

Judges 08 - Complaint of Ephraim; Capture & Execution of Midianite Kings; Gideon's Ephod; Abimelech

II. Failure in rescue of Israel through the seven cycles (Judges 3:7—16:31)

(5) Gideon defeats Zebah and Zalmunna and the Midianites and the Amalekites (Judges 6:1—8:28)

(D) Salvation (Judges 6:8—8:27)

(e) Gideon pursues and destroys the remnant across the Jordan and destroys the hosts of Midian Amalek (7:24—8:21)

(f) Gideon refuses kingship (8:22-23)

(g) Gideon fabricates the ephod which becomes an object of worship (8:24-27)

(E) Silence (8:28)

(6) Abimelech (Judges 8:29—9:54)

(A) Abimelech seizes power by force in Shechem (8:29—9:6)

Winning the War, Losing the Victory

Reports indicate that Angola still has 20 million land mines waiting to maim or kill; Afghanistan, 10 million, Cambodia, 4-1/2 million. The wars may be over but the dangers haven't vanished. There can also be spiritual land mines that can remain in the wake of a great victory...

Let us be as watchful after the victory as before the battle. — Andrew Bonar

Judges 8

(D) Salvation (Judges 6:8—8:27)

(e) Gideon pursues and destroys the remnant across the Jordan and destroys the hosts of Midian Amalek (7:24—8:21)

1 Then the men of Ephraim said to Gideon, "What is this thing *that* you have done to us, not calling upon us when you went to fight against Midian?" And they quarreled with him vehemently.

1 Then the men of Ephraim said to him, "What is this thing you have done to us, not calling us when you went to fight against Midian?" And they contended with him vigorously.

1 Later on, the descendants of Ephraim spoke to Gideon. They argued vehemently, "What are you doing to us? You never called us! But you went out to fight Midian!"

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.

- Instead of rejoicing in the victory, they complained about the strategy. They had three issues:

(1) They were not summoned in the original call (6:35)

(2) They were not involved in the primary rout of the Midianites

(3) They were called in at the last minute, when the Midianites might escape through their territory

— These actions were interpreted as a personal snub against the tribe of Ephraim

- Ephraim was a proud people, a large and important tribe, second only to Judah

— Gideon was from Manasseh, the "brother" tribe to Ephraim: both Ephraim and Manasseh were sons of Joseph and adopted as sons to Jacob—to replace Reuben and Simeon (Gen 48:5; 49:4)

— Manasseh was the firstborn, but Jacob reversed their birth order when he blessed them (Gen 41:50-52; 48:1ff)

- They had assisted Ehud (3:26-29) and Deborah and Barak (5:13-14), but that was no guarantee that they would follow a farmer into battle!

- It was probably wise for Gideon not to call them initially: this proud tribe would have been incensed when Gideon told the frightened men to go home, or when he thinned out the ranks to 300! They were on hand to help in the mopping up and that's what really counted.

2 But he said to them, "What have I done now in comparison with you? Is the gleaning of *the grapes* of Ephraim not better than the vintage of Abiezer?"

2 But he said to them, "What have I done now in comparison with you? Is not the gleaning of *the grapes* of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?"

2 "What have I accomplished compared to you?" he responded. "Isn't what's left from Ephraim's harvest better than the best vintage of Abiezer?"

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?"

- Gideon could have used his authority and popularity to put them in their place, but he chose a better approach:

— Prov 15:1 - A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger.

— Prov 16:32 - He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.

- The part played by Ephraim, although less spectacular than the initial victory of Abiezer, was of decisive importance in the ultimate success of the campaign
 - If the fords of the Jordan had not been seized in time, the fruits of the initial success would have been lost
- The contrast here is between the full grape harvest (“vintage of Abiezer”) and the gleanings of Ephraim’s grapes
 - The full grape harvest was the initial victory at the Camp of Midian. The gleanings of Ephraim’s grapes meant the mopping-up operations and the slaying of the two Midianite princes.
 - The point was: the best that Abiezer can produce is less than the scraps of Ephraim’s table.

Whate’er’s begun in anger ends in shame. — Benjamin Franklin, Poor Richard’s Almanack, 1732

There’s no limit to what a man can accomplish if he doesn’t care who gets the credit.
— Ronald Reagan

3 God has handed over to you the leaders of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb; and what was I able to do in comparison with you?” Then their anger toward him subsided when he said that.

3 God has given the leaders of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb into your hands; and what was I able to do in comparison with you?” Then their anger toward him subsided when he said that.

3 God gave Oreb and Zeeb, the leaders of Midian, into your control. What was I able to do compared to you?” When he said this, their anger calmed down.

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.

- Not only did Ephraim make sure that the campaign ended in success, it was they, and not Gideon, who captured the two key princes of the Midianites

- Ephraim’s pride later created problems for Jephthah (12:1-6), whose response wasn’t as conciliatory as Gideon’s!

— In the Book of Judges, the Ephraimites are presented as self-centered, factious, easily offended, and having an inflated estimation of their own importance within the nation itself

4 Then Gideon and the three hundred men who were with him came to the Jordan *and* crossed over, exhausted yet *still* pursuing.

4 Then Gideon and the 300 men who were with him came to the Jordan *and* crossed over, weary yet pursuing.

4 Meanwhile, Gideon and the 300 soldiers with him came to the Jordan, exhausted but continuing their pursuit.

4 And Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over, he, and the three hundred men that were with him, faint, yet pursuing them.

- They were pursuing two of the Midianite kings, Zebah and Zalmunna, knowing if they caught them, the enemy's power would be crippled and eventually broken

— They crossed over the Jordan eastward to Succoth in Gad, hoping to find assistance; but the men of Succoth wouldn't help their brothers

5 And he said to the men of Succoth, "Please give loaves of bread to the people who are following me, for they are exhausted, and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian."

5 He said to the men of Succoth, "Please give loaves of bread to the people who are following me, for they are weary, and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian."

5 He told the men of Succoth, "Please give loaves of bread to the soldiers who are following behind me. They're tired, and I'm pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian."

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.

- Hospitality—even to strangers—is one of the basic laws in the Middle East

— It is also an important ministry of the Church (Rom 12:13; 1 Tim 5:10; Heb 13:2; 1 Peter 4:9. Cf. Matt 25:34-40)

— The Ammonites and Moabites—relatives to the Jews through Lot—failed to help Israel with food and God declared war on them (Deut 23:3-6)

6 But the leaders of Succoth said, "Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hand, that we should give bread to your army?"

6 The leaders of Succoth said, "Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hands, that we should give bread to your army?"

6 But the officials of Succoth replied, "Do you have Zebah and Zalmunna in custody already, so that we should give food to your army?"

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?

- The 2-1/2 tribes east of the Jordan didn't feel as close as they should have; they hadn't sent any soldiers to help either Deborah and Barak (5:17), or Gideon
- This shows the cohesiveness between the tribes on both sides of the Jordan was broken down; they did not see themselves as one people any more
- They were skeptical of Gideon's ability to defeat the fleeing Midianite army and capture the two kings
- If they helped Gideon and he failed, then they would be in line for retaliation. They not only didn't help, they replied in an impudent manner.

7 So Gideon said, "For this *answer*, when the LORD has handed over to me Zebah and Zalmunna, I will thrash your bodies with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers."

7 Gideon said, "All right, when the LORD has given Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, then I will thrash your bodies with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers."

7 So Gideon responded, "Okay then, but when the LORD has turned over Zebah and Zalmunna into my control, I'm going to whip you with thorns and briers from the desert!"

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.

- One possibility is that Gideon threatened to drag them over thorns as a threshing sledge is dragged over grain. The second possibility is that Gideon intended to lay them upon thorns and thresh them by drawing threshing sledges over them.

— Either way, the result would be death

8 Then he went up from there to Penuel and spoke similarly to them; and the men of Penuel answered him just as the men of Succoth had answered.

8 He went up from there to Penuel and spoke similarly to them; and the men of Penuel answered him just as the men of Succoth had answered.

8 Then he left there to go to Penuel and asked the same thing from them, but the men of Penuel responded the same way the men of Succoth did.

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.

- Gideon made the same request of Penuel as he did of Succoth, for the same reasons; it was followed by the same refusal for the same reason

9 So he said also to the men of Penuel, "When I return safely, I will tear down this **tower**."

9 So he spoke also to the men of Penuel, saying, "When I return safely, I will tear down this tower."

9 So he responded the same way to the men of Penuel, "When I come back safely, I'm going to tear down this tower."

9 And he spake also unto the men of Penuel, saying, When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower.

- Penuel, like those in Succoth, not only didn't help, but were actually aiding and abetting the enemy

- These two cities were east of the Jordan in the region of Gad

- This was similar to the earlier curse on Meroz in Deborah's time (5:23)

- "...tower" - a stronghold, which formed a refuge in time of danger for the inhabitants of an unwalled town

10 Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in **Karkor**, and their armies with them, about fifteen thousand men, all who were left of the entire army of the people of the east; for the fallen were 120,000 swordsmen.

10 Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor, and their armies with them, about 15,000 men, all who were left of the entire army of the sons of the east; for the fallen were 120,000 swordsmen.

10 Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor, along with their armies, about 15,000 men who survived from the entire army of the group from the east, since 120,000 swordsmen had already fallen.

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.

- "...Karkor" - located near Wadi Sirhan, about 100 miles east of the Dead Sea

- This shows how far their pursuit went in spite of the lack of provisions from Succoth and Penuel

- There were about 15,000 men left, out of an original army of 135,000

- This shows how Gideon's army of 300 and others were able to get the swords they are now using to fight

11 Gideon went up by the way of those who lived in tents to the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and he attacked the camp when the camp was unsuspecting.

11 Gideon went up by the way of those who lived in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and attacked the camp when the camp was unsuspecting.

11 Gideon went up by a caravan route east of Nobah and Jogbehah and attacked their encampment when they were off guard.

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.

- Gideon used a road used by the nomads and caravans to issue a surprise attack

- "...for the host was secure" - the Midianites were caught off guard; they did not expect Gideon's pursuit this far south, so close to Midianite home territory

12 When Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued them and captured the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and **routed** the entire army.

12 When Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued them and captured the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and routed the whole army.

12 When Zebah and Zalmunna escaped, he pursued them, captured those two kings of Midian, and threw the entire army into a panic.

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.

- "...routed" - *charad*, to tremble, quake, move about, be afraid, be startled, be terrified, to drive to terror

— A surprise attack captured the two kings and routed their army

13 Then Gideon the son of Joash returned from the battle by the ascent of Heres.

13 Then Gideon the son of Joash returned from the battle by the ascent of Heres.

13 Then Joash's son Gideon returned from the battle along the Heres Ascent.

13 And Gideon the son of Joash returned from battle before the sun was up,

14 And he captured a youth from Succoth and questioned him. Then *the youth* wrote down for him the leaders of Succoth and its elders, seventy-seven men.

14 And he captured a youth from Succoth and questioned him. Then *the youth* wrote down for him the princes of Succoth and its elders, seventy-seven men.

14 He caught a young man from Succoth and interrogated him. He wrote out for Gideon a list of the 77 officials of Succoth, including its elders.

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.

- Retracing his steps, he providentially found a young man who gave him the names of the 77 leaders who had refused to help him and his army (v6-7)

15 And he came to the men of Succoth and said, "Behold Zebah and Zalmunna, about whom you taunted me, saying, 'Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hand, that we should give bread to your men who are weary?'"

15 He came to the men of Succoth and said, "Behold Zebah and Zalmunna, concerning whom you taunted me, saying, 'Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hand, that we should give bread to your men who are weary?'"

15 Then Gideon approached the men of Succoth and announced, "Here are Zebah and Zalmunna. You criticized me about them when you said, 'Do you have Zebah and Zalmunna in custody already, so that we should give food to your weary army?'"

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?

- He showed them the two kings who the elders had said Gideon would never capture, and then made good his previous threat

16 Then he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and he **disciplined** the men of Succoth with them.

16 He took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and he disciplined the men of Succoth with them.

16 So he took the elders of the city and disciplined the men of Succoth with thorns and briers from the desert.

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.

- "...disciplined" - *yada*, made to know

— Gideon fulfilled the promise he made in v7

17 And he tore down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city.

17 He tore down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city.

17 He also demolished the tower in Penuel and killed the men of the city.

17 And he beat down the tower of Penuel, and slew the men of the city.

- He made good his threat to Penuel also (v9), but this time he went further than his promise by actually killing the men of the city, making it equal to what he did to Succoth

— What good was it for Gideon and his men to risk their lives to deliver Israel if they had traitors ("liberals"?) right in their own nation?

— It's ironic that Gideon did to Jewish cities what should have by now been done to all the Canaanites

18 Then he said to Zebah and Zalmunna, "Where *were* the men whom you killed at Tabor?" But they said, "You and they were alike, each one resembling the son of a king."

18 Then he said to Zebah and Zalmunna, "What kind of men *were* they whom you killed at Tabor?" And they said, "They were like you, each one resembling the son of a king."

18 Afterwards, he asked Zebah and Zalmunna, "What were the men like whom you killed at Tabor?"

They answered, "Like you, each one like the son of a king..."

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.

- When Gideon arrived back home at Ophrah, leading Zebah and Zalmunna captive, it must have been an exciting and triumphant procession!

— Gideon was a true hero: with only 300 men, he had routed the enemy camp, then pursued the fleeing soldiers across the Jordan and as far south as Karkor. He brought his royal prisoners back, plus the spoils the men had gathered.

- Gideon had a personal matter to settle with these two kings because they had killed his brothers at Tabor (apparently on one of their previous annual raids; thus, in their homes or fields, not in battle). This was one of the reasons Gideon was hiding in the winepress.

— According to Mosaic law, the family was to avenge crimes like this by killing those responsible for murder (Cf. Deut 19:6,12; Num 35:9-34)

— This shows that the Midianites were not only plunderers, but also murderers

19 And he said, "They *were* my brothers, the sons of my mother. As the LORD lives, if only you had let them live, I would not kill you."

19 He said, "They *were* my brothers, the sons of my mother. As the LORD lives, if only you had let them live, I would not kill you."

19 Gideon replied, "They were my brothers—sons from my own mother. As the LORD lives, if you had let them live, I wouldn't be killing you."

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.

- Gideon must now become the avenger of blood...

20 So he said to Jether his firstborn, "Rise, kill them." But the youth did not draw his sword, for he was afraid, because he was still a youth.

20 So he said to Jether his firstborn, "Rise, kill them." But the youth did not draw his sword, for he was afraid, because he was still a youth.

20 Then he told his firstborn son Jether, "Get up and kill them!" But he was afraid, since he was still only a youngster.

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.

- How a soldier died was important to his reputation

— Abimelech didn't want to die at the hand of woman (9:53-54); King Saul didn't want to fall into the hands of the Philistines (1 Sam 31:1-6).

— For a child, unskilled in warfare, to kill a king would be the ultimate in humiliation (for the king). By doing what Gideon requested, Jether would also have brought honor to himself for the rest of his life.

21 Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, "Rise up yourself, and attack us; for as the man, so is his strength." So Gideon arose and killed Zebah and Zalmunna, and took the **crescent amulets** which were on their camels' necks.

21 Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, "Rise up yourself, and fall on us; for as the man, so is his strength." So Gideon arose and killed Zebah and Zalmunna, and took the crescent ornaments which were on their camels' necks.

21 Then Zebah and Zalmunna responded, "Get up and attack us yourself, since a man's valor is only as good as the man himself." So Gideon got up, killed Zebah and Zalmunna, and took away the crescent-shaped necklaces that adorned the necks of their camels.

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.

- Jether hesitated to avenge the murder of his uncles, so the two kings told Gideon, sarcastically, to do it

— Their response shows they were not afraid to die, but that they also wished to avoid the agony of a protracted death due to an inexperienced soldier

- "...crescent amulets" - *saharonim*, ornamental crescent moons (Cf. Is 3:18)

— A subtle clue yields a profound insight: when Abraham was called out of the Ur of the Chaldees, the prevalent worship throughout the region was the worship of the moon god. In Assyria, he was called Sin (Cf. Sin-echerib). In Arabia, he was called Al-Ilah, later contracted to Allah (long before Mohammed, who then re-packaged this occultic religion into a monotheistic form). The worship of Al-Ilah, the moon god, was the predecessor to Islam; the crescent moon still adorns every mosque throughout the Muslim world.

— These Ishmaelites (v24) are so called as a term for nomads, not limited to traceable descendants of Ishamael. Ishmaelites believed it was Ishamael, not Isaac, that Abraham offered on Mt. Moriah.

(f) Gideon refuses kingship (8:22-23)

22 Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, "Rule over us, both you and your son, your son's son as well, for you have saved us from the hand of Midian!"

22 Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, "Rule over us, both you and your son, also your son's son, for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian."

22 Then the men of Israel asked Gideon, "Rule over us—you, your son, and your grandsons—because you have delivered us from Midian's domination."

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.

- So popular was Gideon that the people asked him to become their king and set up a dynasty—something new for the nation of Israel

- This was not only a reward for his exploits, but also a step toward unifying the tribes to mobilize against future invaders; but it was also an admission of unbelief
- The people are beginning to see the advantages of a king to provide central, strong leadership to save them from their enemies

23 But Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the LORD shall rule over you."

23 But Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the LORD shall rule over you."

23 But Gideon told them, "I won't rule over you and my son won't rule over you. The LORD will rule you."

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.

- Every Jew knew that the Mercy Seat in the Tabernacle was the throne of God from which He ruled in the midst of His people:

- Ps 80:1 ...thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth.

- Ps 99:1 - The LORD reigneth; let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubims...

— Let that sink in: it is the Lord who should rule over you; not man. Not elders, not pastors, not people. People who are in ministry are to serve and to assist, not to rule (2 Cor 1:24).

One of the key themes in the Book of Judges is that there was "no king in Israel" (17:6; 18:11; 19:1; 21:5). Moses had warned that Israel would one day want a king like Gentile nations (Deut 4:5-8; 14:2; 17:14-20; Ex 19:4-5). What other nation had the Creator, the Lord of Heaven and Earth, as their King? Later, the people asked Samuel for a king (1 Sam 8) and God told him to grant their request. Everything that Moses and Samuel warned them about, their kings did to them, but fallen human nature would rather have visible human rulers instead of the invisible God of heaven and earth.

(g) Gideon fabricates the ephod which becomes an object of worship (8:24-27)

24 Yet Gideon said to them, "I would request of you, that each of you give me an earring from his plunder." (For they had gold earrings, because they were **Ishmaelites**.)

24 Yet Gideon said to them, "I would request of you, that each of you give me an earring from his spoil." (For they had gold earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.)

24 But Gideon also added, "I would like to ask that each of you give me a ring from his war booty" because, as Ishmaelites, the Midianites had been wearing gold rings.

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.)

- In spite of Gideon's claim (v23), he increasingly took on the trappings of royalty
— By requesting each one give him a gold earring from their spoils of war, he was demanding a symbolic gesture of submission

- "...Ishmaelites" - the term is used in a general sense to describe itinerant nomads; not necessarily traceable to Ishmael himself; Bedouins, for example, are descendants of Keturah, not Hagar, etc.

25 And they said, "We will certainly give *them to you*." So they spread out a garment, and every one of them tossed an earring there from his plunder.

25 They said, "We will surely give *them*." So they spread out a garment, and every one of them threw an earring there from his spoil.

25 They responded, "We'll be happy to give them." So they laid out a garment, and each of them contributed a ring from his war booty.

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 The weight of the gold earrings that he requested was 1,700 *shekels* of gold, apart from the crescent amulets, the ear pendants, and the purple robes which *were* on the kings of Midian, and apart from the neck chains that *were* on their camels' necks.

26 The weight of the gold earrings that he requested was 1,700 *shekels* of gold, besides the crescent ornaments and the pendants and the purple robes which *were* on the kings of Midian, and besides the neck bands that *were* on their camels' necks.

26 The weight of the rings that he had asked for was 1,700 gold coins, not counting the crescent-shaped necklaces, pendants, and purple garments worn by the Midian kings, and also not counting the bands adorning the necks of their camels.

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.

- By the people's agreement to give an earring willingly, they acknowledged themselves to be his vassals

- About 43 pounds of gold, plus what he had taken from Zebah and Zalmunna after their execution

— The amount of gold taken had the character of a royal treasury

27 Gideon made it into an ephod, and placed it in his city, Ophrah; but all Israel committed infidelity with it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and his household.

27 Gideon made it into an ephod, and placed it in his city, Ophrah, and all Israel played the harlot with it there, so that it became a snare to Gideon and his household.

27 Gideon crafted the booty into an ephod and enshrined it in his home town of Ophrah. Then all of Israel committed spiritual adultery with it there, and it became a snare for Gideon and his household.

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.

- Whether this was an embellished version of that of the high priest (28:6f)—although he wasn't a priest—or some other kind of idol (Judges 17:5; 18:14,17), it was against God's law (Ex 20:4-6) and it became a snare to him and the people

— For the first time in Judges, it was a judge who began to foster idolatry

- Gideon placed ("enshrined") it in his hometown of Ophrah, with two disastrous results:

— Ophrah became the center of idolatrous worship

— The ephod became a snare to Gideon and his house (because he set himself up as a priest, and he established a worship center away from the Tabernacle)

- Gideon not only undermined the theocratic unity of Israel, but also provided occasion for the relapse into the worship of Baal after his death

— He may have put on the ephod and worn it as a priest when he wished to inquire and learn the will of God, or perhaps when he sacrificed on the altar that was built in Ophrah (6:24)

— The ephod became a snare unto Gideon, for the above reasons, and to his house, because it would ultimately result in the slaughter of all of his sons, but two, with one dying in battle later.

(E) Silence (8:28)

28 So Midian was subdued before the sons of Israel, and they did not lift up their heads anymore. And the land was undisturbed for forty years in the days of Gideon.

28 So Midian was subdued before the sons of Israel, and they did not lift up their heads anymore. And the land was undisturbed for forty years in the days of Gideon.

28 Midian remained subjugated to the Israelis, and they didn't so much as raise their heads anymore, so the land was peaceful for 40 years during the lifetime of Gideon.

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.

- The fact that the mighty Midianites and their allies no longer "lifted up their heads" shows the severity of their defeat; they never again play a major role in the biblical record

- This is the last time you will find a period of peace mentioned in the Book of Judges

- The remaining judges mainly ruled locally, and most of them had short tenures. The subsequent activities of Jephthah and Samson did not seem to produce an interim of

peace or delay the nation's decline

(6) Abimelech (Judges 8:29—9:54)

(A) Abimelech seizes power by force in Shechem (8:29—9:6)

29 Then Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and lived in his own house.

29 Then Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and lived in his own house.

29 Afterwards, Joash's son Jerubbaal went home and retired.

29 And Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in his own house.

- Remember, Jerubbaal was the name that Joash gave Gideon when he stood up for him before the men of the city (6:27-32)

30 Now Gideon had seventy sons who were his direct descendants, for he had many wives.

30 Now Gideon had seventy sons who were his direct descendants, for he had many wives.

30 Gideon raised 70 sons as his direct descendants, since he had many wives.

30 And Gideon had threescore and ten sons of his body begotten: for he had many wives.

- His polygamy indicates that he took on the prerogatives of a king

— His wealth didn't prevent his family from becoming a real mess: 69 of his 70 sons were killed by their half-brother who himself was slain by a woman dropping a stone on his head

— Throughout the Bible, men who had more than one wife (polygamy) multiplied their heartaches (in our culture, they take them in series rather than all at once)

— There is no security apart from the will of God. Had Gideon practiced Matt 6:33, subsequent events might have been radically different

31 And his concubine who was in Shechem also bore him a son, and he named him Abimelech.

31 His concubine who was in Shechem also bore him a son, and he named him Abimelech.

31 His mistress in Shechem bore him a son whom he named Abimelech.

31 And his concubine that was in Shechem, she also bare him a son, whose name he called Abimelech.

- Outside of his many wives, he also had a concubine in Shechem; their son will play a major role in the next segment

32 And Gideon the son of Joash died at a good old age and was buried in the tomb of his father Joash, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

32 And Gideon the son of Joash died at a ripe old age and was buried in the tomb of his father Joash, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

32 Later, Joash's son Gideon died at a ripe old age and was buried in the tomb of his father Joash at Ophrah, which belonged to the descendants of Abiezer.

32 And Gideon the son of Joash died in a good old age, and was buried in the sepulchre of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

- Gideon was buried where he had been born

— In his life, he went from poverty to prosperity, to corruption

— He rejected formal kingship, but he lived and acted like a king, with many wives, including a concubine

— He even named the son of the concubine Abimelech, which means, "My father is king"

33 Then it came about, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the sons of Israel again committed infidelity with the Baals, and made **Baal-berith** their god.

33 Then it came about, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the sons of Israel again played the harlot with the Baals, and made Baal-berith their god.

33 Later on, as soon as Gideon was dead, the Israelis again committed spiritual adultery with various Canaanite deities and appointed Baal-berith to be their god.

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.

- "...Baal-berith" - means "the Covenant Baal," and it is equivalent to the El-Berith mentioned later (9:46)

— It does not signify Baal as the god of the covenants, but rather Baal in the covenant, that is, the god with whom they made the covenant. Baal, now, became the covenant-god instead of Jehovah.

— This may imply that several Canaanite cities united in a league to worship Baal in a central shrine, which would have been in Shechem, with the Israelites in the area also joining in this worship

34 So the sons of Israel did not remember the LORD their God, who had saved them from the hands of all their enemies on every side;

34 Thus the sons of Israel did not remember the LORD their God, who had delivered them from the hands of all their enemies on every side;

34 The Israelis did not remember the LORD their God, who continually delivered them from the domination of their enemies who surrounded them on every side.

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 nor did they show **kindness** to the household of Jerubbaal (*that is*, Gideon) in accordance with all the good that he had done for Israel.

35 nor did they show kindness to the household of Jerubbaal (*that is*, Gideon) in accord with all the good that he had done to Israel.

35 And they showed no gracious love to the household of Jerubbaal—also known as Gideon—despite all the good that he had done for Israel.

35 Neither shewed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, namely, Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had shewed unto Israel.

- "...kindness" - *hesed*, loyal love; carries the concept of "covenant loyalty"

- After Gideon's death, Israel forgot all about God and Gideon

— Gideon had missed a great opportunity to bring in a real reformation and revival to the land. Instead of using the occasion for God's glory, he used it for His own profit.

- It is instructive to contrast Gideon and Abraham in their decisions after their respective victories (Gen 14)

— Abraham took nothing for himself but made sure that others received their share of the spoils (Gen 14:22-24)

— He especially refused to take anything from the King of Sodom (Gen 14:17,21)

— Instead, Abraham worshiped with Melchizedek, King of Salem, a type of our Lord Jesus Christ (Heb 7-8); in all that he said and did, Abraham gave glory to the Lord of heaven and earth.

Observations

(1) If anything positive happens in the lives of the people of God, it is because of God's grace.

(2) With God on Israel's side, no enemy is invincible, and so, 300 could defeat 135,000.

(3) The greatest obstacle to the work of God is the faithlessness of His own people.

(4) Those called to leadership will face temptation to exchange the divine agenda for personal ambition. This happened to Gideon who rejected kingship but lived like a king and not only sinned by building a worship center in competition to Shiloh, he also caused and led Israel into sin.