

The Book of
JUDGES

Testing the Heart of God's Children



Test of Success

Judges 8:1-35

Lesson 8

Introduction

One of the key themes in the Book of Judges is that there was “no king in Israel”. Moses had warned Israel that they would one day want a king like Gentile nations. 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. Fallen human nature would rather have visible human rulers instead of the invisible God of heaven and earth.

Though Gideon refused to be called Israel’s King he not only accepted, but requested, the reward of a king. He used it to make an ephod, therefore assuming the role that God reserved for a priest. Instead of using the occasion for God’s glory, he used it for his own profit and it became a snare to both himself and all of Israel. It is interesting that Gideon named the son of his concubine **Abimelech**, which means “My Father is King.” How often, do we say that the Lord alone is our king, but our actions don’t reflect our words?

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 by Jacob.

Zebah & Zalmunna – Kings of Midian, these were not only enemies of Israel, but they had murdered Gideon’s brothers. For a child to kill a king would be the ultimate in humiliation; by doing what Gideon requested, Jether Gideon’s son would also have brought honor to himself for the rest of his life; but he hesitated to avenge the murder of his uncles.

The leaders of **Succoth** asked if the **hands of Zebah and Zalmunna the Midianite kings, were in Gideon’s hands**. It was a common practice for a hand to be cut off each dead enemy so that a count of the casualties inflicted could be made.



LOOKING FOR GOLD - WHAT DOES IT SAY?

The first step in mining for gold is getting the lay of the land. **Carefully observe the text** looking to see where you might dig to find hidden treasure. **Mark your text** looking for repeated words, contrasts or similarities. Look for answers to, Who? What? When? Where? Why or How?

Setting the scene: Read Judges 6:14-16 to remember God's charge to Gideon. Use an atlas or other sources to place the cities in the appropriate place on your map. Pay attention to who's inheritance they are occupying.

Judges 8:1-21

1 Now the men of Ephraim said to him, "Why have you done this to us by not calling us when you went to fight with the Midianites?" And they reprimanded him sharply.

2 So he said to them, "What have I done now in comparison with you? Is not the gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? 3 God has delivered into your hands the princes 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.

4 When Gideon came to the Jordan, he and the three hundred men who were with him crossed over, exhausted but still in pursuit. 5 Then he said to the men of Succoth, "Please give loaves of bread to the people who follow me, for they are exhausted, and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian."

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

7 So Gideon said, "For this cause, when the Lord has delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers!"

8 Then he went up from there to Penuel and spoke to them in the same way. And the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered. 9 So he also spoke to the men of Penuel, saying, "When I come back in peace, I will tear down this tower!"

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

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.



Digging Deeper

Dig deeper using other resources such as a dictionary, concordance, maps & cross-references. Notate where you found it to share with the group. Look for commands to obey or questions to be answered. What does God want you to know about Himself?

BOILING IT DOWN – WHAT DOES IT MEAN?



What **lesson** can I draw from my observations?

State each lesson in a simple sentence (aim for 10 words or less).

Judges 8:1-21 _____

Judges 8:22-28 _____

Judges 8:29-35 _____



REFINED AS GOLD - HOW CAN I APPLY IT?

How should it change me? Ask yourself, "What **course of action** do I need to take to apply each lesson?" (aim for 10 words or less)

Judges 8:1-21 _____

Judges 8:22-28 _____

Judges 8:29-35 _____

CHALLENGE: Use cross-references to find correlating scripture that backs up a main point of the chapter. Summarize your findings in your own words.



STORING UP YOUR TREASURE . . .

What was God's command? Judges 6:14, 7:2-4

Who did the people give glory to for winning the battle? v.22

How did Gideon usurp God's glory in Israel's eyes?

How does v 28 give insight into God's character, in spite of Gideon's failures?

What words or phrases are repeated?

CHECKING FOR CLARITY: See if you can boil down the meaning of **each section** into one or two words. This helps you fully understand what the author is trying to convey. (It's fun to alliterate if you want to try) Did you catch the vision?

Judges 8:1-21 _____
Judges 8:22-28 _____
Judges 8:29-35 _____

BARS OF GOLD: State the main **point** of the passage in the form of a title.

FLEX YOUR MUSCLES: Can you discover an N.T. example of this O.T. truth?



HIDE YOUR TREASURE IN YOUR HEART

If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself. 2 Tim 2:13

Radiating His Truth . . .

Confession of God's kingship without consistent practice of that kingship
is hollow. -Gary Inrig

