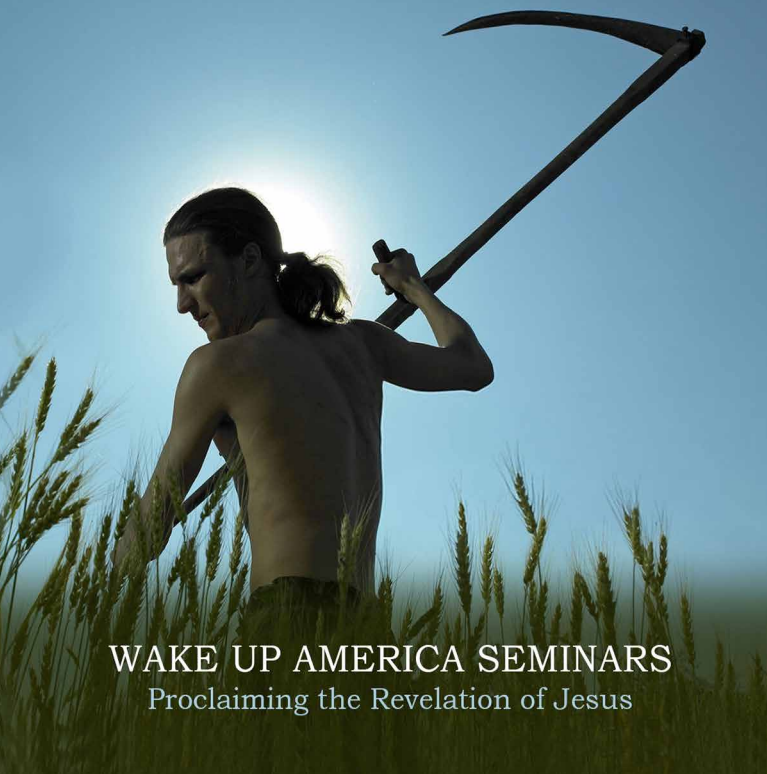


BIBLE STUDY SERIES

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On occasion, I have inserted italics and brackets in Scripture quotations to enhance understanding, not to change the meaning.

May God bless you as you study this fascinating topic!

Larry Wilson

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Foreward

Nothing excites me more than to discover deeper insight from the Scriptures. As I began to focus my study on prophecy, I was amazed how many well-known Bible stories have such profound end time parallels. This is one of ten stories which were originally published in a monthly newsletter during the first ten months of 2002. Here are my reasons for republishing these stories:

First, I hope each booklet will be widely distributed because everyone needs to know that the Bible has never been more relevant and timely than right now! I realize many other Bible stories have end time parallels, but I have chosen these particular stories because they are rich in content. As each story is placed into proper context, it is easier to understand *how* and *why* God's people will be tested during the Great Tribulation.

Second, I want you to have enough background information about the character in each story to feel as though you were there when the story took place. Understanding the tests, struggles, mistakes, and victories experienced by the characters should encourage and prepare us for the days ahead.

Last, I want you to know that faith in God means to submit to His demands and remain loyal to Him in the face of life-threatening adversities. If any concept stands out, I hope it is this: Faith in God is much more than believing there is a God. When people truly love God, their everyday actions will reflect a dedicated commitment to honor

His ways, which are distinctly different from the ways this world honors. A faith-filled Christian often stands in direct opposition to what the world esteems;¹ therefore, honoring God is not always a pleasant experience.

The pressure to conform to the status quo explains, in part, why ancient Israel frequently apostatized.² Tragically, the priests of Israel failed to lead the people to understand that as a nation, they must be vigilant because mankind is inherently rebellious toward God.³

When the draw of our carnal nature is combined with the pressure to conform to the world's ways, serving God becomes a frustrating challenge and requires *patient* faith.⁴ God understands our dilemma. This is why He preserved so many stories of faith in the Bible. Unless we examine and understand the failures and the victories of our forefathers, we will repeat their mistakes.

The Bible is clear; salvation comes through faith in God. Given this sublime truth, I hope you will gain a new appreciation about many aspects of faith as you read these booklets. Faith in God is so much more than intellectual assent to, or agreement with, an idea. Faith in God leads to adventure and fills your heart with peace and joy. True happiness springs from knowing and loving the great "I AM."

Larry Wilson, September 2020

1 Romans 8:7

2 2 Kings 17:15

3 Ezekiel 22:26

4 James 1:3

Gideon – Reluctant Warrior

The book of Judges describes the first 350 years of Israel's experience in Canaan. The narrative begins during the time of Joshua (about 1398 B.C.) and ends just before Saul becomes Israel's king (about 1043 B.C.). During this period, the Lord Himself was Israel's King. Unfortunately, His people apostatized and did not give Him the respect He is due. In fact, the last verse in the book of Judges closes by saying, **“everyone did as they saw fit.”**

After Joshua died, God called certain men and women as judges to guide and govern His wayward people, but they had limited success. Israel vacillated between submission to the Lord and rebellion against Him. Israel's inclination toward rebellion was a persistent problem. In fact, the Bible suggests that there were seven periods of apostasy, seven periods of servitude, and seven restorations during the time of the judges! God is changeless and the carnal nature is predictable.

The book of Judges preserved the history between God and Israel for thousands of years and like a mirror, it reflects how He deals with all nations and people. In the same way, Israel's treatment of God

reflects, like a mirror, how most of the human race treats God. Actually, the Bible tells the story of our lives, only it uses different names! If you and I had lived in those days, most of us would have joined in Israel's "on-again/off-again" relationship with the Lord! If God had destroyed Abraham's offspring at Mt. Sinai as He proposed and replaced Israel with Moses' offspring, the results would have been the same – only the names would have changed.

The Bible is an amazing book. It describes the present human condition with numerous parallels from the past! When I study the Bible, I realize my own human nature is not that different from the antediluvians who scoffed as Noah built the ark. Sometimes, I am rebellious like Israel. In some ways I am blind like the Pharisees. Other times, I am like the disciples and do not understand the words of Jesus. In some ways, I am like doubting Thomas and impetuous Peter. When I am totally honest with myself, I realize that I have much in common with many Bible characters. Good ways and bad ways, they are like me and I am like them.

Two Nasty Problems

Seven cycles of "apostasy – servitude – restoration" in 350 years says much about God's longsuffering

and the inherent rebellion of humanity. Two problems plague the human race. Man's first and greatest problem is his innate rebellion against God's authority. The second problem is the ignorance between generations. On the topic of rebellion, we are spring-loaded from birth to reject all that God wants of us.¹ For example, God commands that we rest on His Sabbath. I have yet to hear a person exclaim when learning about God's Sabbath, "Wow! Look at the wonderful benefit God has set up for us! A day of rest each week. Yippee!"

Sadly, our hearts respond with just the opposite reaction. It typically goes like this: "Whoa! I don't know about this Sabbath rest idea. I have a job, family, and friends to consider." Israel was no different and constantly struggled with its desire to abandon God's Sabbath rest!² Actually, before you break any of God's commandments, you break the first commandment! Israel's apostasy is no different than our apostasy. If we refuse to obey God or justify behavior that is contrary to God's commands, it is the same as Israel's rebellion. God knows that man's propensity toward rebellion can be moderated through punishment, just as a good parent disciplines a child. In

¹ Romans 8:7

² Ezekiel 20

fact, if we were truthful, almost everyone will give in and submit if tortured long enough.

During the time of the judges, Israel experienced God's judgments seven times and repented seven times, each cycle for the wrong reason! Have you ever heard someone say, "Lord, I will do anything you want, just answer my prayer?" Again, this response indicates submission to God, but for the wrong reason. When suffering accomplishes its highest calling, it brings us into *humble* submission so that we can pray as Jesus did when facing death, **"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."**¹

Of course, God knew the people of Israel repented because they experienced the hardships of His judgments. This is why God's punishments were redemptive for many centuries. God designed His wrath to bring the nation of Israel to her knees so that she would consider the wisdom of her King.

Appropriate discipline may be punitive, but it should also be instructional! **"No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."**² Did you

¹ Luke 22:42

² Hebrews 12:11

notice those last words, “**for those who have been trained by it?**” Some people are punished, yet they never learn a lesson. For example, more than 90% of certain classes of felons return to prison after being set free! In this case, discipline does not help if the lessons are not learned. This is why God has a second type of punishment called destructive.

When redemptive judgments fail, destructive judgments terminate the problem. In Noah’s day, the world’s inhabitants went beyond the point of redemption and were destroyed. If a worldwide, waist-deep flood could have achieved redemptive results, God would not have drowned the whole world. God understood the effects of the cancer of sin and that redemption was not possible, so He killed all but eight people and started over.

God disciplined Israel with redemptive punishments for many centuries because He wanted Israel to wake up and observe the deadly consequences of sin. Eventually, God gave up and destroyed Israel as a nation in A.D. 70. God has a message about rebellion for each person on Earth. Rebellion begins with forbidden pleasure or profit which produces a harvest of broken relationships and sorrowful consequences. In the end, sin requires the penalty of death.

If we divide 350 years by seven “apostasy – servitude – restoration” cycles, the average is one cycle every 50 years, which is approximately once per generation. Since generations of people come and go, the second problem God has with humanity is the *next generation*. A punished generation may repent and learn from God’s discipline, but the *following* generation rarely reaps the benefits of discipline given to its elder generation! In fact, God has to start over with the *following* generation because it does not understand God means what He says and is a powerful force. So, the younger generation arrives on the scene and makes the same mistakes as the previous generation and travels down a rebellious road, yielding to the temptations of sin. Consequently, the cycle of degeneration begins again. History constantly repeats itself because it is almost impossible for the *following* generation to possess the wisdom and experience of its elder generation! Therefore, the mistakes and the apostasy of former generations are repeated by the *following* generation.

God Keeps Vigil

With these thoughts in mind, consider the story of Gideon, a judge of Israel, which includes several

end time parallels. The story begins during one of Israel's suffering cycles – a time of servitude: **“The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord, and for seven years he gave them into the hands of the Midianites. Because the power of Midian was so oppressive, the Israelites prepared shelters for themselves in mountain clefts, caves and strongholds. Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples invaded the country. They camped on the land and ruined the crops all the way to Gaza and did not spare a living thing for Israel, neither sheep nor cattle nor donkeys. They came up with their livestock and their tents like swarms of locusts. It was impossible to count them or their camels; they invaded the land to ravage it. Midian so impoverished the Israelites that they cried out to the Lord for help.”**¹

When the majority of people in a nation become decadent and degenerate, the “Land-Lord of Earth” moves into action. God hates sin and will destroy people who insist on rebellion. In Israel's case, God gave His land over to the Midianites for seven years.² God made Israel's defenses weak and her

1 Judges 6:1-6

2 To learn why the Promised Land is “God's land” rather than Israel's land, see Leviticus 18:24-25 and 25:23.

borders porous. Israel's "Homeland Defense Minister" could not stop the terrorists from Midian from entering the land occupied by Israel. The Midianites destroyed their homes, took their crops and killed their animals.

God allowed the Midianites to decimate the promised land "that flowed with milk and honey" because He was displeased with His people. **"When the Israelites cried out to the Lord because of Midian, he sent them a prophet, who said, 'This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I brought you up out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. I rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians. And I delivered you from the hand of all your oppressors; I drove them out before you and gave you their land. I said to you, "I am the Lord your God; do not worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live." But you have not listened to me.'"**¹

The words of the prophet address the core problem. Israel had abandoned God and His Sabbath rest and merged with mainstream religious practices. Israel worshiped the hedonistic gods of the Amorites (the Baals) because the Baals, unlike the God of heaven,

¹ Judges 6:7-10

gave people freedom to do whatever they wanted. Sexual immorality was not a controversial issue. In fact, it was considered entertainment, a popular part of fertility cult worship. The religion of the Baals was bewitching; a sensual religion that appealed to the carnal passions of its worshipers.

Restoration

When the seven years of Midianite occupation had been served, God *changed* Israel's desperate situation. Israel was not allowed to weasel out of punishment. "They did the crime; they did the time." The ironic point about this turn of events is that God used the Midianites to punish Israel for their rebellion against Him, and then used Israel to destroy the Midianites because of their great sexual immorality and depravity! When the time came to set Israel free from Midianite occupation, God chose the son of a prominent Baal worshiper to be a judge for Him. Imagine that! Gideon was a timid, but sincere, young man who refused to worship the Baals. When the story begins, Gideon, in his early 20's, was threshing wheat in his hideout.

"The angel of the Lord came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing

wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, he said, ‘The Lord is with you, mighty warrior.’

“‘Pardon me, my lord,’ Gideon replied, ‘but if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about when they said, “Did not the Lord bring us up out of Egypt?” But now the Lord has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian.’

“[The Lord offered no explanation to Gideon why Israel was in the hands of Midian. God had already explained this through a prophet.] The Lord turned to him and said, ‘Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you?’

“‘Pardon me, my lord,’ Gideon replied, ‘but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.’

“The Lord answered, ‘I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive.’

“Gideon replied, ‘If now I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign that it is really you talk-

ing to me. Please do not go away until I come back and bring my offering and set it before you.’

“And the Lord said, ‘I will wait until you return.’”

“Gideon went inside, prepared a young goat, and from an ephah of flour he made bread without yeast. Putting the meat in a basket and its broth in a pot, he brought them out and offered them to him under the oak.

“The angel of God said to him, ‘Take the meat and the unleavened bread, place them on this rock, and pour out the broth.’ And Gideon did so. Then the angel of the Lord touched the meat and the unleavened bread with the tip of the staff that was in his hand. Fire flared from the rock, consuming the meat and the bread. And the angel of the Lord disappeared.”¹

These verses give me goose-bumps! I can just imagine Gideon running around, trying to get his offering together. Then, returning breathlessly, he puts the offering on a rock. The Lord stretches out His staff and “poof,” fire comes out of the rock and consumes the meat, bread – everything! The Lord suddenly disappears from view, but not from Gideon’s presence!

¹ Judges 6:11-21, insertion mine

“When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the Lord, he exclaimed, ‘Alas, Sovereign Lord! I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face!’ But the Lord said to him, ‘Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die.’

“So Gideon built an altar to the Lord there and called it The Lord Is Peace. To this day it stands in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. That same night the Lord said to him, ‘Take the second bull from your father’s herd, the one seven years old. Tear down your father’s altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole beside it. Then build a proper kind of altar to the Lord your God on the top of this height. Using the wood of the Asherah pole that you cut down, offer the second bull as a burnt offering.’

“So Gideon took ten of his servants and did as the Lord told him. But because he was afraid of his family and the townspeople, he did it at night rather than in the daytime. In the morning when the people of the town got up, there was Baal’s altar, demolished, with the Asherah pole beside it cut down and the second bull sacrificed on the newly built altar! They asked each other, ‘Who did this?’

“When they carefully investigated, they were told, ‘Gideon son of Joash did it.’ The people of the town demanded of Joash, ‘Bring out your son. He must die, because he has broken down Baal’s altar and cut down the Asherah pole beside it.’ But Joash replied to the hostile crowd around him, ‘Are you going to plead Baal’s cause? Are you trying to save him? Whoever fights for him shall be put to death by morning! If Baal really is a god, he can defend himself when someone breaks down his altar.’ So because Gideon broke down Baal’s altar, they gave him the name Jerub-Baal that day, saying, ‘Let Baal contend with him.’”¹

The Lord used this notable incident to let Israel know that He had chosen the young, timid Gideon to be its leader. Gideon’s action was completely out of character! However, when God’s Holy Spirit power rests on a willing heart, there is no limit to what God can accomplish! Gideon’s father, a member of the elder generation, recognized the power of God on his son and he successfully defended his son’s behavior! I believe Gideon’s father’s conscience condemned him in his heart for worshiping Baal. God chose the weakest man in town to send a signal through the land that He was about to res-

¹ Judges 6:22-32

cue His people. A few days later, this signal made perfect sense!

The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon

“Now all the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples joined forces and crossed over the Jordan and camped in the Valley of Jezreel. [They were intent on plundering the possessions of the Israelites.] Then the Spirit of the Lord came on Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, summoning the Abiezrites to follow him. He sent messengers throughout Manasseh, calling them to arms, and also into Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali, so that they too went up to meet them.

“Gideon said to God, ‘If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised—look, I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said.’ And that is what happened. Gideon rose early the next day; he squeezed the fleece and wrung out the dew—a bowlful of water. [The ever-timid Gideon needs assurance, so he asks the Lord for a sign. God willingly responds.]

“Then Gideon said to God, ‘Do not be angry with me. Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the fleece, but this time make the fleece dry and let the ground be covered with dew.’ That night God did so. Only the fleece was dry; all the ground was covered with dew. [Again, the ever-timid Gideon needs assurance. God patiently responds.]”¹

“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 boast 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. [The ever-timid Gideon begins to have heartburn. “Lord, too many soldiers?” How can an army have too many soldiers?]

“But the Lord said to Gideon, ‘There are still too many men. Take them down to the water, and I

¹ Judges 6:33-40, insertions mine

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.’ Three hundred of them drank 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.’ So Gideon sent the rest of the Israelites home but kept the three hundred, who took over the provisions and trumpets of the others.

“Now the camp of Midian lay below him in the valley. 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. [An ev-

er-timid Gideon needed more assurance. Notice how the Lord assures Gideon of victory over the Midianites and uses an enemy to confirm what the Lord is going to do!] **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.’

“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.’ [The ever-timid Gideon is now ready to lead 300 men into the camp of the Midianites.]

“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.’ Dividing the three hundred men into three companies, he placed trumpets

and empty jars in the hands of all of them, with torches inside.

“‘Watch me,’ he told them. ‘Follow my lead. When I get to the edge of the camp, do exactly as I do. When I and all who are with me blow our trumpets, then from all around the camp blow yours and shout, “For the Lord and for Gideon.”’

“Gideon and the hundred men with him reached the edge of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just after they had changed the guard. They blew their trumpets and broke the jars that were in their hands. The three companies blew the trumpets and smashed the jars. Grasping the torches in their left hands and holding in their right hands the trumpets they were to blow, they shouted, ‘A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!’ While each man held his position around the camp, all the Midianites ran, crying out as they fled.

“When the three hundred trumpets sounded, the Lord caused the men throughout the camp to turn on each other with their swords. The army fled to Beth Shittah toward Zererah as far as the border of Abel Meholah near Tabbath. Israelites from Naphtali, Asher and all Manasseh

were called out, and they pursued the Midianites. Gideon sent messengers throughout the hill country of Ephraim, saying, ‘Come down against the Midianites and seize the waters of the Jordan ahead of them as far as Beth Barah.’

“So all the men of Ephraim were called out and they seized the waters of the Jordan as far as Beth Barah. They also captured two of the Midianite leaders, Oreb and Zeeb. They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb at the winepress of Zeeb. They pursued the Midianites and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon, who was by the Jordan.”¹

End Time Parallels

The story of Gideon has four end time parallels.

1. The empowerment of Gideon and his army parallels the 144,000.

God chose a timid, self-deprecating man and reduced Gideon’s army to a mere 300 soldiers to eliminate any possibility for Gideon or the nation of Israel to claim the victory over the Midianites. Similar circumstances will occur during the Great Tribulation. Contrary to what many people believe,

¹ Judges 7:1-25, insertions mine

God is not going to use a religious denomination to preach His gospel to the world. Instead, He will hand pick individuals like Gideon. God's 144,000 servants will not be arrogant people; nor will they be influential scholars or great preachers. For the most part, they will be ordinary persons. The victory they achieve will be the Lord's, not theirs! The ratio of God's servants to the population of the world will be about one per 50,000. God uses impossible odds and will not share His glory with man. He is above His created beings. God is omnipotent and will show His strength through human weakness. **“But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him”**¹

2. God's wrath with the Midianites parallels His wrath in the seven trumpets and seven bowls.

God's punishment of Israel, seven years of occupation by the Midianites, was justified. Afterward, His destructive wrath toward the Midianites was also justified! God gives every nation a measure of

¹ 1 Corinthians 1:27-29

grace and a cup to measure their iniquity. His grace runs out when a nation's cup of iniquity overflows. When the majority of a nation's citizens conduct themselves in a way that is offensive to the Lord, He moves into action. Initially, His actions are redemptive. If they fail to accomplish the required redemption, God's judgments become destructive. Historians may disagree, but I believe war is God's handiwork. He uses one nation to destroy another when the offending nation fills its cup of iniquity. Then, if necessary, God destroys the destroyer. Nations rise and fall not by the prowess of man, but by divine decree.¹

God's wrath against Israel and the Midianites parallels the seven trumpets and seven bowls of Revelation. The seven trumpets will be seven *first* plagues that God has tempered with a generous measure of mercy. The seven trumpet judgments are redemptive. This is why the quantity of "one-third" is mentioned twelve times during the seven trumpets. God spares two-thirds! The seven bowls are seven *last* plagues. These judgments have no mercy. God utterly destroys Earth and every one on Earth (except the saints) by the time the seventh bowl concludes.

1 Daniel 5

We see both types of judgments during the time of the judges. Israel received redemptive judgments and the Midianites received destructive judgments. Later, Israel also received a destructive judgment.

3. The Midianites' confusion and defeat parallel God's end time judgments.

Gideon and his army shattered the stillness of the night with flashing lights and blaring trumpets. Out of nowhere came what looked and sounded like a large army. Generals in ancient times customarily directed their armies by the sound of a single trumpet. This is important. If there were many trumpets, many divisions must be present. A soldier would only hear multiple trumpets when various battalions converged at a specific location. When the Midianites awoke to the sound of 300 trumpets, they had one thought. "We are outgunned and vastly outnumbered!" Their resulting panic confirms this point!

When God's judgments (the seven trumpets) begin, the world will be taken by complete surprise. The world will awaken to a new reality. The inhabitants of Earth will realize there is a living God and He is a deadly, formidable force. The ensuing panic will confirm this. To those who have set their face and lives against God's laws, this will come as a com-

plete surprise like a sneak attack. God is about to send panic through the camp of His enemies. Ultimately, the wicked will be destroyed and they will no longer occupy His land. The saints will, at last, have peace on Earth and live on the New Earth for eternity!

4. Gideon’s trumpets and lamps parallel end time events.

In ancient times, wars were not typically fought in darkness. It was too risky. Warfare was often hand-to-hand and close proximity to the enemy was necessary. In total darkness, it is impossible to tell a friend from an enemy! When Gideon’s army startled the sleeping Midianites with shouting, 300 blazing lamps, and 300 blaring trumpets, the Midianites instinctively knew they could not survive the battle. The Lord filled the hearts of Israel’s enemy with overwhelming panic so that they fled in fear. This scenario describes how the wicked will feel when the Great Tribulation begins. Fear will be everywhere. Anxiety will be out of control. Jesus said there will be distress that has no equal since the beginning of the world!¹ Paul wrote, **“If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the**

¹ Matthew 24:21

knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.”¹ During the Great Tribulation, wicked people will have no rest, day or night² because the Lord will fill their hearts with fear and anxiety.

During the Great Tribulation, God will send His servants, the 144,000, to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to every kindred, tongue, and nation. People who love light illuminating the truth will step forward into the light and unite themselves with God’s servants. The saints will have peace in the middle of the raging, chaotic storm. People who love iniquity will run for the cover of darkness so their deeds will not be seen in the light. In the darkness of sin, Paul writes, there is a fearful expectation of judgment and raging fire. God wants everyone to come to repentance. **“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything**

¹ Hebrews 10:26-27

² Revelation 14:11

done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives.”¹

The Cycle Continues

“Thus Midian was subdued before the Israelites and did not raise its head again. During Gideon’s lifetime, the land had peace forty years. Jerub-Baal son of Joash went back home to live. He had seventy sons of his own, for he had many wives. His concubine, who lived in Shechem, also bore him a son, whom he named Abimelek. Gideon son of Joash died at a good old age and was buried in the tomb of his father Joash in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. No sooner had Gideon died than the Israelites again prostituted themselves to the Baals. They set up Baal-Berith as their god and did not remember the Lord their God, who had rescued them from the hands of all their enemies on every side.”² As far as I know, Gideon holds the world record for having the largest number of children. (I’m not sure what happened – he was a timid guy at first!) If Gideon had 70 sons (and 70 daughters), his offspring would have numbered about

1 2 Peter 3:9-11

2 Judges 8:28-34

140 children! In a way, Gideon's potential heritage would have paralleled the ministry of the 144,000. Abraham's seed will grow into a numberless multitude during the Great Tribulation!

“After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.”¹

Regrettably, this story ends where it began. When Gideon died, the *next* generation prostituted themselves to the Baals *again*. Sadly, if we had been there after Gideon died, some of us may have followed the rebellious majority. If Israel's history proves anything, it is how quickly and easily people turn away from obeying the Lord. We would do well to take note of this fact as we draw near to the Great Day of the Lord!

¹ Revelation 7:9

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