

# Deeper Discoveries

## Judges



### Lesson 4: Judges 6

#### **Rebellion and Oppression from the East**

This time, God “gave them into the hands of the Midianites”. It is the worst oppression yet—Israelites are forced to leave their homes and “[prepare] shelters for themselves” in the inaccessible mountain ranges. The Midianites were not interested in political control but rather economic exploitation, plundering the land of its crops—the people were starving and the land was ravaged. Eventually, “Midian so impoverished the Israelites that they cried out to the Lord.”

So far, though more oppressive, the cycle is following its normal route. Now we expect God to raise up a deliverer, a judge (as in 3:9, 15; 4:4, 6–7). But instead, “when the Israelites cried to the Lord because of Midian, he sent them a prophet” (6:7–8). God’s first response to the people’s cry is *not* to send a savior or salvation, but to give them a sermon! Before they can appreciate the rescue that will come, the people need to understand why they need rescuing. The prophet comes and helps them to understand why they are in the trouble they are in. He wants them to understand where their idolatry—their sin—has led them.

The nature of the sermon shows that God is trying to convict the people so that they will be truly repentant—which suggests that the “crying out” of **verses 6–7** is not a sign of real repentance. God sends the prophet to convict of sin *before* he sends the judge to rescue from oppression because the people are regretful, but not repentant. (Timothy Keller, *Judges for You*, 67–68)

When Israel was under the thumb of Midian, the LORD raised up Gideon as a judge and deliverer (chaps. 6–8). Gideon was a most unlikely leader. He recognized that he was from the weakest clan in Manasseh, and that he was the least honored among his father’s children (6:15). The key to victory was that the LORD had sent him and promised to be with him, just as he sent Moses and was with him (6:14, 17). Gideon’s faith was faltering and weak, and so he needed sign after sign to verify that Yahweh had truly sent him (6:17–23, 36–40; 7:9–14). He was too fearful to tear down Baal’s altar during the day, and so he did it during the night, when he would be unobserved (6:25–27). Indeed, like Ehud, Gideon’s strength came from the LORD’s Spirit (3:10; 6:34). (Tom Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 20)

**6:8 a prophet.** An anonymous prophet. The prophets constantly remind the people of their covenant obligations. The words of this unnamed prophet (vv. 8–10) are virtually identical to the words of the angel of the LORD in 2:1–3. (*Ref SB*)

**6:8–9 brought ... delivered ... drove them ... gave you.** In Israel, religious apostasy is always linked to forgetting God’s saving acts and His law. Remembering these saving actions of God and His revelation is the first part of keeping the covenant. (*Ref SB*)

**Biblical Patterns:** Gideon’s call to be Israel’s deliverer was like that of Moses:

Moses	The LORD Calls a Deliver	Gideon
Exod 3:2	The angel of the LORD shows up and speaks	Judges 6:12
3:1	He was hiding out from enemies, working the family farm	6:11
3:10	Was told that the LORD was sending him on a mission	6:14
3:11	He immediately protested inadequacy for the task	6:15
3:12	The LORD says, “I will be with you”	6:16
3:1	Miraculous fire signals God’s presence	6:21

So the message is clear: Gideon was to be used by God to save Israel from the Midianites, just as Moses was used to save Israel from the Egyptians. The God of the exodus has come to Israel’s rescue again.

**6:24 built an altar.** The first of two altars. **The LORD Is Peace.** Given the circumstances, the name is quite appropriate. **Peace.** Hebrew: *shalom*. (*NIV BTSB*)

**6:25–32** Gideon destroys his father’s Baal altar and Asherah pole. Ironically, Gideon’s own family worships major Canaanite deities. God’s command is nothing more than the covenantal expectation, namely, the destruction of altars to false deities (see Deut 7:5; 12:3—both of which use the verb form of Gideon’s name [“to cut down, hack”]). There must not be an altar to the LORD and to Baal in the same place. “No one can serve two masters” (Matt 6:24). (*NIV BTSB*)

**6:30** The Israelites were so disloyal to God’s covenant that they were willing to kill a fellow Israelite for the cause of Baal. Contrast Deut 13:6–10, where unfaithful Israelites were to be put to death. (*NIV BTSB*)

**6:36–40** The gathering of the tribes should have been sufficient evidence of God’s presence with Gideon, but he wanted a sign that God would do what he had promised. He doubted that God would deliver Israel by his strength...As a result, Gideon put God to the test. In the first test, God did as Gideon asked, but it was not enough; Gideon may have thought that it could have been a fluke. So Gideon, showing his timidity, demanded a second test. Displaying great patience, the Lord graciously gave him a confirmatory sign. (*CSB SB*) Gideon is the first person in the Bible to request a sign from God. Normally, God initiates signs, and he does so not by request but by his design. Since God said he would save Israel, why does he perform the requested signs? God

performed the signs with the fleece because he intended to save Israel; he will not let Gideon's unbelief derail his plan. No character in the book receives more divine assurance than Gideon, yet none displays more doubt. (*NIV BTSB*)