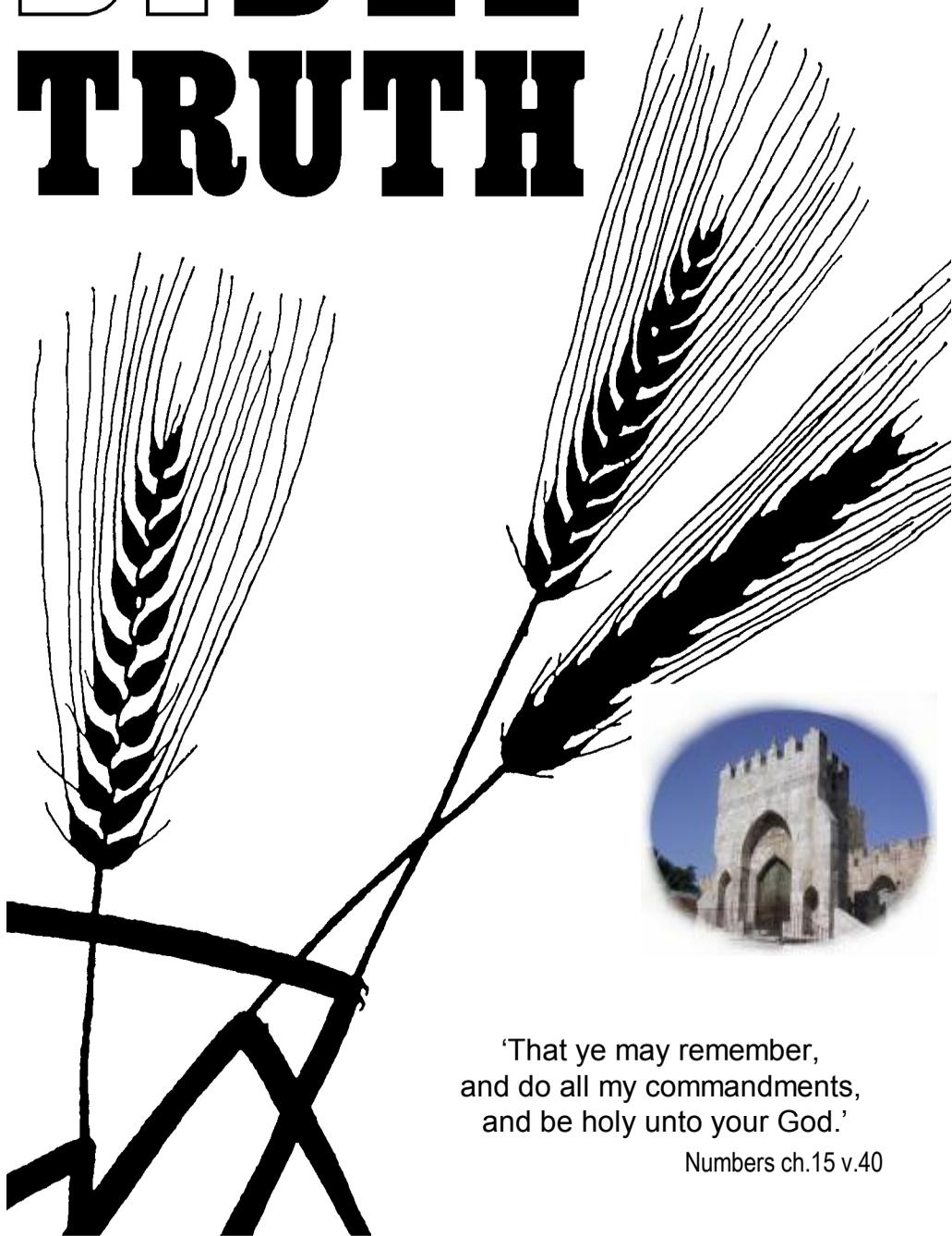


BIBLE TRUTH

No.252
October/December
2008



‘That ye may remember,
and do all my commandments,
and be holy unto your God.’

Numbers ch.15 v.40

THOUGHTS FROM OUR 2008 AGM

by the President, Dr. Michael Bennett

The 34th Annual General Meeting of the British Israel Bible Truth Fellowship was held at Orange Street Congregational Church on Saturday 3rd May 2008 at noon. The meeting was opened in prayer and the chairman (Dr Michael Bennett) read Judges ch.7 vv.9-22 (part of the story of Gideon). After welcoming all those present he introduced the business with the following remarks.

A key aim of this Fellowship is to witness for Our Lord and His truth. We exist to proclaim the whole counsel of God revealed in the Bible. We must not be tempted to measure our success by the number of people who thank us, or who attend our meetings. It is good to hear from people who found our ministry encouraging. It would be abnormal if we did not enjoy seeing more people at meetings. However, it is vital to keep in mind that our prime role is just to obey God and fulfil His calling for Israel, to be a faithful witness - acknowledging Him as God and proclaiming His word by preaching, publications and other means.

‘Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: ... Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour. I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I am God.’

Isaiah ch.43 vv.9 -12

There have been dark days when it was nigh impossible to find a pure word of the Lord because it was lost, hidden, persecuted or buried. Thank God His word is like seed. When buried it grows and becomes fruitful. Our job is to sow the seed of God’s word, and then to trust Him to keep His word and multiply fruit. That’s His part. We can’t do it but He will!

‘The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad. Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.’
Psalms 126 vv.3-6

‘I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.’
1 Corinthians ch.3 vv.6-7

‘Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness; Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.’
2 Corinthians ch.9 vv.10-11

In reading the Bible I have reached the book of the Judges which covers the centuries between the death of Joshua and the birth of Samuel. They were difficult and wild times. The writer summed them up in a telling statement found in Judges ch.17 v.6, and repeated in the last verse of the book.

‘In those days ... every man did that which was right in his own eyes.’
Judges ch.21 v.25

I was struck by similarities between then and now. Indeed, the story of Gideon has telling lessons for us today which are often overlooked by preachers who focus on Gideon but ignore what went before. I will touch on a few to encourage faith in God and expectancy that He will intervene and help us.

It starts when things had become desperate for God’s people in God’s land. They were forced underground, robbed of their natural resources by a numberless flood of invading alien enemies, while idolatry flourished.

‘And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years. And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: and because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds. ... And they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass.’
Judges ch.6 vv.1-2 & 4

There is deliverance but how will it come? Details may differ every time because God has a thousand ways to answer every prayer. However, the basics of Israel's deliverance by God never alter.

1. Troubles are allowed and measured by God

Israel's trouble is allowed and measured out by God to test Israel. It was 'seven years' (see Judges ch.6 v.1), and 'seven times' tailor-made tribulations that are a mark of Israel, never in Satan's control, but all measured out in God's.

'And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice; I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died: That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not. Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out hastily; ...'

Judges ch.2 vv.20-23

2. The people cried out to the Lord in their trouble!

Eventually the people cried out to the Lord in their trouble. This was the turning point, and it always will be. So for us, prayer days are critical!

'And they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. ... And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD.'

Judges ch.6 vv.4 & 6

Like the prodigal son, Israel finally comes to their senses. It is necessary to cry to the Lord. It recognises God's existence and His character, and it obeys the Lord's principle: 'Ask, and it shall be given you; ... For everyone that asketh receiveth;'. (see Matthew ch.7 v.7-8).

3. God sent a prophet

God's first response to His people's cry was to send them a prophet. The prophet's name is not given but his message is known. He reminded them of their history, God's law, and their disobedience.

'And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD because of the Midianites, That the LORD sent a prophet

unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage; And I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drave them out from before you, and gave you their land; And I said unto you, I am the LORD your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice.'

Judges ch.6 vv.7-10

A prophetic message is vital to remind us of our past and of our promised future. What God said is important as He will never change it! The word of the Lord must always come first – even before miracles or deliverance. To focus on our history under God and on prophecy is vital and always right.

4. **God sent one angel**

After the prophet, God next sent an angel with a definite message.

'And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.'

Judges ch.6 v.11-12

Given the gravity of Israel's situation, some may ask if the Divine response is proportionate? Is just one angel enough? Yes, quite enough! One was enough to destroy Senacherib's host - 185,000 dead (see Isaiah ch.37 v.36). We don't credit the power of angels enough. One angel of the Lord with a definite word from the Lord is quite enough. We look forward with awe to imminent angelic visitations and voices (see Daniel ch.12 v.1 & 1 Thessalonians ch.4 v. 16).

Interestingly Gideon did not recognise that the angel was an angel. He thought he was talking to a man as he asked for more information.

'And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.'

Judges ch.6 v.13

Later Gideon understood that the angel was an angel.

‘Then the angel of the LORD put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the LORD departed out of his sight. And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the LORD, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord GOD! for because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face. And the LORD said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die.’

Judges ch.6 vv.21-23

‘Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.’

Hebrews ch.13 v.2

Gideon was such a person, as he made an angel a meal of cakes and roast kid. We need to be spiritually aware to understand God’s ways; and even open to the possibility of new angelic visits today.

5. God chose one man (Gideon) to lead Israel to victory.

After God sent only one angel, He chose just one man to defeat the alien hosts, but he was unimportant in man’s eyes. That is typical of our God.

‘And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house. And the LORD said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man. And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that thou talkest with me.’

Judges ch.6 vv.15-17

‘For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence.’

1 Corinthians ch.1 vv.26-29

We need to grasp that one man who believes and obeys is quite enough, however humble his origins. The power and the glory are all the Lord’s.

6. **God empowered the man he chose with His Spirit**

At first, everyone was against Gideon, both his Israelite neighbours and Midianite enemies (see Judges ch.6 vv.30-33). But God empowered the man He chose as ‘... the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon ...’. Then his whole family (Abiezer) and fellow Israelites suddenly became fully co-operative!

‘Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel. But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him. And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh; who also was gathered after him: and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali; and they came up to meet them.’

Judges ch.6 vv.33-35

‘Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.’

Zechariah ch.4 v.6

The Spirit of the Lord makes all the difference. He will not leave us comfortless but empower whoever He will in these difficult end times.

7. **God is open to honest questions and tests**

Gideon was blessed as he laid his fleeces before the Lord (see Judges ch.6 vv.36-40). God hates unbelief but is open to honest questions and genuine tests.

‘This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him.’

Psalms 34 vv.6-9

8. **God’s ways are NOT our ways**

After years of hiding from the Midianites, 32,000 Israelites answered Gideon’s call to arms. Imagine their reaction when God said 300 is enough and Gideon had to send 31,700 home (see Judges ch.7 vv.1-8).

‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.’

Isaiah ch.55 v.8

When we move in the Spirit of God we can expect the unusual to happen.

9. **God’s weapons are NOT our weapons**

Gideon’s story shows that God’s weapons are not our weapons. God told a fearful Gideon to visit the enemy camp in order to see that they were already beaten.

‘And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along. And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host. And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.’

Judges ch.7 vv.13-15

God did things His way, and the enemy was demoralised by a dream. God destroyed them in their minds before any fighting. If Gideon doubted, his enemies already believed and understood. One Midianite had a prophetic dream and another gave its interpretation. Gideon’s story started as he threshed grain to keep it from the Midianites; it soon saw him baking cakes from flour for an angel; and it ended with deliverance by a dream about a barley cake crushing Israel’s enemy. Five barley loaves fed a multitude, while one in a dream could destroy a host. The power of spiritual dreams to destroy our enemies is just as real today. Moreover, we can also expect an anointed Pentecostal experience with spiritual dreams and visions.

‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire,

and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Ye men of Israel, hear these words; ...'

Acts ch.2 vv.17-22

When faced by a Midianite host, Gideon went to fight with trumpets, pitchers and lights, but without swords. It seemed madness. The enemy would destroy themselves. Do such things happen? Yes, even in the natural. I once read in a book of great military disasters how an Austro-Hungarian army strung out in a mountain pass was marching to fight the Turks. The host from many lands had many different uniforms and languages. For a joke one unit decided to shout 'The Turks are coming'. There were no Turks, but thousands died that day as the different units fought each other. That happened in daylight, while Gideon's attack surprised the Midianites in the darkness of 'the middle watch'.

Gideon had to fight using lights in earthen vessels (pitchers) and trumpet calls. We must do the same.

'For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;'

2 Corinthians ch.10 vv.3-5

To achieve victory our fight must use faith, prayer, patience, love, and God's word. May this Fellowship give a clear and fearless witness, by living sacrifice and faithful service, to proclaim God's Bible Truth today.

'For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.'

2 Corinthians ch.4 vv.6-7

10. God's will for Israel is unstoppable

Remember, God's will is NOT to be stopped by fallen angels or by armies of aliens. Gideon's story fits a pattern of Bible faith for few or many.

‘And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us: for there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few.’ 1 Samuel ch.14 v.6

‘And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.’

Hebrew ch.11 vv.32-34

‘Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.’

Romans ch.8 vv.35 & 37-39
