

**Title:** 'As We See Fit': A study of the book of Judges- Part 9- "King me?"

**Key text:** Judges 8

**Suppl. texts:** Prov. 15:1

**Introduction:** Last time, we looked at the fleece that Gideon placed before God. God had already promised His enablement, but Gideon still asked for two signs. Then we asked an important question: why does God test our faith? First, it proves our faith as genuine & not counterfeit. Second, He strengthens us through the testing. God graciously gave Gideon three promises & three special signs. Finally, we saw that the battle belonged to the Lord. After receiving one final sign & promise, Gideon is overwhelmed by God's goodness as he worships & leads the Israelites to victory. Tonight, we conclude Gideon's judgeship as he returns to battle & is made an offer you'd think he couldn't refuse.

### 1. Incorrect assumptions

- Gideon had been victorious in battle. The Midianite army was in shambles & their princes were dead. The nation of Israel should swell with thanksgiving to God & to Gideon for leading the conquest. Instead, they charged Gideon with wrongdoing.
- **Vs. 1;** *"Now the Ephraimites asked Gideon, "Why have you treated us like this? Why didn't you call us when you went to fight Midian?" And they criticized him sharply."*
- The tribe of Ephraim was second only to Judah in size during Gideon's time. They had previously rallied to defend Israel during the time of Ehud, Deborah, & Barak.
- They were a large & proud tribe. Would such a tribe want to follow a farmer?
- At this point, you have to imagine that Gideon would be upset & offended.
- However, Gideon responds softly & smartly to his critics, swallowing his pride.
- **Vs. 2-3;** *"But he answered them, "What have I accomplished compared to you? Aren't the gleanings of Ephraim's grapes better than the full grape harvest of Abiezer? God gave Oreb and Zeeb, the Midianite leaders, into your hands. What was I able to do compared to you?" At this, their resentment against him subsided."*
- **Prov. 15:1;** *"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."*
- Here's the problem: if Ephraim, a large & militarily skilled tribe, was called into battle, then the glory wouldn't have gone to the Lord, but to Ephraim.
- Second, when God began to sift the warriors, sending the majority home, the proud warriors of Ephraim would've been even more upset.
- They may not have gone home & rebelled against the simple farmer from Manasseh.
- Gideon reminds the Ephraimites that God had delivered the two princes (Oreb & Zeeb) into the hands of Ephraim. So, they had shared in the 'glory' of the battle.
- Their real objection was based on the incorrect assumption that Gideon was trying to keep the spoils of battle all for himself.

## 2. Skeptical friends?

- There were still two Midianite kings on the run. The armies were defeated & the princes killed, but the nation couldn't be defeated until the kings were caught.
- So, Gideon & his 300 tired but valiant warriors continued their pursuit.
- **Vs. 4;** *"Gideon and his three hundred men, exhausted yet keeping up the pursuit, came to the Jordan and crossed it."*
- Gideon asks for assistance from his fellow countrymen, the people of Succoth & Peniel. Both turned him down flatly.
- **Vs. 5-9;** *"He said to the men of Succoth, "Give my troops some bread; they are worn out, and I am still pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian." But the officials of Succoth said, "Do you already have the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna in your possession? Why should we give bread to your troops?" Then Gideon replied, "Just for that, when the LORD has given Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, I will tear your flesh with desert thorns and briers." From there he went up to Peniel and made the same request of them, but they answered as the men of Succoth had. So he said to the men of Peniel, "When I return in triumph, I will tear down this tower."*
- Perhaps they thought there was no way Gideon would be so lucky to defeat Midian twice. Never back a loser.
- Perhaps both groups were concerned that if Gideon failed, then they would incur more of the Midianites' ire towards them.
- Perhaps resources were still so slim that feeding 300 warriors would've been too much for either group to do & still feed themselves.
- *Why didn't Gideon reply with a soft response to Succoth & Peniel?*
- Gideon sees this as a worse sin than the pride of Ephraim; this is betrayal that could lead to the nation's defeat, this is treason. Gideon promises retribution.
- **Vs. 10-12;** *"Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor with a force of about fifteen thousand men, all that were left of the armies of the eastern peoples; a hundred and twenty thousand swordsmen had fallen. Gideon went up by the route of the nomads east of Nobah and Jogbehah and fell upon the unsuspecting army. Zebah and Zalmunna, the two kings of Midian, fled, but he pursued them and captured them, routing their entire army."*
- The two kings had only a fraction of the original army (15k), but with his 300 tired men, he used strategy to defeat the larger force & capture the kings.
- Gideon then returned to Succoth & Peniel & did exactly as he had promised. Whipping the leaders of Succoth & tearing down the fortified tower of Peniel, killing some of their men. He then turned his vengeance against the enemies of God.
- He tried to give his son (Jether) the renown for killing the two kings, who we are told actually killed Gideon's brothers at some previous time. But his son wasn't ready.

- To be killed by a teenager or someone younger was a great offense.
- The two kings actually taunted Gideon into killing them himself, which he did.
- **Vs. 18-21;** *"Then he asked Zebah and Zalmunna, "What kind of men did you kill at Tabor?" "Men like you," they answered, "each one with the bearing of a prince." Gideon replied, "Those were my brothers, the sons of my own mother. As surely as the LORD lives, if you had spared their lives, I would not kill you." Turning to Jether, his oldest son, he said, "Kill them!" But Jether did not draw his sword, because he was only a boy and was afraid. Zebah and Zalmunna said, "Come, do it yourself. 'As is the man, so is his strength.' " So Gideon stepped forward and killed them, and took the ornaments off their camels' necks."*

### 3. The 'king' & his golden idol

- The end of the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book of Judges really shows us the arc of Gideon.
- He was timid & afraid & lacking in faith. Yet, God in His grace, built Gideon into that mighty warrior the angel of the LORD called him. He grew in his faith & was victorious in battle.
- Many people start well but then don't finish well. Some people don't start well but then finish well. Gideon didn't start well or finish well.
- **First**, he gets an **incredible** offer! The people want Gideon to be their first king. They also request that Gideon set up what we would call a **dynastic monarchy**.
- **Vs. 22;** *"The Israelites said to Gideon, 'Rule over us-you, your son, and your grandson- because you have saved us out of the hand of Midian."* Gideon's godly response.
- **Vs. 23;** *"But Gideon told them, "I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you. The LORD will rule over you."*
- Gideon rightly asserts that God is to be their only king, as does Samuel later on.
- Gideon realizes that their request is actually a lack of faith in Yahweh, as they are putting their faith in a family to save them from their enemies continually.
- However, Gideon has a request of his own. Give me **plunder** from the **spoils**.
- While this was a normal thing to ask, Gideon does something strange with it.
- **Vs. 24-27;** *"And he said, "I do have one request, that each of you give me an earring from your share of the plunder." (It was the custom of the Ishmaelites to wear gold earrings.) They answered, "We'll be glad to give them." So they spread out a garment, and each man threw a ring from his plunder onto it. The weight of the gold rings he asked for came to seventeen hundred shekels (40 lbs), not counting the ornaments, the pendants, and the purple garments worn by the kings of Midian or the chains that were on their camels' necks. Gideon made the gold into an ephod, which he placed in Ophrah, his town. **All Israel prostituted themselves by worshiping it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and his family."***
- After **rejecting** the kingship, he wants to **live** like a king.

- The **selflessness** of denying the throne led to the pride of **self-indulgence**.
- Gideon's wealth becomes a snare for himself & for all of Israel.
- **Vs. 28;** *"Thus Midian was subdued before the Israelites and did not raise its head again. During Gideon's lifetime, the land enjoyed peace forty years."*
- **Vs. 29-31;** *"Jerub-Baal son of Joash went back home to live. He had seventy sons of his own, for he had many wives. His concubine, who lived in Shechem, also bore him a son, whom he named Abimelech."*
- A clue to Gideon's **downfall** is in the name of his son, Abimelech. The name means "my **father** is **king**."
- Gideon, the mighty warrior of God, the faithful man, Israel's most famous judge, actually led God's people into **idolatry**, & behaved like a king without the title.
- The judge who once destroyed his family idols makes one of his own.
- He also **trespassed** the **commandments** of God by making an image of worship.
- He may have **trespassed** on the **priesthood** by making an ephod. That clothing was reserved for the Levites' priestly line & only certain priests.
- **Vs. 33-35;** *"No sooner had Gideon died than the Israelites again prostituted themselves to the Baals. They set up Baal-Berith as their god and did not remember the LORD their God, who had rescued them from the hands of all their enemies on every side. They also failed to show kindness to the family of Jerub-Baal (that is, Gideon) for all the good things he had done for them."*

## ***As We See Fit***

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- They charged Gideon with \_\_\_\_\_.
- The tribe of Ephraim was \_\_\_\_\_ only to \_\_\_\_\_ in size during Gideon's time.
- They were a \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_ tribe.
- At this point, you have to imagine that Gideon would be \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_.
- However, Gideon responds \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_ to his critics, swallowing his pride.
- Here's the problem: if Ephraim, a large & \_\_\_\_\_ tribe, was called into battle, then the glory wouldn't have gone to the Lord, but to Ephraim.
- Their real objection was based on the incorrect assumption that Gideon was trying to keep the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ all for himself.

#### **2. \_\_\_\_\_ friends?**

- Gideon asks for assistance from his fellow \_\_\_\_\_, the people of Succoth & Peniel.
- Never back a \_\_\_\_\_.
- Perhaps both groups were concerned that if Gideon failed, then they would incur more of the Midianites' \_\_\_\_\_ towards them.
- Perhaps \_\_\_\_\_ were still so \_\_\_\_\_ that feeding 300 warriors would've been too much for either group to do & still feed themselves.
- This is betrayal that could lead to the nation's defeat, this is \_\_\_\_\_.
- Gideon promises \_\_\_\_\_.

#### **3. The ' \_\_\_\_\_ ' & his \_\_\_\_\_ idol**

- **First**, he gets an \_\_\_\_\_ offer! The people want Gideon to be their first king. They also request that Gideon set up what we would call a \_\_\_\_\_.
- Give me \_\_\_\_\_ from the \_\_\_\_\_.

- After \_\_\_\_\_ the kingship, he wants to \_\_\_\_\_ like a king.
- The \_\_\_\_\_ of denying the throne led to the pride of \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_.
- A clue to Gideon's \_\_\_\_\_ is in the name of his son, Abimelech. The name means "*my \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_.*"
- Gideon, the mighty warrior of God, the faithful man, Israel's most famous judge, actually led God's people into \_\_\_\_\_, & behaved like a king without the title.
- He also \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ of God by making an image of worship.
- He may have \_\_\_\_\_ on the \_\_\_\_\_ by making an ephod.

## **Small Group Questions:**

- 1. Have you ever assumed someone else's intentions only to find out you were wrong? Or have you been falsely accused &, like Gideon, given a gentle response to that accusation? Discuss.**
- 2. The bible prescribes Christian hospitality. Why are we to be people who care for the needs of those inside & outside of the church?**
- 3. Gideon turned down the offer of a lifetime. How do you think you would've responded to such an offer?**
- 4. Discuss why riches & the trappings of this world are so alluring to us, even as believers. We see another example that idolatry is hard to unseat from the human heart. How can we remove our idols & guard against their return?**
- 5. Gideon grew to be a faithful warrior for God but faltered in the end. How do we prevent this from happening in our lives?**