

THE BOOK OF JUDGES

"Gideon and Midianites" (1)

Judges 6:1-10

Introduction

1. 100 verses are recorded in the Bible concerning the fifth judge--Gideon. It covers three chapters. This is four more verses than given to the record about Samson! Here is a major judge indeed.
2. There is a great lesson to be obtained from this portion. It is a single dictum which the Word of God does in fact teach: if you don't learn in communion with God, then you may well have to learn in the hands of the enemy. You can certainly see this sort of thing in the Book of Judges.
3. How did Israel land in the enemy's hands? What did she learn there? These are some of the questions raised. These and other answers are given in the account about Gideon. Study:

1. THE OPPRESSORS ARE NAMED v. 3.

Egyptians' power was at a low ebb. So politically, the time was ripe for this event to take place. But more than that--the spiritual horizon was dim (v. 1). So God brought the enemy. It was really a confederation:

a. Midianites These people were near relatives of Israel, having come into being through Abraham and Keturah (Gen. 25:1, 2). They are actually called Ishmaelites (8: 24). They were nomads and from the east and wealthy with camels (Gen. 37:28, 36). The name Midian means "strife."

b. Amalekites These people are mentioned elsewhere in the Bible (Ex. 17:8-16; Deut. 25:17, 18). Apparently also a nomadic group of people.

c. Children of the east A general statement concerning the desert people of the east and in southern Canaan. They added the final prong to the attack against Israel (6:33; 7:12).

2. THE OPPRESSORS ARE LOCATED

a. In time The date of this oppression was probably 1169 B.C. It lasted seven years (v. 1) until 1162 B.C. Then there was peace for 40 years (8:28) from 1162-1122 B.C.

b. In geography Two areas are specifically mentioned: Esdraelon and Gaza (vv. 4, 33). Much of the area concerned lay in the land given to Issachar, though this tribe is not mentioned. Cities were given to them (Josh. 19:17-23), but apparently the tribe did not occupy the land at this

time, though they did later on (1 Kings 3:17; 1 Chron. 12:32; 2 Chron. 30:18). Those who did help in the war against the enemy are listed (v. 35).

3. THE OPPRESSORS CHARACTERIZED

The main thrust of the confederation was in the area of food supply. They did not occupy the land of Israel nor cause them difficulty all the year long. It was only during harvest (v. 4). They moved in like cammandos! Israel's counterattacks were not military, but furtive in attempting to hide the food (v. 2). The word "den" means a subterranean storage area and a "stronghold" was a place difficult to approach for making an attack (the Hebrew is linked to the word "Masada", the great mountain fortress near the Dead Sea). The spiritual connection is obvious--the enemy cuts the food supply to bring about defeat!

4. THE OPPRESSORS OPPOSED

a. By Israel v. 6. Having been impoverished by the enemy, Israel cried to God. The verb "cried" means to cry with a complaint. They did this because they were "impoverished," a word from a root meaning to "hang down, to be pendulous." They were so weak and languid over the matter that they hung like dead weight! God responded!

b. By a prophet vv. 8-10. This unnamed prophet came in response to the call of the nation. The record does not say where he came from nor where he went in the land. Perhaps he was itinerant. One thing is certain: the Israelites were concerned about their problem (v. 7). They only saw the Midianites. But the prophet was not viewing the dilemma of the nation, but rather to show the nation how they got there! In doing this, he had a two-fold message:

1) Providence vv. 8, 9. The big thrust here is the deliverance from Egypt. This had always been the standard of God's power. It would be until the movement to return to Palestine in the last days (Jer. 23:7, 8).

2) Disobedience v. 10. In view of what God had done, Israel should have trusted the Lord and not feared the Amorites. Rather, they turned to the Amorite gods. This term "Amorite" is a general term referring to the Canaanites. Hence, they were rebuked for disobedience. This had led them to their difficulty (v. 1).

Conclusion The Word of God and communion with the Lord will keep a believer in the place of blessing. That is God's deep concern and ideal. If it is not accomplished by these means, then God will bring the enemy to accomplish His desired results. These verses eminently teach that truth. May we learn from this lesson (1 Cor. 10:11).