

### God Calls Gideon to Defeat the Midianites

#### Judges 6:1-24

Judges 6:1-24 - *"Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD. So the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years, <sup>2</sup> and the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel. Because of the Midianites, the children of Israel made for themselves the dens, the caves, and the strongholds that are in the mountains. <sup>3</sup> So it was, whenever Israel had sown, Midianites would come up; also Amalekites and the people of the East would come up against them. <sup>4</sup> Then they would encamp against them and destroy the produce of the earth as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep nor ox nor donkey. <sup>5</sup> For they would come up with their livestock and their tents, coming in as numerous as locusts; both they and their camels were without number; and they would enter the land to destroy it. <sup>6</sup> So Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites, and the children of Israel cried out to the LORD.*

*<sup>7</sup> And when the children of Israel cried out to the LORD because of the Midianites, <sup>8</sup> that the LORD sent a prophet to the children of Israel, who said to them, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'I brought you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of bondage; <sup>9</sup> and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of all who oppressed you, and drove them out before you and gave you their land. <sup>10</sup> Also I said to you, "I am the LORD your God; do not fear the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell." But you have not obeyed My voice."*

*<sup>11</sup> Now the Angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth tree which was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress, in order to hide it from the Midianites. <sup>12</sup> And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him, and said to him, "The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!"*

*<sup>13</sup> Gideon said to Him, "O my lord,<sup>[a]</sup> if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles that our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites."*

*<sup>14</sup> Then the LORD turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?" <sup>15</sup> So he said to Him, "O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house."*

*<sup>16</sup> And the LORD said to him, "Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man." <sup>17</sup> Then he said to Him, "If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who talk with me. <sup>18</sup> Do not depart from here, I pray, until I come and bring out my offering and set it before You." And He said, "I will wait until you come back."*

*<sup>19</sup> So Gideon went in and prepared a young goat, and unleavened bread from an ephah of flour. The meat he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot; and he brought them out to Him under the terebinth tree and presented them.*

*<sup>20</sup> The Angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth." And he did so.*

*21 Then the Angel of the LORD put out the end of the staff that was in His hand, and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire rose out of the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. And the Angel of the LORD departed out of his sight.*

*22 Now Gideon perceived that He was the Angel of the LORD. So Gideon said, "Alas, O Lord GOD! For I have seen the Angel of the LORD face to face." 23 Then the LORD said to him, "Peace be with you; do not fear, you shall not die." 24 So Gideon built an altar there to the LORD, and called it The-LORD-Is-Peace. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.*

## Background Notes

Judges 6-8 gives the inspired account of how God raised up Gideon to defeat the Midianites and become the next judge in Israel. Who were the Midianites? Genesis 25:2 says that Midian was one of the sons of Abraham through his second wife, Keturah. Over the years, the Midianites had become enemies of Israel. In Numbers 31 God directed Israel to fight the Midianites, but the Midianites were not completely destroyed.

At the time of Gideon, about 200 years into the time of Judges, the Midianites were again strong enough to threaten Israel. God allowed the Midianites to prevail against Israel because the Israel, once again, had wandered away from the Lord and done evil in His sight. For seven years the Midianites sent raiding forces into Israel, stealing the people's flocks and grain and destroying their property. The people of Israel hid in caves and in the mountains for protection. Finally, after seven years of oppression, Israel cried out to the Lord for help. The Lord sent them a prophet to remind them of their disobedience. Then, in His grace, God also called on Gideon, and told him that He would defeat Midian through Him.

Notice that it was the "*Angel of the LORD*" who appeared to Gideon (v11). We believe that "the Angel of the LORD" was the Lord Himself, the second person of the Trinity, the preincarnate Son of God. Gideon knew that he had seen the Lord Himself; he thought he would die because he had seen God (v22). However, the Lord assured him that he wouldn't die.

When the Lord called Gideon, he was threshing wheat in a winepress (v11). Normally wheat would have been threshed out in the open, where the wind could blow the chaff away, but Gideon didn't want the Midianites to see him and steal his small amount of grain. Was this fear - or was it just common sense? I think that it was common sense! So I don't think that the Lord was being sarcastic when He called Gideon a "*mighty man of valor!*"! No. God gave Gideon a promise and a prediction of what God would make of him.

## Doctrinal Points

## 1. True faith believes and struggles.

Did Gideon have true faith in the Lord? Yes, he certainly did. He had a genuine faith in the one true God, the God of Israel. But, like many of us, Gideon struggled in his faith. Look at verses 12-13: *“And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him, and said to him, “The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!”*

*Gideon said to Him, “O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles that our fathers told us about, saying, ‘Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?’ But now the LORD has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.”* Gideon knew Israel's history. He had faith and believed, but he had questions. “Why is all this happening to us, if the Lord is with us? Where are the miracles that God used to do? It seems like the Lord has forsaken us.”

Have you ever asked any of these same questions? “If the Lord is with me, why do I have these problems?” “Why is the Lord letting me go through this situation?” “Why doesn't the Lord do a miracle for me, like He does for other people?” “Why does it seem like the Lord has forsaken me?” We've probably all had similar questions at one time or another. Why? Because **true faith believes - and struggles!** When fear and doubt and questions about the faith arise in your mind and heart, this doesn't mean that you've lost faith any more than Gideon lost his faith.

Gideon didn't reject God, and Gideon didn't deny the Lord. It's true that he had some doubts and questions and fears, but that's not the same as denying the faith and forsaking the Lord. It has been said, “There exists more faith in honest doubt than in professing all the creeds.” **True faith believes and struggles.**

The Lord didn't answer all Gideon's questions, but He assured him (v14): *“Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?”* At this point, Gideon had even more doubts and questions: *“O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house.”* And again the Lord assured Gideon: *“Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man.”*

Then Gideon asked for a sign: *“If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who talk with me”* (v17). So Gideon was not exactly a “giant” in the faith! He had questions and doubts, and he needed a sign. But here's the good news: In spite of his fears and doubts, **Gideon had a genuine faith!** Most of us are a lot like Gideon. We're not giants in the faith. We have doubts, we have questions, and sometimes we'd like a signs from the Lord - but at least our imperfect faith is **genuine** - and **genuine faith is what counts with God!** Struggles in the faith and unbelief are not synonymous. True faith believes and struggles.

## 2. True faith believes and worships.

Verses 18-19: *“Do not depart from here, I pray, until I come to You and bring out my offering and set it before You.”* And *He said, “I will wait until you come back.”* So Gideon went in and prepared a young goat, and unleavened bread from an

*ephah of flour.... and he brought them out to Him under the terebinth tree and presented them.*” This was an act of worship. And **notice the cost** involved! Remember - this was a time of famine because of the Midianites, and yet Gideon gave a very substantial offering to the Angel of the Lord! This offering was not from surplus, but from **survival** supplies. Worship involves real sacrifice!

Are you a true worshiper? Gideon was a true worshiper. He may have had some doubts and questions, but that didn't stop him from worshipping the Lord. So don't let your doubts and unanswered questions keep you from worship. If we waited until all our doubts and questions were answered before we worshiped, we'd never become worshipers. There will always be certain nagging questions for which we don't have answers, but true faith continues to believe and worship. True faith believes and worships.

## **Practical Application**

### **Your worship is not a waste!**

The Angel of the LORD said to Gideon, *“Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth.” And he did so. Then the Angel of the LORD put out the end of the staff that was in His hand, and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire rose out of the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. And the Angel of the LORD departed out of his sight”* (v20-21).

“What a waste!” you might say. This was a time of famine, food was scarce, and many poor people could have been fed with this food - and yet the Lord just consumed it all in fire! Was it a waste? No, this was worship, and God accepted that worship.

Many times it may appear that our worship time is a waste of time. Time is consumed when we worship the Lord in prayer and praise. Meanwhile there are hurting people and starving people and people in need all around us. Shouldn't we go out to meet those needs, instead of sitting around worshipping the Lord?

Yes, we should meet needs around us - but we should also take time out for worship! Mary of Bethany worshiped the Lord by anointing His feet with very costly ointment (John 12). She was accused of wasting money that could have been used to care for the poor, but the Lord commended Mary for her act of worship! The Lord would commend our worship as well. Our worship is not a waste!