

Judges 7:1-25  
Gideon – Part 2

Introduction

1. Last week we learned that after the death of Deborah, Israel continued in its wicked ways (i.e. idolatry, immorality, child sacrifices)
2. As a result, God brought the Midianites into their land every harvest season to steal their food, graze on their land, and severely oppress them.
3. Each year the Israelites found themselves heading for the hills to hide in dens, caves and strongholds
4. This lasted for seven years until, as the text says, Israel “**was brought very low**”
5. Unlike before, however, this time God sends them a prophet before He sends them a deliverer
6. The unnamed prophet reminded Israel of three things:
  - a. God had delivered them from Egypt
  - b. He brought them to the promised land
  - c. He was their God and they were to have no other God’s before Him
7. However, the prophet also rebuked Israel because they had not obeyed God, thus revealing in no uncertain terms that God was chastising them and that their misery was of their own doing
8. We were then introduced to Gideon, Israel’s next deliverer:
  - a. The pre-incarnate Christ (i.e. Angel of the LORD) appears to him and informs him that God will use him to deliver Israel from the Midianites
  - b. In a bit of foreshadowing, the LORD calls him a “valiant warrior” and promises to be with him as he defeats the Midianites
  - c. However, the Gideon we are introduced to here is a bit timid and shy it appears:
    - 1) He questions whether God has really been with Israel through their suffering
    - 2) He questions why he was chosen to deliver Israel when he is the youngest son of a relatively small family
    - 3) He asks the Angel of the LORD to prove He’s really a messenger of God (i.e. through the sacrificial offering)
    - 4) He then carries out his first assignment (tearing down his father’s temple to Baal) under the cover of night (**an allusion to God’s superiority over the baals that permeates this book**)
    - 5) Finally, he asks God, not once but twice, for a sign to prove He will indeed deliver Israel through his hands
    - 6) All of this appears to change, however, when the Spirit of the LORD comes upon Gideon and he raises up an army to go against the Midianites

A. God promises to miraculously deliver Israel with only 300 men (1-8)

1. According to verse 1, Gideon and his army of 32,000 men (reference 7:3) is camped at the spring of Harod (reference 7:3)
2. Midian has an army of 135,000 men and is camped in a valley the north of Gideon by the hill of Moreh ( reference 8:10)

3. God whittles down Gideon's army to a mere 300 men: **"The LORD said to Gideon, "The people who are with you are too many for Me to give Midian into their hands, for Israel would become boastful, saying, 'My own power has delivered me.'"**
  - a. The LORD tells Gideon that his army is **"too many for Me to give Midian into their hands"**
  - b. The problem? **"Israel would become boastful, saying 'My own power has delivered me.'"**
  - c. So, God tells Gideon to send home anyone who is afraid to go into battle and 22,000 leave (3)
  - d. God removes another 9700 at the watering hole (4-6):
    - 1) Those who knelt down to drink were sent home
    - 2) Those who brought the water up to their mouths to drink (i.e. lapped) were allowed to stay and fight
    - 3) Some try to see some hidden meaning in this episode related to the way the men drank and their worthiness to fight, but that seems a bit much (especially since there is no interpretation as to the difference between the way they drank provided by the text itself)
    - 4) Rather, it seems to represent God's supernatural and independent work in selecting the 300 men
4. God assures Gideon that He will deliver the Midianites into his hands with only these 300 men (7-8)
5. It is hard NOT to miss the overarching theme of God's sovereignty in this event

B. God reveals His plan to Gideon (9-18)
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1. God sends Gideon down to spy on the Midianite outpost (9-11):
  - a. He again assures Gideon that He will deliver the Midianites into his hands (9): **"Now the same night it came about that the LORD said to him, "Arise, go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hands."**
  - b. He informs Gideon that in going to the camp, he will overhear something that will embolden him (11): **"and you will hear what they say; and afterward your hands will be strengthened that you may go down against the camp." So he went with Purah his servant down to the outposts of the army that was in the camp."**
2. Gideon overhears a Midianite soldier as he describes a dream to another soldier (12-14):
  - a. He dreamt of a loaf of barley bread tumbling into the camp and tipping over a tent (13)
  - b. His friend understood the meaning of the dream (14): **"His friend replied, "This is nothing less than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel; God has given Midian and all the camp into his hand."**—this is remarkable for a number of reasons:
    - 1) The soldier was a Canaanite who likely worshipped Baal
    - 2) He must have known the Midianite army was significantly larger than Israel's (even if he was only familiar with Gideon's original 32,000 men—that's still FIVE times smaller than this soldier's own army)
    - 3) He was familiar with Gideon (and even knew his father's name)
    - 4) And probably most importantly, he knew it was God who was going to deliver them into the hands of Gideon and the Israelites
    - 5) All of these things indicate that this was a DIVINELY INSPIRED vision
3. Just as God promised, Gideon was strengthened and encouraged by what he heard (15-18):

- a. The first thing he does is worship God (15a): **“When Gideon heard the account of the dream and its interpretation, he bowed in worship.”**
- b. He then returns to the camp with renewed conviction and confidence (15b): **“He returned to the camp of Israel and said, “Arise, for the LORD has given the camp of Midian into your hands.”**
- c. Finally, he prepares his men for the battle (16-18):
  - 1) He divides the men into three companies of 100 men
  - 2) Each man carries trumpet in one hand and a torch covered by a clay pitcher in the other hand
  - 3) They are to watch Gideon and on his command blow their trumpets and do what he does

C. God delivers Israel from the Midianites (19-25)
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1. Gideon and his 300 men surround the camp, and on Gideon’s signal they blow their trumpets and shatter the clay pots to reveal the torches (19-22a)
2. The Midianites are so confused they begin to kill one another, and in the end 120,000 Midianites are dead
3. This is remarkable because not a single Israelite died, in fact it doesn’t even appear they had to raise their swords—they had a trumpet in one hand and a torch in the other!
4. We learn that this was ALL GOD’S DOING (22b): **“the LORD set the swords of each man in the army against each other”**
5. Only 15,000 Midianites escape and when they try to flee to the east, Gideon calls on men from Naphtali, Asher, Manasseh and Ephraim to prevent their escape (23-24)
6. Two Midian princes are killed and their heads brought to Gideon (25)
7. Later, the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, are captured and killed by Gideon (8:12-21)

Conclusion
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1. There is a wonderful contrast in this passage that bears a striking resemblance to our own salvation
2. First, we have tremendous weakness displayed in Gideon and his 300 man army compared to the overpowering strength and power of the Midianite army—how could a small town boy found threshing wheat while hiding in a winepress be used to defeat an army of 135,000 men?
3. The answer is found not in his own abilities, but rather in his own weakness and in the supernatural strength of an all-powerful God
4. In each of the previous acts of deliverance, it was clear that God was the ULTIMATE deliverer, but none have been as striking as this act of deliverance
5. There would be no question that God delivered Israel here, and no opportunity for Israel to boast in its own strength or abilities
6. The same is true of our eternal salvation:
  - a. The Bible states that because of sin we are all condemned destined for eternal punishment and separation from God
  - b. And like Gideon, we are weak and powerless against such an enemy—sin and death have their grip on us and there is nothing we can do in and of ourselves to bring deliverance
  - c. There is only One who can, God Himself, and He did this through the Great Deliverer Jesus Christ

- d. In speaking of Jesus, Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 13:4: **“For indeed He was crucified because of weakness, yet He lives because of the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, yet we will live with Him because of the power of God directed toward you.”**
  - e. You see, God could not deliver Israel through an army of tens of thousands, so he whittled it down to a mere 300 men so that Israel could not boast
  - f. In the same way, He has saved us through One man, Jesus Christ, so that like Israel we also might not boast in our own strength, but in His: **“But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”** (Ephesians 2:4-9)
- 7. Even our eternal security is based on God’s sovereignty: Romans 8:26-39
  - 8. Gideon was assured victory, not because of His own strength, but because of God’s sovereignty.
  - 9. The same is true with us.