

THE BOOK OF JUDGES

"Hot Pursuit and Problems"

Judges 8:1-21

Introduction

1. Midian caused a problem to Israel. This was due to Israel's sin before God (6:1-3). The people of God, therefore, fell prey to the people of the world.

2. God raised up Gideon to help Israel in the midst of her problem. He was reassured again and again that he was the man God would use for the task (6:11-7:15). Gideon did fight the Midianites in a most unorthodox manner and won hands down (7:16-25).

3. Now comes the aftermath of that victory. The main battle was over, but the mopping up had to be attended to. In addition, surprise problems developed for Gideon in Israel. Here's the account as given in the Bible:

1. CONSTERNATION from Ephraim vv. 1-3.

a. Question

Ephraim raises a question with Gideon about the manner of his strategy. Here is strife connected with victory. Ephraim had a problem from birth (Gen. 48:13, 14). It may have been a concern about the booty, but more surely it was a matter of plain jealousy. Paul had the same problem presented to him (Phil. 1).

b. Discussion

Gideon did not dismiss the problem out of hand, but he compared his efforts with theirs. This was a psychological device! He showed grace, self-emptiness, and allowed himself to be eclipsed by Ephraim. He cooled their anger.

c. Solution

The reference to Oreb (meaning raven) and Zeeb (meaning wolf) settled the problem happily. Ephraim's deeds were classed with Gideon's fantastic victory. What a matter of grace.

2. INSUBORDINATION from Succoth and Penuel vv. 4-9.

a. Supplication

Gideon pursued the remnants of the Midianite

troops as they fled. He only had his 300 men and they were faint, but he did it in any case. When he came to Succoth and Penuel, he asked for provisions. Succoth means "booths or tents." Penuel means "fact of God." Surely they would provide!

b. Rejection

The sad account of the Bible is that both of these cities, which should have helped, rejected Gideon's request. Apparently they were in a position to help but still feared the Midianites, especially two kings who are named: Zebah and Zalmunna.

c. Prediction

So sure of ultimate victory was Gideon that he promised both Succoth and Penuel a punishment when he returned.

3. DEDICATION from Gideon vv. 10-21.

a. Subjugation

The total victory of Gideon is related later on in the Word (Psalm 83; Isa. 9:4). Gideon came upon the host of Midian when they felt secure (kept no guard) at Karkor (vv. 10, 11). So complete was the victory that Gideon turned back from the battle or pursuit only when he came to Heres (Hebrew for "before the sun was up," v. 13).

b. Retribution

In fulfillment of his pledge to Succoth and Penuel, he returned and meted out their punishment. At Succoth, a young man "wrote down" (so Hebrew for "described") the names of 77 men who deserved the judgment. At Penuel a more severe punishment was given (v. 17). In doing this, he "taught" (caused them to know).

c. Retaliation

Zebah and Zalmunna were slain by Gideon after his son refused to do it. He did this because these kings had slain his own brothers (v. 19). Although that incident is not recorded in chapters 6 and 7, the truth must not be doubted. Justice had to be meted out to them. It had been at Succoth and Penuel; now with the Midianites.

Conclusion Clearly divine victories may be accompanied with disappointments from your own group. But God's man had the proper strategy to deal with the situation. Oh, that men might heed the servant of God whom He sends among them. Such action would lead to blessing.