

# A HERO WILL RISE

The Book of Judges

Text

Judges 7:16-25

Topic

Gideon tells his three hundred man army to simultaneously blow their trumpets at his signal

Title

*"Trumpets of Mass Destruction"*

Introduction

"Who so pulleth out this sword of this stone and anvil is rightwise ruler born of England."

By "England," the Cast Member means *Fantasyland*.

At Disneyland, the Sword in the Stone ceremony is held on the castle side of the King Arthur Carrousel, where, coincidentally, there is a rather large anvil with a rather large sword embedded in it. Merlin the Magician appears several times a day to announce that the realm is having a (temporary) leadership crisis, and is in need of a new (temporary) ruler.

Can someone be found who has the necessary courage and strength to be the new ruler? Merlin selects volunteers who attempt to pull the sword from the stone. Typically a rather burly man will be the first selected, and will fail miserably, only to be shown up by a 5-year-old.

The triumphant volunteer is proclaimed "Ruler of the Realm," with all of the privileges and responsibilities that go with it.

Which means that they receive a "Sword in the Stone" medal and a certificate acknowledging their accomplishment in pulling the sword from the stone. (Courtesy [allears.net](http://allears.net)).

At first reading it seems that swords will figure prominently in the verses we are studying today, because they are twice mentioned:

- In verse eighteen, Gideon's three hundred men are instructed to say, "*The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!*" "
- Then, in verse twenty, the battle commences in earnest when they cry, "The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!"

Despite the dual mention of swords, however, Gideon and his men are not armed with them. They carry only trumpets, empty pitchers, and torches.

It begs the question, *What is the sword of the Lord?* In this passage, the sword of the Lord is not a *what*; it's a *who*. It is Gideon, being wielded by God as His weapon of choice, to defeat the Midianites and their evil coalition forces.

By extension, the sword of the Lord is each of the three hundred men in Gideon's army.

I don't think it a stretch to say that **you** - if you're a Christian - **you** are likewise God's sword.

Yes, the Word of God, the Bible, is the sword of God. But He puts it in your heart and in your hands, and in that sense **you** are His sword.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 You Are The Sword That The Lord Has Deployed Against His Enemies, and #2 You Are The Sword That The Lord Has Engaged To Defeat His Enemies.

#1 You Are The Sword That The Lord  
Has Deployed Against His Enemies

(v16-18)

If you think I'm going too far to say that you are the sword, maybe this quote from Robert Murray M'Cheyne will ease your doubts.

Never heard of him? He's quoted by Charles Spurgeon.

Never heard of him? Then you need to get out more.

M'Cheyne said, "Remember **you** are God's sword... A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God."

As spiritual as he was, M'Cheyne's words aren't the Word of God. Can we find anyplace in the Bible that might justify our thinking that the Lord's servant could be considered His sword?

There's a passage in the forty-ninth chapter of the Book of Isaiah that describes God's servant as His weapon. The servant is talking, and he says,

Isa 49:2 And [God] has made My mouth like a sharp sword; In the shadow of His hand He has hidden Me, And made Me a polished shaft; In His quiver He has hidden Me."

Isa 49:3 "And He said to me, 'You *are* My servant, O Israel, In whom I will be glorified.'

God's servant was identified as Israel, but commentators see a dual meaning because later in the chapter it is clear that the Messiah is also in view. Either way, they are described as being God's weapon.

Then there is Jeremiah 51:20. God says to King Cyrus, "Thou art my battle axe and weapons of war."

You know what this means? You can call your wife "an old battle axe," *and it's a biblical compliment.*

In His Word, God's servant was a sword; he was an arrow in the quiver; he was a battle axe. So, yes, a believer can be considered God's weapon.

God had hold of Gideon and was about to wield him as His sword - an awful weapon in the hand of God.

We are picking-up the story, so a bit of review is in order. The Israelites were idolaters, neglecting the worship of Jehovah. He disciplined them by empowering the Midianites to oppress them. Every year for seven years, they and their allies would come at the harvest to steal the crops, and to spoil the grazing land.

The Angel of the Lord came to Gideon to raise him up as a judge to deliver Israel. By 'judge' we mean someone we'd call a hero.

After a few preliminaries, Gideon was instructed to raise an army. Thirty-two thousand men rallied to him. God said it was too many for Him to get the glory. Gideon was told to send away all those who were afraid. When the dust of their leaving settled, he was left with ten thousand men.

God said that was still too many, so He whittled them down to three hundred.

Did I mention that their enemy numbered one hundred thirty-two thousand?

Israel was unmounted and unarmed. Their enemy was armed, and possessed multitudes of camels - which were formidable creatures on the battlefield.

God invited Gideon to go down to the enemy encampment, to do surveillance. By divine providence, Gideon went just to the spot where two Midianites were discussing a dream one of them had. In it, Gideon defeated the Midianites.

Encouraged by God's promises and providences, Gideon returned to his unarmed army and declared, "Arise, for the LORD has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand" (v15).

Jdg 7:16 Then he divided the three hundred men *into* three companies, and he put a trumpet into every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and torches inside the pitchers.

In the *The Lord of The Rings: The Two Towers*, there's a scene where Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli are choosing their weapons from the armory in Helm's Deep, and adjusting their chain mail.

The men of Rohan are handed various weapons - swords and helms and spears. They are each outfitted as well as possible.

As Gideon's men stepped up, they were each outfitted with a trumpet, an empty pitcher, and a torch.

It's upsetting when we hear reports that our service men and women are inadequately supplied. Or that our police officers and Sheriff's deputies, or our firefighters, lack the necessary equipment to keep them safe, and to perform their jobs.

Gideon's men seemed hopelessly, inadequately supplied. The more spiritual among them might have taken some courage from the story of a previous hero. Shamgar had defeated six hundred Philistines with only an oxgoad for his weapon.

Even so, an oxgoad at least looked like a weapon; it was spear-like, with a sharp, pointed tip. No way that a trumpet, an empty pitcher, and a torch were weapons.

Ah, but that's the point, isn't it? **The real weapons were the men themselves.** So equipped, they would function as God's sword against the Midianites.

**You** have been outfitted with weapons:

- In Ephesians six you discover that you have been clothed in spiritual armor that can withstand any enemy attack.
- Your weapons are said to "have divine power to demolish strongholds" (Second Corinthians 10:4).

That sounds great, until you inventory the weapons. The armor you're clothed with consists of things like truth, righteousness, the Gospel, faith, and salvation. The kind of warfare they are designed for is explained by the apostle Paul in this passage from Second Corinthians:

2Co 6:4 But in all *things* we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses,

2Co 6:5 in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings;

2Co 6:6 by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love,

2Co 6:7 by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,

2Co 6:8 by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and *yet* true;

2Co 6:9 as unknown, and *yet* well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and *yet* not killed;

2Co 6:10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and *yet* possessing all things.

When I'm in a trial, or enduring some affliction, I want to be granted an armored transport to safely escort me out of my circumstances. I want the spiritual equivalent of a HumVee.

Instead I must reach for things like purity, knowledge, longsuffering, and kindness.

Have you heard the expression, "kill them with kindness?" While we certainly don't want to apply lethal kindness, it is, in fact, one of the ways God can wield us to defeat His enemies.

To use words from the passage I just read, when folks are attacking me with "dishonor" and by "evil report," my supernatural

kindness disarms them, and defeats them. God draws down on them, with me or you as His weapon of kindness.

It seems like I've been given a trumpet, an empty pitcher, and a torch, when I'd prefer an uzi. But the uzi won't defeat my spiritual enemies; these spiritual resources will.

We need reminding that our real enemies are not "flesh and blood," but are supernatural. You can destroy a stronghold with kindness that is a fruit of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Jdg 7:17 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:

How many times in your Christian life have you been told to "keep your eyes on Jesus?" It is illustrated nicely by Gideon. His men must keep their eyes on him, in order to know what to do.

Jdg 7:18 When I blow the trumpet, I and all who *are* with me, then you also blow the trumpets on every side of the whole camp, and say, '*The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!*' "

Gideon did not give his men a full briefing on the battle strategy. I'm guessing he did not yet know himself what the Lord wanted him to do, exactly.

It might seem scary, or fanatic, to set out without a full plan. It isn't, if you're following the Lord, because He will only lead you along the path most perfect in order for you to become more like Him.



It's intriguing to me that there were three hundred trumpets. True, the initial roll call was thirty-two thousand Israelites. If they traveled in troops, three hundred trumpets was no big deal.

But most of those thirty-two thousand had been dismissed. How did they know to leave their trumpets behind?

It tells me that God is always at work, providing for His plan, when I have no inclination as to what He is doing. If He knows I'll need a trumpet, He will see to it I have one.

The translators added the words, "the sword of the Lord," but it's a good addition, because in verse twenty you see that was indeed part of their battle cry.

In the Gideon scenario we are developing, God's servants are His sword. If He wields the sword, it will always hit its mark, to wound, or to overcome. He is a weapons expert, knowing just what spiritual qualities are needed to defeat the enemy, and to bring Him glory.

We don't fight Midianites. Our struggles are against things like "tribulations," "needs," "distresses," "stripes," "imprisonments," "tumults," "labors," "sleeplessness" and "fastings."

For our part, we are called upon to yield to Him, and watch as He uses "purity," "knowledge," "longsuffering," "kindness," "righteousness," and "sincere love" with amazing skill.

## #2 You Are The Sword That The Lord Has Engaged To Defeat His Enemies

(v19-25)

The following is quoted from an article I read:

Fifty years ago, during the dramatic events of the Six-Day War, the entire world saw a great miracle as God made war against Israel's enemies and redeemed the holy city of Jerusalem. Israel's sweeping victory against the seemingly insurmountable opposition of surrounding nations is one of the great miracles of the modern era. Within that great, overarching miracle are uncounted smaller miracle stories about God's hand at work in the midst of the conflict.

On the first day of the war, the Israeli ground forces had overrun the strategic road junction at Abu-Ageila to gain access to the central route into the Sinai Desert, sending a wave of panic through the Egyptian command. In Bible times, God often assisted the people of Israel on the battlefield by throwing the Canaanites, Philistines, Arameans, and other enemies into panic and confusion. The Torah says, "I will send my terror before you and will throw into confusion all the people against whom you shall come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you" (Exodus 23:27-28). By the second day of the Six-Day War, the Egyptian army had fallen into that same kind of confusion. Orders from Egyptian commanders contradicted good sense, calling for unnecessary retreats and withdrawals.

The Israeli army expected to face a serious battle at the heavily defended Kusseima outpost in the Sinai, but as they drew near, they heard explosions. When they arrived, they discovered that the Egyptians had destroyed their own equipment and abandoned the base. At other bases, the Egyptians had not even bothered to scuttle their equipment before fleeing.

**Gideon and his men were about to be part of a military miracle.**

Jdg 7:19 So Gideon and the hundred men who *were* with him came to the outpost of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just as they had posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers that *were* in their hands.

Probably around midnight, Gideon deployed his army. The three hundred Israeli's must have been spaced equally apart in three directions around the Midianite camp, giving them maximum coverage.

Think of that moment. They were hopelessly outnumbered and out gunned. They still did not know the entire strategy. What if one of them had a sneezing fit, alerting the sentries? The sheer number of things that could go wrong were staggering.

One thing we could highlight in their poise before the battle is unity among the brethren. They were solidly behind Gideon, trusting in the Lord, in formation.

Every church has its proper formation. As I set about to accomplish the tasks God has gifted me to perform; as I set out to discover the good works He has before ordained that I should discover; I am visible to those in the formation who are doing likewise.

Sadly, too many believers abandon their posts. Whether it's because of sin, or apathy, I might look to the left, or to the right, and see a gap in the formation, weakening the defense and lessening the chance of defeating the enemy.

Let's continue to stand our ground, and look to one another.

Gideon blew his trumpet. His company of one hundred blew their trumpets. They also broke the pitchers - something Gideon exemplified, but had not yet instructed.

Jdg 7:20 Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers - they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing - and they cried, "The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!"

The full strategy was finally revealed. Blow your trumpet... Break your pitcher... Hold out your torch.

The trumpets were most likely ram's horns - *shofar* they are called. Trumpets were used to announce many things, and among them were troop movements. Three hundred being blown at once would normally indicate a vast army, numbering tens of thousand. Sounding all at once, in the middle of the night, would be terrifying.

The pitchers breaking would have made considerable noise, but it seems that their main purpose was to conceal any trace of light from the torches.

The torches are described like this by one commentator: "here the word means not "lamps," but "firebrands," or "torches." The best illustration is furnished by a passage in Lane's *Modern Egyptians*, where he tells us that the *zabit* or *agha* of the police in Cairo carries with him at night "a torch, which burns, soon after it is lighted, without a flame, excepting when it is waved through the air, when it suddenly blazes forth." "

Another commentary stated:

... the lamps were not of oil; for then, when the pitchers were broken, the oil would have run out; but were a kind of torches, made of rosin, wax, pitch, and such-like things; and these were put into the pitcher, partly to preserve them from the wind, and chiefly to conceal them from the enemy, till just they came upon them, and then held them out...

Jdg 7:21 And every man stood in his place all around the camp; and the whole army ran and cried out and fled.

There was no need to advance. In fact, any advance would be counter-productive, because it might reveal to the Midianites that there were not so many Israelites as they were being led to believe.

Standing for the Lord can be challenging:

- In trials, and in sufferings, rather than stand, I want to retreat.
- In triumphs, I want to advance, and take ground as a spoil.

In both cases, I must wait for further instruction from the Lord. Otherwise, I might make a serious mistake.

King Saul won a great victory, but got tired of waiting for Samuel to show up, so he took matters into his own hands. When Samuel arrived, he rebuked Saul, saying, "Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD? Why did you swoop down on the spoil, and do evil in the sight of the LORD?" (First Samuel 15:19). Samuel went on to let Saul know he had been rejected by the Lord as king.

The ten spies who gave Moses a bad report about the Promised Land are poster boys for wanting to retreat. Their fear convinced the nation to disobey God, leading to the death of all that generation as they wandered in the wilderness for the next forty years.

Meanwhile, back to Gideon... The army encamped against Israel fled in terror - with a little reckless confusion thrown in for good measure.

Jdg 7:22 When the three hundred blew the trumpets, the LORD set every man's sword against his companion throughout the whole camp; and the army fled to Beth Acacia, toward Zererah, as far as the border of Abel Meholah, by Tabbath.

It was dark... It was late... They thought they were being overrun by superior forces... There were several groups in the camp besides Midianites. Those are a few logical reasons that they hacked at each other.

Mostly it was the supernatural terror of the Lord coming upon them. In Proverbs 28:1 we read, "The wicked flee when none pursueth." Job 18:11 says, "Terrors make him afraid on every side, and drive him to his feet..."

The Lord can be terrifying to His enemies. Looking far into the future, one writer said, "Who shall be able to stand before the last terror, when the trumpet of the archangel shall sound, the elements shall be on a flame, the heavens pass away with a great noise, and the Lord himself shall descend with a shout!"

Jdg 7:23 And the men of Israel gathered together from Naphtali, Asher, and all Manasseh, and pursued the Midianites.

Jdg 7:24 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 and the Jordan." Then all the men of Ephraim gathered together and seized the watering places as far as Beth Barah and the Jordan.

These were those who had been honorably discharged on account of their fear; and those who had been dismissed by the Lord when He was whittling down to three hundred. They remained in the vicinity, and now were called into the fray.

You may think you're living on the outskirts of Christian service, but it behooves you to remain ready. You can be called upon to join at any moment.

The fleeing enemies were nearest the area in which were the Ephraimites. Gideon sent runners to enjoin the men of Ephraim to engage in the mopping-up operation.

They were specifically told "seize from them the watering places," which they did. Gideon did not want the weary, dehydrated enemy to regain strength.

Are you battling something - maybe some sin? Don't nourish it by giving in even a little. Let it dehydrate, shrivel, and die.

Jdg 7:25 And they captured two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb. They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb they killed at the winepress of Zeeb. They pursued Midian and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side of the Jordan.

As an aside: My spell check keeps changing "Oreb" to "Oreo."

The places where they killed Oreb and Zeeb were renamed to commemorate Israel's triumph over them.

Take a look at Gideon and each of his three hundred men. They were each trumpeters who had fire contained in clay vessels until broken to expose it to the wind.

It's not a stretch to say that we are trumpeters. We need no shofar; our trumpet-blast is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which we are called upon to proclaim throughout the whole world.

We are told by the apostle Paul that "we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us" (Second Corinthians 4:7). I can't help but wonder if maybe Paul had Gideon in mind, because in the verse directly preceding that he said, "For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (v6).

Isn't that what happened when Gideon and Company broke the pitchers - light shining out of darkness? Only in our case, we are the vessels, and what shines is the "light of the glory of God" as we reveal Jesus to a world trapped in darkness.

The torch exposed to wind is, of course, an emblem of the Holy Spirit, Who is God permanently indwelling us, and constantly infilling us.



If that is indeed what Gideon typifies for us, than is it going too far to borrow his battle cry? In verse twenty it reads, in the NKJV, "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon." The scholars who wrote *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* translate it, "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!"

My loose, interpretive paraphrase, based on what the passage is illustrating, would be, "A sword for the Lord - Gideon!"

Want to get Pentecostal? Go ahead and insert your name: "**A sword for the Lord - Gene!**"