

FPFWC Christian Development



Out of Slavery to Nationhood

October 2022

Fall Quarter

October 15, 2022

Lesson #3 – The Call of Gideon

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Judges 6:1-2, 7-16a

ICE BREAKERS-

1. *What should we do when we are not sure whether God is leading us to go a certain way?*
2. *How do individual choices affect a group of people?*

Key Verse: “The LORD said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die.” —Judges 6:23

LESSON BACKGROUND –

The book of Judges features accounts of a series of leaders (“judges”) who arose to rescue Israel from foreign oppressions during the era 1380 to 1050 BC. These stories fit together to paint a picture of a dreary pattern: the Israelites sinned, God punished them with foreign oppression, the Israelites repented, a deliverer came, and peace followed. Gideon, the deliverer-judge of today’s lesson, was the fifth of perhaps 14 judges; he served in that capacity during the first half of the twelfth century BC. The Midianites, the oppressors whom Gideon was to confront in today’s text, came from what is now northern Saudi Arabia or southeastern Jordan. They had created a sophisticated society based on trade across the Arabian Peninsula with the cultures around its perimeter (Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and Mesopotamia; compare Genesis 37:28). They were not barbarians. The Midianites shared a history with Israel (see Exodus 18:1; etc.), a history that included conflict (see Numbers 25:14–18; Psalm 83:9–12).

LESSON COMMENTARY

6:1–6. The **Midianites** were the offspring of Abraham, through his handmaid Keturah (Gn 25:2). They were camel caravaneers in the Joseph narrative (Gn 37), close allies and relatives of Moses in the wilderness (Ex 2:15–25), and objects of an Israelite attack and plundering (Nm 31:1–24). The Midianites were probably a broad collection of related tribes, led by separate “kings” or “princes,” without a common political focus. The transportation for Midianite aggression was the camel, which gave them both range and speed, allowing the raiders to do their damage and get away before effective counterforce could be mounted. **The Midianites with the Amalekites and the sons of the east** destroyed Israel’s troops, attacking **like locusts in number**. The Amalekites, descendants of Esau (Gn 36:12) had been enemies of Israel before (in Nm 14:45 and afterward). The **sons of the east** (*bene*

qedem) are nomadic peoples in general, perhaps other descendants of Esau not otherwise specified.

b. The Covenant Message of a Prophet (6:7–10)

6:7–10. The sending of a prophet was a new development. Previously the people had cried out and had been rewarded with deliverance by the Lord in the form of a judge. This time a prophet, otherwise unknown, was sent to encourage them not to fear **the gods of the Amorites** and to deliver the rebuke, **you have not obeyed Me.**

2. Gideon's Call to Deliver Israel

This extended account of Gideon's call to the work puts him in a different class from other judges, who simply appeared on the scene or were given brief histories. Gideon was not a nobleman, even though his father **Joash** was apparently the headman of the district. His family is of little importance outside the region. That seems to be the point of the passage, as God demonstrated His willingness to work through the most humble and the most poorly equipped if they will walk in faith. Gideon's growth in faith and courage is a theme in this passage.

a. Gideon Called by the Angel of the Lord (6:11–18)

6:11. **The angel of the LORD** spoke to Gideon when he was **beating out wheat in a wine press.** Wheat was normally threshed on a wide, flat beaten area called a threshing floor. The best ones were on high ground in the midst of the fields. The idea was to dislodge the grain from the stalks by marching oxen and people over them. Next came winnowing, tossing wheat and chaff in the air to allow the wheat, which is heavier than the stalks and chaff, to fall to the threshing floor while wind blew away its chaff. This process was normally a time of communal celebration and was easily visible to anyone passing by. But the Midianite threat made any such event impossible. The wine press, on the other hand, was a square or round vessel, often cut out of the rock, in which grapes could be trodden. The juice from this process ran through a conduit to a lower and smaller wine vat from which the juice was collected in jars for fermentation. Such presses are normally found in the midst of gardens and vineyards, out of sight of passersby. Gideon was so fearful of the Midianites that he prepared this grain in a secluded wine press. He no doubt hoped to be able to thresh enough grain for a meal or two. This speaks of the desperation of the people under the oppression of the Midianite raiders.

6:12–14. **The angel of the LORD appeared to him** at the wine press. Scholars continue to argue about the identity of **the angel of the LORD** in this passage and throughout the OT. Since this angel has the authority of God Himself and was actually willing to accept worship, it seems likely that this is a theophany, a visible manifestation of God on earth. This is the extent that the text reveals. Nevertheless, since the Scriptures affirm that "No one has seen God at any time" and it is "the only begotten God ... [who] has explained Him" (Jn 1:18), this visible manifestation was likely a preincarnate appearance of Christ (or a Christophany).

When Gideon questioned why the Midianites oppressed Israel, the angel told him that Gideon was being sent by God to deliver Israel.

6:15. How shall I deliver Israel? Gideon's humility is not feigned. He was really an insignificant son in an unimportant family. In a society in which clan pecking order was paramount (cf. the dispute with Ephraim later) Gideon was simply being realistic about his chances of gaining a following.

6:16–18. God's answer to Gideon, **Surely I will be with you**, is reminiscent of God's call of Moses. In answer to Moses' complaint, "Who am I?" God replied, "I AM" the One who is sending you to Pharaoh (Ex 3:14). The point is clear: a person's social status is insignificant when compared to walking with God. The power and the strength are in God Himself.

LESSON NUGGET – Gideon was an unlikely candidate for God's "Hall of Fame" (Hebrews 11:32) When God called him, he was hiding. But God saw the potential in Gideon and even called him a "mighty man of valor" (v.12). God sees the potential in you and says to you as He did to Simon, "You are.... You shall be". (John 1:42). He knows your weaknesses and will accommodate Himself to your needs so that He might develop your faith.

Sources: *Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, Wiersbe Study Bible and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary*