

## Judges Chapter 8 Part 4

Tonight's lesson will focus on the theme of king. Although Gideon is never made king, that theme runs through this chapter as a thread in the fabric of Scripture. This theme starts in verse 4:

**Judges 8:4 Then Gideon and the three hundred men who were with him came to the Jordan and crossed over, exhausted yet still pursuing.**

Trent Butler quotes B. G. Webb concerning Gideon being offered to “rule” over Israel in Judges 8:22:

“From the moment he crossed the Jordan he has acted more and more like a king, especially in his dispensing of summary punishments on those who resist his authority. In crossing the Jordan he had already exceeded his commission and begun to move towards the kind of rule which is now formally offered to him. [in verse 22]”

**Judges 8:5 And he said to the men of Succoth, “Please give loaves of bread to the people who are following me, for they are exhausted, and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian.”**

This is the first mention of the word “king” in the Gideon narrative. Gideon was doing what an army commander in those days was supposed to do: defeat the enemy army, kill the enemy commander(s) and kill the king(s).

**Judges 8:6 But the leaders of Succoth said, “Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna**

already in your hand, that we should give bread to your army?”

**Judges 8:7** So Gideon said, “For this answer, when the Lord has handed over to me Zebah and Zalmunna, I will thrash your bodies with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers.”

**Judges 8:8** Then he went up from there to Penuel and spoke similarly to them; and the men of Penuel answered him just as the men of Succoth had answered.

**Judges 8:9** So he said also to the men of Penuel, “When I return safely, I will tear down this tower.”

**Judges 8:10** Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor, and their armies with them, about fifteen thousand men, all who were left of the entire army of the people of the east; for the fallen were 120,000 swordsmen.

**Judges 8:11** Gideon went up by the way of those who lived in tents to the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and he attacked the camp when the camp was unsuspecting.

**Judges 8:12** When Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued them and captured the two kings

**of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and routed the entire army.**

A second reference to “kings.”

**Judges 8:13 Then Gideon the son of Joash returned from the battle by the ascent of Heres.**

**Judges 8:14 And he captured a youth from Succoth and questioned him. Then the youth wrote down for him the leaders of Succoth and its elders, seventy-seven men.**

**Judges 8:15 And he came to the men of Succoth and said, “Behold Zebah and Zalmunna, about whom you taunted me, saying, ‘Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hand, that we should give bread to your men who are weary?’”**

**Judges 8:16 Then he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and he disciplined the men of Succoth with them.**

**Judges 8:17 And he tore down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city.**

**Judges 8:18 Then he said to Zebah and Zalmunna, “Where were the men whom you killed at Tabor?” But they said, “You and they**

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**were alike, each one resembling the son of a king.**”

A third reference to “king.” And this one is pointed at Gideon.

Here is a pertinent observation by Robbie Dean:

“In Judges 8:13-17 [Open in Logos Bible Software (if available)] where we see Gideon going back to Succoth and to Penuel and disciplining those cities because of their rebelliousness and because they had completely sold out to the enemy, there's something very subtle that begins to take place, starting in verse 18 and you won't necessarily catch it if you're just reading the English. There's very subtle things that the author of Judges is doing through vocabulary, through his stylistic arrangement of the information and through a knowledge of the culture at that time that go right past the average 20th century English reader. Starting in verse 18 the writer is choosing vocabulary and he begins to illustrate through what happens that a change is taking place in Gideon. He has moved from executing justice in a righteous manner, in verses 13-17, to executing justice from an arrogant self-centered manner in verse 18. Starting here our sympathies are going to start shifting away from Gideon because Gideon is going to succumb to the same arrogance that he has been against. And that's so easy for us to do. One minute we are upset correctly about something and the next thing we know we're taking it personal and all of a sudden we shift from self-righteous anger to arrogant anger and to self-centered anger, and it is easy to make a subtle shift in our thinking and to move from walking by the Spirit or walking in obedience to the Word to disobedience to the Word and we see how Gideon moves from being a correct executor of justice in verses 13-17 to where he gets involved in vengeance starting in verse 18.”

**Where were the men** (NASB). The NIV has “What kind of men...” Robbie Dean has some keen insight into this:

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“He says, "What kind of men were they whom you killed at Tabor?" and that's a bad translation because the sentence begins with a Hebrew word *eypoh*, and it's a compound word and it means where, at what place. It's not what kind of men; he's not asking that question, he's asking where are the bodies. "Where are the men whom you killed at Tabor?" He wants to identify them because he has... apparently Gideon has certain suspicions about who they were.”

“Now Tabor was a mountain on the northeast side of the Valley of Jezreel. The Valley of Jezreel is where this battle against the Midianites began and apparently they had not only gone through the Valley of Jezreel destroying all the farms and capturing all of the grain and taking it off for themselves and leaving the people with very little food or sustenance to get them through the next year but they had also been sending out raiding parties who were guilty of a number of atrocities. And in one of these we learn from this episode, and it has been mentioned before, that apparently Gideon's brothers were all killed by the Midianites. This has not been mentioned before but Gideon has been aware of this and now he's concerned, he's heard the rumor and he wants to identify the bodies to see if they were indeed his brothers.”

“So he asks, "Where are the men whom you killed at Tabor. And they said, They were like you, each one resembling the son of a king." Now I want you to notice that here we see that the Midianites are using a little flattery in order to try to have their way with Gideon and when they mention this, and I want you to notice this, you ought to underline the term "son of a king" here, they said "they were like you, each one resembling the son of a king.”

“Now we've studied Hebrew idiom before, that when they use a phrase like "son of" that is an adjectival description. For example, if someone were a murderer they might be termed the son of a murderer. That doesn't mean their dad was a murderer, it means they are characterized

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by the adjective there, they're a murderer. If they were the son of a fool that doesn't mean that their father was a fool, it means that they are a fool; they are characterized by being a fool. When Jesus was called the Son of God it is not emphasizing His lineage that God gave birth to Him, it is emphasizing the fact that He is full deity.”

“So the term "son of" describes something about these men. They had a regal bearing, the Midianites are saying, just like you, they looked like a king. So they're flattering Gideon. But this is foreshadowing because what's going to happen for the first time in Israel's history there's now going to be the introduction of the issue of kingship in an illegitimate way starting in just a few verses and so the author uses this as a way of foreshadowing the coming of the monarchical crisis in Israel. And Gideon doesn't quite fall for this. He said they looked just like you, but he recognizes that they had seen a family resemblance.”

**Judges 8:19 And he said, “They were my brothers, the sons of my mother. As the Lord lives, if only you had let them live, I would not kill you.”**

**Kill you.** Again from Robbie Dean, “Gideon uses the Hebrew word *harag*, which is an interesting word because it has two meanings; one is to take life illegitimately through murder and the second is to execute justice in the sense of capital punishment, to execute the criminal. And under the Mosaic Law and under the Noahic Covenant it is clear that the person who does not execute the criminal is viewed as being an accomplice of the murderer by failing to take the loss of life, of the victim and being concerned about the victim, seriously. Whenever you let a murderer survive what you are doing is you are saying the life of the victim of really didn't matter. And that's the way human viewpoint turns

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things around. So Gideon is going to use this word "execute" here and the author uses a play on words here to bring out the point.”

“There are seven different words in Hebrew for the taking of life and the author here uses *harag* because it has this double sense...”

I do not currently have a list of the seven Hebrew words for kill that Robbie Dean references.

**Judges 8:20 So he said to Jether his firstborn, “Rise, kill them.” But the youth did not draw his sword, for he was afraid, because he was still a youth.**

One of the commentators mentioned that this might have been a Canaanite “blood initiation.” Something similar is in one of the Jason Bourne movies where David Webb is in training to be a project “Treadstone” agent and is required to kill someone in the training facility.

**Judges 8:21 Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, “Rise up yourself, and attack us; for as the man, so is his strength.” So Gideon arose and killed Zebah and Zalmunna, and took the crescent amulets which were on their camels’ necks.**

**Rise up yourself, and attack us;** Robbie Dean again, ““...Rise up yourself, and fall on us;” and the Hebrew word for fall there is not *naphal*, which means to fall, it is *paga*’ which means to take life in an illegitimate manner based on a capricious selfish whim.”

**Took the crescent amulets.** From Robbie Dean “These were the decorations of royalty that they wore on their camels and the fact that

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Gideon is going to take them for his own indicates that he is starting to think in terms of being king. He is going to take for himself the trappings of monarchy This foreshadows what's about to take place in verse 22.”

**Judges 8:22 Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, “Rule over us, both you and your son, your son’s son as well, for you have saved us from the hand of Midian!”**

**The men of Israel.** This would suggest all of Israel. The actual composition of “the men of Israel” is not called out in detail. This is just a general statement.

**Rule.** This word means to rule or have dominion. It does not come from the root for king or reigning. Is this word just another word for king, a distinction without a difference, or is there actually a difference?

Here is what the TDOT says:

“Throughout the entire OT, mšl appears in texts that substantiate the all-embracing order of the whole created world and assign the activity of ruling to both God and human beings.”

“In the majority of texts, this general meaning of mšl moves in the more specialized direction of political dominion. Its meaning thus comes close to that of → מלך mlk. In comparison with mlk, however, mšl focuses less on the person of the ruler and more on the rule or dominion itself.”

“In Jgs. 8:2f. Gideon refuses to rule over Israel, since to do so would impugn the kingship of Yahweh.”

“In Jer. 30:21; Zec. 6:13, the verb is used positively for the restoration of the people under a new ruler of their own.”



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“All these texts ultimately reflect the fundamental biblical notion that in the strict sense Yahweh is the ruler pure and simple, as Job 25:2 states absolutely.”

“This fundamental principle applies in a special way to Israel, which in the earliest premonarchic period considered itself a theocracy and recognized Yahweh as its true king even in the sphere of earthly politics, as Jgs. 8:23 illustrates.”

“or the early period of Israel, the same eschewing of mlk and the concomitant emphasis on the unique kingship of God are attested by Jgs. :22f.; 9:2 in which the verb mšl is chosen deliberately for both God and the earthly ruler.”

Look at the book of beginnings, Genesis chapter 1 for the first uses of this verb and a noun from this verb:

**Genesis 1:16 God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern (this is our word) the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; He made the stars also.**

**Genesis 1:17 God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth,**

**Genesis 1:18 and to govern (this is our word) the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good.**

**Genesis 3:16 To the woman He said, “I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain**

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**you shall deliver children; Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he shall rule (this is our word) over you.”**

**Judges 8:18 (YLT) And he saith unto Zebah and unto Zalmunna, `How -- the men whom ye slew in Tabor?' and they say, `As thou -- so they, one -- as the form of the king's sons.'**

**The king's sons.** Notice that in the Young's Literal Translation, the Hebrew definite article is translated, “the.” That is not in other translations. Zebah and Zalmunna are the first to make the suggestion that Gideon is royalty. Zebah and Zalmunna were royalty and they are suggesting Gideon is royalty. This adds credibility to the claim.

We know that during time of the book of Judges, God is supposed to be king.

**Judges 18:1 In those days there was no king of Israel,...**

**Judges 19:1 Now it came about in those days, when there was no king in Israel,...**

**Judges 21:25 In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes....**

**1 Samuel 8:7 And the Lord said to Samuel, “Listen to the voice of the people regarding all that they say to you, because they have not**

**rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being King over them.**

**You have saved us.** Who saved Israel? Yahweh, God Almighty. Looks like the people are still walking by sight and not by faith.

Here is what Gary Inrig, “Hearts of Iron Feet of Clay,” says, “Sometimes we learn more from what is not recorded in Scripture than from what we actually read. That is certainly true in Judges 8. As you read this chapter, you will not find one word of spontaneous praise, gratitude, or thanksgiving to God. Nothing is more indicative of the spiritual condition of Israel than this. Before the people ever approached Gideon with such a request, they should have been pouring out their hearts in praise to the god who gave them victory, but that never occurred to them. And Gideon himself should have been the one leading such a celebration. They did not have the singing faith of Moses or Joshua or Deborah. Their hearts did not ring with praise to their God.”

Turn to Judges 5 and see the song of praise and thanksgiving to God by Deborah.

Turn to Deuteronomy chapter 32 and see the song of Moses.

Turn to Luke 17:11-19 and read and see the thanksgiving of one of the healed lepers.

God wants to hear our thanksgiving.

**1 Thessalonians 5:16 Rejoice always,**

**1 Thessalonians 5:17 pray without ceasing,**

**1 Thessalonians 5:18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.**

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The concept of a king was anticipated in the Torah.

**Deuteronomy 17:14** “When you enter the land which the Lord your God is giving you, and you take possession of it and live in it, and you say, ‘I will appoint a king over me like all the nations who are around me,’

**Deuteronomy 17:15** you shall in fact appoint a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses. One from among your countrymen you shall appoint as king over yourselves; you may not put a foreigner over yourselves, anyone who is not your countryman.

**Judges 8:23** But Gideon said to them, “I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you.”

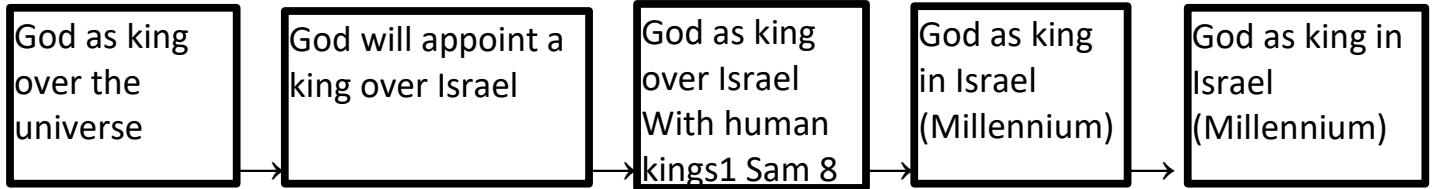
If Gideon really believed this, why did he name one of his son’s Abimelech? This name means “My father is king.” That would make Gideon, king. Perhaps he really wanted to be king, but knew that during the time of the judges, God was supposed to be in charge.

Is this a shadow of something that happens to Jesus Christ in the Gospels?

**John 6:14** Therefore when the people saw the sign which He (Jesus) had performed, they said, “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.”

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**John 6:15** So Jesus, aware that they intended to come and take Him by force to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself, alone.



**Judges 8:24** Yet Gideon said to them, “I would request of you, that each of you give me an earring from his plunder.” (For they had gold earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.)

**Judges 8:25** And they said, “We will certainly give them to you.” So they spread out a garment, and every one of them tossed an earring there from his plunder.

**Judges 8:26** The weight of the gold earrings that he requested was 1,700 shekels of gold, apart from the crescent amulets (signs of royalty), the ear pendants, and the purple robes which were on the kings of Midian, and apart from the neck chains that were on their camels’ necks.

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**Judges 8:27 Gideon made it into an ephod, and placed it in his city, Ophrah; but all Israel committed infidelity with it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and his household.**

Ephod. What is an ephod? Per Unger's Bible Dictionary,

“A sacred garment of gold, blue, purple, scarlet and fine twined linen worn by the Jewish high priest (Exod. 28:40).”

“In Israel, however, it early came to be a distinctive part of the sacred dress of the Levitical priesthood. It was as Israel's anointed king and accordingly as a special representative of Jehovah that David wore a linen ephod on the occasion of the transfer of the ark of God to his capital city, Jerusalem.”

“Perhaps Gideon's ephod refers to a high-priestly type garment with an unusual degree of gold ornamentation or to a replica of the high-priestly garment made of pure gold. However the amount of gold and the verbs used to describe Gideon's action (“made,” “set up”) mitigate against this understanding. Here “ephod” is perhaps used figuratively to represent not only the garment that clothed a sacred d image but also the image over which the garment was draped.

Block via Trent Butler:

“Block succinctly describes Gideon's trek along the “typical pattern of oriental kings: (1) he treated his subjects/ countrymen ruthlessly (8: 5–9, 13–17); (2) his actions were driven by a personal agenda rather than theological or national ideals; (3) he reacted to the death of his brothers as if they were royal assassinations requiring blood vengeance; (4) he made ridiculous demands on his people (v. 20); (5) he claimed for

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himself the symbols of royalty taken from the enemy” (299). He also demanded a “symbolic gesture of submission” in asking for the golden earrings (v 24), collected what amounted to a royal treasury (v 26), took control of the worship place as kings usually did (v 27), made his own home town the de facto capital of the country (v 27), and assembled a family that can be compared only to royal harems (v 30). He even named a son Abimelech, meaning “my father is king.” In addition to all this evidence that Gideon tacitly assumed the role of king of Israel, the wording in Judg 8: 29 that he lived in his house may well mean he was enthroned (Block, 299–301). For Block, then, “the conclusion seems inescapable that despite his protestation, Gideon actually assumed the role of king ‘over Israel.’ But his was an aberrant and illicit kingship from the beginning,” not initiated nor certified by Yahweh, the true King of Israel, and not devoted to Yahweh’s law or to Yahweh’s plan for his people. Rather, “for the first time idolatry is officially sponsored by a leader of the nation” (301).”

Mentioned above by Merrill Unger is that the ephod might have been a replica of the high-priestly type garment.”

“Perhaps Gideon’s ephod refers to a high-priestly type garment with an unusual degree of gold ornamentation or to a replica of the high-priestly garment made of pure gold.”

If so, then Gideon perhaps had secret ambitions of being both king and high-priest. But the true king who is a high-priest was yet to come in the person of Jesus.

**John 18:37 37 Therefore Pilate said to Him,  
“So You are a king?” Jesus answered, “You  
say correctly that I am a king. For this purpose  
I have been born, and for this I have come into**

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**the world: to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to My voice.”**

**Hebrews 3:1 Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession: Jesus;**

So, does this narrative of Gideon contain suggestions of a type of Jesus Christ as king and high priest?