

UNDERSTANDING THE STORY OF GIDEON AND HIS ARMY

1. To understand the story as we should, it is necessary to read all three chapters, 6, 7, 8.
 1. At this time Joshua had been dead about 200 years.
 2. Three times during this period Israel had lapsed into idolatry according to your quarterly notes in the INTRODUCTION: As best I can count it was four times and as follows:
 - (1) They served the king of Mesopotamia 8 years, Judges 3:5-8.
 1. Othniel, a grandson of Caleb, the first Judge was raised up to deliver the Israelites.
 - (2) They remained faithful until the death of Othniel when the second apostasy occurred and they served Moab 18 years.
 1. Ehud, a lefthanded Benjamite delivered them. Second Judge.
 - (3) After the deliverance of Ehud Israel remained faithfully for 80 years.
 1. After this Shamgar delivered Israel from the Philistines when he slew 600 men with an ox goad. Judges 3:31. Third Judge.
 - (4) After Shamgar came Deborah to team with Barak to deliver Israel from Jabin who was king of Canaan. He reigned in Hazor.
 1. Jabin oppressed Israel for 20 years.
 2. After the deliverances by Shamgar and Deborah they had rest 40 years. Deborah was the fourth judge of Israel.
2. Two great sins of the period.
 1. Their failure to exterminate the wicked inhabitants of the land beginning with Joshua's league with the Gibeonites: Joshua 9; Judges 2:20-23.
 2. Their frequent lapse (seven times altogether) into idolatry. The reason for their failures is found in Judges 17:6; 21:25 where it reads, "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes." This is not good because:
 - (1) Men are awayed by passion and selfish greed.
 - (2) Men often move with prejudice, and are too short-sighted to see what is best.
 - (3) The anarchy of universal self-seeking without restraint brought ruin on Israel then, and is bring the same result now.
 - (4) The unchecked power to do that which is right in his own eyes is not a man's liberty, but it is his bondage: Self-will, self-pleasing, always having one's own way, his way is always right, the way of the other fellow wrong, is set in motion by sin.

THE CALL OF GIDEON (Judges 6:11-24)

1. While Gideon was threshing wheat by the winepress in Ophrah. 6:11
 1. The angel of the Lord appeared there and said to Gideon, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." 6:12
 2. Gideon's question, "If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us?" 6:13
 - (1) Gideon was wrong in not seeing what it was that that prevented God from being present: The sin and apostasy of Israel.
2. Gideon's excuse. (Judges 6:15) "Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? My family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." Man's excuses:
 1. Moses' excuses, Exodus 3:11; 4:1, 10
 2. Saul's excuse, 1 Sam. 9:21; 10:21-27. "GOD SAVE THE KING" 10:24

GIDEON BEGINS PREPARATION FOR BATTLE

1. Where the preparation began. Judges 6:25; "Throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it: Judges 6:26; "And build an altar unto the Lord."
 1. IT BEGAN AT HOME: "Honor thy father and mother," Eph. 6:2
 - (1) Gideon would honor his father Joash by destroying his father's false gods.
 1. "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee," Mark 5:19.
 2. IT BEGAN AT ONCE:
 - (1) That very night Gideon cut down the grove and destroyed the altar to Baal. Judges 6:27, 28
 - (2) Pulling down...building up: "throw down the altar to Baal... build an altar unto the Lord." V. 25, 26
2. Gideon calls his army. Judges 6:34, 35 "But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abi-ezer was gathered after him."
 1. When Gideon blew his trumpet thousands gathered after him, commend-themselves as fit warriors. This reminds us of Paul's words in 2 Cor. 10:18; "For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth."
 - (1) 32,000 Commended themselves.
3. Gideon's army tested. Judges 7:1-7 Three things involved:
 1. A STRANGE HINDERANCE: "The people that are with thee are too many for me." Judges 7:1
 - (1) This to human wisdom is foolishness: 32,000 men against 135,000? 8:10
 - 1 Reason: lest ye say, "Mine own hand hath saved me," Verse 2
 2. AN URGENT CALL: Judges 7:3; "Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early."
 - (1) 22,000 got up and went home.
 - (2) The presence of the fearful and self-interested are always a hinderance to the work of God. Numbers 11:4
 - (3) On the second test, Judges 7:5, 9,700 more turned back.
 3. A STARTLING REVELATION: Judges 7:7; "By the 300 men that lapped will I save you." Lessons to learn:
 - (1) God sifted these men and the wind blew a way the chaff. Psalms 1:4
 - (2) Men who are steeped in their own worldly objects are not the men whom God will use for His work.
 - (3) That number does not necessarily determine the success or failure of a given project. HUMAN VANITY: "big number."
 - (4) Our own strength and wisdom are always too many for God. 1 Cor. 1:29
 - (5) Paul said, 2 Cor. 12:10, "For when I am weak, then am I strong."
 - (6) John said, 1 John 2:19, "For if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us."

NOTE: Faint-heartedness, weariness, fickleness, inconstancy, clashing considerations, worldly interest, will stop the many midway, and work, if accomplished at all, will be the work of the few.
EXAMPLE: Nehemiah rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem. Nehemiah Chapters 1 through 6

See 2 Cor. 6:10

