

thousand times "NO!" Gideon never should have tested God's Word!

c. He denied God's Word.

Even after God, in great grace stooped to Gideon's request, Gideon still did not take God at His Word. He asked God to reverse Himself in Gideon's little game! He had made a promise to God (v. 37), but he did not keep it. So Gideon was doubly wrong. God's Word is enough!

Conclusion The Midianites and their war pals had come to deal Israel a blow for their evil (v. 1). But God provided some help in Gideon. To get the proper results, God moved against the evil of the land (Baal), then supported His appointed man (with troops), and finally manifested His undeserving grace toward His servant. It was time now to battle (chap. 7). Oh, beloved, let us learn the lessons of trust and confidence in the simple Word of God. It is glorious! Amen.

THE BOOK OF JUDGES

"Gideon's Fleece"
Judges 6:25-40

Introduction

1. Israel had again committed evil before the Lord (v. 1). Therefore, the Lord brought them under the smiting hand of the Midianites, Amalekites, and men of the east (v. 3). They had to learn to worship the Lord alone (v. 10).
2. The man God appointed to deliver them was Gideon (vv. 11-24). God's call to Gideon was stated (v. 12), reaffirmed (v. 14) and confirmed (v. 16). There was no doubt about it: Gideon was God's man with God's call leading God's people!
3. But before the actuation of the deliverance occurred, some events took place. Here are three of them:

1. THE DESTRUCTION ----- of Baal Worship vv. 25-32.

- a. The command to do it vv. 25, 26.

It was on the "same night" that the altar was built (v. 24) that God spoke to Gideon! Three items are included in the command:

- 1) Sacrifice of a bullock. Only one is involved (v. 28). It was a bullock reserved for sacrifice that is named. This was to be in the proper place and done in the proper manner. Fire came from wood of the "groves."

- 2) Destruction of Baal altar. This was no mean task since one found at Megiddo measured 26 feet across and 4½ feet high. It was made of stones and cemented with mud.

- 3) Cutting of the grove. The "grove" was in fact the "Asherah" or the female consort of Baal. Some have referred to this as the "shame images." Why? Because on either side of the altars of Baal were two poles, one with the secrets of a woman and the other with the secrets of a man carved on it. Here were major helps for the fertility worship. It was utterly offensive to God (Ex. 34:13; Deut. 12:3; 16:21).

Note: God arranged for this way to rid the land of Baal items for at least two reasons: 1) Gideon needed encouragement and this was God's way of providing it. He was God's man for the more difficult task with Midian and their fellows. He was given the privilege to see God work in a smaller way among his friends. 2) Gideon and Israel needed to be clean before God could deal with the enemy. This meant the removal of Baal.

b. The personnel that did it v. 27.

Gideon was able to gather ten men to help him do the job assigned by the Lord. For fear that either his family or the nation or both might be a hinderance, Gideon and his compatriots did the work in one night! The size of Baal altars and the kind of worship required makes their effort heculean! They meant business!

c. The reaction for doing it vv. 28-32.

1) Demand for Gideon's death vv. 28-30. The appointment of Gideon as the man involved in the Baal worship destruction shows that he had evidenced, with his father, opposition to it publicly. The men of the city knew he was the culprit. They demanded his death!

2) Reprimand for Baal's failure vv. 31, 32. Joash, Gideon's father, would not accede to the demand for his death. He also, apparently, was secretly happy for the destruction of the altar and groves. But more than that, he named his son "Jerubbaal" noting that Baal was utterly helpless to oppose the action of Gideon. It had been supposed that to move against Baal would mean death, but nothing happened. Gideon had gained a victory. If Baal couldn't protect himself, why should the nation Israel come to his defense?!?!

2. THE CONSCRIPTION ----- of Fighting Troops vv. 33-40.

a. The reason for it v. 33.

The simple waw consecutive serves as a temporal connective in this verse: "then." With the cleaning of house in Israel, now God is prepared to bring the enemy into battle! The stage is set. This valley is also called the valley of Esdraelon and stretches from Mt. Carmel to Mt. Tabor. It was the traditional battleground of Israel.

b. The call to it vv. 34, 35.

The Spirit of God related Himself to Gideon for the task before him. The Hebrew verb means to "clothe" and not merely to "come upon." Hence, Gideon was completely "controlled" by the Spirit at this point. He responded and blew the trumpet for conscription of troops. Those who came included:

1) Abiezer (cf. v. 24). This is a family name (v. 11). Hence, those whom Gideon called first were those of his own house! His relatives responded first!

2) Tribes. These included Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali. All of these were near the center of the trouble.

Note: The total who responded was 32,000 (7:3). This was an enormous amount in the light of the conditions (cf. 10,000 for Barak in 4:14). Even this was pitifully small compared with the 135,000 Midianites! But it was an evidence of support for Gideon.

3. MANIFESTATION ----- of God's Grace vv. 36-40.

The account of Gideon's fleece has long been a source of concern. The tragedy is, however, that in the context it is a sad commentary on the faith of Gideon toward God. True, he had fewer men, weapons, and a very difficult situation within the nation itself. BUT, he did have God! That was the deciding factor. He should have trusted. The fleece episode magnifies three problems with Gideon:

a. He questioned God's Word.

God had explicitly indicated His intent in calling Gideon (vv. 12-16). This should have been enough. Indeed, Gideon mentions this when asking for the fleece matter (vv. 36, 37). So, he questioned when he should have trusted!

b. He tested God's Word.

This ought not to be, but it was. Think of testing an infinite God! But what is really serious is that the test was a homemade gimmick. It was sort of a way to dictate to God what He should or should not do! Does God really have to get involved in our puny methods?!? A