

Judges 8:10-35 - Thursday, November 15th, 2012

(10) Now Zebah and Zalmunna *were* at Karkor, and their armies with them, about fifteen thousand, all who were left of all the army of the people of the East; for one hundred and twenty thousand men who drew the sword had fallen. (11) Then Gideon went up by the road of those who dwell in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah; and he attacked the army while the camp felt secure. (12) When Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued them; and he took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and routed the whole army. (13) Then Gideon the son of Joash returned from battle, from the Ascent of Heres.

- It's important to keep in mind that the Midianites have not yet been completely defeated by virtue of how there still remained about 15,000.
- I say that because what can be easily missed here is Gideon's army is not only still at 300, these men are exhausted and without any food.
- While the odds may not be as impossible as they were with the 135,000 men, if you think about this, it is still a miracle in the supernatural.

- By the way, have you noticed how much Gideon has changed from when we first met him hiding out, threshing the grain in the winepress?
- It would seem that God, as He is always faithful to do, in beginning that good work in us will complete it making us mighty, giving us victory.
- The reason I bring this up is that God has built Gideon up to where he has become that mighty warrior and in so doing made him victorious.

(14) And he caught a young man of the men of Succoth and interrogated him; and he wrote down for him the leaders of Succoth and its elders, seventy-seven men. (15) Then he came to the men of Succoth and said, "Here are Zebah and Zalmunna, about whom you ridiculed me, saying, 'Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hand, that we should give bread to your weary men?' " (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.

- There's something here that I wish to point out because it's not so easily visible at first glance, and it's related to these seventy-seven men.
- This begs the question of why it is that Gideon would interrogate this young man of Succoth in order to force him to write down their names.
- I believe the answer is Gideon was measured in his meting out of justice so it was only against those who had ridiculed and rejected him.

- Also, one has to be struck with the irony in all of this. I say that because they end up on the receiving end of the very thing they had feared.
- Namely, being the recipients of retaliation and humiliation at the hand of the Midianites. It's ironic that instead it would come from Gideon.
- Make no mistake about it what Gideon does here in his retaliation and their humiliation is nothing shy of horrific in every sense of the word.

- Gideon is going to use an ancient practice of teaching them a lesson with briers and thorns, which they would have been very familiar with.
- The one learning the lesson would lay face down on the ground while his body was beaten with thorns and briers, then drag on the ground.
- Once they were to the point of death, they would stop, with the understanding that they had learned their lesson to never do that again.

(17) Then he tore down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city.

- Here we're told, in addition to the brutal beating of the men of Succoth, Gideon not only tears down the tower, but kills the men of Penuel.
- This brings up the question of why it had to be so severe, as it would appear that the punishment was disproportionate to the transgression.
- One thought is that it may have had to do with the belief that the men of Penuel sided with the Midianites actually betraying the Israelites.

- Another school of thought is, when they came back to mete out the judgment by tearing down the tower, the men of Penuel fought them.
- This sort of makes sense in the sense that Gideon never said he was going to kill them, he only said that he would tear down their tower.
- Either way, this severe measure was justified by virtue of how it would have been a lesson in deterrence publicly meted out for the rest.

(18) And he said to Zebah and Zalmunna, "What kind of men *were they* whom you killed at Tabor?" So they answered, "As you *are*, so *were* they; each one resembled the son of a king." (19) Then he said, "They *were* my brothers, the sons of my mother. *As* the LORD lives, if you had let them live, I would not kill you." (20) And he said to Jether his firstborn, "Rise, kill them!" But the youth would not draw his sword; for he was afraid, because he *was* still a youth. (21) So Zebah and Zalmunna said, "Rise yourself, and kill us; for as a man *is*, so *is* his strength." So Gideon arose and killed Zebah and Zalmunna, and took the crescent ornaments that *were* on their camels' necks.

- This passage is gnarly, such that I think it will require some explanation before we attempt to glean from it the lessons that are here in it.
- It seems that Zebah and Zalmunna, as kings, were the ones behind the cold-blooded murder of Gideon's brothers at some time in the past.
- This would explain why Gideon gives his firstborn son, Jether, the first opportunity to avenge their death by killing Zebah and Zalmunna.

- However, Gideon's son was afraid being a teenager, so interestingly enough, at the request of Zebah and Zalmunna, Gideon kills them.
- There is some speculation as to why they wanted Gideon to kill them himself one being that having a teenager do it would be insulting.
- The other thought is that they wanted Gideon to do it because he was experienced and, as such, he would make it likely to be quicker.

- Now, here's what I believe the lesson is here for us by way of application to our lives, vengeance belongs to the Lord and not to us.
- In other words, if we will but wait on the Lord to defend us, and avenge us, He will always do it in a way that brings about justice in the end.
- I'm of the belief that up until this point, Gideon did not know who it was that had killed his brothers. That didn't matter, in the end God knew.

- One last thing before we move on to verse twenty-two, notice how in verse twenty-one we're told that they took these crescent ornaments.
- It's believed that these men were worshippers of the same "moon god" that is worshipped today under the banner of the religion of Islam.
- The reason being is that Allah, the god of Islam, is this same moon god, as evidenced by the symbol of Islam being the crescent moon.

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

- Good answer Gideon! This is why I believe that Gideon was a man of humility, never once wishing to take any credit for what God did.
- Again, the irony of all this is that Gideon himself had been accused of this very thing at the beginning of the chapter by the men of Ephraim.
- If there were remaining any doubt about Gideon wanting the glory, this should put that to rest once and for all. Gideon points to the Lord.

Charles Spurgeon – “Here again Gideon shines. He had no eye to a dynasty, his eye was single for the Lord only. At the same time, it is natural that our deliver should be our ruler, and if the Lord Jesus has indeed set us free from sin and Satan, it is but meet and right that He should rule over us.”

(24) Then Gideon said to them, "I would like to make a request of you, that each of you would give me the earrings from his plunder." For they had golden earrings, because they *were* Ishmaelites. (25) So they answered, "We will gladly give *them*." And they spread out a garment, and each man threw into it the earrings from his plunder. (26) Now the weight of the gold earrings that he requested was one thousand seven hundred *shekels* of gold, besides the crescent ornaments, pendants, and purple robes which *were* on the kings of Midian, and besides the chains that *were* around their camels' necks. (27) Then Gideon made it into an ephod and set it up in his city, Ophrah. And all Israel played the harlot with it there. It became a snare to Gideon and to his house.

- This sort of ties into what Gideon had just done in refusing to rule over the people in what he makes out of what is about 45 pounds of gold.
- He makes a golden ephod which was the priestly garment worn by the priest to determine the God's will with the Urim and the Thummim.
- The reason this ties in with wanting Gideon to rule over them is that Gideon points them back to the Lord Who is the only one to rule them.

- I find it interesting that they would begin worshipping the golden ephod instead of worshipping the Lord Who the golden ephod pointed to.
- Here's where I'm going with this, innate within our sin nature is this idolatrous desire to worship man or things instead of worshipping God.
- We need look no further to the Israelites worshipping the golden calf, which Aaron declared to be the god who delivered them out of Egypt.

- Now it's thought that what Gideon does here was wrong and that in doing it, he became the one responsible for stumbling the Israelites.
- One has even suggested this golden ephod was meant as retaliation against the Ephraimites as an alternative site for Israel to worship.
- Gideon may have wanted to get back at them because the tabernacle where they worshipped was at Shiloh the territory of the Ephraimites.

- Whatever the reason was, I would have to concur that this making of a golden ephod was the beginning of Gideon's and Israel's downfall.
- This will be reinforced as we see what happens next at the end of the chapter, but be that as it may, this speaks to the peril of prosperity.
- By that I mean, when things are going good, we tend to forget God and in so doing worship false gods, like the god of gold and success.

Charles Spurgeon – What a pity that so good a man, with so good a motive, should do so wrong a thing. ...From worshipping God in a wrong way, to the worship of a wrong god, is an easy step. Alas! Gideon, what evil didst thou do? ...It is no wonder if those who forget God, forget also all others to whom they are indebted. ...This chapter practically admonishes us to keep close to God's rules of worship as laid down in Scripture, for the slightest divergence therefrom may lead to deadly errors and innumerable evils.”

(28) Thus Midian was subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted their heads no more. And the country was quiet for forty years in the days of Gideon. (29) Then Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in his own house. (30) Gideon had seventy sons who were his own offspring, for he had many wives. (31) And his concubine who *was* in Shechem also bore him a son, whose name he called Abimelech. (32) Now Gideon the son of Joash died at a good old age, and was buried in the tomb of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. (33) So it was, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel again played the harlot with the Baals, and made Baal-Berith their god. (34) Thus the children of Israel did not remember the LORD their God, who had delivered them from the hands of all their enemies on every side; (35) nor did they show kindness to the house of Jerubbaal (Gideon) in accordance with the good he had done for Israel.

- The ending of this chapter speaks for itself in how it teaches us to never forget how it is that God can use the ordinary to do extraordinary.
- However, when God does the extraordinary in and through the ordinary, never forget that it was God Who did it while we bask in His glory.
- Furthermore, it can be very dangerous to think that somehow we had something to do with what God did, and begin to worship other gods.