

## Judges Chapter 6 Part 11

We live in the Church Age.

That statement assumes you understand something about dispensations. The Church was a mystery to the Old Testament. It is not revealed anywhere in the Old Testament. There are some that reject the concept of dispensations but it is clear that the rules God has for the Church are different than those for the Jews under the Law.

The Church Age is the intensified phase of the Angelic Conflict according to R. B. Thieme.

That statement assumes you understand something about the Angelic Conflict. There is much about the Angelic Conflict in the New Testament. However, we learn much about the Angelic Conflict from the Old Testament. There is continuity between the Old and New testaments on this subject.

In the biblical book that was the first to be composed, the book of Job, in the very first chapter we encounter a fallen Satan. Read the first chapter to see the Angelic Conflict in action.

Historically, the third chapter of Genesis describes the beginning of the Angelic Conflict. Read that to see this.

In the second book of the Torah, Exodus, the first two commandments are about worshipping God and NOT worshipping false gods. A warning about the Angelic Conflict.

**Exodus 20:1 Then God spoke all these words, saying,**

**Exodus 20:2 “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.**

**Exodus 20:3 “You shall have no other gods before Me.**

**Exodus 20:4 “You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth.**

**Exodus 20:5 You shall not worship them nor serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, inflicting the punishment of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,**

**Exodus 20:6 but showing favor to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.**

So, the Angelic Conflict permeates throughout the Old Testament. There are some descriptions of Satan and his fall in Isaiah and Ezekiel.

In the book of Judges, the worship of Baal and other gods is a continuation of the Angelic Conflict.

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But, many theologians do not spend much time on the Angelic Conflict. Some might relegate it to “myths” and “legends.” Others are aware of the demonic creatures but are not concerned about them.

As a result, there are narratives in the Old Testament which contain elements from the Angelic Conflict that are not addressed in biblical commentaries or in sermons at churches. Spring Valley Bible Church is an exception.

The narrative concerning Gideon is one of those passages that deals with the Angelic conflict. My interpretation of the “fleece & dew” deals with an aspect of the Angelic Conflict.

So, how does fleece and dew relate to the Angelic Conflict. Let us read and see.

**Judges 6:36 Then Gideon said to God (the Elohim),  
“If You are going to save Israel through me (by my  
hand), as You have spoken,**

**God.** Gideon does not talk to Yahweh here. He is talking to Elohim. Actually, it has the definite article so it is the Elohim. Remember that Baal is a god “el,” singular whereas Elohim is the God, plural. Right from the beginning of human history, as we saw in the books of Job and Genesis, the angelic conflict is pitting Yahweh/Elohim against demonic forces. This conflict runs through the Gideon narrative. Remember the instructions to Gideon to tear down the altar of Baal and hew the idol of Asherah? Remember Gideon’s other name, Jerubaal, let Baal contend for himself if he can, which he can’t.

**Judges 6:25 Now on the same night the Lord said  
to him (Gideon), “Take your father’s bull and a  
second bull seven years old, and tear down the  
altar of Baal which belongs to your father, and cut  
down the Asherah that is beside it;**

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**Judges 6:26 and build an altar to the Lord your God on the top of this stronghold in an orderly way, and take a second bull and offer a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah which you shall cut down.”**

Also remember the apocryphal story of Abraham in which Abraham tells his father that the biggest idol destroyed the smaller idols. Abraham's father says that can't happen. Of course, because they are just dumb wood and stone made by men. Remember though, that behind the worship of false gods is Satan. But Yahweh/Elohim is the living God as we heard David say in 1 Samuel chapter 17 on Sunday.

This is spiritual warfare: Yahweh/God against Baal/god. Please understand that behind the worship of Baal are demonic forces. If we use this in our interpretation, we may understand this passage better than most commentators, who know little or nothing of the spiritual warfare.

**If.** There is an “if” but no “then.” Instead, Gideon uses the word for “look here” in the next verse. One commentator made a big deal about this (Trent Butler):

“Now facing the moment of truth and action, Gideon backs away from his commitment to God and seeks reassurance. With language tying back to v 14, Gideon says, “If you are really there saving Israel by my hand just as you promised” (Judg 6: 36). We look in vain for the “then” clause to finish the conditional sentence. Instead we get the versatile Hebrew particle [וְ] [hinneh], saying look right here at something I want to show you. Gideon does not say, If you keep your promise, then I will. Instead he backs off from his previous understanding and commitment and says he will know God's word is true if God will do the sign Gideon demands, not the sign God chooses to demonstrate. God does the sign just as Gideon asks, but Gideon is still not satisfied. After all, one would expect fleece to hold dampness longer than earth or grass. Gideon is cautious

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and tries to guard against any impatient anger God might display. He speaks to God, saying, “Do not let your nostrils burn hot against me so I may speak yet once more. I will set up a test just one more time with the fleece. Please let dryness come on the fleece by itself, but on all the ground, let there be dew” (Judg 6: 39).”

**Save.** This word is used often in Judges. This is what a deliver does, save or deliver. Gideon is a type of savior.

**Through me.** Literally, “by my hand.” Commentators mention that Gideon apparently wants some of the credit for delivering Israel. More on this subject as the story develops.

**As you have spoken.** Gideon is reiterating what God already told him. Gideon knows God’s will. But Gideon is using human viewpoint. Some would say he is looking for an out. Like Barak, leading a farmer army against well-equipped and well-trained troops is high risk from a human perspective. But Gideon is likely saying, if God is going to make me successful, then put me at the front to get the credit. But how powerful is Yahweh? Is he stronger than Baal?

**Judges 6:37 behold, I am putting a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I will know that You will save Israel through me, as You have spoken.”**

**Behold.** Translators like to use “behold” for this interjection. This doesn’t communicate very well to present day audiences. They might suspect that Shakespeare had a hand in the translation. But “look” or “look here!” might communicate better to a present day audience. Trent Butler in the previous quote translates it “look right here.”

**Threshing floor.** The narrative begins with Gideon in the wine press, using it as a threshing floor. So, from the context, Gideon is using the

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threshing floor which is located in the wine press due to his fear of the Midianites. Have you ever gone to a new school or new job where all the rules had changed? You bring the “old” rules with you but you soon find yourself having to adapt to a new situation. Gideon is not used to dealing with God, only Baal and human viewpoint.

Many commentators criticize Gideon for “putting God to the test.” From a Western perspective this is evident. But, there may be some Israelite cultural perspective being missed. Yes, it will be from a human perspective, but commentators don’t seem to provide a rationale why Gideon picked fleece and dew for this test.

Here is a typical comment:

"Gideon's fleece is not a sign of faith. It is the opposite. It is not a search for God's will. It is a desperate grasp for security by one who knows clearly what that will is but who is reluctant to do it." (Block)

What does Herman say about the three rules of hermeneutics? Context, Context, Context.

What is the context of this event? So what just happened prior to this “test.”

**Judges 6:35 And he (Gideon) sent messengers throughout Manasseh, and they also were called together to follow him; and he sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and they came up to meet them.**

Gideon had gathered and continued to gather an army to follow him in battle against the Midianites. Did Gideon need a sign from God to convince his army that he was the one chosen to lead them into victory? The text is focused on what Gideon did. We do not know for sure if there were any witnesses. But it is a distinct possibility that someone besides Gideon was observing. He could have pointed to his tests and said, “See I

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told God to do something and He did it. So I am in charge.” Careful Gideon, pride comes before a fall.

Also consider in that culture, when you asked someone a question, he has to prove he is capable of correctly answering the question. There needs to be some proof. Something like credentials. In the New Testament, the apostles had various spiritual gifts as credentials, like healing.

**Fleece.** Why fleece? No one seems to address this. Does this represent Israel, as sheep? Or the production from the land, perhaps representing freedom to live without interference.

**Dew.** Initially, this sounds like a strange request. But remember who Baal is supposed to be. He is the “storm god.” He is supposed to be in charge of rain and dew. And in the Canaanite pantheon of gods and goddesses, one of Baal’s daughters is named Tallay/Tallai which means “dew” or “dewy.” This would then appear to be a challenge to God. Are you greater than Baal who controls water?

The TDOT identifies dew as important in an agricultural economy.

“It is only the dew that provides a certain amount of moisture for plants during the long, dry Palestinian summer. The summer dew is thus as necessary for life as the winter rain; in the OT, a time of famine can be called simply a time “without dew or rain” (1 K. 17:1).”

“Behind nearly all the mentions of dew in the OT (some 30 in all) stands the conviction that the dew is a gift of Yahweh, just as in the religion of Ugarit it is a gift of Ba’al.”

Perhaps in Gideon’s mind, he needs to verify who is in charge of nature. He wants to verify that God is able to ensure victory in battle. Is Baal in charge of dew or is Yahweh?

**Through me.** This is literally, by my hand. Why didn’t he just say that you will save Israel? Is Gideon looking to take some credit for saving Israel?

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**As you have spoken.** Gideon already knows the will of God. This is nearly a duplicate phrase from the previous verse. Gideon repeats this, as if to say, “Now God, you already told me you will make me successful, but...I need to verify that one more time...”

**Judges 6:38 And it was so. When he got up early the next morning and wrung out the fleece, he wrung the dew from the fleece, a bowl full of water.**

**And it was so.** God did it. In spite of Gideon’s temerity, his human viewpoint, God made it so.

This was not just a couple of drops of water. God delivered in spite of Gideon’s human viewpoint test.

**Judges 6:39 Then Gideon said to God, “Do not let Your anger burn against me (literally, do not let your nose burn—Hebrew way of saying things), so that I may speak only one more time; please let me put You to the test only one more time with the fleece: let it now be dry only on the fleece, and let there be dew on all the ground.”**

Shades of Abraham asking God how many people it takes to save Sodom and Gomorrah. Just one more time, please.

**Judges 6:40 And God did so that night; for it was dry only on the fleece, and dew was on all the ground.**

**And God did so.** Different words from verse 38 but the same concept, but amplified. God did it again! God is patient.

Commentators castigate Gideon for the fleece episode. Some would say he sinned. He is trying to find a way out of leading troops into battle and likely getting killed, from his perspective. That may be true, but I like to



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give the accused the benefit of the doubt. Let me propose an alternate theory of the “crime.”

I. Observations:

Some of these observations are intertwined. Some information in one point may not be clear until all the points are presented. Bear with me.

A. Importance of Baal Worship

- i. Baal Worship and abandonment of Yahweh is the reason for their curse.

The paradigm of unbelief which is repeated over and over in the book of Judges is found in chapter 2.

**Judges 2:11 Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals,**

**Judges 2:12 and they abandoned the Lord (He is no longer their frame of reference), the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and they followed other gods from the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them; so they provoked the Lord to anger.**

**Judges 2:13 They abandoned the Lord and served Baal and the Ashtaroth.**

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(Again, Baal and Ashtaroth are their frame of reference, not the living God.)

Now in Judges 6, they once again did evil.

**Judges 6:1 Then the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord handed them over to Midian for seven years.**

The implication is that this fits the pattern of Baal worship outlined in chapter 2. As we saw early on in chapter 6, they were ready to kill anyone who tore down the altar of Baal and idol of Asherah. They not only abandoned Yahweh, their God, but they were so hostile to Him that they were willing to kill someone who obeyed Him. They are immersed in Baal worship. That is their frame of reference, not the worship of Yahweh.

This means they are familiar with Baal and the pantheon of gods associated with Baal worship.

ii. Baal is the “storm god”

Baal is sometimes identified as the “Storm” god. Somewhere I read that the emphasis is on rain and dew rather than “storms.” The TDOT has some insight into the importance of dew agriculturally and as a result, as a spiritual blessing. I quoted that above.

iii. Tallay (Dewy) a daughter of Baal

There is an interesting “coincidence” within the text. In the pantheon of Baal worship, Baal had daughters. One of those daughters was named Tallay which can mean dew or dewy.

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B. Importance of Dew

Above I explained from the TDOT that dew was very important in an agricultural economy.

Per TDOT, “The dew is thus an expression of Yahweh’s blessing, belonging as it were to the order of creation.” Dew is used in blessings as in the following quote from Isaac’s blessing of Jacob:

**Genesis 27:28 Now may God give you of the dew of heaven, And of the fatness of the earth, And an abundance of grain and new wine;**

It is interesting to note that dew was associated with mana.

**Exodus 16:13 So it came about at evening that the quails came up and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp.**

**14 When the layer of dew evaporated, behold, on the surface of the wilderness there was a fine flake-like thing, fine as the frost on the ground.**

**15 When the sons of Israel saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” (NASB Note: Hebrew *Man hu* which is where we get “mana”) For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, “It is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat.**

C. Importance of Fleece

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Gideon picked fleece of wool for a reason. I suspect this represents the Israelite agricultural economy and a return to normalcy. This test is conducted on the “threshing floor.” We learned early on in chapter 6 that Gideon was beating out the wheat in the wine press to hide their produce from the Midianites.

**D. Importance of Credentials**

Gideon doesn't know much basic doctrine. He apparently sees God and Baal as gods contending against each other. So, from a human perspective in that culture, he needed a test that would verify that Yahweh/Elohim was stronger than Baal/el and could control dew on command. I am not defending Gideon. It is because of his spiritual ignorance that he has dropped back to relying on Canaanite culture to answer this question. Gideon may not have know that it was wrong to “test” God.

In the current day Middle East, this mentality still exists. I encountered a Muslim gentleman who asked me a question. Just as I was beginning to answer, he stopped me. He quizzed me on my training and experience. Essentially, did I have credentials to answer his question authoritatively. I did, so then he allowed me answer the question. This is what I think was going on with Gideon.

Indeed, Abraham quizzed God on the number of people it would take to save Sodom and Gomorrah. So Gideon may have thought he had precedent.

Later in history, David presents his credentials to Saul for being able to take on Goliath. In this case, David understands that Saul needs some kind of assurances that this “kid” had some kind of experience. What are his credentials since he is a youth and has had no military training.

**1 Samuel 17:32 And David said to Saul, “May no one’s heart fail on account of him; your servant will go and fight this Philistine!”**

**1 Samuel 17:33 But Saul said to David, “You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight him; for you are only a youth, while he has been a warrior since his youth.”**

**1 Samuel 17:34 But David said to Saul, “Your servant was tending his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and took a sheep from the flock,**

**1 Samuel 17:35 I went out after it and attacked it, and rescued the sheep from its mouth; and when it rose up against me, I grabbed it by its mane and struck it and killed it.**

**1 Samuel 17:36 Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, since he has defied the armies of the living God.”**

E. Importance of 32,000 troops

In Judges 7:3, it indicates that Gideon had assembled an army of 32,000 troops. Was it possible that Gideon needed some kind of credentials to lead them into battle? If he had evidence that God responded to Gideon’s tests, then he could show the troops that he had authority from God to lead them. There is nothing in the text itself that says that. In the context, the Holy

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Spirit “clothed” him. Apparently, the purpose was to give Gideon leadership skills. But, he still operated on human viewpoint.

## II. Conclusion

It is possible that Gideon, spiritually ignorant, equated Yahweh with Baal. He needed a demonstration of God’s power as a credential for trusting Him. In so doing he brought to the fore, the spiritual warfare believers are faced with in all ages, from Adam through the Tribulation.

God responded to Gideon’s request in grace demonstrating to the leader of the Israelite army His ability to control rain/dew against Baal’s “power,” passing the qualifying test, i.e. Yahweh/Elohim God is able to do what He promises even in the areas where Baal was supposed to be supreme.

Note of caution. We have the inerrant Word of God. Read it instead of putting God to the test!

Gideon’s Tests:

The fleece and the dew test is one of two Gideon presents to God.

### 1. Test of God’s Identity (Judges 6:17-24)

Are you really God?

**Judges 6:17 So Gideon said to Him, “If now I have found favor in Your sight, then perform for me a sign that it is You speaking with me.**

### 2. Test of God’s Character (Judges 6:36-40)

The test of the fleece and dew. Are you really able to accomplish what you promised?

We look at Gideon and maybe ridicule him. We have the completed canon of Scripture with the indwelling Holy Spirit and potential for

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the filling of the Holy Spirit to help us understand. Gideon is immersed in Baal worship. He has never dealt with God before.

Current Events and the book of Judges:

<http://endoftheamericandream.com/5-signs-that-show-that-the-depravity-in-america-has-reached-an-entirely-new-level/>