

Judges 6:1-24

Introduction – The cycle begins again. This time, in the story of Gideon, three chapters of details will need to be considered. And once again, we will see many details are given to us for the purpose of speaking to us of our Great Deliverer, Jesus Christ.

The Midianites – The Midianites were descendants of Abraham by Keturah and they become known generally also as the Ishmaelites. They buy Joseph and then sell him to Potiphar. The Kenites are a subset of the Midianites, from whom Jethro, Moses' father in law is a priest. The Midianites joined with king Balak and the Moabites in trying to curse and destroy the Israelites, and it was a Midianite woman who was pierced through while joined to an Israelite by Phineas in Numbers 25. The Midianites were severely routed under Moses in Numbers 31. Some 200 years later, God is now using them as a scourge of chastisement upon His own people.

Terrible Oppression (vv 1-6) – ‘*Doing evil*’, remember, is the code-word in Judges for idolatry. After forty years of rest, Israel again has fallen away from God, their deliverer. This time, He hands them over to a large band of invaders who saw the good harvest as a time to pillage for themselves. Israel, fainthearted as their false gods seem to desert them, hide in caves each year as these ‘*locusts*’ come in and take their harvest and livestock. Under God’s blessing, His children reap what others sow (Josh 24:13). When His people live in disobedience, He promised that others would reap what they sowed (Deut 28:29, 31).

“Obvious” Words (vv7-10) – Before He sends them a deliverer, God sends them a prophet. This prophet, in essence, prepared the way for the deliverer to come. But this prophet did not bring any new prophecies. He simply declared what had once again been forgotten, discarded as antiquated religious and historical interpretations. Verse 10 again makes clear that the main problem is not oppression, but Baalism. False worship, false gods, and disobedience to Jehovah, are destroying the nation, not the oppression of the Midianites.

God is With You (v11-12) – God, having declared Israel’s unfaithfulness, shows forth His own mercy in coming to be with His people. The angel of the Lord appears to the foot of a terebinth tree, once again a symbol of the place where God meets man. Gideon is hiding in a winepress, trying to secretly thresh what little wheat his father has hid from the marauding band. All of this symbolism points to a lack of communion with God.

The Promise of Presence (vv12-13) – The angel declares that the Lord is with Gideon. *Immanuel* has come. Because God is with him, Gideon will be a valiant warrior. Gideon’s response is one of faith, for he acknowledges that the oppression is from the hand of God.

The Promise of Strength (vv14-15) – Gideon is declared by the LORD to be mighty because God is sending him. Gideon is dumbfounded. He is of the weakest clan in a half-tribe of Israel, he is the least in his father’s house, and he is down in an empty winepress threshing wheat like an ox. Other younger sons have been selected by the Lord before (Abel, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph), and others will be (David, and Jesus, the second Adam). Strength comes from the selection of God, leaving no room for presumption.

The Promise of Victory (v16) – The Lord rewards this humility with yet a third promise. Because God is with him, Gideon’s victory will be total. Moses was considered the meekest man in the Old Covenant, and like Moses, Gideon now asks for a sign.

The Sign of Restored Communion (vv 17-21) – Why does Gideon choose this sign? What is his nagging question? It is this: Is God with us? Have we been reconciled to Him? Only then can we have confidence that He will deliver us. So He prepares an offering (a modified peace offering), and the fire that consumes it leaves no room for doubt – Gideon has been with God.

Grace, Fear, and Peace (vv 22-24) – Having witnessed a picture of his or Israel’s atonement, one would expect Gideon to be filled with rejoicing and joy. Instead, we find him scared to death. No one sees Jehovah and lives. This sounds so strange to us; we have lost the sense of terror in the awesomeness of God. But if there is nothing terrifying about God’s holiness then there is really nothing amazing about His grace. God, having received this substitutionary sacrifice declares peace with Gideon. He has passed the judgment. Gideon built a memorial-altar which was visible for generations to come, reminding the people of God’s judgment and God’s peace. In the New Covenant, the Lord’s Supper is our reminder of God’s judgment and peace through Jesus Christ. It is our time to sup in the presence of Jehovah.

Final Thoughts –

Another Forerunner, Another Threshing Floor (Luke 3:3-4, 15-17) – We are invited to see the shadows of our Great Deliverer in the book of Judges. Once again, there are several similarities, this time, to the prophet John, and his description of the ministry of Christ the Thresher.

The Grace of Speaking the Truth About Sin – There is no good news if there is no bad news. Our culture hates to bring up our own sin and idolatry. But ‘*we have reason to hope God is designing mercy for us if we find He is by His grace preparing us for it*’ – M. Henry. External oppression is simply the symptom. Covenantal disobedience (idolatry, sin) is causing the problems.

Real Peace – Peace is not about a feeling inside your belly. Peace is about relationship; and primarily your relationship with God. The declaration of peace is a declaration of the restored, reconciled relationship that we have been given, all of grace, by God (Luke 2:14, John 14:27, 16:33, Rom 5:1). It is this covenant renewed with Him that we share as we come to the Table of our Lord. But we must come with faith, or He will not come to us as our peace (Matt 10:34-39). This peace, this relationship, requires holiness.