

Judges 08-04-11b

Let's resume our study now in Judges chapter 7. I belabored a little bit the location here because it's really important. This, and you have all of the pieces now to solve this little puzzle of God's test for weeding down the ten ellipse to just 300 men. He says take them down to the water and I will test them for you there.

I will test them for you. He doesn't say you need to figure out who. He says I will test them for you and I will tell you which ones will go with you and which one should not.

So he takes them down there and you have these two different drinking styles. Now why on earth would this be important? Many speculations have gone about because think about it, it could be either way. What is God's purpose in whittling down the number? To make sure that no one thinks that it's their military prowess and their numbers and their wonderful professionalism and expertise that won the battle, right? So maybe God is looking for the worst, most untactical, unthinking, messed up people.

Maybe these are the 300 that drank the wrong way. Wouldn't that make sense? Lapping like a dog. Dogs are traditionally, in Israel especially, associated with that which is am I a dog that you come to me with a sling and a bunch of rocks? You know I'm a mighty Philistine warrior.

Remember when the king gets killed and the dogs are going to lick his blood out of the chariot? That sort of thing. The dogs are eating the crumbs that fall from the children's table and when Jesus is talking to the Gentile woman in the New Testament. So dogs are sort of denigration.

They're low. They're beneath the acceptable level. So these who drink like a dog and of course they're actually using their hand the way a dog would use its tongue.

They're moving the water up into their mouth. It specifically tells us they put their hand to their mouth. So maybe these, because they're sort of, God arbitrarily says you're drinking like a dog and I'm going to use these 300 dog drinking guys to deliver Israel and they're the lowest and the meanest and the least military.

That could be it. Or many people have said well these were smarter men. These are the 300 who knew how to drink and watch for the enemy and they're up and able to look around while the rest of them are prostrate sucking the water out of the pool.

Well you could make an argument for either one. It isn't really definitive. And I, since I was a little boy and heard the story of Gideon, I've never really understood.

I understand the first one. If you're afraid go home. You don't have faith.

You don't think God is with us. Go away. That makes sense to me.

But this test I've never really understood until this week. Let me offer you a thought on this.

What is the name of this spring? It's the spring of trembling, isn't it? So what kind of water is in this spring? What does the water represent? This is the spring of fear.

This is the spring of trembling, right? Now if you think of it in those terms, there's two different ways that you deal with this fear. These guys did not say, I'm too fearful to function. Many times if you've ever been in a dangerous situation, if you've ever been under a lot of pressure and maybe it's just the fear of failure or the fear of disappointing someone or the fear of making an idiot of yourself.

Some of us make an idiot of ourselves so often that we just no longer have any fear of it because it's just one more in a long line of idiot behaviors. But we all are confronted with fear and it's one of the fundamental tests in our life. It isn't a sin to be afraid.

It is a sin to give in to and be dominated by fear, right? Brave men in battle are not fearless. They master their fear. They overcome it with discipline and with training and with self-control and hopefully with some spiritual dynamics because God has not given us a spirit of fear.

Perfect love does what? Perfect love casts out fear. That's scripture. Perfect love casts out fear.

If you are dedicated to God, if you love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength, guess what? You are not afraid to do God's will. You are not afraid. People used to say, well, if you really commit yourself to God, if you say, Lord, just do with me what you will, prepare to suffer.

Well, that's kind of a scary thought. I thought, well, maybe I don't want to commit my way entirely to God because I'm committing to a way of pain and God is going to teach me through tremendous suffering. I studied under a pastor for a while who said, you know, when you get to a certain level of maturity, stand by because you're going into the desert.

You're gonna suffer and it's gonna be hard. I thought, well, maybe I want to get just below that level of maturity and just kind of hover at the place of blessing before I get into the no-man's-land of great testing and so on, because who wants that? I'm afraid of what God might bring me if I just, he says, oh, so you're giving yourself to me completely well. I'm gonna put you in suffering.

Nobody wants to suffer. We have a healthy dislike for suffering. That's a good, healthy, self-preserving instinct.

So, once again, what's going on here? This is the spring of fear and when God takes these men down to the water, he says, I will test them for you there. The way that they drink is emblematic. It's symbolic.

It doesn't have anything to do with how military they are or whether they can see the enemy coming or anything like that. Remember, this is where we're dealing in the realm of spiritual metaphor. This is the well of fear.

That's its name, Karad. It's the well of trembling. Some people get down on their face and drink deep from the well of fear.

Others lap with their hand. They control it. What does the hand represent? How many times have we seen hand in this chapter? What is the hand? This is power.

This is control. I will manage the water. I will take it one handful at a time.

I am not face down in the water. I am not sucking in the water in unlimited quantities with my mouth. I am using my hand.

I am doing what a dog does. Dogs are smart. They are despised and they are common, but they are smart.

By the way, if you were going to nominate a candidate for the mightiest warrior in Israel, what's his name? Dog. Kelev. Very same word here, and it's repeated several times just in case we miss it.

Kelev. If you drink like Kelev, you're in. If you get down on your face, if you bow down, by the way, this word bow down that I mentioned earlier, you can look this up.

I'm not going to quote it for you, but just write down Job 31.10. You can look that up. In 1 Samuel 4.19, remember when Hothni and Phineas were out and took the ark into battle and got defeated by the Philistines, and Phineas' wife was pregnant and about to give birth, and when she heard the news that the ark of God was taken and that her father-in-law and her husband had died, she knelt down and gave birth, for her pains came upon her. She bowed down.

She fell down. She gave birth in a humiliated posture. She was distraught.

She was distressed. This is a negative word for bowing down. 1 Samuel 4.19. In Isaiah 46.1-2, talking about the idols of Israel's enemies, Bel has bowed down.

Nebo stoops over. Their images are consigned to the beasts and the cattle. In other words, you go to these places today and these idols and statues are sticking up out of the earth, like Ozymandias, if you've ever read that poem, How the Mighty Have Fallen, it's like the sphinx buried up to its neck.

That's the picture of these idols that have fallen over. They've now got their face in the earth. This is Isaiah 46.1-2. Job 4.4. It says, Your words have helped the tottering to stand, and you have strengthened the feeble knees.

And that's sort of a rough quotation in the New Testament. Lift up the hands that hang down and strengthen the feeble knees. The word translated feeble is this word bow down.

It's the knees that bow down, the knees that won't hold you up. You're weak-kneed. You're knock-kneed.

You can't stand on your own two feet. That's the kind of bowing down. These people can't, symbolically now, metaphorically speaking, in the language of spiritual things, these people's knees won't hold them up.

Why would they be so used to kneeling? Why would they be so used to prostrating themselves? Has the worship of God been prevalent in this area? If they've been prostrating themselves and bowing down, to what and to whom have they been doing it? Why does it come so easy for them to bow down? Idolatry is rife. They've bowed down to the gods of the Canaanites. These are the ones who bow down, and they do it out of fear.

They do it out of, I don't want to trouble my neighbors. I don't want to have a bad crop. I don't want to lose too many calves or kids, in either sense of the word.

I'll appease the gods of the Canaanites. After all, we're dwelling in their land, and they don't see it as the gift of God, and they don't recognize the presence of God in their midst, and so they are quick to bow down at the well of fear. That's the idea here.

So who does God choose? It's all about fear, isn't it? In the first instance, people said, I'm fearful, I'm leaving. In the second case, God says, you are associated with fear, at least in the metaphorical, symbolical sense. You are one who drinks deep at the well of fear.

You're not going to go into the battle. I'm not going to use you. God doesn't need fearful people.

And so the real message here is, not that there is no well of fear, or not that we don't all partake of that trembling from time to time. What does our memory verse say over there? Work out your own salvation, how? Fear and trembling? Everybody partakes of trembling. There is a healthy respect.

There is a healthy fear. There is a healthy trembling. We are commanded to work out our deliverance with fear and trembling.

But it's got to be under control. You drink with the hand. You're like Caleb.

You control it. Bring it to your mouth. That's the idea here.

Now, there's another interesting idea in this passage that I want to point out, because everything is significant. This book is just as dense and as meaty as any that we've covered in narrative form. Where is it that this chapter tells us the Midianites are encamped? The hill of what? Remember I pointed out the first or the last lesson, the hill of Morah? And I reminded you that there is a place down south called the Oaks or the Terebinth of Morah.

It's a rather famous place. Well, Morah is a pretty significant word. It comes from a root, Yarah, Y-A-R-A-H.

Yarah means to teach. It literally means to throw or to shoot. Now, how would that come to

mean to teach? Well, to throw or to shoot is to establish a direction and to point.

There is a point there. There is a point involved in shooting an arrow, for example. So it's used literally for shooting by archers, shooting arrows and so on.

It comes to mean to throw or to project something. Basically it has the idea of projecting something. We use projectors all the time when we want to teach.

We put something out there for people to see. And so, although it meant originally to shoot or to throw, it came to be used for rain. In Hosea 6, verse 3, let us know, let us press on to know the Lord.

His going forth is as certain as the dawn, and he will come to us like the rain, like the spring rain watering the earth. And there is a play on words there, because Yarah is used for rain, but let us press on to know the Lord. And we know the Lord through teaching, through that which is projected, through that which is taken from here and put to there, to cast it forth.

A parable, para balo, balo is the Greek word that means to throw. Para is alongside. Jesus taught in throwing alongside stories.

Let me throw this example alongside reality. And when you understand the example, you can go from that to reality. It's a parable.

It's a para balo. I will cast it alongside, throw it alongside. So, why is this important? The Midianites have come and encamped at the hill of teaching.

Remember I told you, if you want to turn a verb into a noun in Hebrew, what do you do? What letter do you put in front of it? Letter M, letter main. So you take Yarah, and you put a main in front of it, and the O-E infix makes it into a participle instead of Marah, it would be moreh. That's teaching.

It's the hill of teaching. Easy, easy Hebrew, first semester Hebrew. Moreh, hill of teaching.

So, God has brought Gideon and his men against the Midianites, and the location is the hill of teaching. And in order to accomplish the victory against the enemy that is encamped at the hill of teaching, you've got to get rid of fear. Fearful people, go home.

And they go back to Gilead, to the unsuccessful, wrong side of the Jordan. That's where fear dwells. Two-thirds of them go back there.

And it's a double. There's two elephs and two. Twenty-two, remember? It's two and two.

And there's ten that remain behind. So, of those, still too many. And so God is again going to weed them out, and it's on the basis of, what do they do at the pool of fear? What do they do at the spring of trembling? And they don't know that what they are doing is a criteria, but God sets it up as a criteria, and God chooses.

They choose and eliminate themselves. This time God chooses, and He tells Gideon, take the ones who take the water in their hand. And hand is repeated time and time again in this chapter.

It means power. They're taking the water in their power, and they're bringing it to their lips in measured amounts, and partaking. So now they are ready.

Well, this is all going to take place, and the battle is going to be engaged. The camp that they're going to go down with, you know the story, the torches and the pitchers and all that, it's at the hill of teaching, and it comes from this word Yara. There is another derivative of this word, another direct derivative.

Moreh is one of them. Another one is Torah. The word Torah is directly derived from this word, and it means direction or instruction or law.

I will instruct you out of my... There are several places where the verb and the noun occur in the same sentence. So it is as though God is bringing Israel through Gideon, through these faithful warriors, back to the teaching, back to the instruction that Moses delivered in the Torah. They are at the hill of Moreh, and in Hebrew, these are linked very closely.

So this gives us a little bit of a perspective, a little bit of an understanding of what the symbolic value to the entire nation of Israel is, as this one man, in obedience to God, issues the call to a slightly larger group, his tribe and a couple of other tribes in the vicinity, and then God narrows it down. He takes away the fearful, and now they are going to proceed with these 300. And God says, by the 300 men who lapped, I will deliver you and deliver the Midianites into your hand.

These men who know how to use their hand, these men who control fear with their hand, I am going to deliver the Midianites into those same hands. Those are the hands that are going to achieve the victory. Let all the other people go, every man to his place.

So the people took provisions and trumpets in their hands. He sent away all the rest of Israel, every man to his tent. Notice, not to his home, but to his tent.

These guys are going to stay in the camp. They haven't necessarily been sent all the way home. But they are not going to be involved in this battle, this particular onslaught, the first foray, the first engagement.

It is just going to be done with the 300. So the rest of them go to their tent. Remember, these people are in the land.

They have homes and properties and fields and houses. They don't go back to their house, they go back to their tent. They are going to remain in the camp.

And he retains the 300 men. Now the camp of Midian was below him in the valley. So they are at the foot of this hill of teaching, this hill of Moreh.

It happened on the same night that the Lord said to Gideon, Arise, go down against the camp, for I have delivered it into your hand. How many times do we have yad in this chapter? How many times do we have fear and trembling referenced and referred to? And the whole point of it is, it is for teaching. But if you are afraid to go down, and this is not if, it is since.

But since you are afraid to go down. God isn't saying maybe yes, maybe no here. And if and since are expressed identically in both Hebrew and Greek in many cases.

But since you are afraid to go down, now notice, God says, Arise and go down into the camp, I have delivered it into your hand. But since you are afraid to go down. He is not saying, I know you won't go down because you are too afraid.

But he says, I know that there is fear in your heart. So I am going to give you something to cope with that fear. God isn't worried that Gideon won't be obedient.

He is worried that Gideon is just afraid. And God has already weeded out a bunch of afraid people. And he doesn't need Gideon being afraid.

He says, since you are afraid, here is what we are going to do. Go down to the camp with Purah your servant. How would you like to be mentioned one time in the Bible as someone's servant, but you are mentioned by name? Do you think that there is any accident that this man's name is given to us here just as an aside? Well, this is a name that is derived from a verb, Parah, as you might expect.

Purah is derived from Parah. Parah is the verb in Hebrew that means to be fruitful, to bear fruit. And now, I don't think they just called the guy fruit, or fruitcake, or fruit boy, but Purah has the connotation of production.

They used to have names in colonial days. Remember Constance, Hope, Faith, Purity, Charity. Christian virtues were given as names to girls in a lot of cases.

It was very, very prevalent back when there were so many Puritans and so on over here. Well, you can imagine this guy being named Produce. Produce.

Produce Hopkins. You've got Constance Hopkins and Hope Hopkins and Charity Hopkins, and then they have a brother and they name him Produce. This is as close as I can come to it, but that's what Purah means.

It means fruitfulness. And you think what a great blessing that God gave Gideon, that he's got this servant, and God calls him by name. Remember he had ten servants to help him tear down the idol and the altar.

By the way, somebody did an excavation of a bale altar not far from here. I think it was down by Shechem. The thing was 26 feet wide and 11 feet long and 4 feet high.

That's why he had to have the bull and the ten servants to tear the thing down. In case, I can't

remember if I mentioned it or not, but you know that the ox and the bull was associated with the bale cult. And that bull that belonged to Gideon's father, the prize bull, was probably the symbolic bale bull.

And the father would parade it around the altar, you know, lead it all around the 26 foot side, the 11 foot side, the other 26 foot side, the 11 foot side. And so what a finger in the eye of Baal to take the bale bull and sacrifice it on a fire made out of the ash of a pole on the site where his altar used to be. I mean, it's just a complete, you know, it's a three stooges thing right in Baal's eye.

Burned his bull on a fire made out of his ash or a pole on the site of his former altar. I mean, it's just a complete disrespecting of Baal. You couldn't trash him any worse unless you erected an outhouse on the site.

So anyway, God says, He says, take Pura, your servant. And this must have been a great guy. This guy is like Jonathan's armor bearer.

He is a blessing. He's in the background. We don't know anything about his life other than his name and his relationship to Gideon.

But God calls him by name. And there aren't very many people in scripture that God calls by name and says, take this individual. Wouldn't it be great to be in that category? God looked down and called your name.

Take Pura, your servant. You shall hear what they say. And afterward, what shall be strengthened to go down against the camp? Your hands.

This is just like the old, you know, Mr. Who is it? Mr. Holland's opus, you know, where he's banging. I always think of that whenever I see things repeated repeatedly, it's just like a drumming into the head. How many times does God have to mention hands here? This is about fear, and it is about taking control through the grace of God, by faith in God, by confidence in God.

Perfect love casts out fear. We do not have a spirit of fear. We're all afraid of something.

We're all reserved. We're all stand off. There are certain things to which we do not want to commit.

There are certain things where we don't really want to feel like we're out on a limb. God says, don't be that way. You're eliminating yourself.

You're going back to the mountains of Gilead on the wrong side of the Jordan. It's the first place that's going to be overrun and carried away, and you're not going to have any part in the land. And you remember in the millennial kingdom when God redistributes those tribal areas and puts those stripes all the way from north to south for each of the tribes, how much of that is on

the other side of the Jordan? Zero, zilch, nada, nothing.

God says, you don't belong over there. You belong between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan. That's the land of promise.

The fearful go back across the river by a circuitous, braided, windy route. So he went down with Purah 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.

These are primarily Midianites and Amalekites. However, there were also a great horde of Ishmaelites in amongst them. And we know this from a passage that's going to come up a bit later.

But when it says all people of the east, it means and others, a cast of thousands. The leadership is Midianite and Amalekite, but they've got all kinds of hangers on and people who want to be there for the spoils. Everybody wants the spoils.

They're going to come in and they're going to raid and get crops and household goods. So you remember the Ishmaelites? These are the ones that paid a little money and got Joseph to take him down to Egypt. Those were Ishmaelites.

They are traders. They are businessmen. They're eBay entrepreneurs.

They're looking for stuff they can sell. They're going to go in there and scoop this stuff up, take it back and sell it for a profit. So Midianites, Amalekites, all the people of the east, this is primarily your Ishmaelites.

And what's the difference between a Midianite and an Ishmaelite? Are they the same thing? Who are the Ishmaelites descended from? A little bit of your background biblical knowledge here. Descended from Ishmael and Ishmael's father was Abraham and his mother was Hagar. Who is Midian and his descendants? Who's his father? Abraham.

But his mother is, who's the third lady who gives offspring to Abraham? Keturah. Seventeen sons, a whole people of the east deal. So the Ishmaelites and the Midianites are about the same distance as the Jews and the Ishmaelites and the Midianites.

They're all cousins descending from that first generation or two under Abraham. Just so you keep it straight. Ishmaelites are not Midianites but they're cousins in the same way the Jews or the descendants of Isaac are.

So they're lying in the valley as numerous as locusts and their camels were without number as the sand by the seashore in multitude. This is important. These camels are mentioned for a reason.

What is a camel a symbol of? These people are not only numerous, they are well off. Poor people don't have camels. Job's wealth is measured in terms of she donkeys and camels among

other things.

Camels sign of wealth. You've got to be well off to have camels. It's like the thing is full of Hummers, full of Volvos, full of Cadillacs, full of Lamborghinis.

These are signs of wealth. These camels are opulence and great power. If you've got camels you've got a whole bunch of other stuff as well.

Living in rich tents, fine foods, the best of everything, just great dripping with riches. But God turns strength into weakness and he turns weakness into strength as we will see. So when Gideon had come, he and Purah are up there, they sneaked up by night and they get close enough that they can hear the conversation coming through the tent flap.

What's interesting to me is this is still early enough that when a Midianite is speaking Midianites and when an Ishmaelite is speaking Ishmaelites and when an Amalekite is speaking Amalek, a descendant of Jacob can still understand it. Because all of these are cognate languages. Even today we learn a lot from Arabic when we're studying Hebrew.

These are cognate languages and they're close enough that even though it's a different dialect and a different accent and a little bit different vocabulary, Gideon can easily get the gist. And this man is telling a dream to his companion. These are two Midianites talking to each other, but their language is still common enough.

He said, I've had a dream. It's like Martin Luther King's famous speech. I had a dream.

But to my surprise a loaf of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian. It came to a tent and struck it so that it fell and overturned and the tent collapsed. His companion answered and said, this is nothing else but the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel.

Into his hand God has delivered Midian and the whole camp. How would a Midianite know about God? Well, they've got no excuse to not know about God. They're descended from Abraham.

Moses lived with them for 40 years. The knowledge of God is spread throughout the land. Rahab the harlot knew about God.

All of these people know about God. Moses traveled for 40 years and the reputation of God is well known. Joshua painted the rocks with the law of God and the decree of God and the Gibeonites and everybody else knew.

It's common knowledge throughout this area, throughout this region, who God is. Into his hand God has delivered Midian and the whole camp. Now notice two particular things here.

First of all, this is nothing else but what? The sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel. They not only know Gideon, they know Gideon's family. Now how would they know this? They are encamped very close to Oprah, which is in the shadows of Mount Tabor.

We're going to find out later that they have been in the vicinity for a while and they've done their recon. They've gathered their intelligence. They know who lives there.

This will make sense a little bit later on. But it mentions the sword of Gideon. Later on, this very phrase is going to be shouted by the 300 men.

I've always wondered, why did the 300 men shout the sword of the Lord and of Gideon or the sword for Gideon and for the Lord? Why would they say that? Why would they mention Gideon's name? Right here. God brought Gideon down here to hear what is the central cause of fear in the hearts of the Midianites. They know Gideon is the leader of the opposing force.

So when all of these men shout his name, people recognize. I used to think, well, these Midianites, they don't know. You could say the sword of Barubabel or something.

They would say, well, who's that? Nobody's saying who's that. When these 300 men shout the sword of Gideon, they know, just as this man knows. So you remember barley bread? Barley is the commonest, humblest, this is what poor people eat.

You can't afford wheat, you've got to eat barley. And barley bread is the commonest stuff that you can make human food out of. And this loaf of barley bread, this humble fare comes in and knocks over a tent in Midian.

And this is a prediction for this guy. He gets a dream from the Lord for Gideon to hear. Now, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, he worshipped.

He returned to the camp of Israel. Notice, he worshipped. His spirit of fear has been cast out and he praises God.

He's appreciative to God. God has given him an assurance. And God does this for us out of his word.

What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. Fear thou not, for I am with thee. Be not dismayed, I am thy God.

Our degree of fear, our degree of reservation, our degree of hesitancy and reluctance is going to be directly proportional to what we don't sense of the presence of God. The less we are aware of God, the less we believe and cultivate His presence in our life, the more fear, the more uncertainty, the more trembling there's going to be. When we dedicate ourselves to God, perfect love casts out fear.

So, Gideon heard the telling of the dream. He worshipped. He returned to the camp of Israel and he said, Get up! The Lord has delivered the camp of Midian into your, what? Hand.

The same hands that scooped that water out of the pool. God has delivered Midian into that hand. That's their fighting hand.

That's their sword hand. That's their torch and pitcher hand. So, he divided the three hundred men into three companies.

He put a trumpet into every man's hand. This is the shofar. This is the ram's horn.

Right? And with empty pitchers and torches inside the pitcher. Now, how would this work? Why would you put a torch inside a pitcher? So that your guys can go surround the camp and get into position without the sentries and the people down at the camp watching you. You've got to light the thing back at the camp.

They don't have matches. They don't have big flicks. They don't have a way to start a fire.

They've got to carry the fire from their own camp. Right? The fire is in the camp. The torches are lit in the camp.

The torches are lit when they're all together in obedience to God's command. They light their torches and then they stick them down in these pitchers, these clay jugs, so that they cannot be seen. And they go out there and they all get in position.

They surround the camp. They've each got a shofar. A shofar is normally only held by the leader of a unit.

It's like the bugle. Every soldier doesn't carry a bugle, does he? In the old Civil War days and so on. Who had the bugle? You've got a bugler for a small unit.

And you do it in different ways. You sound the advance sound, the retreat sound, the call to color sound, the mess call, whatever it may be. Little patterns of notes tell people what to do.

So, heaven help us when the big electromagnetic pulse hits and all of our radios go down and nobody is going to know anything about audible commands. Nobody is going to understand a bugle call and everybody will be sitting around saying, well, I sure wish I had a fresh radio and we would just be paralyzed. But in those days, all you had to do was blow the horn.

So, now where did these 300 guys get these horns? Did they have 150 goats hanging around there and they just, you know, two horns for each goat? These things have to be cured. They have to be prepared. They have to be turned into the shofar from a goat horn.

It takes time. These are already in existence. Where did they get 300 shofars? They started out with how many alephs? 32 alephs? You can imagine Gideon saying, hey, let me have those shofrim.

And the guys who are remaining back in the camp, you have got 10 alephs who are staying in the camp and 9.7 of those 10 alephs are staying back. So, it tells us that there are small units within these alephs and each one has got a shofar. Well, they just have a big recall of all the shofars.

They get them all in a big pile. They have got 300 of these goat horns. Every man gets one.

Every man gets a torch. Every man gets a pitcher. And they go and they surround the camp.

Now, what do the Midianites know about a shofar? It is the signaling device for a unit of guys. So when 300 shofars go off in the dark, how many units do they think are out there? Oh, my gosh, the entire nation of Israel has surrounded us and they are all converging. We are all going to die.

And this is why the blowing of the trumpet did not just confuse them, it scared them to death. What is the thing that causes these people to kill each other? Look at what happens. Gideon says, 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, you also blow your trumpets on every side of the whole camp and say, a sword of the Lord and of Gideon. Notice the sword of is missing and I think it has dropped out.

That is why they put it back in and you find it later. Gideon and 300 men are with him, came to the outpost of the camp, the beginning of the middle watch. The night is divided into three four-hour watches.

The beginning is 6 p.m. 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. is the first watch. 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. is the second watch. 2 a.m. to 6 a.m. is the third watch.

So if it is the beginning of the middle watch, what time is it? It is 2200 hours, 10 p.m. So what is the situation in the camp? This is precisely timed. All of the guys who are on watch for the first watch are done and they are leaving their post and they are going to find their tent and hit the sack. They are bushed.

They have done their four-hour watch. They are heading for the rack. All of the guys on the second watch are just now waking up and trying to find their way in the dark.

So there are two watches of people. The first watch is going home. The second watch is coming out.

The third watch is fast asleep. They don't have to get up until 2 a.m. So precisely at the moment when the watches are changing and two-thirds of the people in the camp, what is the proportion of people who are milling about in the camp of Midian at 10 p.m.? Two-thirds. All of a sudden the shofars go off.

All of a sudden the pitchers break. Just as they had posted the watch, it tells us, they blew the trumpets, they broke the pitchers that were in their hands. The three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers.

They held the torches in their left hand and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing and

they cried, A sword of the Lord and of Gideon. And they mention Gideon because Gideon is known by name. All of this cacophony, it sounds like there are 300 elephs.

Now we know from piecing scripture together that the number of elephs in the Midianite camp is 135. There are 135,000, 135 elephs in the camp, which dwarfs the 32 elephs that Gideon started out with and it certainly renders minuscule his 300 men. They've got 135 elephs in the camp.

Well, two-thirds of those guys are milling around coming off watch and coming on to watch, or elements from them are. So there is all of this milling around in the camp. Well, when the shofars go off, these guys are looking around and they can't figure out who is standing up and who is up.

The guys who are asleep wake up and they see guys walking around in the camp. They don't know who they are. There is horrible spirit of fear and confusion.

And because of that, every man stood in his place around the camp. The whole army ran and cried out and fled. The 300 blew the trumpets.

The Lord said, Every man sword against his commander. So the whole camp, the army fled and they just slaughtered each other. The men of Israel gathered.

It was just a horrible catastrophe for the Midianite army. What accomplishes this? It's the very thing that's been weeded out of the Israelite camp. Why do they flee in confusion? Why do they kill each other? Fear.

They're afraid. It's dark. They don't know what's going on.

They're ignorant and they're afraid. They're trembling and they kill themselves. They wipe themselves out in large measure.

This is what God eliminated out of the Israelite camp. It's what we need to eliminate out of our camp as well. This is where we have to stop for tonight.

We'll pick up with the pursuit in verse 23. There is a point of change. Many times in scripture you see someone who has a great success and then something happens.

Something changes. This is going to be the case with Gideon and we're going to see it next time. Gideon is going to go from being a man of faith, a man of obedience, a man through whom God can bring the victory and deliverance to being a problem.

What changed? We will observe it. Hopefully we will learn from it next week. But let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for this graphic picture that brings us to the hill of teaching and presents to us truth that is pertinent, truth that is applicable, truth that we need in order to be equipped to

do your will and your work on this earth and in the ages to come. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress it on our hearts, help us to see both individually and collectively where your will and your plan lie for us so that we can be those through whom your victory is accomplished, those who by faith and patience inherit the promises. We ask all these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.