

Gideon, Pt. 1  
Heart-work.  
Sunday, March 27, 2011.

I. In the hands of the Midianites. Vs. 1-6.

- A. Once again Israel has gone astray from the Lord their God, and this time God delivered them over into the hands of the Midianites; by this time seven years of Midianite oppression have taken place.
- B. Here we have the most detailed description of any of Israel's oppressions thus far:
1. The Midianites would invade in large numbers, joined by Amelekites and other people from the East. (Vs. 3). They would do so whenever Israel's crops would approach harvest time. They would take for themselves whatever they wanted, and leave their life stock, which they brought along, to graze on the rest. Vs. 3-5.
  2. They would steal Israel's sheep, oxen and donkeys also, thus robbing them of the means to farm with. Vs. 4
  3. Israel was forced to make caves in the mountains in which they could hide some provisions for themselves, and some small strongholds as well which they could defend. Vs. 2.
  4. Seven years of this had left Israel impoverished, hungry, tired and frustrated. Yet, this was what covenant breakers could expect according as the Lord had warned them in Deuteronomy 28:29, 31.
  5. So Israel cries out to the Lord.  
Once again we see the pattern we might observe in our own lives as well. When all goes well we take the liberty to serve and to service the gods of our own choosing; we serve the Baals and the Asherah's of our world as Israel did in their world. But, when push comes to shove, and when we really need help it is time to seek out the Lord God. At such a time the Baals and Asherah's will not do, and we know it instinctively, and so did Israel. Vs. 6.

II. God sends a prophet. Vs. 7-10.

- A. This may not have been the kind of answer Israel was looking for in answer to their cry for help. After all they needed a deliverer like Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah and Barak. It is a little bit like being stranded with your car in the middle of nowhere, and AAA sends you a philosopher instead of a mechanic with a tow truck.
- B. Are you sometimes surprised at the Lord's seemingly inappropriate answers to your cries and pleas for help. We say to ourselves, and sometimes to others: "Does He even hear or understand us?" We should understand that the Lord has different objectives than we do. He reminds us that His thoughts and ways are not like our thoughts and ways. Isaiah 55:8,9.
1. Our objective is to get out from under our burdens, and to get back on top of our circumstances; we want the problems to go away.
  2. God wants us to learn from our circumstances; He wants us to interpret and interact with them. He wants to give us wisdom and insight and understanding through them.

3. For this reason, sometimes the problems need to stay around for a while until these objectives have been met, and the image of Christ is formed in us.
  4. Is this your objective in the midst of all the crisis, obstacles and adversity in life? Then we need to place ourselves under God's word as Israel had to do here; that is why the Lord sent them a prophet rather than a deliverer.
- C. We do not know the name of this prophet, but we do know his message.
1. The message he brought was from the Lord God of Israel.
  2. The message rehearsed the past mercies relating to their deliverance out of Egypt, and bringing them in the possession of the Promised Land.
  3. The message reminded them of their obligation not to serve (fear) the gods of the Canaanites, here designated by the subset of the Amorites.
  4. Finally the message puts its finger on the problem Israel had to come face to face with: "But you have not obeyed My voice." They did serve other gods.

### III. The Lord prepares a deliverer.

- A. When the Lord's people are humbled by their circumstances, and willingly have placed themselves under the indictments of His word, owning their guilt and shortcomings, the Lord is neither slow, cruel nor unmerciful to forget their outward circumstances, and He raises up a deliverer for them.
- B. The Angel of the Lord (Messenger, a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ as The Messenger of the Lord's Covenant) appears to Gideon while he is threshing wheat inside a winepress to hide it from the Midianites.  
The messenger offers the whole solution to Israel's dilemma in these few words: "The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor."
- C. "The Lord is with you" is always the whole solution to life's dilemmas.  
These are words of communion. If God be with us what can be against us? Here too we remember the name of the Lord Jesus, Immanuel, God with us.  
"I will be with you" was all that Moses needed when He was called, Exodus 3:12, and it was all that was offered to Joshua after Moses' death in Joshua 1:5.
- D. There is a second half to this truth, and that is that Gideon would give himself to the Lord as well by answering, "if that be true, then I will be with You as well."
- E. Gideon has some problems however believing the Lord is with Him:
1. Why then is he beating out wheat in a winepress?
  2. Where are all the mighty signs done in Egypt?
  3. Why are we delivered over to the Midianites?
- After the Lord calls Him again as Israel's deliverer, Gideon objects again: His clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and he is the youngest in his father's house. The Lord answers again: "Surely, I will be with you." He has no more to give than Himself.
- F. From the words "I will be with you" Gideon begins to surmise that he is dealing with the Lord himself (vs. 17) and he asks for a sign which would take him a few hours to prepare; a young goat and fresh baked bread. Upon his presenting it to the Lord, fire comes out of the rock and consumes it. The Angel of the Lord disappears, and Gideon is left with an overwhelming sense of awe having been in the presence of the Lord Himself. Does something of that awe come home to us in the worship of God and especially at His table?