

# Judges 8:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian.

## Analysis

**Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian.**

Israel's offer of hereditary monarchy represents theological crisis. The phrase 'rule thou over us' (meshal-banu, מְשַׁלֵּבָנָה) uses mashal (מְשַׁלֵּח, 'to rule, have dominion'), indicating governmental authority. The specification 'both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son' establishes dynastic succession—not temporary judgeship but permanent kingship passing through generations. This directly contradicts theocratic ideal where God alone reigns over Israel through temporary judges raised for specific crises.

The people's reasoning—"thou hast delivered us"—misattributes glory. Gideon didn't deliver Israel; God did (7:2, 7). This theological error—crediting human instrument rather than divine power—precisely fulfills God's concern about pride (7:2). Despite dramatic demonstration of divine agency (300 defeating 135,000), people still credit human leadership. This reveals human tendency toward visible, tangible leadership over invisible divine rule, foreshadowing 1 Samuel 8 where Israel demands king 'like all the nations' (1 Samuel 8:5), rejecting God's kingship (1 Samuel 8:7).

Theologically, this tension between divine rule and human governance reflects the

fall's consequences. Originally, God ruled humanity directly through Adam in Eden. Sin introduced rebellion requiring institutional authority structures (Genesis 9:6, Romans 13:1-7). Yet human government always proves inadequate, tending toward tyranny or chaos. Only Christ perfectly unites divine and human rule—God incarnate governing with perfect righteousness and love. Believers await His kingdom's consummation when 'the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ' (Revelation 11:15).

## Historical Context

---

Ancient Near Eastern kingship typically involved hereditary dynasties. Egyptian Pharaohs passed throne through royal family (though succession struggles occurred). Mesopotamian kings established dynasties, though coups and assassinations frequently interrupted succession. Canaanite city-states operated as hereditary monarchies—king's son (usually eldest) inherited throne. Israel's offer to Gideon followed regional norms—rewarding military deliverer with permanent political authority.

However, Israel's covenant structure differed fundamentally from surrounding monarchies. Yahweh was Israel's king (Exodus 15:18, Numbers 23:21, Deuteronomy 33:5), with human judges serving as temporary military-judicial leaders. This theocratic ideal distinguished Israel religiously and politically. The tension between this ideal and practical governance challenges characterized the judges period and eventually necessitated monarchy (though never fully resolving the theological problem).

Gideon's refusal seems noble, yet subsequent actions (making golden ephod, naming son Abimelech) suggest ambivalence. Abimelech ('my father is king') clearly implies royal pretensions, and Abimelech later claims kingship, murdering seventy brothers (9:1-6). Gideon's verbal rejection of kingship while maintaining kingly lifestyle and ambitions represents hypocrisy. True humility matches words with actions, rejecting not merely titles but power, privilege, and control that titles represent.

## Related Passages

---

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

## Study Questions

---

1. What 'kingships' (areas of control, authority, prestige) do you verbally disclaim while practically maintaining?
2. How does misattributing to human instruments what God accomplished reveal underlying spiritual blindness?
3. In what ways do Christians seek worldly power structures despite confessing Christ's lordship?

## Interlinear Text

---

בָּם בְּ כֹּה מְשַׁלֵּל יִאָמֶר וְ  
said Then the men of Israel unto Gideon Rule  
H559 H376 H3478 H413 H1439 H4910 H0 H1571

בְּ אֶת בְּ אֶת בְּ אֶת בְּ אֶת בְּ אֶת בְּ אֶת בְּ  
H859 H1571 and thy son's H1571 and thy son's and thy son's H3588  
H1121 H1121 H1121

הַוְשִׁעָתְךָ כִּי מִ דְּלִי  
also for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian  
H3467 H3027 H4080

---

From KJV Study • [kjvstudy.org](http://kjvstudy.org)