

Judges 6:25-40

Introduction – Why so much detail? It doesn't take long to realize that if we do not consider the details in the literature of the Bible (the second bull, seven years, dew upon fleece and a threshing floor) then we will not do justice to the sacred text. In fact, it is this passage that requires some extra meditation to make sure we understand the nature of signs and the significance of God giving them.

Cleaning House First (vv25-27) – The prophet who had come before made clear that the main problem for Israel was not the external oppression of the Midianites. The problem was the covenantal disobedience of idolatry inside Israel. Judgment must begin at home (1 Pet 4:17). The victory 'out there' won't take place until the cleansing 'in here' is finished.

Some of the Details – It is his father's property where the Baal and Asherah are kept, so Gideon grew up in an idolatrous home or in a divided home (Matt 6:24, 1 John 2:15-17). The second bull (maybe representing Gideon and his family) is seven years old (seven years of oppression) is to be sacrificed by using the wood of the idols and it is to be done publicly. Every connection between the outside oppression and the internal idolatry is to be declared. Notice that Gideon is not chastised for his fear of the mob and his decision to do this during the night – "*Gideon...did as the Lord said to him.*" Apparently obedience was required but heroism was optional (John 3:2, 19:39).

Jerubaal (vv28-32) – The next morning, everyone knows what happened. Lord Baal's altar wrecked, Lady Asherah's pole chopped into firewood, and Joash's prize bull sacrificed as a sign of Jehovah's favor. Determining it was Gideon, they demand that Joash turn over his son. But Joash, in biting sarcasm, reveals that his household is now following Gideon and the Lord. Then, his father renames him Jerubaal, the Baal-Fighter.

Shadows of The Baal-Fighter – These delivering judges are types of our great Deliverer, the Lord Jesus Christ. On the cross, Christ made a mockery of all the false gods that lay a claim over those He came to redeem (Col 2:15). And in Christ, our victory comes when He continues the work of Baal-Fighting through us – we are promised final and complete victory over all idols and sin (Phil 1:6, Rom 16:20). We must tear down our idols (Col 3:5-7) of worldliness, not by the flesh, but by the same Spirit that came upon Jerubaal (Rom 8:12-14).

An Anointed One (vv33-35) – The Spirit is imparted to Gideon, which makes him a messiah, an anointed one. The anointing is literally "a clothing, a putting on." Here we see also a pattern – a sacrifice for sin and the gift of repentance, followed by the equipping of God's people by His Spirit to finish the work which was already definitively accomplished by God in the sacrifice. Gideon is now clothed as a new man, recreated after the image of God.

The Trumpet is Sounded – This Spirit anointed man calls upon the people of God to battle. The Midianites have come again, but this time God has sent messengers who efficaciously gather the people back to Himself, back to the battle at hand.

"Putting Out a Fleece" (vv36-40) – In order to consider the prophetic meaning of these signs, it is important to keep the context in mind. Gideon has faith in God, but it is weak. There is a battle about to take place between Jehovah (who has appeared to be weak) and Baal (who has appeared to be strong). The Midianites are used to fighting; the Israelites to hiding. It will take a miracle. Does Jehovah intervene in miraculous ways? And can Israel trust Him this time?

Dew, Fleece – Much speculation has been attempted here. The context and the way symbols have been used in Judges up to this time should help direct our interpretation. It may be that the fleece represents Gideon being anointed and then through him, all of Israel is blessed as well.

Miracles – More importantly, these signs point out that the Triune God of scripture is eternally active in His providence of all things. A proper Christian view of miracles sees God acting in a different way than the way He usually acts. It is not that God sets aside physical laws, for there are no self-sustaining laws. "*In Him, we live and move and have our being.*" (Acts 17:28) "*He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.*" (Col 1:17). God is "*upholding all things by the word of His power.*" (Heb 1:3)

Should We "Put Out the Fleece"? – The ability to ask God for a miraculous sign was limited to His prophets and apostles before the Word had been completely given to us. It validated their ministry and gave a sign to the people that they were in fact speaking the very words of God (2 Cor 12:12). We should not seek miraculous signs.

Other Signs – God does not give us miraculous signs today. That is not to say that God does not do miracles (act in a manner differently than He usually does in His ordinary providence). It also does not mean that God does not give us signs that build up our faith. Rather than miraculous signs, He gives us covenantal signs. By His Spirit, He uses the preaching of His Word and the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper to communicate to us the benefits of redemption – that is, to strengthen our faith.

The Living God, Not a Dead Baal - We do not worship a set of propositions about the created world around us. We worship the personal, Triune God who created all things by the word of His power. In giving us His Son, we are to remember that He will freely give us all things. We should be looking all the time for the eternally active God to bring things to pass. We should take everything to the Lord in prayer. We should seek Him and expect Him to increase our faith, our obedience, our perseverance, and all because of his loving grace. And in that grace, we must tear down all the remaining idols, for that is where our victory continues.

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