

Exegetical Notes – Judges 8:28-35
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Background: When Joshua died, the conquest of The Promised Land was only partially completed. In large part, Israel had followed the instructions of YHWH regarding the taking of the land and the destruction of the indigenous population who lived there, but Israel had not followed God completely. Large sections of the indigenous population remained and were not under Israeli control.

From the time of the occupation (around 1380 BC) until the beginning of the Monarchs (1050 BC) Israel was a THEOCRACY, a nation whose king was God. Israel was supposed to listen to and follow the word of the Lord, but as we have already seen, Israel was not good at following the instructions of YHWH. Her failure to do so left her in trouble time and again. Partial obedience to the word of the Lord is disobedience to the word of the Lord and always leads to disaster. “Judges provides many examples of the principle that OBEDIENCE TO THE LAW BRINGS PEACE, WHEREAS DISOBEDIENCE MEANS OPPRESSION AND DEATH” (Charles Ryrie). This is the constantly repeated lesson of the Book of Judges. Judges is the story of the time in Israel’s early history when “Every man did what was right in his own eyes” (17:6 and 21:25). This always results in chaos and disaster.

In the Book of Judges a recurrent theme emerges: Step one - The people are following the will of YHWH; Step two - The people stop obeying the word of the Lord; Step three - An enemy arises that oppresses the people of God; Step four - The people cry out to God for help; Step five - God answers Israel’s prayer by sending them a deliverer (a judge to lead her, a Messiah); Step six - The people repent and return to the Lord. Then, the process begins again. Judges simply repeats this pattern over and over again. God’s people are “stiff necked and disobedient.” God is forever faithful. If God’s people would follow God’s word, they could save themselves hardship, worry, pain, etc. But they choose to do what seems right in their own eyes.

Judges 8:28-35

Verses 28-29

Thus Midian was subdued before the Israelites and did not raise its head again.

During Gideon's lifetime, the land had peace forty years.

²⁹ *Jerub-Baal son of Joash went back home to live.*

- God delivered Israel from the Midianites through the hands of Israel's 5th judge, Gideon (aka Jerub-Baal). After Israel's deliverance, Gideon returned to his home town, Ophrah, where he and all Israel worshiped the ephod which he had made (see 8:22-27).

Verse 30

³⁰ *He had seventy sons of his own, for he had many wives.*

- Gideon did not follow the word of the Lord in regard to marriage. Like many others, he followed the practice of those who lived around Israel and had many wives.
- From his many wives, Gideon had 70 sons. He may have had daughters, too.

Verse 31

³¹ *His concubine, who lived in Shechem, also bore him a son, whom he named Abimelech.*

- In addition to his wives, Gideon also had concubines. Women with whom he had sexual relations but to whom he was not formally married.
- He had at least one son born to him by a woman to whom he was not married. That son's name was Abimelech (see Judges 9).

Verses 32-35

³² *Gideon son of Joash died at a good old age and was buried in the tomb of his father Joash in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.*

³³ *No sooner had Gideon died than the Israelites again prostituted themselves to the Baals. They set up Baal-Berith as their god ³⁴ and did not remember the LORD their God, who had rescued them from the hands of all their enemies on every side. ³⁵ They also failed to show any loyalty to the family of Jerub-Baal (that is, Gideon) in spite of all the good things he had done for them.*

- When Gideon died, Israel quickly rejected the worship of the golden ephod (see Judges 8:22-27) and returned to worshipping the gods of the cultures around them, the Baals. They forgot YHWH altogether.
- They also rejected the family of Gideon (see the promise they had made to Gideon - Judges 8:22). The people of God are fickle. They turn their backs on YHWH and disregard their promises.



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