

APRIL 28

Judges 8:18-9:21

Judges 8:18-35

Vs. 18-21 Apparently there is something going on here. Normally Gideon would have had these kings killed anyway, but his words indicate that these two kings were responsible for killing his brothers in time of peace. Gideon is taking the responsibility as the blood avenger as he does this.

I have never understood why Gideon did this to his young son. I'm sure there was some cultural meaning, but every year I think what a bad idea this was.

Vs. 22-28 This was an understandable gesture by the people, wanting Gideon to be their king. I wonder why Gideon didn't ask the Lord and I wonder where the Levites were. Since Gideon asked for help in other places, why didn't he ask for guidance from the priests? But I think we will see why Gideon didn't seek the priests.

Gideon was very firm on the idea that God ruled Israel. Of course, this only worked if the Levites were in place and the people obeyed God. If they did their parts, then Israel was untouchable.

Apparently during the fighting Gideon did more leading, than collecting of treasure, so for the main part of his pay, he asked the people to donate an earring. This way Gideon would be blameless if any accusations were brought against him, saying he took the biggest share. Up to here, this is all good thinking by Gideon.

V. 27 This is the only negative that God mentions against Gideon. Remember, this is Samuel writing about Gideon years later, so there is an historical perspective here too. If the only understanding of ephod we have is used here, it is the apron worn by the high priest in worship in which the Urim and the Thummim were held. Why would you want this unless you wanted to represent yourself before God and obtain answers without using the tribe that God had designated for this? The land was full of corruption and I have a feeling that Gideon had no respect for the Levites. I think this explains why there were no Levites present. Why go to them? Later, King Uzziah will be stricken with leprosy for disrespecting the priests and Levites and trying to represent himself before God.

V. 28 This will be the last time we will read of the land having rest in the book of Judges. The next rest will come during the judgeship of Samuel. The next true rest will come during the reign of David.

Vs. 29-35 This report about Gideon isn't written in a negative way, but, in my heart, it indicates that not all was well with Gideon. His wealth allowed him to live in extravagance. We will see another judge with lots of sons who rode on lots of donkeys. It is another way of saying that he had lots of money. You notice that when the people wanted Gideon to be their king, they mention him having a small family. In the years that passed, apparently, Gideon was a busy guy. All that Gideon built without God will come to ruin.

It seems to me that what you learn from Gideon, as a disciple, is that he had no lasting influence. When the battle was done, he lived for himself, not the Lord, and not for building the future generations of Israel. If the future of Israel had meant anything to him, he would have gotten the Levites involved and he would have been a godly influence to make the Levites prominent again in Israel. Gideon's first response to the angel of the Lord revealed his ignorance of the Word. His ignorance of the Word caught up with him. He needed the Levites.

The test of a disciple is living for Christ, before, during, and after the "battle." The harvest goes on. People are still lost, needing to know Christ, and disciples need to keep being made and

equipped for the next generation. In spite of all this need, we still need to be in the Word and personally close to Christ, abiding in Him and following Him His way. We can't be too busy for Him and His Word, and we can't disrespect the church. Regardless of the critics of the church, the church is still the bride of Christ and entrusted with the harvest. We need to stop criticizing other churches and just do our work. As disciples of our Lord in the harvest, we need to make disciples, building the church to be a disciple-making community in the harvest.

Notice what happened to Gideon when there was no goal to strive for or no battle to fight. It is the same thing that happens to us. We might not have an army of spouses (what madman would want that?), but our cars and TVs and phones and apps and computers and everything else make us flabby, fat and unfocused as the storm approaches the harvest.

Judges 9:1-21

Vs. 1-3 Gideon's concubine in Shechem is mentioned in 8:31. This "wife" and her son lived with her parents in Shechem and not with the other wives and sons. Gideon would have visited on occasion.

In Genesis, Shechem is a notable place, for good and bad. And in Joshua, Shechem is the place, between Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal, between the blessing and the curse, where Joshua renewed the covenant with Israel before he died.

Abimelech (melech is a form of the word king) is not only using the need for a king to push his proposal, but also the resentment he has toward being rejected from his father's family. This looks like a bad episode from a TV show.

V. 5 The mention of killing all of Gideon's sons on one stone suggests a public execution.

V. 6 Notice that it wasn't until Abimelech had done this, that the men of Shechem made him king.

Vs. 7-21 This is a long story by Jotham, but you get the point. If this was a fictional event, you would have placed Jotham over on Mt. Ebal, the mount of the curse; but in reality, he needed to be on Gerizim to make his escape.

Jotham was predicting the events to follow. Whatever happened here with the family of Gideon, Israel would never be the same and they wouldn't see rest. Verses 16-19 are a charge, not only against the people of Shechem, but against all of Israel. Notice that there is no outcry from the other tribes when they learned that Gideon's family was slaughtered like this. The people, all the tribes, should have risen up as one man to seek justice, but nearly everyone was corrupt and serving idols. How different this is from the end of Joshua, when the tribes gathered together because they thought something was done wrong in building that altar. There will be justice here, but justice isn't always "instant." In the first verse of tomorrow's reading you'll see how long Jotham had to wait to see God finally move in and judge Abimelech and the people of Shechem.

Luke 23:44-24:12

Luke 23:44- 56

Vs. 44-49 It was dark from noon to 3 p.m. It was a supernatural darkness. It doesn't mention a storm or a solar eclipse. The curtain in the temple, hiding the Holy of Holies, was torn, but not as the result of an earthquake. Luke doesn't mention the earthquake. The people who came for the "spectacle" left disappointed, beating their chests in sorrow (of not seeing a sign, not because Jesus died). At this point, those who loved Jesus were watching from a distance.

Vs. 50-56 We don't hear of Joseph until now. He, like Nicodemus, was a member of the Sanhedrin, the group that plotted Jesus' death. Nick and Joe were against what had happened and were probably not invited to the meeting. The grave was Joseph's and apparently Pilate and Joe knew each other, so the request was granted. Being in Joe's tomb fulfilled Isaiah 53:9.

Luke 24:1-12

V. 4 If you add up all of the angels, there were probably at least five present at the resurrection, two in the tomb, one on the stone and these two sneaking up on these women and scaring the soldiers.

V. 11 is interesting. Even though they knew these women well, and even though the women were pretty excited, *these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them*. The great heroes of Christianity responded like duds. Someone promoting themselves would never write a fable like this. Obviously, this is true and these men were no heroes, yet.

V. 12 We know that Peter and John took off for the tomb. Why Luke only mentioned Peter might be because Peter would have been better known by his readers.

Psalm 99

This psalm is focused on worshiping the Lord in Jerusalem, in the temple (where He rests His feet), before the ark of the covenant, which is the mercy seat and the throne of God. With this imagery in mind, see if you can find all of this. Since it mentions *all the peoples*, it is another indication that Israel was mindful of its part in the plan of redemption, leading all peoples to God. That is still to come. Again, I think this psalm was part of David's desire to unify the people by bringing Israel together to worship in Jerusalem.

Vs. 1-5 It is interesting that there are two prominent ideas here. First, that Zion is the place where the Lord exercises His authority, and second, that the nations should both tremble and praise Him. This is exactly what will happen during the Millennium.

Vs. 6-7 The psalmist mentions that three prominent priests called upon God and God spoke to them. This was to motivate the people to come and allow the priests to lead them in worship, instead of doing their own thing like Gideon did. During the judges and during Saul's reign, people worshiped as they desired, but not as God had told them. This was written to correct that.

V. 8 This is both a motivation and a warning.

V. 9 Here is the point of this psalm.

Proverbs 14:9-10

What an interesting couplet. In v. 10 it suggests that a heart that is locked up by a lack of confession remains closed and isolated. The fool in v. 9 doesn't realize the freedom that having an open and cleansed conscience gives. The wise person openly confesses his guilt before God in worship and receives God's acceptance. The wise person knows submission before God and he knows the joy of having a cleansed and open heart. These few words could keep a disciple from developing heart problems.