



Whenever Israel departed from following God, He would allow their enemies to rule over them. If they called on the Lord, He had mercy and sent ones who were called *judges* to deliver them.

One particular time, the Israelites had been oppressed by the Midianites (*MID-ee-uh-nites*) for seven years. This is what happened. The Israelites would plant their crops, then the Midianites and other people of the land would come in with their animals and tents. There were so many, they were like grasshoppers: they ate and destroyed almost all the Israelites' crops! Israel was left with very little to eat.

The Israelites were so afraid of the Midianites that they would hide in caves and in strongholds in the mountains. They took what little food they could save with them.

Then the Israelites cried to God, and God sent a prophet to them. He reminded them of their disobedience to God. Once more, God had mercy on His people, and He sent a man to deliver them. This man was Gideon.

One day Gideon was threshing "wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites." The "angel of the Lord appeared" to Gideon and said, "The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." God knew that Gideon had great strength and ability, and He was going to call Gideon to do a mighty work.

Gideon replied, "Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? . . . but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites." Then the Lord said, "Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?"

Gideon asked how he could save Israel, as his family was poor, and he was "the least in my father's house." God



Church of God Sunday School

GIDEON DESTROYS BAAL: THE CALL OF GIDEON

Judges 6:1-35

promised Gideon, "Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man."

Gideon wanted a sign that God was truly talking to him. He asked the "angel of the Lord" to wait while he went to prepare an offering of a baby goat, some unleavened cakes, and some broth. When Gideon returned, the "angel of the Lord" told Gideon to put the meat and cakes on a rock and pour the broth out. Gideon did as he was told. Then the "angel of the Lord" touched the food with the end of his staff. Fire came out of the rock and burned up the food! "Then the angel of the LORD departed out of [Gideon's] sight."

Then Gideon was afraid! He had "seen an angel of the LORD face to face." The Lord told Gideon not to be afraid; he would not die. Right then, Gideon built an altar to God. He called it *Jehovah-shalom* (*juh-HOH-vuh-SHAY-lom*), meaning "the Lord send peace."

God told Gideon to take his father's young bullock and tear down the altar to Baal that his father had built. God also wanted Gideon to cut down the *grove* (sacred trees or tree that they worshiped). It was by the altar. Next, Gideon had to build a proper altar to the Lord and offer the young bullock as a sacrifice to the Lord, with the wood of the grove.

Gideon wanted to obey God. He asked ten men to help him. That very night Gideon began tearing down the altar of Baal and the grove. When everything had been torn down, Gideon built an altar to the Lord and offered the young bullock on the altar.

In the morning, the men of the city saw that Baal's altar was gone. In its place was the new altar. The men saw that the young bullock had been offered on the altar.

They said to one another, "Who hath done this thing?" The men soon found out that Gideon had done it, and they wanted to kill him.

But Gideon's father, Joash, also had seen all that had been done. Maybe he had done some thinking, like this: if Baal is so powerful, shouldn't he be able to fight for himself? Joash spoke up and said: "Will ye plead for Baal? will ye

save him? he that will plead for him, let him be put to death whilst it is yet morning: if he [Baal] be a god, let him plead for himself, because one hath cast down his altar."

Because Gideon had torn down the altar of Baal, Joash changed Gideon's name to Jerubbaal (*jih-ruh-bAY-uhl*). It means "contender with Baal" or "let Baal plead." In other words, Baal ought to be the one to contend with Gideon for tearing down his altar, if he really was a god. Well, Baal did not fight for himself. He was not the true God.

After that, the Midianites and the Amalakites

(*uh-MAL-uh-kites*), with other people from the East, came together to fight the Israelites in the valley of Jezreel (*JEZ-ree-uhl*).

God's Spirit came upon Gideon, or Jerubbaal. He blew a trumpet, a call to Israel for war. Gideon gathered an army of 32,000 men to fight the Midianites and others. Then, Gideon went about getting ready for the battle.

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**MEMORY VERSE:**

*"Go . . . and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?" —Judges 6:14*  
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