant. It is that God could not be pleased to deliver Israel from the Midianite oppressor until its sinful high place of Baal had been removed. As has been noted, the principle sin of the people, which had continued to call for punishing oppression was Baal worship. The people of God were turning to this false diety of the Canaanites. The high place at Ophrah represented this false worship explicitly. There may have been high places in other Israelite cities, too, but this one was particularly important for destruction because it was at Gideon's home city. It simply was not appropriate for this pagan center to remain when Gideon was to be used to lead against the Midianites. Its destruction would represent what should be done to all such places, and it would demonstrate that God would bring blessing only when Baal worship had been put away.

The Asherah was a sacred tree or pole that stood beside the altar, and the Lord commands that this too be cut down.

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

Whereas we have the (negative steps in v.25,) we have the (positive steps in v.26.) After once destroying the sacred place of Baal, it is now to be replaced with an altar to the Lord on the top of this stronghold. And it is to be built in an orderly manner. Then the seven-year-old bull is to be taken and slain and offered as a burnt offering. And the fire for the offering would be the wood that is cut up of the Asherah, which has been cut down.

II Cor. 7:1 "Having therefore these promises, Dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh, and spirit, perfecting holiness ~~and~~ in the fear of God."

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

It is obvious that this worship had a stranglehold upon the people. They are actually acting more like Canaanites than they are Israelites. And it was a big responsibility to fulfill this assignment. It was almost like a Mission Impossible.

Gideon is new in spiritual things, and still has a great deal of fear about fulfilling what God has commanded. And so, because he was afraid of his father's house and the men of the city, he chose to carry out this difficult project at night.

* Proverbs 29:25 says: "The fear of man brings a snare, but whoso puts his trust in the Lord shall be safe."

* II Tim. 1:7 "God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love, and a sound mind."

These ten servants, along with Gideon, moved up the hill late at night with the two bulls. They began to perform their act of destruction in accordance with the words given by the Lord.

Had it All Planned, Perfectionist, every detail. see it in the battle.
v.28 "When the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was torn down, and the Asherah which was beside it was cut down, and the second bull was offered on the altar which had been built."

Eleven men worked feverishly through the night, completing the project with the dawning of a new day.

The morning sun showed the gap upon the hill where the symbols had stood of Baal and Ashtart. And soon, like an angry swarm of bees, the people were buzzing around the scattered stone of the old altar, and the rough new pile with its smoking sacrifice. Where was he who ventured to rebuke the city?

Very indignant, very pious are these false Israelites. They turn on Joash with the fierce demand, "Bring out thy son, that he may die." The father, too, had come to a decision.

v.29 "And they said to one another, 'Who did this thing?' And when they searched about and inquired, they said, 'Gideon the son of Joash did this thing.'"

The people are very upset over what has taken place during the night, and their first question, because of their anger, is "Who did this thing?" And they began to search about and inquire from several. They evidently discovered from someone that Gideon, the son of Joash, was the one who was responsible for wrecking the altars of Baal.

Down of
The Rock

11 Guys
Move up
The Hill

Began Narrow-
ing it down
Soon have a Suspect

v.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.'"

These men of the city come to Gideon's father and command him to bring out his son that he may die. The charge that is leveled against him is that he has torn down the altar of Baal and has cut down the Asherah which was beside it.

These men involved in Baal worship were accustomed to child sacrifice in their religious worship, so it was no big thing for them to request that Joash bring out Gideon, and that he be put to death because of what he had done against their religious activities.

v.31 "But Joash said to all who stood against him. 'Will you contend for Baal, or will you deliver him? Whoever will plead for him shall be put to death by morning. If he is a god, let him contend for himself, because someone has torn down his altar.'"

Whoever shall fight for Baal and seek to avenge the destruction of his altar by putting the author of it to death, shall be put to death himself. Let us wait till tomorrow and give time to avenge the insult which he has received.

If Baal were really god, he might be expected to avenge the crime that had been committed against this altar.

He who would take Baal's place and put the other to death, he deserves punishment at once, for he denies that Baal has any power at all, and by consequence, that he exists. Wait till morning, if he be a god, he will contend for himself, because he has cast down his altar.

After the destroyer of the altar ^{alone} ~~he says~~, we know not yet whether he has deserved death. Wait till morning and let us see whether Baal himself will do anything.

Romans 12:19 "Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord."

It is in similar fashion that Elijah met the host of Baal at Mt. Carmel when he confronted them with the fact that, if Baal were truly God, let him bring fire out of heaven. And here, if he truly is a god, let him contend for himself.

v.32 "Therefore on that day he named him Jerubbaal, that is to say, 'Let Baal contend against him,' because he has torn down his altar."

Mob of Men

Gideon is shaking in his boots. Dad is an idolator
Big leader!!

Let Baal do His own thing!! He can get proper revenge if He's real

*

11 Let Baal
Contend Against
Him. 11

This name which Gideon is given sets forth the utter impotence of Baal, and the mockery which it excited. Had Gideon been named "Contender with Baal" it would have implied the existence of Baal, or if he was called "Baal will contend with him" avenge himself on him, and thus by his life, presence, and prosperity strikingly manifested the impotence of the idol god, who could not take vengeance on him, then his name itself was full of the triumph of the Israelitish spirit over his opponent.

Baal can do nothing; Baal will do nothing when his altars are overthrown. Baal is not. Israel has no occasion to fear the superstition that he will avenge himself on his enemies is idle. Of that Jerubbaal affords living proof. In vain did Baal's servants wait for vengeance to overtake Gideon. It came not. The hero only becomes greater and more triumphant.

v.33 "Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the sons of the east assembled themselves; and they crossed over and camped in the valley of Jezreel."

Now that the problem of Baal worship is taken care of, we find the enemy beginning to move into battle positions. The Midianites and the Amalekites, the sons of the east, are assembling themselves together.

It is believed there was somewhere in the neighborhood of 135,000 of these folks who were gathering for a campaign against Israel. It says they crossed over and camped in the valley of Jezreel.

This is the valley in which that great final battle of Armageddon is going to be fought at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to earth to set up his kingdom.

The Amalekites were the ones who fought against Israel at Rephidim when they attacked the stragglers in the children of Israel heading toward the land; and then Joshua and the forces fought against the Amalekites as Moses, Aaron and Hur stood on the top of the mountain holding the staff which brought the victory to Israel.

Amalek was a son of Esau who sold his birthright to Jacob. Midian and the Midianites were descendants of Ishmael, and so the two of them have this in common, that they are only interested in this world, and in temporary things. You never find Ishmael in the line of blessing because he was the product of Abraham and Hagar's union, in trying to help God fulfill his promises. And the same is true with Amalek, the descendant of Esau. He and his followers are just like his father, in that they had no time to think about spiritual matters.

These two, then, are very compatible as enemies to the people of God. When they cross over and begin to assemble in the valley of Jezreel, you can imagine how much this strikes fear into the hearts of the children of Israel, who are totally unprepared to wage war as it is.

v.34 "So the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon; and he blew a trumpet, and the Abiezerites were called together to follow him."

Cleansing
clothing
with you shall
be in you.

After the cleansing that had taken place in the previous verses, the Spirit of the Lord who sovereignly came upon people in the Old Testament for special acts of service, but who now indwells the believer permanently when he or she comes to know Jesus Christ, the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon. And he blew a trumpet and the Abiezerites were called together to follow him.

Isaiah 59:1 "Behold, the Lord's hand is not short that it cannot save; neither is his ear so dull that it cannot hear."

Isaiah 59:19 "When the enemy shall come in like a flood the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him."

How much Gideon needed to be aware of the fact that his place was to be in a position of obedience and submission in allowing God to provide all that is needed for the fulfillment of his assignment that had been given.

The Abiezerites were the local folks, and when Gideon blew the trumpet, they were called together to follow him into battle.

v.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 him."

Gideon sent some messengers throughout his own tribe of Manasseh, and they were called together to follow him. Then he sent other messengers to the tribes of Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali; and they, too, were enlisted to come and meet with him.

Northern Neighbors!

v.36 "Then Gideon said to God, 'If Thou wilt deliver Israel through me, as Thou has spoken,'"

Evidently Gideon is going through a time of real doubt and fear. Even as a result of gathering together all of these folks who are willing to fight to defend Israel against her enemies, the odds are still overwhelming. And when he sees the vast host of the Amalekites and the Midianites, he is struck with fear. The overwhelming task is before him.

Gideon needed to learn the promise of Isaiah 26:3 -

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."

It's when we get our eyes on our circumstances and off of the Lord that we begin to sink down into depression and defeat. That those times we

He got everything in Control - B.S. Thomas

I don't know what the future holds but I do know who holds the future!!

have the times of greatest doubts and difficulty in our lives. It is when we focus our eyes upon Christ, even as Peter learned walking upon the water. So it is, that we can see Him leading us in triumph, bringing to us the overwhelming victory.

Now Gideon has some questions, and he turns again to the Lord, who has already provided adequate evidence as to who he is and what he is about to do. Because back in v.21 it says, "There arose up fire out of the rock, showing thereby that he was not a man who needed meat, but the Son of God, who is to be served and honored by sacrifice, and signifying also to Gideon that he had found grace in his sight. For God usually testified his acceptance by kindling them with fire from heaven. Acceptance of the sacrifice was also a token of the acceptance of his person. It went to confirm the commission now given to him, and to afford him every needed assurance of success on what he was to be doing.

How quick we are to forget the tokens of blessing and direction that the Lord gives us and how weak we feel when we get our eyes upon the circumstances around us.

v.37 "Behold, I will put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I will know that Thou wilt deliver Israel through me, as Thou hast spoken."

Gideon felt in need of reassurance that God truly wanted him to proceed with this frightening venture. Gideon sought this reassurance by what has been well known as his test with a fleece of wool. He placed the fleece on the ground and asked God to make it wet the following night while leaving the ground dry. He stated that if God would be pleased to do this, he, Gideon, would then know that God would truly save Israel by his hand.

There are several things to notice in this situation:

First of all, God's directive had already been given. That alone is sufficient as evidence. It is God who has already made His will clear to Gideon at the time of the call, and God does not change his mind. The angel had said, 'Thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites, have not I sent thee?' This was definite and it should have been sufficient and final for Gideon. Though the difficulty seemed great in moving ahead, he should have done so without hesitation on the basis of God's sure word.

It should be recognized too that Gideon had not forgotten this word of the angel for he here added the significant admission, "As thou hast said."

The significance I believe of the test is that Gideon was not really seeking to know the nature of God's will, but to have that will changed. He simply felt that the problems were too great to proceed, and therefore

Call
Comparison -
Ship
Commitment
Forgot
The Altar
OF Peace

People Got
Mad
Nearly Killed
Him

Lord, that
was a close one
Out of the Saws
OF Lion.

Should have
been enough

"Father if it
be possible"

Madam Chiang. "I used to pray that He would do this or that. Now I ask Him to make known His will to me."

-9-

what God had previously said must somehow be wrong. The one who was wrong, however, was not God but Gideon. Though Gideon had been surprised by the circumstances that had developed, God had not been. The circumstances had all been foreseen when Gideon's call first had been issued.

It is always improper to come to God and dictate to Him what He must do in order to convince us of His will. It's our responsibility to be submissive and obedient, rather than dictating to God tests which will endeavor for us to determine His will.

He already had some obvious signs of approval in his mission in that God had given him success in the tearing down of the altars of Baal, and also the 32,000 men who had responded to his call, which should have been enough.

Gideon also did not keep his word in this situation because after the first test he has to return and have another one done.

This whole episode is an outstanding example of God's gracious patience with a troubled child.

v. 38 says "And it was so. When he arose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece, he drained the dew from the fleece, a bowl full of water."

How patient and gracious the Lord is to fulfill a sign requested so that Gideon can be certain of the fact that the Lord has called him.

v. 39 "Then Gideon said to God, 'Do not let Thine anger burn against me that I may speak once more; please let me make a test once more with the fleece, and let there be dew on all the ground.'"

Gideon is, I think, really hoping that there will be a situation whereby he might find an excuse for not having to go ahead with the whole project. And so he asks for a second evidence, and that is that the fleece would be dry and there would be dew on all of the ground.

v. 40 "And God did so that night; for it was dry only on the fleece, and dew was on all the ground."

J. Vernon McGee has some interesting observations on these last verses in chapter 6. There are some wonderful spiritual lessons in this account. First of all, I would like to go back to this matter of the dew on the fleece. We need God today to do an interior decorating job on our lives. We need to ask him for dew on our barren lives. In Hosea 14:5 God says, "I will be as the dew unto Israel. He shall grow as the lily and cast forth his roots as Lebanon." God speaks about the subject several times, and of Joseph he said, "Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew and for the deep that coucheth beneath." Deut. 33:13

wrong to dictate to God!!

Psalms 86:11
Teach me thy way, O Lord.
I will walk in thy truth.

Fleece might still be wet by morning

God in the dry cleaning business

W/ just one you can't be sure

"A king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion, but his favor as the dew upon the grass. By his knowledge the depths are broken up and clouds drop down the dew." Finally in Psalm 133 God says, "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like a precious ointment upon the head that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garment, as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life, forever more." God has blessed in this way. We need that touch, that fresh touch. We need it like dew upon the rosebud and the grass in the morning. We need a tender touch.

In Judges chapter 6 we have seen the Lord call Gideon to his service. His first assignment has been given to tear down the altars of Baal and replace it with the altar of God, and to sacrifice a burnt offering to Him. And then we have seen Gideon's fear in the mobilization of troops, and the test with the fleece.

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Before the Lord can use us, there must be the tearing out of all rivals to His cause.

LESSON #2: Let us examine the boundaries of our own hearts for idols that can stand in the way of his blessing, those things which are more important than our relationship to the Lord. What has 1st place?

LESSON #3: Gideon's first mission is successful because the Lord had called him to do it.

LESSON #4: The Lord had promised protection for his servants when they are fulfilling his will.

LESSON #5: The Spirit of the Lord closed Himself with Gideon only after the cleansing had taken place.

LESSON #6: God's word to Gideon should have been enough. But he displayed human frailty in seeking further signs of affirmation.

LESSON # 7: Let us learn never to question His authority, and also, to believe when only we have His word.

Lesson #8 Lord, make known your will.

Roy