

In our last lesson, we talked about Deborah. Deborah was a prophetess and a judge. Deborah chose Barak to be the commander of the army of Israel. Deborah and Barak together won the battle. Deborah wrote a song praising God. Deborah and Barak sang that song to celebrate Israel's victory.

After Deborah was gone, the Israelites started to sin again. Because of their sin, God allowed the Midianites to rule over them. The Israelites had to hide out in caves and mountain dens so that the Midianites would not take their food and the things that belonged to them. After seven years, the Israelites called out to the Lord again for help. (Judges 6:6)

There was a man from the tribe of Manasseh named Gideon. Gideon was the son of Joash. Gideon was a farmer. He had to hide in the winepress to thresh the wheat because of the Midianites. The Midianites would come in at harvest time and take the crops and the animals. They left the Israelites with no food.

An Angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon. The Angel told Gideon that the Lord was with him. (Judges 6:12) Gideon asked the Angel why things were so bad for them. Gideon asked where the miracles were that their fathers had told them about. Gideon asked God for a sign to show him it was really God who spoke to him. (Judges 6:17) Gideon went to prepare food for the Angel of the Lord. Gideon cooked a goat and made unleavened bread.

The angel told Gideon to set the meat and the unleavened bread on a rock. The Angel of the Lord touched the meat with His staff. A fire burned up the meat and the bread. Then the Angel disappeared. (Judges 6:21) Gideon built an altar to the Lord and called it "The-Lord-Is-Peace".

The first thing the Lord told Gideon to do was to tear down the altar of Baal. Baal was an idol that Gideon's father worshipped. Gideon was afraid of his father's household and the men of the city. He took ten men with him and went at night to tear down the altar. When the men of the city saw what Gideon had done, they were angry. They wanted Gideon to die. (Judges 6:30) But Joash told the men that if Baal was the true God, he could have taken care of himself. On that day, they called Gideon Jerubbaal. (Judges 6:32)

Gideon was afraid. He asked for another sign from God. Gideon put some fleece on the threshing floor. He asked God to make dew fall on the fleece but not on the ground around it. The next morning, Gideon squeezed the dew out of the fleece. But there was no dew on the ground.

Gideon asked the Lord not to be angry with him, but he wanted one more sign. Gideon asked the Lord to make the ground wet with dew but to leave the fleece dry. That night, God caused the fleece to be dry but the ground was wet. (Judges 6:40)

Gideon gathered 32,000 men together from several tribes. The men made camp and were ready to go to battle. God told Gideon he had too many men in his army. God wanted only a few men so the people would understand that He won the battle for them. God told Gideon to send home all of the men who were afraid. (Judges 7:3) 22,000 men went home. The Lord told Gideon that the army was still too large.

God told Gideon to take the men down to the water to drink. Some of the men got on their hands and knees and lapped the water like a dog. 300 of the men drank the water from hands. These 300 men were the ones chosen to be the army. The others were sent home. Gideon had only 300 men to fight 135,000 Midianites. But Gideon knew the Lord was with them.

Gideon divided the 300 men into three groups. He gave each man a pitcher with a torch of fire inside. (Judges 7:16) The pitchers helped to keep the fire going. It also helped to hide the flame from the Midianites until they were ready to attack. Gideon went with one group. He told the other two groups to do exactly what he did.

Gideon placed the three groups so they would surround the Midianite camp. Gideon waited until the Midianites were asleep. He wanted to surprise them so they would not be prepared to fight back.

Suddenly, Gideon's group started blowing their trumpets. They broke the pitchers around the torch and started running for the Midianite camp. The other two groups did the same thing. They were all shouting "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" (Judges 7:20) The Midianites woke up and saw all the lights coming towards them. They heard the trumpets and the shouting. They were so afraid that they started killing each other. Then the rest of the Midianites ran away. Gideon and his army went after them and destroyed them.

Gideon won the battle because he trusted in God. He was a great man but he could not have won the battle without the Lord. After Gideon died, the people turned away from God again. They started to worship the idol, Baal. They forgot God very quickly.