

Episode #523 Judges 6 Part 3 – Gideon 2: The Courage of Gideon

I. In the book of Judges, we have a brief record of the early history (the first centuries) of the history of the land of Israel. We see the leaders God chose, judges, who ruled under Jehovah, the King. Through the lives and work of these judges, we can learn about God's works and ways.

II. We have been considering the call of Gideon, the fifth judge. Israel was being terribly oppressed by Midian. They were not just coming in to steal from Israel, but they were destroying Israel's crops, trying to cause them all to die! Gideon was a man of Manasseh, and not a very brave one, but the Angel of the LORD called him to save Israel.

III. The fifth judge: Gideon. An angel visits Gideon. Judges 6:11-24.

A. Verses 17-20. Gideon wants a sign before he believes the Angel. The Angel demands an offering before He gives him a sign. Gideon prepares a meal, and the Angel tells him to pour it out on a rock.

B. Verse 21. The Angel touches the meat and bread with His staff. Fire comes out of the rock and burns the offering. This shows the sacrifice was accepted! Then the Angel of the LORD disappears from sight.

C. Verse 22. Now Gideon fully realizes that this was the Angel of the LORD in person. Perhaps earlier he just was replying to the LORD through His messenger? Gideon is afraid knowing Who he has seen face to face. He cries out to Adonai Jehovah.

D. Verse 23. The LORD assures him. He should be at peace. He will not die.

E. Verse 24. He builds an altar to Jehovah-Shalom (The LORD is Peace). It was still there when the book of Judges was written.

IV. Destruction of the altar of Ba'al. Judges 6:25-32.

A. The LORD orders him to take his father's bull and a second, seven-year-old bull, and use them to destroy the altar of Ba'al of his father's and the Asherah by it. The Asherah was of the foulest kind of Canaanite idolatry, and shows the perversion they had stooped to. This was a bold move against his father's idolatry!

B. Verse 26. He is to build an altar to Him. This is probably the same altar mentioned in verse 24. Then he is to sacrifice the second bull (his own?) using the Asherah for wood. Yahweh repurposes this foul thing!

C. Verse 27. He takes ten of his servants and obeys. However, he is afraid of his father, their household, and the people of the city too much to do it boldly by day, so he does it secretly at night.

D. Verse 28. The men of the city wake up to find their altar to Ba'al destroyed, their Asherah pole cut down, and a new altar built and sacrificed on.

E. Verse 29. They ask who has done this. Somehow they discover it was Gideon. Perhaps they were seen, or perhaps from one of his ten servants.

F. Verse 30. They come to Joash his father and demand that he be turned over to them to be executed for having destroyed these idols. Yet notice Deuteronomy 13:12-16. It was the men of the city, every one of them, who truly deserved to die. Gideon was the only one of the city who did not deserve to die!

G. Verse 31. His father stands up for him in a clever way. He says they are insulting Ba'al by pleading for him and trying to save him. He argues that those who do this should be put to death. If Ba'al is a god, he should be able to plead for his own altar.

H. Verse 32. The people of the city agree to this. On this day, Gideon is given a new name: Jerubba'al, which means "Let Ba'al Plead." Of course, Ba'al, being a false god, never did. So Gideon survives the wrath of his idolatrous townsmen.

V. Gideon's signs. Judges 6:33-40.

A. Verse 33. The Midianites, with the Canaanite Amalekites, the people who lived east of Israel, gathered together and camped in the Valley of Jezreel. Jezreel, "God Sows," was the name of two locations. This one was in the north in Issachar near Mount Gilboa. They are coming to wipe the land out once again!

B. Verse 34. The Spirit of Yahweh steps in. Came upon = clothes or comes on to fill. He blows a trumpet (to gather troops). The Spirit supports him, and the Abiezrites gather at his summons!

C. Verse 35. He gathers from multiple northern tribes. Manasseh, his own tribe, with Asher was northwest along the coast. Zebulun southeast of Asher. Naphtali was north and east of Zebulun.

D. Verse 36. The fire from the rock was not enough. Gideon wants another sign that Jehovah will really save Israel through him, as He said.

E. Verse 37. Dew collects on the ground because it was cold. Why would it gather on a fleece up in the air on a threshingfloor but not on the ground?

F. Verse 38. Just as Gideon said, there was water on the fleece but none on the ground. He wrung a bowlful out of the fleece!

G. Verse 39. Now Gideon gets to wondering. What if there is some weird natural phenomenon he didn't know about that caused this? So he asks for the opposite sign.

H. Verse 40. God does as Gideon said. Now the fleece is dry and the ground wet.

I. This is the kind of thing people notice and try for themselves! In fact, as a child I tried this. But we have to realize several things about this.

1. Gideon was an Israelite, and God worked with them through signs. This is not the same dispensation. God is silent today and is not working through signs.

2. As much as we would like to think of ourselves, we are not Gideon. He was God's choice to be Israel's judge, a leader. God was asking something of him, and he had every right to ask Him for proof. That is not the case with us. And we are not anything like a chosen judge!

3. Today we are all one in Christ, and no one person has a privileged position to ask for something like this.

VI. Gideon was a cowardly man, but the LORD told him he would be mighty, the reason being that He would be with him. Gideon obeys Jehovah, but lacks confidence, carrying out His will in secret. He gathers Israel, but then seeks a further sign that Yahweh will really be with him.

Today, God does not offer us signs. Will we believe His Word? Do we have the kind of faith that believes without seeing?