

BOOK OF JUDGES

"Last Days of Gideon"

Judges 8:22-35

Introduction

1. Midian had troubled Israel for seven years. God, in His mercy toward the nation, promised deliverance through Gideon (6:12, 14, 16).

2. Gideon followed the instructions of the Lord. First he attacked Baal (6:25-32). This strong effort against the false religion of the nation accomplished, Gideon turned to the enemy, Midian (chap. 7). In a most unusual fashion, the enemy was defeated by the power of God (7:2).

3. The victory over Midian was followed by certain internal problems (8:1-21). These having been settled, there rose four other events in the life of Gideon. Here they are:

1. PROMOTION IN LEADERSHIP vv. 22, 23.

So complete and victorious was Gideon that the men of Israel desired to make him king over them. This was a notch above the judgeship which he already held. Gideon refused. Instead of a monarchy, Gideon requested that the theocracy be maintained. However, Gideon did, in effect, have a high position in Israel like a king. How is this known? Here are some reasons:

a. He had 70 sons (v. 30). This number suggests he had a sort of harem as kings were accustomed. Others had many children, but not 70 (10:4; 12:9, 14).

b. He fathered a son named "Abimelech." This name means "father of a king." It may suggest the concept. This son desired to be a "king" (9:1, 2). He may have gotten the idea from his father.

c. He had large influence, even to Shechem. This extended rule may mean he acted the part of a king. The stability of the region for 40 years supports this.

2. USURPATION IN WORSHIP vv. 24-27.

a. Gideon's request v. 24. Gideon asked the people for amulets of gold. His intent apparently was not made known at the moment (cf. v. 27).

b. People's response vv. 25, 26. The people responded overwhelmingly to Gideon and provided 1700 shekels of amulets of gold (about 42 pounds).

c. National rebellion v. 27. Gideon made an ephod from the amulets. Israel went after it and used it as a means of worship. An ephod was an extravagant apron which included the Urim and Thummim, means for determining revelation from God. It probably had gold threads running through the fabric. It was a garment of the High Priest (Ex. 28:6). Gideon did not qualify to do this and the people should not have cooperated in the sin. Hence, wherein Gideon was right with the kingship, he was wrong in priestly matters!

3. PROVISION IN PEACE vv. 28-32.

a. For the nation v. 28. Specifically it is noted that the land was at rest for 40 years. Midian did not again trouble the nation during the days of Gideon. The number 40 is the number of testing (cf. 40 years in wilderness).

b. For Gideon vv. 29-32. Gideon had his own home, family of many wives and children, extended influence, and he died at an old age. He was buried in his father's burial ground. He was God's man for the time and was so used, although being imperfect.

4. DEGRADATION IN BELIEF vv. 33-35.

a. Toward Baal v. 33. Baal was the god of rain and reproduction. Crops were essential and it was a simple thing for Israel to move to Baal worship. She did so without the help of Gideon's leadership! She became in all but name Canaanite!

b. Toward God v. 34. The nation forgot the Lord Who had wrought so much deliverance for her. How could this be! Mystery of mysteries!

c. Toward Gideon v. 35. The name Jerubaal means "let Baal contend or plead." Baal had not contended with Gideon. He had been silent, hence Gideon had been given by his father this badge of reputation--Jerubaal. Now he, like the Lord, was set aside and neglected in memory.

Conclusion The final days of Gideon leave much to be desired, particularly after all God had wrought for him and the nation. Let us learn the lessons and respond to the Lord in full obedience. So be it (1 Cor. 10:11-13).