

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Billy Put Out the Fleece

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The famous preacher, Billy Graham reveals in his autobiography, “*Just A I Am*” what he did to receive a sign from God in an evangelistic campaign in Los Angeles, California. He wondered if he and his campaign should continue in the west coast city or should they leave for another town. He wanted a sign from God so He said he did what Gideon did, *He put out the fleece*.

We read of Gideon putting out the fleece in Judges 6:36-40. He was seeking a sign from God during a conflict with the Midianites. Gideon says the following to God, “*If thou wilt save Israel by my hand, as thou has spoken, behold I will put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there be dew on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the ground, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by my hand, as thou has spoken* (v. 36-37).

After he “*pressed the fleece together*” the next morning and “*wrung the dew out of the fleece a bowlful of water*”, he appealed to God once more. He changes the conditions for the sign. Regarding the fleece, He

prays, “*let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew*” (v.39). God silenced Gideon’s questioning by giving him the sign. “*And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground*” (v. 40).

Two facts stand out in this Biblical account of Gideon’s life. First, *God is patient*. He had already told Gideon that he would deliver the Midianites into his hand (*Judges 6:14*). Gideon admits this fact twice, while he is yet seeking a sign from God to confirm that God is with him. Second, God gives *objective signs*. One night, the fleece is wet. The second night, the ground is wet with dew, not the fleece. Wet fleece, and dry fleece amidst the dry and wet ground were objectively discernable.

One is not told in Billy Graham’s book whether or not he literally put fleece outside his motel, or that he was merely speaking metaphorically in his seeking a sign from God. If literally, he did not tell us about wringing out water from the fleece the next morning. Mr. Graham does inform us that the next morning he received a

phone call from a lost soul wanting to receive Christ. To Billy Graham, this was the sign from God that he should remain in his crusade in Los Angeles. How convenient!

If Mr. Graham was speaking metaphorically when he said he put out the fleece, then why did he not, like Gideon, give the specific details of what the literal sign would be. Why did he not say, “*Lord if I receive a phone call in the morning from one precious soul desiring to be saved, then I will know that you want me to continue in Los Angeles.*” Such specificity is not found in Billy Graham’s account. Nor is it found when he said he “*put out the fleece*” on another occasion when he sought a sign from God.

The confirming power in miracles and signs of the Bible lies in their ability to be tested objectively (cf. Jn. 9:20,25, Acts. 3:2, 4:14,22). Gideon received objective proof from a patient God. Mr. Graham, you may have “*put out the fleece*” but you did not seek a sign from God like Gideon.