

Gideon's Conquest - Part 1

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[0 : 00] Well, we're going to be looking at the book of Judges again tonight as we kind of make our way through this book, the book of the Old Testament.

And we're kind of going at a snail's pace here with Gideon, and it's on purpose because there's so much to learn from Gideon. And there are so many portions, parts of the story that are interesting, and even parts of it that are, oh, how shall I say it, misapplied, misinterpreted, misapplied.

And we're going to be looking at possibly one of those tonight. So if you want me to preach on this tonight, then let's put out a fleece and find God's will here.

That was a little in poor taste. I'm sorry. I should wait until we get to that part of the passage of text and talk about it seriously and not poke fun at that.

All right, so we're taking our time with the fifth judge, Gideon. And we have looked at Gideon's call.

[1 : 25] That was an interesting part of the story. You know, the angel of the Lord comes, I think, pre-appearance, pre-appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ prior to his incarnation.

Pre-incarnate, that's the word I was trying to say, of the Lord Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, God the Son. And so he comes and finds Gideon. And where is he?

He's hiding out, threshing out the little bit of grain that he has because the Midianites and Amalekites and these people from the east have been taking care of.

I mean, they've been destroying all of their crops. And so he's hiding out inside of a wine press, kind of a big barrel probably of some sort. But, you know, you've kind of seen the pictures, put the grapes in there and they crush out those grapes.

Though only he's not doing that, he's threshing grain. And God calls him, calls him and commissions him. And then we looked at Gideon's confirmation and confirmed to the call and also Gideon confirming God.

[2 : 34] And tonight we're going to look at Gideon's conquest. That is, we're going to begin to look at it because it spans through to the end of this chapter and all the way to verse 25 of chapter 7.

And there are so many important details, important features of this part of the story that we're going to take our time with this.

And again, deals with some very interesting features in the story. For example, we have, again, the famous putting out the fleece. Putting out a fleece.

We're going to talk about that tonight. And then in the story we have Gideon's 300 men. You know, and that's a very interesting part of the story. We're not going to get to that tonight.

Okay, I'm sorry. So you have to be back next Sunday night. And then finally we have, of course, the victory. The victory that's won with a shout. And the breaking of simultaneous breaking of pictures that have lamps in them.

[3 : 35] And an interesting part of the story. And God confusing the enemy and each man turning his sword against the other. And so God, of course, wins the victory in a very interesting way.

A very miraculous way. And a few other interesting parts of the story. In fact, we're going to look at two, I think, significant parts of the story tonight.

And save the other two for the next time. So a lot to consider as we move along in the book of Judges. I would like to go ahead and read, though. Starting with chapter 6 and verse 33.

And I'm going to go ahead and read, actually, all the way to verse 25 of chapter 7. Now, that's a lot of reading. I'm sorry.

The lighting seems a little bit bad. It's kind of blurry to me for some reason. But we shall try. Starting then with chapter 6 and verse 33.

[4 : 37] Then all the Midianites and Amalekites, the people of the east, and the people of the east, gathered together. And they crossed over and encamped in the valley of Jezreel.

But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon. Then he blew the trumpet. And the Abiezrites gathered behind him.

And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, who also gathered behind him. He also sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali. And they came up to meet them.

So Gideon said to God, And it was so.

When he rose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece together, he wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water. Then Gideon said to God, Do not be angry with me.

[5 : 52] But let me speak just once more. Let me test, I pray, just one more with the fleece. Let it now be dry only on the fleece, but on all the ground let there be dew.

And God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only, but there was dew on all the ground. Then Jerubabal, Jerubabal, that's Gideon, And all the people who were with him rose early and encamped beside the well of Herod, so that the camp of the Midianites was on the north side of them by the hill of Moray, Moray in the valley.

And the Lord said to Gideon, The people who are with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against me, saying, My own hand has saved me.

Now therefore proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead. And 22,000 of the people returned, and 10,000 remained.

But the Lord said to Gideon, The people are still too many. Bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. Then it will be that of whom I say to you, This one shall go with you, the same shall go with you.

[7 : 15] And of whomever I say to you, This one shall not go with you, the same shall not go. So he brought the people down to the water, and the Lord said to Gideon, Everyone who laps from the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set apart by himself.

Likewise, everyone who gets down on his knees to drink. And the number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men.

But all the rest of the people got down on their knees to drink water. Then the Lord said to Gideon, By the three hundred men who lapped, I will save you and deliver the Midianites into your hand. Let all the other people go, every man to his place. So the people took provisions and their trumpets in their hands, and he sent them away, all the rest of Israel, every man to his tent, and retained those three hundred men.

And now the camp of Midian was below him in the valley. It happened on the same night that the Lord said to him, Arise, go down against the camp, for I have delivered it into your hand.

[8 : 17] But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Pura, your servant, 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 Pura, his servant, to the outpost of the armed men who were in the camp. Now the Midianites and the Amalekites, all the people of the east, were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts, and their camels were without number, and as the sand by the seashore is in multitude.

And when Gideon had come, there was a man telling a dream to his companion. He said, I have had a dream, I've had a dream. To my surprise, a loaf of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian.

He came to the tent and struck it so that it fell and overturned, and the tent collapsed. Then his companion answered and said, This is nothing else but the sword of Gideon and the son of Joash, a man of Israel.

Into his hand God has delivered Midian and the whole camp. And so it was when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, that he worshipped. He returned to the camp of Israel and said, Arise, for the Lord has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand.

[9 : 35] Then he divided the 300 men into three companies, and he put a trumpet into every man's hand with empty pitchers and torches inside the pitchers.

And he said to them, Look at me and do likewise. Watch, and when I come to the edge of the camp, you shall do as I do. 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.

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.

Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers they had held the pitchers in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing. And they cried, The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.

And every man stood in the place all around the camp, and the whole army ran and cried out and fled. When the three hundred blew the trumpets, the Lord set every man's sword against his companions throughout the whole camp.

[10:47] And the army fled to Bethacacia toward Zerorah, as far as the border of Abelmehalah or Tabaph.

Okay, that's about as close as I can get. And the men of Israel gathered together from Naphtali, Asher, and all Manasseh and pursued the Midianites. Then Gideon sent messengers throughout all the mountains of Ephraim, saying, Come down against the Midianites, and seize from them the watering places as far as Beth-barah in the Jordan.

Then all the men of Ephraim gathered together and seized the water places as far as Beth-barah in the Jordan. And they captured two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeab.

They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeab they killed at the winepress of Zeab. They pursued Midian and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeab to Gideon on the other side of the Jordan.

Okay, there you have it. You got the whole story. And a lot of that story is pretty familiar, isn't it? Especially those parts that are kind of intriguing to us, you know.

[11:56] And we'll consider two of those tonight. Again, as I've said, this portion of the story goes under the heading of, I've put under the heading of Gideon's conquest.

Because we are going to move through the story, we've moved through the story all the way to the actual conquest, the conquering of the Midianites and Amalekites and these people of the east.

So this is Gideon's conquest. And yet when I say that, I do want you to understand that when I say Gideon's conquest, I'm not suggesting that Gideon had really anything to do with the defeat of the Midianites.

I mean, you heard the story and you read along in your Bibles. It's obvious that the conquest belonged to God. He was the one who did this. Now, Gideon and the people of these four tribes were doing as God had instructed and God used that, of course, to bring about the conquest of the Midianites.

And all the judges, Gideon and all the judges before him and all those that will come after him will be used as instruments in God's hands in order to bring about conquest.

[13:09] So I'm not talking about Gideon's conquest in the sense that he did this. Not at all. And this is the point that I want us to see, exactly what I want us to see tonight.

We can see the hand of God in every movement of this story. We really can. It's very clear to see. Even, by the way, those movements or portions of the story that seem clearly to display Gideon's lack of any real strength of faith.

And we've already had a number of opportunities to see Gideon's weak faith. And we're going to see that here tonight. And yet God is moving even in those things.

And so God brought about a great conquest in Gideon's life, through Gideon's life, and, of course, in the life of Israel. And we see four movements in this story.

I'm not going to give you all four of them here tonight yet. We're going to look at two of these. Two of these tonight. Four movements. So let's get to the first one.

[14:23] And it's probably not the one that really stands out to you. But there's an interesting movement in the story that really comes to us right at the very beginning of that portion of the passage that I just read.

And it comes under the heading, and this is what I want to call it, Gideon's fame. This is an interesting part of the story. And I don't know if you remember what we studied last time and earlier in this chapter.

And I don't know, as I was reading, I don't know if you thought, you know, there's something that has changed here dramatically. And it has. Suddenly, seemingly overnight, Gideon became famous.

Famous in the eyes of the people. So much so that the people were now suddenly willing to follow him. Now, I say that this is a strange kind of change in the story.

It's amazing what happens here in verse 34. But the Spirit of the Lord, look at it. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, then he blew the trumpet. We always hear about Gideon blowing his trumpet.

[15:33] And the Abiazrites gathered behind him. Now, that's interesting. The Abiazrites are his clan. His family and extended family would include quite a number of people because the Jews were very prolific.

And so, a huge clan. But not only that, but verse 35 further says, And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh. Now, Manasseh would be his tribe.

He's of the tribe of Manasseh. And the Bible is very deliberate here in describing this. Gideon blows his trumpet and his clan rallies to him.

He sends messengers to all of the tribe of Manasseh and they rally behind him. And not only that, but of course it goes on to say that he sent messengers to Asher, that would be another tribe of Israel, and unto Zebulun, another close tribe in proximity to where Manasseh, a lot of the promised land was located, and also unto Naphtali.

And they came to meet him. Came to meet him. That is, they rallied to him as well. This is amazing. You say, how so? Well, how did Gideon become such a popular guy all of a sudden?

[16:56] You remember what we studied last week? In fact, let's just go back even further. When we first met Gideon, again, where did we find him?

He's hiding out, you know. He's afraid. He's got to somehow provide little pittance of food for his family and how's he going to do it and not get caught?

He's inside of a wine press. And it's an indication of what kind of man he was. Hardly a man of any significance, right?

Which is not unusual for God to pick a man like that and use a man like that. But how did he go from that suddenly to now he's sending messengers out, blowing trumpets and sending messengers, messages out and all these tribes and their armies are rallying behind him.

You know, we're not introduced to a man of any real significance. In fact, he said of himself, you remember, back in verse 15 of this same chapter, he said, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh.

[18:03] That is, my clan, my family, they're at the very bottom of all the clans of the tribe of Manasseh. And then further, he said, and I am the least in my father's house.

How could you get any lower than that? How could you get any more insignificant than that? Your family is the most insignificant in the whole tribe of Manasseh and I am the most insignificant in my family.

All right, so, but now, Gideon is blowing a trumpet and four tribes of Israel are rallying to his side. And this is especially amazing when you consider, and I'm sure you remember this, that Gideon's own clan, first it mentions the Abiezrites, they are in support of him.

They support his call to arms. And yet, just three verses back from here, they are asking for his death. Remember?

[19:09] Gideon went out one night, tore down the altars of Baal, tore down the image of his, I guess, sweet wife, Astarte, or whatever her name was, that was erected there.

And the people are saying, man, bring this guy out, Joash, bring your son out. He's to die for this. And now they're rallying to him. All he's done is blown a trumpet.

All right, so, how did this happen? What has happened to change their opinion of Gideon? Well, it's right here in the passage, and the answer is, God happened.

God is what happened. And the key to understanding this is found in the very first few words of verse 34. And these words did not escape your notice, I'm sure.

But look at it again, verse 34, but the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon. That's an interesting phrase. I mean, just on the face of it, the Holy Spirit came upon Gideon, and apparently he did so in a very observable way.

[20:25] that the people could see this. And that's why they responded to him. In fact, the words came upon, and I'm just reading from the New King James.

Those two words, came upon, are one word in the Hebrew language, and the words literally mean to dress or to put on clothes.

There's really only one version that I could find that brings this out, and it's the ESV. The ESV reads like this, but the Spirit of the Lord clothed Gideon.

That's just a very, very visual, very vivid way of describing it, isn't it? That the Holy Spirit clothed him. Now clothes, you wear on the outside.

I'm not saying that suddenly the people could see the Holy Spirit or see some kind of aura around him. You know, it's not some mystical kind of supernatural kind of thing that they saw.

[21 : 29] But the Holy Spirit clothed Gideon. And so, it means that there was something different about him, something observable by the people. And they were so convinced that the Holy Spirit was now upon Gideon, that they were willing to follow him.

And I think the people began to see this, I think, back, even back there where Gideon boldly tore down the altar of Baal and cut down the Ashtoreth.

I think they could begin to see that because, you see, it was then that Gideon's father, Joash, remember, he spoke the truth about what Gideon had done.

He spoke the truth, actually, about the false god, Baal. So Gideon's father, Joash, he's finally, his eyes were open, he saw.

And he spoke in behalf of what Gideon had done. And I think the people, suddenly their eyes were open to this ridiculous notion that Baal was some true god.

[22 : 35] And so, you know, the people suddenly began to see Gideon in a whole new light. Not because of some aura around him, but because of what he had done and what that represented.

And so they're thinking, well, hey, he was right about these gods that we've been worshipping. They're false. He's brave.

He was brave to destroy them. That must be God in his life. And they say, hey, the Spirit of God is upon him. So you see, Gideon's fame.

But now, let's understand, because he was clothed by the Holy Spirit, Gideon's fame is really the Lord's fame. And that's the way it should be. It's the way it should be.

David said in Psalm 34 too, he said, my soul shall make her boast in the Lord. So it's not because Gideon suddenly became a big shot or there was something special about him.

[23 : 40] It was because he was clothed in the Holy Spirit. His fame was really the Lord's fame. And people could see that and responded to it and they were willing to follow him.

And, you know, it begs the question really of us today. I mean, do people see you clothed in the Spirit of God?

When they look at you and they see you, you say, there's something different about that man or that woman. There's something special about him or her. And it's God in her life or his life.

And everything about them just speaks of God and speaks of who he is and his character and speaks of his word. That's how people ought to see us.

Now, it is interesting, by the way, and this is just as a side note, that, you know, the Holy Spirit existed in the Old Testament. Okay? The Holy Spirit is third member of the Trinity, eternal God himself.

[24 : 44] And so, the Holy Spirit has not changed from the Old Testament to the New Testament, but his ministry and his way of ministry has changed. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit, you always hear, always read the Bible speaking of the Holy Spirit coming upon a person for a time or for a ministry or for a certain task.

But in the New Testament, the Holy Spirit comes in to dwell. He's not there as a temporary guest. He comes in as a permanent resident.

And so, that's the difference between the ministry of the Holy Spirit from the Old to the New Testament. All right, so Gideon's fame. Gideon's fame. Interesting part of the story and challenging to all of us.

Then second, Gideon's fleece. Gideon's fleece. And this is perhaps one of the most interesting parts of the story, although I think the next one we're going to look at, the part about God dwindling Gideon's army down to 300 men to go out and defeat a number of enemy that could not be counted.

It says even their camels are like counting the grains of sand in the sea. And so, that's a very interesting story. But this one is too. And so, kind of set this up.

[26 : 12] Remember, the armies of the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the east, they have now crossed over Jordan. Now, they've already been over Jordan before.

I mean, they've already been and marauders have come in and they have destroyed crops. And so, now they're just so bold and they just come right across the Jordan and they just set up camp there in a place the Bible calls the Valley of Jezreel.

Valley of Jezreel. And, you know, by the way, maybe a note of biblical prophecy here. This Valley of Jezreel, very famous place.

Famous place in the Old Testament and will be a famous place prophetically in the future. The principal city of this valley is a place called Megiddo.

Megiddo, the Valley of Megiddo. And, from that, we get the word Armageddon. Armageddon, which just simply means the mound of Megiddo or the hill of Megiddo or mount of Megiddo.

[27 : 23] Israel. It's identification of this place that here in Judges is named the Valley of Jezreel.

And, in history, several significant battles have taken place in this valley, in this place. We've already studied one of those, though we didn't, I didn't emphasize the place so much, but back when we were looking at Deborah, the Judge Deborah and Barak, and they defeated the Canaanites right here in this very same place, the Valley of Jezreel.

Gideon, of course, is about to defeat the Midianites here in this very same place. A little bit later, King Saul is going to die here at this place in a battle against the Philistines.

And, a few others that are maybe less notable or those that we don't really remember much, Ahaziah, king of Judah, was slain in this valley, this very place, by Jehu, king of Israel, during the divided kingdom and the battle between these two divisions of all of Israel.

In this very same place, Josiah also, King Josiah, will be slain in this very, very valley during a battle from the invasion of the Egyptians.

[28 : 52] And, there are a few other places, references to the Valley of Jezreel in the Old Testament. But, there's one great battle yet to take place in this valley, Valley of Jezreel.

The Bible calls that battle, what? The Battle of Armageddon, the mound of Megiddo, Megiddo. And, in Revelation 16, all the kings of the earth and of the whole world are going to gather here against the Lord and his host there in Revelation 16.

Just a side note about this place. Anyway, the enemy has encamped in the valley and Gideon has blown the trumpet and the armies of Israel have rallied to him at least from four tribes of Israel.

And, God has already said something about what's going to happen, hasn't he? He's already assured Gideon of the outcome, hasn't he?

Back in verse 16, chapter 6, verse 16, surely, this is God speaking, surely I will be with you and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man.

[30 : 14] That's, that's pretty, pretty, sure thing, isn't it? This is what God said. So, Gideon is ready, right? Now he's ready to go. Let's, let's go then.

Let's go out and defeat the Midianites. God has said that we will defeat him as if they were just one man. is that what happens next?

Well, you know, as a reader, we're, we're expecting that. In fact, and that's why I have said a number of times that the writer of the book of Judges, the genius telling the story because the readers are expected, they're intended rather, to expect that to happen next.

that now Gideon, all these armies have gathered behind him and now he's ready to go out, defeat the Midianites, the Amalekites and these people from the east because God had said that he would be with them and they would defeat them.

And so you're kind of expecting that to happen but the author builds us up to this climax only to shock us into what happens next. It's only because we already know the story that it doesn't surprise us even now as we're walking through this book.

[31 : 34] So what does Gideon say? Well, he begins his conversation with God in a way that no one should ever begin a conversation with God with the word if.

That's how he begins. And that's not the best way to start a conversation with God about something he has promised. He promised, didn't he?

Gideon, I'll be with you and you will defeat the Midianites as one man. And so you don't then approach God after that with this word if but that's how Gideon approached him.

Verse 36, if you will save Israel by my hand as you have said. I mean, that is a terrible, terrible thing for Gideon to say.

Think about it. if, I mean, to have if on the front and what you said, your word on the back side of that, I mean, think about that.

[32 : 35] What contradiction? You know, as if saying, God saying something was not enough. And that's exactly the point here, isn't it?

You know, it's really difficult to try and shed some positive light on this. I've read a number of commentaries on this part of the story, Gideon's fleece.

And there are actually some who see this as a very positive thing and really kind of try to explain this to mean something totally different.

But it's a stretch. I mean, no matter how you cut it, no matter how you look at it, it's just not a good thing. You know, you can't present Gideon in a favorable light here.

Gideon is doubting God's word. Because God has clearly revealed his word. And Gideon is not sure about it. He's doubting it.

[33 : 35] And worse, he's now going to put God to the test. All right, I'm just kind of building you up for this big letdown about putting out a fleece, okay? Are you with me?

All right, let's just look at it. I read it a moment ago, but let's read it again. And I've lost my place. What book are we in? 223.

Well, that's not it. It's actually 284. So, turn to page 284, and let's look again at what happens here. Verse 37 of chapter 6. Look, I shall put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. All right, here's the test, at least the first part of the two-part test.

If there is dew on the fleece only, all right, we're assuming that, I mean, it's implied that the fleece is dry to begin with, all right. We're going to put it out there, and if there is dew on the fleece, but only on the fleece, and it is dry on all the ground around it, I'm kind of adding some words, kind of paraphrasing it, then I'm satisfied, I'm convinced that what you said, you will do, all right.

[34 : 58] I will know that you will save Israel by my hand as you have said. All right, so it's just a little test, God, it's no big deal. And it was so, when he rose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece together, he wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water, that too is meant to kind of shock us a little bit.

We kind of expect a little lightning bolt come down, you know, and singe Gideon's behind. Then Gideon said to God, man, you just, do not get angry with me, but let me speak just once more. Now, why wasn't the first test enough? It's bad enough that he asked that. It could be because maybe Gideon thought, well, you know, this is not conclusive.

Because everybody knows that fleece, fleece of wool, it's going to bring moisture from wherever. If there's any moisture anywhere, it's going to find its way into that fleece.

And so maybe this was just not, you know, this didn't work. So let's turn it around. And Gideon said, don't be angry with me, but let me speak once more.

[36 : 24] Let me test, I pray, just once more with the fleece. Let it now be dry only on the fleece, but on all the ground let there be dew.

And God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only, but there was dew on all the ground. Interesting, isn't it? And what are we to make of it?

That's the question. I'm going to take a little survey here tonight and I'm not going to, I said, so don't raise your hand. I'm going to take a survey and ask how many of you have kind of done this fleece thing before, put out a fleece.

I have. I have years ago. I can almost remember the situation. I'm not going to get into that.

But what are we to make of this? I mean, this isn't something we should be doing. Is this God's way of instructing us in an additional method for discovering God's will?

[37 : 38] Is that what this is? And so what can we say about it? Can we safely say, let's just kind of think of this logically based upon what we know from Scripture here.

I mean, can we safely say that Gideon had some doubts? Well, yes, I think so, clearly. Had some doubts.

This is not the first time. Is it also safe to say that Gideon's faith was somewhat weak?

And not just because of this instance, but we have seen indications of this a number of times already in the story from the very beginning. The maturity of his faith was weak.

It was weak, I think, clearly. We can say that about this. can we also say that Gideon lacked courage? I think we can.

[38 : 45] Though he did, you know, very boldly tear down the altar of Baal, though he did it at night when nobody could see. I mean, is there some tinge, some measure of fear in his life, a lack of courage?

I think so. Is it also safe to say that God graciously accommodated Gideon's lack of faith and lack of courage?

Absolutely he did. I mean, you cannot read the story and not see that. God submitted himself to the test. Didn't he?

Yeah, he did. God revealed his promise with or through the test. Revealed his promise, his will through that test and God did not condemn Gideon for the test.

You don't see any words of condemnation here. No criticism at all. None. In fact, we can even look all throughout the rest of the Bible, you know, and we can say, well, maybe there's some word about that later, you know, in the Bible.

[40 : 07] Nothing. Nothing negatively said about Gideon's test with the fleas. All right, we can say that. These are the things we can say about the story.

We're just kind of trying to get to the bottom of this and know how we're to respond to this and what does this say to us. And so, one final question.

Is it safe to expect God honor our putting out of fleeces? Now, be careful about that one.

I can see Wes back there. He's going, I don't know. And I'd say no. My answer is no.

It's not safe to expect that God will always honor our own version of putting out the fleece. Although many Christians do it and talk about it.

[41 : 11] You've heard somebody say that, haven't you? I just put out a fleece. This is not meant to be, you know, one of God's sanctioned methods of determining his will.

And why? Well, a number of reasons why. I'll just give these to you and you can take them and consider them. In the first place, you don't find this being advocated by any of God's people later on in Scripture, in the Old Testament as well as in the New, especially in the New Testament.

Nowhere do you have Jesus mentioning the fleece or this method of finding God's will. will.

Nowhere in the Gospels do you have the apostles preaching on this.

Nowhere in Paul's letters, and he wrote most of the New Testament, most of the books of the New Testament, nowhere do you have in Paul's letters any instructions on the fleece method of determining God's will.

Now that ought to be a big flag to us right there. You're just not going to find it. You say, well, I know where it is. It's the casting of lots. Is that your answer?

[42 : 27] All right, then you tell me what casting of lots is. All right, I'll consider that as a possibility if you tell me what it is. You don't know, do you? In fact, I have done a little research on that.

Nobody knows. One thing we do know, the last time we ever hear of it was at the very beginning of the church. Actually, before the church, the birth of the church.

And after that, you don't see it anymore. That's in Acts 1 26, when they were choosing a replacement for Judas, Matthias, and they cast lots.

They had two that they picked and they cast lots. We don't really know what it is. You say, well, that's a putting out of the fleece. Well, a fleece is a fleece and a lot is a lot.

Okay? It's not a fleece. Not trying to be impossible. We'll say that Proverbs 16, 33 says, the lot is cast, it's actually cast on the lap, it's cast on the lap, but it's every decision is from the Lord.

[43 : 44] So, I think all we can say is it was a method, it was used throughout the Old Testament in a number of places and the last time it was used was in the selection of Matthias and after that you don't ever hear about it again because of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit has taken the place of the casting of lots. So, first of all, you don't have it advocated in Scripture.

We're not going to base our decision about anything apart from Scripture. And so, if we want to know whether this is permitted by God as something we ought to have a part of our regular routine for searching His will, then we ought to find some kind of authority for that in Scripture.

It's just not there. We just have this example of Gideon doing it and God allowing it. That's all we have. It doesn't mean it's got to be then normative for our experience in searching for God's will.

Second of all, Gideon's fleece, I've got to get done here, Gideon's fleece test, now get this, it was supernatural. It was supernatural both times, even though the first time Gideon had some doubts about it, it was still a supernatural thing.

[45 : 06] God moved supernaturally to cause the fleece to be loaded with water and everything else around it dry, and then the second time he caused the fleece to remain dry even though everything around it was covered with dew.

By the way, the dew is just as much a miracle as the dry fleece in that sense, as well as the no-dew the first time. I mean, all of it is a supernatural act of God.

It's supernatural. It was physically impossible for this to happen. That's the definition of a miracle. It cannot be explained scientifically. It's outside of natural order. We call a lot of things miracles that are not miracles. God moved through the natural order of things possibly and answered our prayers, but that's not per se a miracle.

Miracle is outside of God's laws that he has established. He, in a sense, has broken his own laws. Our fleeces, I say our, as if you've ever done this before, and many Christians do, our fleeces are typically not supernatural tests.

[46 : 25] Just think about it. They're usually things that could possibly happen anyway. I mean, they're within the realm of possibility.

Okay? Now, why is it that we don't pick supernatural fleeces? Because we don't want them to fail. And we don't really believe anything supernatural will happen.

Now, we wouldn't want to admit that, but we don't really believe it. Our fleeces are typically like this. Lord, when I flip this coin, if it comes up heads five times, five consecutive times, then I will take that job, but if it does not, I will not take the job.

I mean, why not say this? Lord, if it's your will that I should take this job, then let this coin land on its edge and then twirl ten times and turn into a quarter.

Hey, you're asking for something supernatural, but in our heart of hearts, we don't dare do that because we know it's not going to happen. And so we've almost proven in our own hearts and minds the fallacy of this notion of putting out fleeces.

[47 : 57] I'm not advocating that you put a fleece out like that, okay, so don't go home. If you've got a big decision and say, God, if you'll turn this well, anyway.

Or we might say something like this, if the next three traffic lights come up red just before I get there, then I'll know that you want me to break up with this guy, you know, some silly thing like that. Or if so-and-so calls me exactly at 7.03 p.m., then I'll know what your will is about this certain situation, whatever. Or if the next car that passes me is a blue Lexus, then I know you want me to have one.

Now, I know I'm being silly, but you get the idea. And that leads to a third point about putting out fleeces. fleeces. Our fleeces are too influenced by what we want God's will to be.

We just can't help ourselves. And so how we put the fleece out and how we kind of almost give ourselves an escape clause and, you know, kind of have all this work, it's too influenced by the flesh for this to be, ever to be, a very viable way of discovering God's will.

[49 : 24] It's like the hobo I heard about and someone said, you know, you're a hobo and you just go wherever you want to go and I'm just curious, how do you decide where to go, what road to take and so forth?

And he said, well, that's simple. I have this very special stick that I carry with me. And he said, when I come to the fork in the road, I just throw the stick up in the air and when it lands, I go in the direction that it's pointing.

Simple. He said, sometimes I have to throw it up there four or five times for it to point the right direction. See, we can't help it.

Fleeces are too subjective. They're not verifiable in any way and they're too prone to the desires of the flesh.

Fourth, and I'm about done, okay? God has already given us several sure methods for determining his will.

[50 : 27] Number one is word. Also his spirit, the Holy Spirit that dwells in us gives us guidance.

God has. There's wisdom, godly wisdom that God grants us, gives us. There's the church. There's the church.

I mean the godly counsel of those who love the Lord and you know are close to him and we ought to get counselors. And God gives us all of these methods for discovering his will.

and many times we want to make sure all of those various methods line up together. God's word, his spirit, our own godly wisdom, the counsel of our brothers and sisters, prayer is a part, all of those things come together and God will reveal his will to you.

We don't need another kind of miraculous way for God and really it amounts to just putting God to the test anyway. And then one last thing, God does sometimes accommodate our doubts and our

weak faith but that's not the same as putting fleeces out.

[51 : 47] I remember hearing a story told by an evangelist by the name of Sam Cathy. I don't know if you've ever heard of Sam Cathy. I'm not sure if he's still around or not.

Okay. Sam Cathy, great, great man of God, great preacher. He told a story about one time when he was in I think California or someplace doing a revival, evangelistic crusade.

And he got a call that his daughter had been in a horrendous automobile accident and she was in very serious condition and so he was going to rush back so he gets on a plane and he's flying home because his daughter is in terrible shape and he doesn't know the outcome and he's so concerned about it and deeply burdened for it.

He's praying and he's struggling with this thing as he's flying. Imagine. He said about that time he looked up and the flight attendant was there beside him and she said is there anything I can get you?

And he said well I know you don't have it but I'd love to have an ice cold Coca-Cola in one of those short little glass bottles and he was just kind of being silly about it. A little bit later she came and there it was.

[53 : 06] Coca-Cola in a glass bottle. And he said thank you so much and she put her hand on his shoulder and said I think your daughter's going to be okay. And then she left.

And he didn't see her again for the rest of the flight. And when he got landed he asked about that stewardess and described her and what she was wearing and said we don't have anybody by that description.

He said you know there's that lady who brought me the Coca-Cola in a bottle and they said we don't even have those on the plane. And as soon as he got off the plane and got to a phone he called and his daughter was going to be alright.

Now did Sam Cathy throw out a fleece on that thing? No. Did God accommodate his faithlessness or his doubts and struggles? Yes he did.

Does God do it that way all the time? No he doesn't. Should we always be looking for that kind of thing all the time? No I don't think so. God says we're just to believe him and trust him. It's impossible to please him without faith.

[54 : 18] God's not going to give us all the answers and God's not going to necessarily accommodate our weakness of faith all the time though I think all the time he accommodates our weakness of faith in a sense.

So Gideon's fame, Gideon's fleece and then next time we'll see Gideon's forces, his 300 and then finally Gideon's fight in this very miraculous way that God brought about victory.

Gideon's