

Gideon, Also Called Jerub-Baal

Judges 6-8

BACKGROUND

- Gideon makes a generic *oblation* or *grain* offering (a sacrifice of agricultural produce, such as wheat, as an act of worship, typically accompanying a larger sacrifice) coupled with a *communion* or *burnt* offering (also an act of worship or atonement) of a young goat (cf. Ex 29:18, Lev 1:9+; 2).
- Gideon was a well-off member of a lesser tribe (6:11, 27).

Read 6:7-7:25, 8:22-27

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. True or False: Yahweh didn't do anything to tell Israel why things were going wrong.
2. What one word would you choose to describe Gideon's response to God's clear, miraculous call? How about God's response to Gideon's requests for signs?
3. Gideon's fleeces were used not to *determine*, but to *confirm* God's will for him. How is "fleece" used in Christian circles? Are there any examples in the bible of using a fleece to determine God's will?
4. Gideon asks for a sign the first time to confirm that the one who *appeared* to him (6:12) was God (6:17). Who else might it have been?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

5. The account of Gideon is often used as an example of discernment. Edith and Francis Schaeffer are another example: In 1955, Before founding the L'Abri fellowship in Switzerland, they faced eviction and extremely limited resources. The only option for staying and continuing their ministry was to put a down payment on a house, and even then they lacked the resources to meet the mortgage payments. Edith, seeking the Lord's will, prayed that if he wanted them to try to stay, they would receive a \$1,000 check the next day as a sign. The following day in the mail they received a check for exactly that amount from a supporter in the U. S. Even with this support, buying the house from which to minister meant stepping beyond their means.
 - a) How is the account of Gideon similar to and different from the Schaeffers'?
 - b) Your daughter, having just graduated from college, wants to move to Newark, New Jersey, to minister in the inner city. She does not as yet have the financial resources to do more than pay a security deposit on an apartment and a couple of month's rent, but plans to solicit support from churches. What do you advise her? What would Gideon or the Schaeffers say? Is this stepping out in faith, or just stepping out?

6. Read Phil 4:18, Heb 13:15. Gideon's response to the angel's proclamation of hope was to offer sacrifices, specifically a communion and an oblation sacrifice. What would one in the New Covenant offer as a corresponding sacrifice? (See also Ps 51:16-17, Rom 12:1) When did you last offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God, and what form did it take?
7. Why did God start the process of rescuing the Israelites before they had repented? ¹
8. Read Judges 8:22-23, 1 Sam 12:6-15. Israel has been ruled using patriarchy, rule by judges and monarchy. Did Israel or the early Church ever elect their leaders? Does "rule" by elected council avoid the dangers warned of by Gideon and Samuel? Does your church employ random decision making, as in Ex 28:30 or Acts 1:26?
9. What is the symbolism of the barley cake in 7:13? Who interpreted the dream? Was any supernatural agency involved in this dream or its interpretation? A friend at work describes a dream of his and its interpretation. Should you lend it any weight?
10. Read Deut 30:11-18. Judges records this prophecy of Moses played out in the history of Israel. The prophecy is so central to the history of Israel that all of the Old Testament prophets may be understood to be repeating it in new contexts. How are the blessings and curses incorporated into Jesus' teaching? (Hint: Luke 6:17-26, Mt 23:13-32.)
11. How can you tell if an activity such as work or exercise or gambling or even TV viewing has risen to the level of idolatry? Are there any activities, say astrology, which always fall under the category of idolatry?
12. Now that you have read about Gideon, was the angel of the Lord being sarcastic in 6:12?

¹ Question from *Judges*, Don Baker (IVP, 1995).