

## ....All the Earth Beside

<<< Judges 6:36 – 7:25

~ Our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God continues through some excruciatingly difficult learning curves as we traverse the Book of Judges. In our previous report, the Spirit of God came upon Gideon, or Jerubaal, as he is named in the Word of God, and Jerubaal sent messengers all over the land asking them to come and meet with him concerning deliverance from the king of Midian. Remember, many of the tribes had refused to support Deborah! Interestingly, they respond to Gideon's calling. Ultimately, this led to the assembling of an army of thirty-two thousand people, as we see here. Well, I'm not sure how impressive that was compared to the Midianites who "were as grasshoppers" on the side of the hill and their camels were as "the sand of the seashore." What I do know is: there were a whole lot of Midianites and only a relatively small fraction of their number in the army of the children of Israel.

Well, Gideon is still expressing doubt because he says "... if thou will save Israel." God has already told Jerubaal what He intends to do – there's no "if" about it; but let's not shake our heads too much at Gideon, because the Midianites and Amelekites were Bedouin's of the desert - and they moved as nomads robbing and raiding the crops and supplies of others. Their sheer numbers allowed overwhelming and overtaking the inhabitants of any region. Manasseh, as we previously saw, took to the hills; and most of us doubt God this same way. So, it is under those circumstances Gideon was raised up by God. Gideon isn't so sure, though; and he presents a test to God. God responds graciously and follows through for one reason and one reason only: the weakness of Gideon....

## VI

***36 And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said,***

***37 Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said.***

***38 And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water.***

***39 And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew.***

~ We have all experienced God answering our prayers. One direct miracle from God should have been sufficient for Gideon - but it wasn't. And it usually isn't enough for us today, either. God is so loving and gracious to those who are sincere in serving Him. Gideon was encouraged by the second round of dew - because that's what he needed to believe. God knew this - and He knows what we need to believe today, too. If we are sincere, the Lord will show us what we need to confirm our faith. The Lord graciously accommodated Gideon when Gideon stepped out in faith. Even so, we find Gideon still not quite ready to go into battle....

***40 And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground.***

## **VII**

***1 Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley.***

***2 And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.***

~ I'm sure when Jerubaal surveyed the army of the children of Israel, he immediately wished they were ten times more people in number. It must have startled him as God said he had too many! Can you imagine God encouraging a man in this manner? Well, if God had let Gideon have the victory with that many people, Israel would have said they attained victory by their own power and their own might. So, God is going to whittle this number WAY down; see, NO flesh will glory in the presence of the True and Living God. God is going to make SURE you understand it was He Who brought victory in our lives. That is precisely why God uses weak instruments for His use – and always has - and always will....

***3 Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand.***

~ The Mosaic System of Levitical Law presented in Deuteronomy allowed those who were drafted into the Israeli army to simply walk away and go home if they were too afraid to fight. God says those people are a liability to an army anyways - and you don't want them dragging the spirit or the army down. Gideon lost twenty-two thousand men - almost seventy percent - to that law alone. My questions are: why didn't Gideon pack up and hand over command to someone else at this time? Why didn't the people know the Mosaic Law concerning this before following Gideon? We already know he was afraid and unsure. I know one man who would have definitely gone home at this time: me! Gideon had to be alarmed seeing almost two thirds of his army desert their posts. Well, God tells Gideon He still isn't through getting rid of people out of the army....

***4 And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go.***

***5 So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog***

***lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink.***

***6 And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water.***

~ Naturally, this is a tremendous statement; but an unnatural way for God to encourage Gideon. Gideon is suddenly left with less than one percent of his original army against countless numbers of Midianites. Only the men who were gung-ho to kill some Midianites were chosen. Only these few hundred actually believed God would bring them victory. The nine thousand seven hundred out of ten thousand were only half-heartedly prepared to fight for their nation. This is the finest lesson regarding God's election and the free will of mankind we have in the entire Word of God. God chose three hundred men by allowing them to exercise their free will. If you had been there talking about election, those three hundred wouldn't have had a clue what you were talking about – all they cared about was killing Midianites.

Most people theologize and argue election until they don't even know what point they are trying to make; but we won't understand election by arguing – or even by talking about it. This is something that has to work in your life in a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ through the Bible. God chose very few men from the original number in Gideon's day. Today, many are called, few are chosen. That should make our hair stand up and our mouth shut. Now, if you had initiated a conversation with the nine thousand seven hundred, they would have cried you a river about how they were always left out of everything; nothing is ever good enough for that crowd. What they don't understand is that it is THEM that made the decision to not be elected. Every single one of them exercised their own free will and God didn't interfere with a single man. The Lord Jesus Christ has extended to you a legitimate offer that is sincere and true and "whosoever will" is the calling by which you can believe. Those who come to Christ will in no wise be cast out. We need to stop debating election because we can turn to Christ if we want to – and we can reject Him if we want to reject Him, also. If you reject Christ – I have bad news for you –

you're not the elect; see how that works? That's the way God moves, and He isn't going to be apologizing to you for it, either. The responsibility to study to be quiet is NOT on God – it is on YOU, my beloved.

I am confident there are a lot of Gideon's reading this report right now. I hope all of you little churchy Jesus people will read this very, very carefully. Many people want to reduce Gideon to some small and insignificant little band of rag-tag believers. Oh, how wrong they are. Gideon's men were on FIRE for the Lord; and they were absolutely convinced there would be victory; because of their faithfulness. Failure was not an option. These are men who only wanted to win the battle for God at any and all cost, and they wanted to serve God to the best of their abilities - with all their heart, all their might and all their souls. Alright, God will now give one final lesson to Gideon before he is sent into battle....

***7 And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place.***

***8 So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets: and he sent all the rest of Israel every man unto his tent, and retained those three hundred men: and the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley.***

***9 And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand.***

***10 But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host:***

***11 And thou shalt hear what they say; and afterward shall thine hands be strengthened to go down unto the host. Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that were in the host.***

***12 And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude.***

***13 And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along.***

***14 And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host.***

~ So, we find Gideon eavesdropping on these two soldiers; and the Lord set this all up for the further encouragement of Gideon. Certainly, it WAS an encouragement at this time, too; and that brings about the victory of the nation Israel over Midian. As we read on, we see just after midnight these men are going to follow Gideon's instructions. When they do, this will be a very short battle, if we can even really call it a battle. The record of the strategy Gideon uses is to take his three hundred and divide them into three companies. Three hundred in three flanks are given three items to work with: pitchers, lamps and trumpets. As we know, when light is refracted straight up into the sky at night the source cannot be seen. Well, that's what they are doing now. Then, they take the trumpets in their hands. Many people want to talk all about the trumpet of Gideon and the trumpet of the Lord – but – the record is clear it was the "sword of Gideon" that took the victory. Well, there are no swords in this picture. Make a note.

Many scholars have accounted for the nomadic raids and seizure of supplies and land during this period of history. These Midianites and Amelekites are the ones they study. This is an extremely unorganized mass that moved around with no cohesive pattern through the desert. Of course, they did have watchmen set around the perimeter of their camp, but everyone is miraculously asleep. They weren't expecting an attack - and they weren't expecting an attack in the middle of the night. It's a little difficult to see in the pitch-black of night on the desert. Well, when those pitchers were broken, and the trumpets were blown, the Midianites would have assumed there were several hundred soldiers associated with each of those trumpets. In that confusion, pandemonium ensued. The Midianites abandoned the area as fast as they possibly could....

***15 And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.***

***16 And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers.***

***17 And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do.***

***18 When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.***

***19 So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands.***

***20 And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.***

***21 And they stood every man in his place round about the camp: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled.***

***22 And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host: and the host fled to Bethshittah in Zererath, and to the border of Abelmeholah, unto Tabbath.***



**23 And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out of all Manasseh, and pursued after the Midianites.**

**24 And Gideon sent messengers throughout all mount Ephraim, saying, Come down against the Midianites, and take before them the waters unto Bethbarah and Jordan. Then all the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and took the waters unto Bethbarah and Jordan.**

**25 And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb; and they slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the winepress of Zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side Jordan.**

~ Alright, let's drop back to the account of the dew on the fleece for a moment to consider some extremely wonderful spiritual lessons. Every one of us needs an interior decorator – and His Name is the Lord Jesus Christ – to renovate and redesign our lives. We need to ask God to bring some dew on the total barrenness of our souls. God has said several times He would be as the dew upon Israel. In Deuteronomy thirty-three verse thirteen we read God said the land of Joseph would be blessed for the precious things of Heaven, and for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath. Then, in Proverbs, God said the King's wrath is as the roaring of a lion, but His favor is as dew upon the grass. Also, in Proverbs chapter three verse twenty we read, "... by His knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down as dew." Psalm one hundred thirty-three speaks of the precious ointment upon the head – and of the unity of the Holy Spirit – and it was as the dew upon the mountains of Zion.

God has blessed us, and we all need a fresh touch, like dew upon a rose bud or the grass in the morning. I know I need a tender touch – right now. Hosea said God would be as dew unto Israel and He shall grow as the lily. A lily is extremely delicate, of course. Even when we are in trouble and God has cut us down as the mown grass, He says He will come down upon us like rain. The Lord Jesus Christ wept over Jerusalem; but do we weep over the lost sinner? The publican could smite his breast and cry out to God about his sin – what about you? Do you need a touch from God to make



you stable and strong? Do you need to be rooted, grounded and settled? Is your heart fixed upon God, friends?

Be diligent that you may be found of Him in peace; without spot and blameless. We need that – I know I do – because God only uses a clean cup in His service. God said He is holy; be ye, therefore, holy! If you have received these promises cleanse yourself from all filthiness of the flesh and from an evil spirit; perfecting holiness in the FEAR of the Lord – so that your trumpet can give a clear and certain sound.

That's a beautiful picture, but let's carry through with something else as we conclude this report: we are told we have treasure in our earthen vessels. That means we are like those pitchers Gideon handed out. Well, some of us aren't broken and, as a result, the light doesn't shine through. Paul said, "... let no man glory in man." The only light we have is the light of the Lord Jesus Christ shining through us. That can only ever happen in a broken life. We are to shine as lights in the world. The spiritual implications in the story of this coward of a man named Jerubaal – Gideon – are beyond full recognition. God chooses the weak things of this world – and I hope that is as much of an encouragement to you as it is to me ~

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