



Beginning where Joshua leaves off in the death of Joshua (Josh. 24:29), covering almost 450 years, Judges tells the story of how *spiritual compromise* turned victory (blessing) into defeat (curse). “Another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD” (2:10). Creating a world of such chaos where, “...everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” (Judges 21:25)

### **Objectives:**

By the power of the Holy Spirit working through God’s Word, we will:

- Discover how God calls and works through Gideon as his servant-judge;
- learn how God’s grace brings deliverance;
- see how God delivers you and me through Christ who comes to us in God’s Word & Sacraments.

### **Setting the Stage:**

Fourth Oppression, Judges 6-8:32:

Sin—Departed from God

Cause—Apostasy

Punishment—Midianites for Seven years

Deliverer and Judge—Gideon

Judges 6:6 recalls Judges 3:9. At that time, Cushan ruled Israel. For eight years, the heathen gods Baal and Asheroth took God’s place. Jews intermarried with pagans (3:6). In His time, God “raised up” Othniel, the first judge. Othniel fought Cushan and won (3:10).

This time, unlike the earlier times, God did not raise up a judge right away. This time He sent an unnamed prophet to Israel. This prophet recalled God’s rich grace with a four-verse sermon. “I saved you from your Egyptian oppressors. I commanded you to worship Me only. But you didn’t listen.” Hardships came. The Midianites saw to that. They raided on camelback and left nothing. Israel needed a “deliver.” God said, “Not yet! Trust Me and My covenant.”

Read Judges 6:1-10. *What point does God make in this four-verse sermon?*

Reread Judges 2:1-3. *Compare the prophet’s message with those of the Angel of the Lord.*

### **Gideon’s Call:**

Never have so few defeated so many. These few words summarize the skillful military success granted to the judge, Gideon. As He did with other judges before him, God used Gideon to save the Jewish people (God’s chosen people) and turn them away from (repentance) “what was evil in the sight of the LORD” (Judges 6:1). Gideon battled against the Midianites (v.2). These were Abraham’s offspring by his concubine Keturah (Genesis 25:2), who lived in the Arabian Peninsula.

During the time of Moses, Israel went through the land of Moab. As they did, Balak, their king, called upon the “prophet” Balaam to curse them (Numbers 22:4-7). He failed. However, Balaam caused Israel to worship the god Baal at Peor (Numbers 25:1-3). After Israel began serving Baal, Phinehas, the high priest’s son, killed an Israelite man and the Midianite woman he took as a wife (vv.7-8).

Just before God called Gideon as judge, the Midianites joined the Amalekites and “the people of the East” (Judges 6:3). Annually they invaded Israel and made the Jews flee their homes to live in dens and caves (v.2). Jewish harvests became the pickings of those who “devoured the produce of the

land” (v.4). Like clockwork, each year at harvest time the Midianite hordes swarmed over the land, “like locusts in number—both they and their camels could not be counted—so that they laid waste the land” (v.5), leaving Israel little to eat. After seven years of raids, God called Gideon.

Read Judges 6:11-24. When we meet Gideon for the first time, we find him doing everyday things. Thus when called we see Gideon’s lack of confidence (v.15).

*What words and signs does God provide to encourage him?*

6:12

6:19-21

6:14

6:23

Read Judges 6:25-35. Gideon, his family, and his people worshiped pagan idols. *What happened when Gideon tore these idols down?*

### **Deliverance through Gideon:**

Read Judges 6:36-7:8. Gideon’s faith fails. God provides Gideon another sign, then God begins downsizing Gideon’s army. This theme shows up often in the Old Testament and New Testament for those who live by faith in God. *What is this symbolic of?*

Read Judges 7:9-25. God knows Gideon’s heart. *What does God do to strengthen Gideon?*

### **A New Idolatry: Read Judges 8:1-35**

Gideon defeated Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian, for refusing to supply food for his men. In court martial style, Gideon took their symbols of power, crescent ornaments (v.21). Muslims later put this crescent symbol on their flags, where it remains to this day.

God provided several victories in Gideon’s life (6:32; 8:22-25). Sadly, Gideon used the spoils of war to make a gold ephod (v.27). A new era of idolatry began. *What might the name of Gideon’s son, Abimelech—which means “my father is king” (v.31)—indicate?*

Gideon dies and Israel goes back to worshiping false gods. *What does this indicate?*

### **For Christian Living Today:**

Read 2 Chronicles 7:14. We recognize also in the story of Gideon (and all the Judges) that our temporal kingdom is in need of repentance and rescue.

*What is the problem with applying these passages to our present situation/temporal kingdom?*

*How should we, appropriately, apply such passages to our present situation?*

Read Psalm 50:15. *How do these words strengthen faith for Christian living today?*