

Episode #524 Judges 7 – Gideon 3: The Victory 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 career 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 not a brave man, but the Angel of the LORD called him to save Israel. He lacked courage at first, doing the LORD's will at night. But he gained confidence as God gave him signs that He would be with him with the fleece.

III. Too many soldiers! Judges 7:1-2.

- A. Verse 1. Jerubba'al, Gideon, pitch camp by the Spring of Harod (Trembling). The camp of Midian is to their north near the Hill of Moreh (the Teacher).
- B. Verse 2. The LORD says there are too many soldiers for Him to cause them to win, lest they think they got the victory themselves!
- C. Verse 3. All who are afraid should leave. 2,020 leave (Hebrew "twenty and two thousand, not 22,000), 10,000 stay.
- D. Verse 4. Jehovah wants to weed out yet more. He tells Gideon to bring the people to the water to drink in order to make a division.
- E. Verse 5. He is to separate those who lap with their tongues (taking the water in their hands) from those who kneel down to stick their mouths in the water.
- F. Verse 6. 300 lap, bringing their hands up to their mouths. 9,700 bow down on their knees to drink the water.
- G. Verse 7. Yahweh makes the division. The 9,700 should be sent back home. He will use the 300 to save Israel. Why this test? Keeping your head up is more alert for the enemy (we need to be ready for God's service). Bullinger (*The Companion Bible*) suggests kneeling bowing on the knees was perhaps a symbol of submission to water gods, a sign of idolators. These three hundred would not even look like them!
- H. Verse 8. Note: these 300 are called "the People," the ones chosen by God. A small number indeed! They are carrying provisions and trumpets. Where are the swords?

IV. Another sign for Gideon. Judges 7:9-15. A nighttime adventure gives him courage.

- A. Verse 9. The LORD assures him: he is ready to defeat the army! Why, with his tiny force? Because the LORD has given him power over them!
- B. Verse 10. If he is still afraid (apparently he is!), he is to take Purah (Branch) his servant (armor-bearer?) and sneak down to spy on the Midianite army.
- C. Verse 11. Jehovah promises when he hears what they are saying, he will receive courage to go down to attack the army. He and Purah sneak down to the boundary of the camp.
- D. Verse 12. The sons of the Midianites, Amalekites, and their allies from lands east of Israel lie in the valley of Jezreel like grasshoppers, and their camels without number, like the sand of the seashore. Note: not literal, but meaning unable to be counted.
- E. Verse 13. Gideon overhears a man tell his fellow soldier about a dream he had. In his dream, a round loaf of barley bread rolled into the camp of Midian, came to a tent, and struck it so that it fell down, so that the tent lay flat. A heavy loaf!
- F. Verse 14. His companion interprets the dream. The loaf represents Gideon's sword. The dream means the God has given Midian and all the army into Gideon's power.

G. Verse 15. Gideon hears and worships. He goes back to the army, finally confident. He tells the army to get ready because Yahweh has given the army into their power!

V. Gideon's victory. Judges 7:16-25.

A. Verse 16. The 300 are divided into three groups. They are armed with a trumpet in one hand and an empty pitcher with a torch inside it in the other hand. Strange equipment indeed for going to war!

B. Verse 17. They are to follow Gideon's example when they come to the outskirts of the camp of the Midianites.

C. Verse 18. When Gideon and his third blow their trumpets, the other two companies on two other sides of the camp are to do the same, shouting (no word for sword), "For the LORD and for Gideon!"

D. Verse 19. They come to the camp. The middle watch is 10:00PM, if there are three watches. The watch had just come on duty, so were not settled down yet. Not sleepy or easily startled. Their panic was God's work! They blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers (to let the light suddenly shine out).

E. Verse 20. The other companies do the same, so all three do this at once. Then they shout, "The sword of Jehovah and of Gideon."

F. Verse 21. They all stood in their places surrounding the camp. The Midianite host is terrified and flees, imagining a giant host behind the trumpeters that wasn't there!

G. Verse 22. The 300 blow their trumpets rather than fighting. Yahweh sets the swords of the army against each other, so that they destroyed each other for Israel. They flee to Beth hash-Shittah (House of the Acacia Tree) in Zererath (Cooling) in Manasseh, and to Abel Meholah (Meadow of Dancing) and the town of Tabbath (Celebrated) near there in Issachar.

VI. Gideon started as a cowardly man, but the LORD gave him confidence with many signs.

Gideon hears a dream from the mouth of some Midianite soldiers and knows Jehovah has already given him the victory! Do we already have confidence in Yahweh, or do we too lack?

The victory for Gideon is complete. The LORD gives him the victory by throwing the Midianites into panic. Our trust in His Word too will always be justified!