

BETWEEN THE LINES

A Deeper Look...

#957- LITTLE KNOWN ENDINGS: The Rest of the Story

Gideon- The Whole Story: Far be it from me to be terribly critical of any other little sinner but I have to admit that I'm not sure that anyone in the Bible frustrates me as much as Gideon. Knowing that he wins a great victory with 300 others is just such a small part of the story that we really do ourselves an injustice if we don't open the Word to get the whole picture.

Let's consider the biography just as it reads in Judges and let it stand on its own merit...

- 6:1-23 Gideon is called and does everything he can to negate the call.
- 6: 24-31 Finally convinced he decides to be a hero and, flying by the seat of his pants, he almost gets himself run out of town. What he did wasn't so bad, just very badly planned and only his father's wise interference saves his hide.
- 6:33-35 He puts forth the call and (surprise of surprises!) men from all across the land respond, aching for the deliverance of the Lord.
- 6:36-40 The angel clarifies his position, the Lord saves him from the anger of his townsfolk, thousands of strangers respond to his call, and now he's going to find out if the Lord is serious? You've got to be kidding!
- 7:1-8 God has a way of showing Gideon that He really doesn't need a mob for He's capable of accomplishing His purposes through whomever He chooses. Numbers, skills, talents, and strategies are inconsequential to Him.
- 7:9-14 This God is so generous that He actually out-does Himself when it comes to giving assurances to a man who is really reluctant to believe.
- 7:15-25 In spite of all of it the Lord gives His people a victory.
- 8:1-21 Some of his actions after the major battle appear to be a bit petty to me. Is all of this really the Lord's will or is it Gideon just trying to assert himself out of his insecurity?
- 8:22-23 The first reading of this may seem really noble, but the reality is that life history proved that it was nothing short of an abdication of the noble calling that God had called him to. Gideon wanted the perks of leadership without any of the obligations.
- 8:24-27 "I never wanted to have the job, but I'll sure take your wealth for the privilege that you've had for having me as your leader for a short time!"
- 8:28 This period of peace could have been overseen by Gideon but he didn't covet that privilege. He was too busy considering his own desires and lusts.
- 8:29-32 He is busy preparing a legacy of stupidity rather than building a society dependent upon the delivering Lord.
- 8:33- Onward Israel pays for Gideon's abdication of responsibility.

In Conclusion: Does this alter your perception of Gideon or am I just too harsh? I will admit that God must be a tone more gracious than I am for this man is, much to my surprise, listed among the faithful in Hebrews 11. (It is about here that we should hear the strains of *Amazing Grace* echoing...)

Patmos: 15 Square Miles of Desolation...It the Roman Empire is determined that you are a threat and they can't shut you up they send you to Patmos. Church tradition tells us that since they couldn't kill the last living voice of the apostles they banished him to this pitiful hunk of rock in the Icarian Sea in the Aegean. Let's see what we can glean from a number of sources on this imprisonment...

- Most church tradition has the old apostle living in Ephesus for many years.
- John was imprisoned during the terrible wave of persecution of the Emperor Domitian.

- Tertullian records that John was first taken to Rome for treason against the empire.
- He says John was, "plunged into boiling oil, unhurt, and then exiled on an island".
- Patmos (today called "Patino") is a small, basically barren, rock 37 miles off of the Miletan coastline.
- The island is ten miles long and only six miles at its widest point.
- The Romans called it part of "the 12 islands" (but, in reality, the group has 14).
- Rhodes was (and still is) the dominant island of this Greek archipelagos.
- This was the "Devil's Island" of the Empire.
- Only the most hardened and incorrigible of prisoners were condemned to that site.
- It appears that the old apostle served approximately 18 months in that place.
- Nerva, Domitian's successor, appears to have released the old man to freedom.
- Most church tradition says that John spent his last days back in Ephesus.

In Conclusion: This is just a skeleton of material, but the truth is that archeology and history really have not been able to glean much more. All in all it is a long way from the side of the Galilee, isn't it?

*What wouldn't you give to hear one sermon in the Ephesus congregation
by that last old voice of the gospels?*

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**The First Generation Falls...** In the *Deeper Look Study Guide* (#970) for our series on "The Apostles" we went into more extensive detail on this information but let's close this guide with just a bit of a review on what has been purported (by some) as having been the end of each of the other apostles of our Lord...

- James (son of Zebedee) was beheaded by Herod Agrippa I in Jerusalem. (Acts 12)
- Andrew was crucified (upon "St. Andrew's Cross") most probably in Achaia or Edessa.
- James (brother of Jude) is claimed to have been sawn asunder by some others say his head was crushed with clubs when he was very, very old.
- Bartholomew/Nathanael may have died in India... perhaps by beating/crucifixion.
- Judas, of course, died by suicide (hanging) during the Crucifixion event in Jerusalem.
- Jude (also known as Thaddeus) death is probably the most obscure of all... some say it came by crucifixion in Edessa around the year 72 a.d.
- Matthew seems to have been butchered by a halberd in Nadabah.
- Philip died in Hierapolis but the method of his death is not agreed upon... perhaps crucifixion in the year 54 a.d.
- Simon (the Zealot) seems to have been crucified in North Africa.
- Peter is believed to have been crucified upside down in Rome.
- Thomas' death is also obscure and debated, perhaps a spear in Parthinia or India.
- Matthias is claimed to have been stoned and then beheaded in Jerusalem.
- Paul was beheaded on the outskirts of Rome.

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