

Episode #525 Judges 8 Part 1 – Gideon 4: Gideon Versus Zebah and Zalmunna

I. In the book of Judges, we have a brief record of the early history (the first centuries) of the history of the land of Israel. We see the leaders God chose, judges, who ruled under Jehovah, the King. Through the lives and work of these judges, we can learn about God's works and ways.

II. We have been considering the career of Gideon, the fifth judge. Israel was fighting back against the terrible oppression of Midian, who were not just stealing from them but were destroying their food supply, trying to wipe them out. Gideon had over 12,000 soldiers, but the LORD said that was too many, and by various tests sent all but 300 back home. Gideon heard one of the Midianite army tell a dream that showed his victory. He and his men blew trumpets and shown torches around the camp, which threw the enemy into a panic and achieved a great victory. Not by Gideon at all, but by the LORD!

III. Gideon's victory. Judges 7:16-25.

- A. Verse 23. After the routing of the army, Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh gather together to pursue them and chase them out of the land.
- B. Verse 24. Gideon sends messengers throughout the hill country of Ephraim, asking them to fortify the waters of Beth-Barah (House of the Ford) and the Jordan River in front of the fleeing army so they cannot escape back east to their lands.
- C. Verse 25. They (Ephraim) capture the two princes of Midian: Oreb (Raven) and Zeeb (Wolf). They execute Oreb on the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb at the winepress of Zeeb, while chasing Midian out of the land. They bring the heads of the two princes to Gideon back on the west side of the Jordan River. This victory was long remembered! Psalm 83:9-12. Isaiah 10:24-26.

IV. Gideon faces opposition from the Israelites. Judges 8:1-9.

- A. Verse 1. Ephraim is upset that he did not call them to help fight against Midian. Ephraim was the larger and more powerful tribe of Joseph, but were often outshone by Judah. Here they are jealous of Manasseh.
- B. Verse 2. Gideon belittles himself. Their grape juice is better than the wine of Abiezer. Abiezer means "My Father is Help," one of Manasseh's subtribes.
- C. Verse 3. He points out that they were the ones who captured and executed Oreb and Zeeb. What had he done by comparison? Thus he staves off their anger by this peaceful answer.
- D. Verse 4. Gideon and his three hundred chase the Midianites across Jordan, the eastern border of Israel. They were exhausted, yet still chasing them.
- E. Verse 5. Succoth – "Booths," where Jacob had built booths for his cattle. East of Jordan by Jabbok. Now part of the tribe of Gad. He asks for loaves (food) to feed his men. He is chasing Zebah (A Slaying, Sacrificial Victim) and Zalmunna (Protection is Denied, Without Shadow), the Midianite kings.
- F. Verse 6. The leading men of Succoth do not take an army of 300 seriously. They would only feed him when he was victorious. They did not think he would be.
- G. Verse 7. He promises that when he does get power over these two, he will return and tear their flesh with thorns and briars.
- H. Verse 8. Peniel (Face of God) is where Jacob wrestled with God, near Succoth. He asks them the same favor and gets the same response.
- I. Verse 9. He promises these that he will break down their tower (stronghold) when he returns victorious.

V. Gideon's further victories. Judges 8:10-17.

- A. Verse 10. Zebah and Zalmunna are in Karkor (Level Ground) ready to fight. 15,000 is all who are left, 120,000 have fallen. Remember, 12,020 was Gideon's original force. All that is left is more than Jehovah said was too much for Gideon!
- B. Verse 11. Gideon goes by the road of the nomads east of Nobah (A Barking) and Jagbehah (Lofty) and attacks the army. They thought they were secure, but Gideon defeated them. Note: not by a trick this time!
- C. Verse 12. The two kings try to flee, but Gideon chases and captures them, and sends all their remaining army fleeing in terror.
- D. Verse 13. Gideon Joash's son returns from defeating the army of Midian before sunrise. Yahweh gave him swift victory!
- E. Verse 14. He catches a young man from Succoth (perhaps going out to work early in the fields) and demands a description of all the elders of Succoth. He describes them, eighty-seven men.
- F. Verse 15. He comes to them and shows them Zebah and Zalmunna, reminding them how they mocked him that he would never get the power over these kings.
- G. Verse 16. He punishes the elders of Succoth with thorns and briars. Hebrew is they get to know them...close personal contact!
- H. Verse 17. He beats down the tower of Penuel and destroys the mortal men of the city. Why does he take greater vengeance on those of Penuel? Perhaps they tried to stop him from throwing down their tower?

VI. Jehovah gave Gideon a great victory, but his people still refused to believe in his call. Gideon got a total victory with 300 men! There was a price for the unbelievers to pay for their mockery. Scoffing words do not go unnoticed! We see the cruel, unmerciful attitude of the Midianite enemies. We should not distrust Yahweh's motives in causing them to be destroyed. We can learn many lessons from the victory of Gideon!