YOU HAVE TOO MANY MEN

Judges 7:2 The LORD said to Gideon, “You have too many men. I cannot deliver Midian into their hands, or Israel would boast against me, ‘My own strength has saved me.’ “

Review

God has told Gideon to rescue Israel from the Midianites and has answered his excuses. Gideon has torn down the altar to Baal and the Asherah pole in front of his father’s house and built an altar to the Lord and offered a sacrifice on it. The people of the town, who were calling on the Lord to save them, wanted to kill him for that, but were dissuaded from killing him by being told if Baal was truly a god he should be able to protect himself.

Gideon raises an army of 32,000. After that, he puts out fleeces asking God to confirm that God will save Israel through him.

You Have Too Many Men

Judges 7:1-3 Early in the morning, Jerub-Baal (that is, Gideon) and all his men camped at the spring of Harod. The camp of Midian was north of them in the valley near the hill of Moreh. The LORD said to Gideon, “You have too many men. I cannot deliver Midian into their hands, or Israel would boat against me, ‘My own strength has saved me.’ Now announce to the army, ‘Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.’ “ So twenty-two thousand men left, while ten thousand remained.

Deuteronomy 20:1&2 When you go to war against your enemies and see horses and chariots and an army greater than yours, do not be afraid of them, because the LORD your God, who brought you up out of Egypt, will be with you. When you are about to go into battle, the priest shall come forward and address the army.

Deuteronomy 20:3&4 He shall say: “Hear, Israel: Today you are going into battle against your enemies. Do not be fainthearted or afraid; do not panic or be terrified by them. For the LORD your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory.”

Deuteronomy 20:8 Then the officers shall add, “Is anyone afraid or fainthearted? Let him go home so that his fellow soldiers will not become disheartened too.”

Joshua 2:8&9 Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof and said to them. “I know that the LORD has given you this land and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you.”

Joshua 2:10&11 We have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone’s courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.”

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Matthew 26:52(NASB) Then Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back in its place; for all who take up the sword shall perish by the sword.”

I Corinthians 4:20 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.

You Still Have Too Many Men

Judges 7:4&5 But the LORD said to Gideon, “There are still too many men. Take them down to the water, and I will thin them out for you there. If I say, ‘This one shall go with you,’ he shall go; but if I say, ‘This one shall not go with you,’ he shall not go.” So Gideon took the men down to the water. There the LORD told him, “Separate those who lap the water with their tongues as a dog laps from those who kneel down to drink.”

Judges 7:6&7 Three hundred of them drank water from cupped hands, lapping like dogs. All the rest got down on their knees to drink. The LORD said to Gideon, “With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands. Let all the others go home.”

Judges 7:8 So Gideon sent the rest of the Israelites home but kept the three hundred, who took over the provisions and trumpets of the others.

Although it is not stated in the text, getting down on your knees and sticking your face in the water seems like taking a position that would leave one much more vulnerable to attack, than bending down and scooping up water to your mouth with your hand. Although God was going to give them the victory, caution rather than carelessness was to be encouraged.

A Final Confirmation to Gideon

Judges 7:9-11 During that night the LORD said to Gideon, “Get up, go down against the camp, because I am going to give it into your hands. If you are afraid to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah and listen to what they are saying. Afterward, you will be encouraged to attack the camp.” So he and Purah his servant went down to the outposts of the camp.

Judges 7:12&13 The Midianites, the Amalekites and all the other eastern peoples had settled in the valley, thick as locusts. Their camels could no more be counted than the sand on the seashore. Gideon arrived just as a man was telling a friend his dream. “I had a dream,” he was saying. “A round loaf of barley bread came tumbling into the Midianite camp. It struck the tent with such force that the tent overturned and collapsed.”

Judges 7:14&15 His friend responded, “This can be nothing other than the sword of Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite. God has given the Midianites and the whole camp into his hands.” When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, he bowed down and worshiped. He returned to the camp of Israel and called out, “Get up! The LORD has given the Midianite camp into your hands.”

2 Kings 7:5&6 At dusk they got up and went to the camp of the Arameans. When they reached the edge of the camp, no one was there, for the LORD had caused the Arameans to hear the sound of chariots and horses and a great army, so that they said to one another, “Look, the king of Israel has hired the Hittite and Egyptian kings to attack us!”

2 Kings 7:7 So they got up and fled in the dusk and abandoned their tents and their horses and donkeys. They left the camp as it was and ran for their lives.

Proverbs 28:1 The wicked flee though no one pursues, but the righteous are as bold as a lion.

Lessons to Be Learned

God wanted to give victory to His people, but was determined that those He used to give victory would not take the credit for themselves.

By God’s law, fearful warriors were told to go home, and God told Gideon to send the fearful among his men home.

We are in a spiritual battle, but our weapons are not the weapons the world uses.

Christianity is a supernatural religion. If it becomes only doctrines and rules, it loses the spiritual battles. “The kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.”

Not being afraid doesn’t mean being careless.

God did for the Israelites what they could not do for themselves and then when it was obvious that He had given them victory, they did the rest.