

MESSAGE: "TO DARE THE IMPROBABLE". JUDGES 7:10-11 & 18-19

"The Angel of the
Lord and Gideon"
– James Tissot



We have watched over these last few months and especially this last week our society threatened by chaos, it is a fearful place but as Christians, we know that even though we do not choose the times we live in, we can choose to act with faith and courage in these times.

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According to the chronology of Judges this period of time takes place around the year 1200 BC. In fact I believe we can date it to the year 1202 BC. The reason for this is that Pharaoh Merneptah [1213-1203] in his 4th year [1209 BC] faced an rebellion by the Libyans, allied with the Canaanites and invading Sea Peoples. Israelites seem to have been employed in this alliance as mercenaries. In 1207 after winning a decisive war Merneptah sent a raiding party against Israelite towns [there are no cities mentioned] – most cities in Canaan were Canaanite. His destruction of the cities the year before and this punitive raid probably left Israel defenseless against a full scale invasion by the Midianites as we see in Judges 6. Merneptah in 1206 built a victory stele mentioning his victory over the coalition and his punitive raid on Israel.

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It is likely that the Midianites were encouraged if not funded by the Egyptians in 1209 [the 7 years of Midianite oppression] to destabilize the Canaanite cities and Israelites to allow Egypt to deal with the Libyans and Sea Peoples. Likely in 1202 BC when Meneptah died and his son Ramesses III takes the throne the Midianites have decided to settle in the Jezreel valley. This is likely the year of Gideon. Ramesses was too busy consolidating his kingdom to bother about Gideon. The world was coming apart within 50 years all the major kingdoms of the Bronze age would collapse with only Egypt and Assyria surviving of the great powers that had existed prior to 1200 BC. With this collapse a dark age would grip the ancient world for nearly 2 centuries. Gideon's judgeship would span most of this 50 year period of collapse.

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10 "But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant, 11 and you shall hear what they say; and afterward your hands shall be strengthened to go down against the camp." Then he went down with Purah his servant to the outpost of the armed men who were in the camp.

18 "When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then you also blow the trumpets on every side of the whole camp, and say, 'The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!' " 19 So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outpost of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just as they had posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers that were in their hands.



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Tibor Rubin, a Hungarian Jew was sent as a 13 year old boy to Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria, He was liberated by American troops 14 months latter. He vowed to join the American army to liberate others. He immigrated to the USA in 1948. His family died in concentration camps. He apprenticed to a butcher but in 1949 attempted to join the US Army. He was unable to pass the English proficiency test. In 1950 he finally passed the test. He was sent to Korea where he served as a private with the I Company, 8th Cavalry Regiment, First Cavalry Division. He was placed under an antisemitic Sargent Arthur Peyton who consistently volunteered Rubin for the most dangerous missions possible to attempt to have him killed. On these occasions Rubin showed his courage, rescuing his entire company and holding a hill singlehanded under enemy onslaught for 24 hours. He was eventually captured and nearly starved to death by the Chinese but he kept his fellow prisoners alive with his courage and scavenging for food. Though nominated for honors by his fellow soldiers he was denied by his Sargent. Finally in 2005 this was rectified by President George W. Bush. 2 Corinthians 3:1-3

Tibor Rubin [1929-2015]
receiving the Medal of
Honor, September 23,
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2 Corinthians 3:1-3

1 Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some *others*, epistles of commendation to you or *letters* of commendation from you?

2 You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men;

3 clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, *that is*, of the heart.



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Gideon's judgeship would see the collapse of the Hittite, Mycenaean and Manian civilizations all highly centralized and organized societies...the fall of Troy and the rise of the Philistines. The order and structure of society was decimated and people fell into a defensive posture. The writer of Judges says of this era "every man did what was right in his own eyes because there was no king in Israel".

Prior to this period there was a sense of a rule of law, afterwards everything was relative. How do we make sense of a relative world where right and wrong change at a whim and standing up for truth or justice makes you a target, rather than a hero. **Judges 6**

Pharaoh
Merneptah [1213-
1203]

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In 1898 the founding of Gideons International was discussed by 2 traveling salesmen in this hotel room in Boscobel WI, The founders in 1908.



The Gideons since 1908 have distributed free Bibles following the example of Gideon:

"Gideon was a man who was willing to do exactly what God wanted him to do, regardless of his own judgment as to the plans or results. Humility, faith, and obedience were his great elements of character. This is the standard that The Gideons International is trying to establish in all its members, each man to be ready to do God's will at any time, at any place, and in any way that the Holy Spirit leads."

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"Gideon Thanks God For the Miracle of the Dew" Maarten van Heemskreck [1498-1574]

Gideon lived in such a world and like many people succumbed to the relativism...he hid a way, kept his head down and avoided the bullies on the block. But God had another plan for his life. It is in a relativistic world that God's people must shine. We bring hope into the darkness, courage to the fearful and strength to the weak.

When the Angel of the LORD, likely the pre-incarnate Christ, met Gideon at a wine press where he was hiding grain as he thrashed it to keep it away from the Midianite raiders, God called him a mighty man of valor. Not a fitting title for such a man.

In the painting by 16th century artist Maarten van Heemskerck entitled "Gideon Thanks God for the Miracle of the Dew" you have a spindly weak looking man hardly the picture of a valiant warrior. His face is screwed up by doubt and trepidation, yet Gideon in spite of his misgivings trusted God for what he could not fathom. He tore down his father's idol altar and committed himself to God's purpose in his life. This is the foundation of courage.





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“Gideon separates out the 300” James Tissot

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Facing 150,00 troops with 32,000, it is no wonder Gideon asks for the 2 assurances of the dew on the sheep skin and off the sheep skin. Yet seemingly in response to Gideon's request for this sign, God has him release 22,000 men who are fearful. Then God has him reduce that number to a shock force of 300 by test. Then instead of waiting for Gideon to back out God tells him to go down to the Midianite camp below to get assurance from his own enemies of God's and Gideon's victory. He and his aide-de-camp slip down the mountain under cover of darkness and hear a nightmare of a Midianite soldier. Victory in Gideon's case was founded on faith and courage in spite of his misgivings and so it is with us.

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Living in a relative world is difficult but with Faith and Courage you and I no matter our misgivings can accomplish God's will in the world around us. Paul would write to Timothy at a very dark period in history about the Faith and Courage he would need to face the onslaught. 2 Timothy 1:6-14

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2 Timothy 1:7

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but
of power and of love and of a sound mind.

As a Christian face life with faith and courage.

