

Gideon: A Deliverer for the People

Key Verse: *“The LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?”*
—Judges 6:14

Selected Scripture:
Judges 6-8

AS WE MAY RECALL FROM

our studies, Israel’s history from the time of the division of Canaan until the anointing of Saul to be their king is called the period of the Judges—Joshua being the first judge and Samuel the last. These judges were evidently not elected to their position but raised to it providentially. However, as these judges had no power or authority and collected no revenues it would seem to follow that any power or influ-

ence they possessed was a personal one. To give weight or force to them implied a proper acknowledgement of them as Divinely appointed or raised up. This type of arrangement led the people continually to look to God for their helpers and leaders. Through these men God continued his personal government of Israel. The choice of the judges is an illustration of his will, “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.”—Zech. 4:6

A judge, in ancient times, was one who executed justice and relieved the oppressed. When under oppression by their enemies because of the transgression against

the LORD, Israel was time and again released and blessed by the raising up of judges. If we were to read the Book of Judges as a complete history of Israel for the 450 years that they were used by God, we would mainly see a bleak picture. The account passes by the happy period of Israel's prosperity and especially points to their disobedience to God. We would also note their punishments for such transgressions and the deliverance from their problems through the judges, or deliverers, whom God raised up for them. They were God's representatives, and, as such, Israel's spiritual interests were more advanced under these judges than when they were subject to kings. It should be noted that this raising up of judges was a gracious action of God's grace, in order to deliver and bless the people, not to condemn and punish them. "Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them." (Judg. 2:16) Spiritual leaders of Divine appointment will always be marked by spiritual victories.

This brings us to our consideration of Gideon, a man of natural nobility who was appointed by God as Israel's sixth judge. Because of the evil that the people had done in the sight of the LORD, they had been delivered into the hands of the Midianites. God would send an angel to speak to Gideon, to inspire him as his appointed deliverer from the hands of their oppressors. 'Have not I sent thee?' Gideon was nevertheless given evidences from the LORD through his holy angel that he was doing the Divine will. The account tells us that Gideon was to assemble an army to go against the Midianites. At first, the army was over 22,000 men, but when God said that the amount was too high he proposed tests that would eventually reduce the number to 300. (Judg. 7:7) The enemy would be routed through the blowing of trumpets, the smashing of pitchers, the shining of lamps, and by shouting "The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon."—
vss. 17-20 ■