

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
2-14-24

Judges 6

Israel's Bondage To Midian – Verses 1-6

¹ The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, and for seven years he gave them into the hands of the Midianites. ² Because the power of Midian was so oppressive, the Israelites prepared shelters for themselves in mountain clefts, caves and strongholds. ³ Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples invaded the country. ⁴ They camped on the land and ruined the crops all the way to Gaza and did not spare a living thing for Israel, neither sheep nor cattle nor donkeys. ⁵ They came up with their livestock and their tents like swarms of locusts. It was impossible to count them or their camels; they invaded the land to ravage it. ⁶ Midian so impoverished the Israelites that they cried out to the LORD for help.

6:2 The Midianites were desert people descended from Abraham's second wife, Keturah (Genesis 25: 1-2). From this relationship came a nation that was always in conflict with Israel. Years earlier the Israelites, while still wandering in the wilderness, battled the Midianites and almost totally destroyed them (Numbers 31: 1-20). Because of their failure to completely destroy them, however, the tribe repopulated. Here they were once again oppressing Israel.

6:6 Again the Israelites hit rock bottom before turning back to God. How much suffering they could have avoided if they had trusted him! Turning to God shouldn't be a last resort; we should look to him for help each day. This isn't to say life will always be easy. There will be struggles, but God will give us the strength to live through them. Don't wait until you're at the end of your rope. Call on God first in every situation.

God Sends A Prophet – Verses 7-10

⁷ When the Israelites cried out to the LORD because of Midian, ⁸ he sent them a prophet, who said, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I brought you up out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ⁹ I rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians. And I delivered you from the hand of all your oppressors; I drove them out before you and gave you their land. ¹⁰ I said to you, 'I am the LORD your God; do not worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live.' But you have not listened to me."

6:7-8 The LORD sent a prophet: The delivering judge will appear later. Before Israel could receive and respond to the work of the judge, they first had to be prepared by this un-named prophet. God spoke through the prophet, reminding Israel of all He did for them in the past. To face their current crisis, Israel needed a reminder of what God did before. This reminded them of the love of God. The God loving enough to before deliver from Egypt, still loved them enough to now deliver them from the Midianites. This also reminded them of the power of God who was still powerful enough to now deliver them from the Midianites.

6:10 But you have not obeyed My voice: God sent this messenger to tell them where the real problem was. It wasn't that the Midianites were so strong; it was that Israel was so disobedient. Israel thought

the problem was the Midianites, but the real problem was Israel. It is human nature to blame others for problems that we cause. The message of the prophet also shows that when Israel cried out to the LORD, they didn't understand that they were the problem. Their cry to God for help did not mean that they recognized or repented of their sin.

The Angel Of The LORD Appears To Gideon – Verses 11-13

11 The angel of the LORD came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. 12 When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he said, "The LORD is with you, mighty warrior." 13 "Pardon me, my lord," Gideon replied, "but if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about when they said, 'Did not the LORD bring us up out of Egypt?' But now the LORD has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian."

6:11 The Old Testament records several appearances of the angel of the Lord: Genesis 16:7; 22:11; 31:11; Exodus 3:2; 14:19; Judges 2:1; 13:3; Zechariah 3:1-6. It is not known whether the same angel appeared in each case. The angel mentioned here appears to be separate from God in one place (6:12) and yet the same as God in another place (6:14). This has led some to believe that the angel was a special appearance of Jesus Christ prior to his mission on earth as recorded in the New Testament. It is also possible that as a special messenger from God, the angel had authority to speak for God. In either case, God sent a special messenger to deliver an important message to Gideon.

6:11 Threshing was the process of separating the grains of wheat from the useless outer shell called chaff. This was normally done in a large area, often on a hill, where the wind could blow away the lighter chaff when the farmer tossed the beaten wheat into the air. If Gideon had done this, however, he would have been an easy target for the bands of raiders who were overrunning the land. Therefore, he was forced to thresh his wheat in a winepress, a pit that was probably hidden from view and that would not be suspected as a place to find a farmer's crops.

6:13 Gideon questioned God about the problems he and his nation faced and about God's apparent lack of help. What he didn't acknowledge was the fact that the people had brought calamity upon themselves when they decided to disobey and neglect God. How easy it is to overlook personal accountability and blame our problems on God and others. Unfortunately, this does not solve our problems. It brings us no closer to God, and it escorts us to the very edge of rebellion and backsliding. When problems come, the first place to look is within. Our immediate response should be confession to God of sins that may have created our problems.

Gideon's Call To God's Service – Verses 14-16

14 The LORD turned to him and said, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?" 15 "Pardon me, my lord," Gideon replied, "but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family." 16 The LORD answered, "I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive."

6:14-16 "I will be with you," God told Gideon, and God promised to give him the strength he needed to overcome the opposition. In spite of this clear promise for strength, Gideon made excuses. Seeing only his limitations and weaknesses, he failed to see how God could work through him. Like Gideon, we are called to serve God in specific ways. Although God promises us the tools and strength we need, we often make excuses. But reminding God of our limitations only implies that he does not know all about

us or that he has made a mistake in evaluating our character. Don't spend time making excuses. Instead, spend it doing what God wants.

A Sign From The Angel Of The LORD – Verses 17-21

17 Gideon replied, “If now I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign that it is really you talking to me. **18** Please do not go away until I come back and bring my offering and set it before you.” And the LORD said, “I will wait until you return.” **19** Gideon went inside, prepared a young goat, and from an ephah of flour he made bread without yeast. Putting the meat in a basket and its broth in a pot, he brought them out and offered them to him under the oak. **20** The angel of God said to him, “Take the meat and the unleavened bread, place them on this rock, and pour out the broth.” And Gideon did so. **21** Then the angel of the LORD touched the meat and the unleavened bread with the tip of the staff that was in his hand. Fire flared from the rock, consuming the meat and the bread. And the angel of the LORD disappeared.

6:17 Then show me a sign that it is You who talk with me: It was not wrong for Gideon to ask for a confirming sign. It made sense to ask God to confirm some area of direction that was not specifically detailed in His word, and in regard to something as life-or-death as leading Israel into battle against an enemy. For example, we don't need a special sign that God loves us because He forever demonstrated His love at the cross according to [Romans 5:8](#). This is true for many other things specifically detailed in God's Word. Yet when it comes to guidance in things not specifically detailed in God's Word, it is possible to look for and expect confirmation in various ways.

6:20-21 Fire rose out of the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread: The miraculous sign alone should not have persuaded Gideon because there are miraculous deceptions. Yet this miracle of fire together with the other aspects of this whole experience should have persuaded Gideon that this all was from the LORD.

Gideon Reacts With Awe And Worship To The Miraculous Sign – Verses 22-24

22 When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the LORD, he exclaimed, “Alas, Sovereign LORD! I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face!” **23** But the LORD said to him, “Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die.” **24** So Gideon built an altar to the LORD there and called it The LORD Is Peace. To this day it stands in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

6:22 Why was Gideon afraid of seeing an angel? The Israelites believed that no one could see God and live (see God's words to Moses in Exodus 33:20). Evidently Gideon thought this also applied to angels. Gideon perceived that He was the Angel of the LORD: The appearance of the Angel of the LORD was completely human in its character. Once Gideon realized the identity of the Angel of the LORD, he was terrified. The Angel of the LORD brought this comforting word to the terrified Gideon.

6:24 So Gideon built an altar there to the LORD: Gideon did this as an act of worship and consecration unto the LORD, whom he had just encountered face-to-face. He was no longer terrified of God, as demonstrated by the title given to the altar: The-LORD-Is-Peace.

Removing Baal Worship From His Midst – Verses 25-30

25 That same night the LORD said to him, “Take the second bull from your father's herd, the one seven years old. Tear down your father's altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole beside it. **26** Then build a proper kind of altar to the LORD your God on the top of this height. Using the wood of the Asherah pole that you cut down, offer the second bull as a burnt offering.” **27** So

Gideon took ten of his servants and did as the LORD told him. But because he was afraid of his family and the townspeople, he did it at night rather than in the daytime.²⁸ In the morning when the people of the town got up, there was Baal's altar, demolished, with the Asherah pole beside it cut down and the second bull sacrificed on the newly built altar!²⁹ They asked each other, "Who did this?" When they carefully investigated, they were told, "Gideon son of Joash did it."³⁰ The people of the town demanded of Joash, "Bring out your son. He must die, because he has broken down Baal's altar and cut down the Asherah pole beside it."

6:25-27 After God called Gideon to be Israel's deliverer, he immediately asked him to tear down the altar of the pagan god, Baal— an act that would test Gideon's faith and commitment. Canaanite religion was very political, so an attack on a god was often seen as an attack on the local government supporting that god. If caught, Gideon would face serious social problems and probable physical attack.

6:28-30 Gideon took a great risk by following God's higher law, which specifically forbids idol worship (Exodus 20:1-5). After learning what Gideon had done, the townspeople wanted to kill him. Many of those people were fellow Israelites. This shows how immoral God's people had become. God said in Deuteronomy 13:6-11 that idolaters must be stoned to death, but these Israelites wanted to stone Gideon for tearing down an idol and worshiping God! When you begin to accomplish something for God, you may be criticized by the very people who should support you.

The Altar Raises A Controversy – Verses 31-32

³¹ But Joash replied to the hostile crowd around him, "Are you going to plead Baal's cause? Are you trying to save him? Whoever fights for him shall be put to death by morning! If Baal really is a god, he can defend himself when someone breaks down his altar."³² So because Gideon broke down Baal's altar, they gave him the name Jerub-Baal that day, saying, "Let Baal contend with him."

6:31-32 If he is a god, let him plead for himself, because his altar has been torn down: Gideon's father made a very logical argument for preserving his son's life. Since Baal was the offended party, he could defend himself. This incident gave Gideon the nickname Jerubbaal. The name means, "A man against whom Baal is to strive and contend; a title of honour."

Gideon Gathers An Army – Verses 33-35

³³ Now all the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples joined forces and crossed over the Jordan and camped in the Valley of Jezreel.³⁴ Then the Spirit of the LORD came on Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, summoning the Abiezrites to follow him.³⁵ He sent messengers throughout Manasseh, calling them to arms, and also into Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali, so that they too went up to meet them.

6:33 The armies of Midian and Amalek camped in the Valley of Jezreel, the agricultural center for the area. Whoever controlled the valley's rich and fertile land controlled the people who lived in and around it. Because of the valley's vast resources, many major trade routes converged at the pass which led into it. This made it the site of many great battles. Gideon's men attacked the enemy armies from the hills, and the only escape route was through the pass toward the Jordan River. That is why Gideon urged some of his troops to take control of the river's crossing points (7:24).

God assures Gideon's doubts – Verses 36-40

³⁶ Gideon said to God, “If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised— ³⁷ look, I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said.” ³⁸ And that is what happened. Gideon rose early the next day; he squeezed the fleece and wrung out the dew—a bowlful of water. ³⁹ Then Gideon said to God, “Do not be angry with me. Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the fleece, but this time make the fleece dry and let the ground be covered with dew.” ⁴⁰ That night God did so. Only the fleece was dry; all the ground was covered with dew.

6:37-39 Was Gideon testing God, or was he simply asking God for more encouragement? In either case, though his motive was right (to obey God and defeat the enemy), his method was less than ideal. Gideon seems to have known that his requests might displease God (6: 39), and yet he demanded two miracles (6: 37-39), even after witnessing the miraculous fire from the rock (6: 21). It is true that to make good decisions, we need facts. Gideon had all the facts, but still he hesitated. He delayed obeying God because he wanted even more proof. Demanding extra signs was an indication of unbelief. Fear often makes us wait for more confirmation when we should be taking action. Visible signs are unnecessary if they only confirm what we already know is true. Today the greatest means of God's guidance is his Word, the Bible. Unlike Gideon, we have God's complete, revealed Word. If you want to have more of God's guidance, don't ask for signs; study the Bible (2 Timothy 3: 16-17).

6:39 After seeing the miracle of the wet fleece, why did Gideon ask for another miracle? Perhaps he thought the results of the first test could have happened naturally. A thick fleece could retain moisture long after the sun had dried the surrounding ground. “Putting out fleeces” is a poor decision-making method. Those who do this put limitations on God. They ask him to fit their expectations. The results of such experiments are usually inconclusive and thus fail to make us any more confident about our choices. Don't let a “fleece” become a substitute for God's wisdom that comes through Bible study and prayer.