

Study Notes on Gideon ~ Judges 6-8

The Cycle of Sin in Judges

1. There is peace in the land (2:6-7).
2. The people do evil in God's sight and abandon God for idols (2:11-12).
3. God has them overrun by enemies (2:14).
4. The people cry out for help (2:15).
5. God sends a judge to rescue them (2:16).
6. There is once again peace in the land (2:18).
7. The judge dies and the people once again turn to evil, thereby starting the cycle all over again.

The Cycle in the Life of Other Judges

1. Othniel (3:7-11) vs. Aran-naharaim
2. Ehud (3:12, 15, 30) vs. The Moabite coalition
3. Shamgar (3:31) vs. Philistia?
4. Deborah (and Barak?); 4:1-3; 5:31b) vs. Canaan

What is the purpose of the challenges faced by the judges? (See 2:20-23)

Gideon vs. Midian—Judges 6-7

The cycle—1) 5:31b; 2) 6:1; 3) 6:1; 4) 6:6; 5) 6:7, 12; 6) 8:28; 7) 8:33

Notes

1. It is possible that Midian did not really have Israel captive, but merely subjected. They “impoverished” Israel by razing their crops and land (6:1-6, but compare Gideon’s view in v. 13).
2. 6:7-10—The reason why Midian oppressed Israel: the consequences of their sin, yet God continued to redeem them (6:11-ch. 7).
3. 6:11-18—The calling of Gideon as a judge. Note: vs. 11, 12—the angel of the LORD, but in v. 15 Gideon addressed the LORD in the 3rd person even as “the LORD” speaks to him in vs. 14, 16. Is the angel of the LORD the same as the LORD? (See also v. 21)
4. Why does the writer point out (in v. 11) that Gideon was hiding the wheat from Midian? Is it to point out the shrewdness of Gideon? Does it highlight his fear?
5. 6:13—“Why is this happening?” Gideon may be confused on the small

picture (he is focused on his own personal life). The larger picture is the rebellion of Israel against God.

6. 6:17—"You." Does Gideon know he is speaking to God? He seems to, as he asks for a sign (vs. 19-24).
7. 6:20-22—The sign is successful; God reaffirms he has chosen Gideon.
8. 6:25-27—God sends Gideon on a covert mission to wage a major war against idolatry. Gideon is afraid, despite God's assurance.
9. 6:31-32—Why did Gideon's father, whom Gideon was afraid of in vs. 25-27, defend him? Is the name given to Gideon in vs. 32 mocking or respectful?
10. 6:33-34—The spirit of God was instrumental in leading Gideon.
11. 6:33-34—Gideon ask for more signs. Is he fearful? Unsure? Yet, he is led by God's spirit.
12. 7:2-6—Whittling the army down. Is this due to Israel's pride?
13. 7:9—The assurance of victory and the provision for fear. Why did God say what he did in v.10?
14. 7:15—Gideon worshiped God. Does this seem like an unusual time to worship? How can we use this example in our own lives?
15. 7:19-25 and ch. 8—Victory and tying up loose ends. Note Gideon's arrogance, false humility, and self-sufficiency in chapter 8.

But ... disaster for both Gideon and the people! See 8:22-28, 33-35 for the very tragic ending to this story.

Another Cycle in the Life of Gideon (5:31b; 6:1, 6, 7, 12; 8:28, 33)
[with study questions]

1. 6:1-12—The call of God, in God's time.
 1. What is the context of the story of Gideon (1)? Why? What were the consequences?
 2. Why was Israel afraid? What was their response to fear (6)? How did God respond?
2. 6:13-24—Testing God.
 1. Why is Gideon skeptical of the the angel's message (13)?
 2. What is Gideon's response to the angel? (test)
 3. When Gideon realized the angel's message was truly from God, how did he respond (22-24)? [Fear → worship]

3. 6:25-32—Serving God.
 1. What mission did God send Gideon on?
 2. Was Gideon fully devoted to this task? (27)
 3. How is fear preventing Gideon from fully following God?

4. 6:33-40—Testing God II.
 1. What is the meaning of Gideon's actions in 34-35?
 2. What does he then do in 36-40?
 3. What do you think of his actions?

5. 7:1-15—Overcoming Fear.
 1. Why does God whittle down the army (2)?
 2. What will this teach Gideon?
 3. How does Gideon overcome his fear?
 4. How does he respond to God?

6. 7:15-25—Victory.
 1. How did they win the battle (22)?
 2. What was the difference in Gideon between this incident and the preceding ones?

7. 8:1-35—Failure.
 1. Gideon got his start by tearing down an idol but finished by setting up a new idol.
 2. He talks a good game (8:23) but doesn't follow through. Instead, he decides to "help" God.
 3. He leaves a legacy of idolatry.

Reflection Questions

1. How central is fear in our lives as we attempt to completely follow God?
2. How are obedience and worship key actions that help us overcome fear?
3. How does sin and rebellion affect us today?
4. What cycles do we face today? How can we break them?
5. Do we ask God for signs today? Is it right for us to do so?
6. Gideon was a very flawed and reluctant (doubtful) leader. Can we be a leader for God today and do it reluctantly or even fearfully? Why or why not?
7. What did you learn from this lesson that we can pray for or about?