

Judges Chapter 08 Commentary

1 ¶ "And the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And they did chide with him sharply. 2 And he said unto them, What have I done now in comparison of you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? 3 God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that."

Man's nature of jealousy has not changed. Instead of praising God for the victory Ephraim complains to Gideon because he did not ask them to help. Gideon assuages their anger with words of praise and kindness. He did remind them that it was God who delivered these kings into their hands. I wonder if he told them: I am only doing what God has told me to do.

There are a couple of scriptures that we can remember at times like these:

- ***Pr 15:1 "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger."***
- ***Php 2:3 "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."***

Both texts demonstrate; Gideon handled the situation in a godly manner.

4 ¶ "And Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over, he, and the three hundred men that were with him, faint, yet pursuing them. 5 And he said unto the men of Succoth, Give, I pray you, loaves of bread unto the people that follow me; for they be faint, and I am pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian. 6 And the princes of Succoth said, Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thine army? 7 And Gideon said, Therefore when the LORD hath delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into mine hand, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers. 8 And he went up thence to Penuel, and spake unto them likewise: and the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered him. 9 And he spake also unto the men of Penuel, saying, When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower. 10 Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor, and their hosts with them, about fifteen thousand men, all that were left of all the hosts of the children of the east: for there fell an hundred and twenty thousand men that drew sword. 11 And Gideon went up by the way of them that dwelt in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and smote the host: for the host was secure. 12 And when Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued after them, and took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and discomfited all the host."

Gideon crosses over Jordan into the territory of Gad. After being refused assistance from Succoth and Penuel, he promises to come back and punish them for their refusal. These people see Gideon only has three hundred men, and he is pursuing an army of fifteen thousand. They do not believe that he has a chance of winning, and under normal circumstances they are right. However, they forgot that God was on Gideon's side. Remember, Gideon has the promise of God in: ***Jg 7:7 "And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand:"*** Gideon has complete belief in God doing what he has told him he would do.

I am reminded of a scripture, about using weak things, in: ***1Co 1:26-31; 26 "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: 27 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; 28 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: 29 That no flesh should glory in his presence. 30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: 31 That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." God used the man he called, and his three hundred warriors, to discomfit an army that is fifty times larger.

This is a great reminder to God's people today; never doubt the power of God and Christ. God can, and will, do whatsoever he desires to do. Therefore, we can believe in the finished work of Christ Jesus, and know our eternal salvation is secured.

13 "And Gideon the son of Joash returned from battle before the sun was up, 14 And caught a young man of the men of Succoth, and enquired of him: and he described unto him the princes of Succoth, and the elders thereof, even threescore and seventeen men. 15 And he came unto the men of Succoth, and said, Behold Zebah and Zalmunna, with whom ye did upbraid me, saying, Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thy men that are weary? 16 And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth. 17 And he beat down the tower of Penuel, and slew the men of the city."

God having given Gideon victory; Gideon, on his return journey, takes a man from Succoth who can identify the princes and elders of Succoth. He fulfills his promise to them by whipping them with thorns and briers from the dessert. He also keeps his promise and beats down the tower of Penuel and slew the men of the city.

18 ¶ "Then said he unto Zebah and Zalmunna, What manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, As thou art, so were they; each one resembled the children of a king. 19 And he said, They were my brethren, even the sons of my mother: as the LORD liveth, if ye had saved them alive, I would not slay you. 20 And he said unto Jether his firstborn, Up, and slay them. But the youth drew not his sword: for he feared, because he was yet a youth. 21 Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, Rise thou, and fall upon us: for as the man is, so is his strength. And Gideon arose, and slew Zebah and Zalmunna, and took away the ornaments that were on their camels' necks."

The captured Midianite kings are questioned and then slain because they had slain Gideon's brethren. Gideon tells his son to slay them, but he is young and afraid, wherefore Gideon slays them.

Did you notice the description of Gideon and his slain brethren? "***each one resembled the children of a king***." Other people should be able to look at true Christians and see they are different. We should have a bright countenance, and our walks, and talks, should identify us as "***the children of a king***."

22 ¶ "Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian. 23 And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall rule over you."

Israel now asks Gideon to be king and he refuses. He reminds Israel: God is your King. This is a good answer from Gideon. Why? Because it rightly gives all the glory and headship to God. Had Gideon accepted the offer of being king over Israel, the Israelites would probably continue to give Gideon the honor of being their deliverer. Gideon knew that none of the honor of the deliverance was his and that

it all belonged to God. We are not told specifically, but from the context of this chapter we believe that Gideon did continue you as a judge of Israel until his death, which seems to be his God called position. We are studying the book of Judges, not of kings.

This is a good reminder to us today. The church may fall into the trap of worshipping a pastor, who is God called and blessed, and forget that the blessings are of God. In other words: we begin to worship the preacher, and we forget to give God all the glory. This has been the downfall of many very able ministers of God.

24 "And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that ye would give me every man the earrings of his prey. (For they had golden earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.) 25 And they answered, We will willingly give them. And they spread a garment, and did cast therein every man the earrings of his prey. 26 And the weight of the golden earrings that he requested was a thousand and seven hundred shekels of gold; beside ornaments, and collars, and purple raiment that was on the kings of Midian, and beside the chains that were about their camels' necks. 27 And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, even in Ophrah: and all Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house."

After refusing to be king over Israel, Gideon immediately makes a very bad decision. He now desires of Israel the gold they had taken from the Midianites. Gideon desires money which will lead to his fall and the fall of Israel. We should all remember what we are told in scripture in: **1Ti 6:10 "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."** Certainly, we will see this in the life of Gideon and Israel.

Gideon makes an ephod and puts it on display in his city. We are not told why Gideon did this, but some commentators think that it was done as a memorial to the great victory that God had wrought. Israel begins to worship the ephod, and this becomes a snare to Gideon, his family, and Israel. Remember, Israel has just been called back to worship of God from after at least seven years of idolatry, and they have not been purged completely of praising the work of men's hands.

God understands the need of man to have a leader, and set up rulership of the household first, followed by the leadership of his people, and then government rulers. Thus, God ordained the man to be head of the household. God also established rules of government and appointed leaders to fill the positions thereof. God did this first in the law church by the appointment of Moses to bring Israel out of Egypt. Next, God established the hierarchy of the church by the Office of High Priest, followed by the priest offices, and appointing the seventy elders, with the heads of the tribes of Israel and the heads of the families.

The government of the church of grace is established by God with the High Priest, Jesus Christ as the King, followed by the ministers of God, followed by the elders, the deacons, and then the other church offices. However, as Gideon rightly pointed out, no one is to be worshipped but God. So it is in the church. Christ Jesus is the head and the object of our worship, all those below him are just men, doing their God called duties. God's plan of earthly government is a monarchy. God's government of the church is a theocracy, which puts King Jesus as the head.

28 "Thus was Midian subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted up their heads no more. And the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon. 29 ¶ And Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in his own house. 30 And Gideon had threescore and ten sons of his body begotten: for he had many wives. 31 And his concubine that was in Shechem, she also bare him a son, whose name he called Abimelech. 32 And Gideon the son of Joash died in a good old age, and was buried in the sepulcher of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites."

"And the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon." Midian learns that God is greater in strength than they are. They learned the lesson so well; they do not rise against Israel again. Thus, God gives Israel forty years of quietness and then Gideon dies. We have no scripture that indicates that Gideon did anything else in the leadership capacity, although it seems practical to assume he continued as a judge over Israel.

Scripture does tell us of Gideon and Israel turning away from God. We see the result of Gideon taking of multiple wives. Gideon and Israel have forgotten the Lord's commandment as seen in: *De 17:14-20; 14 ¶ "When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; 15 Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother. 16 But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. 17 Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold. 18 And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: 19 And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: 20 That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel."*

Gideon, nor Israel, followed these commandments. If Gideon, as Judge over Israel, had followed the above commandments: he would have been daily reading God's word of truth, and he would not have asked Israel for gold nor taken multiple wives. Failure to do so lost the blessings of God upon him, and his family. Again, I point out; the love of money is the root of all evil. Clearly demonstrated in the life of Gideon, and of Israel; gold caused them to turn from God to idolatry again.

33 "And it came to pass, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel turned again, and went a whoring after Baalim, and made Baalberith their god. 34 And the children of Israel remembered not the LORD their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side: 35 Neither shewed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, namely, Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had shewed unto Israel."

Scripture testifies that Israel remembered God while Gideon lived. Again, I point out: the generation that saw, the great deliverance of God through Gideon, is probably mostly gone. A mostly new generation is under consideration. They did not see God's deliverance and they turn to idolatry. We see a continuing pattern of the generation, of those who experience the delivering power of God in their lives, die, and they are replaced, by those who have not experienced the oppression of the enemy and the delivering power of God. Wherefore, they easily fall prey to idolatry.

This is a great warning to us today. Diligence in following "***thus saith the Lord***" and teaching it to the following generations is of utmost importance. Consider: ***De 17:18-20; "18 And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: 19 And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: 20 That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel."*** We are told in New Testament scripture that the born-again are children of God and made kings and priest to him seen in:

- ***Re 1:5-6; 5 "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, 6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."***
- ***Re 5:9-10; 9 "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; 10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."***

Both texts clearly indicate; every born-again child of God, made so by the finished work of Christ Jesus, is made king and priest to God.

Wherefore, if we follow the commandment of God for a king given here in Deuteronomy, we will be learning, and teaching our children, the word of God, the King James bible, every day. Do you see God's point in this? If we are in the word of God daily, we do not have time to turn to idolatry. This commandment is a defensive tool for the kings of Israel to set a godly example. We, as kings, should also set the godly example of Christian living.

May God help us to be faithful followers of Christ; the teachings of the King James bible; remembering everyday that Jesus Christ is our High Priest. Great is the wonder to find in the Old Testament such treasures as these commandments of God, carried forward and taught in the New Testament. Praise and glory to God and Christ for the revelation of our salvation and eternal life. Hallelujah! Amen!