

1. Intro:

- a. Gift giving during Christmas means we all see the ads saying “give yourself the gift of ...”
- b. From what I can tell the earliest quote about self giving came from the stoic Marcus Aurelius. Not sure if this means he started a trend or not, but the quote goes some like “give yourself this retreat, and renew yourself.”
- c. This was consistent with stoic philosophy which is rooted in the self ability to take action in what you can control. If you can control it, then take the action. Give yourself the gift.
- d. Of course that’s not at all what the word gift means. A gift is something that leaves you and lands on another person for their benefit. The point of giving gifts in Christmas is that it costs you, the giver something, and the recipient, nothing.
- e. So giving a gift to the self is an oxymoron. It doesn’t make any sense. Giving a gift to the self is called taking. Taking. Either take or don’t take, but don’t call it a gift.

2. Text **Judges 8:22-35**

22 Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, “Rule over us, you and your son and your grandson also, for you have saved us from the hand of Midian.” 23 Gideon said to them, “I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the Lord will rule over you.” 24 And Gideon said to them, “Let me make a request of you: every one of you give me the earrings from his spoil.” (For they had golden earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.) 25 And they answered, “We will willingly give them.” And they spread a cloak, and every man threw in it the earrings of his spoil. 26 And the weight of the golden earrings that he requested was 1,700 shekels of gold, besides the crescent ornaments and the pendants and the purple garments worn by the kings of Midian, and besides the collars that were around the necks of their camels. 27 And Gideon made an ephod of it and put it in his city, in Ophrah. And all Israel whored after it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and to his family. 28 So Midian was subdued before the people of Israel, and they raised their heads no more. And the land had rest forty years in the days of Gideon.

29 Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and lived in his own house. 30 Now Gideon had seventy sons, his own offspring, for he had many wives. 31 And his concubine who was in Shechem also bore him a son, and he called his name Abimelech. 32 And Gideon the son of Joash died in a good old age and was buried in the tomb of Joash his father, at Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

33 As soon as Gideon died, the people of Israel turned again and whored after the Baals and made Baal-berith their god. 34 And the people of Israel did not remember the Lord their God, who had delivered them from the hand of all their enemies on every side, 35 and they did not show steadfast love to the family of Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) in return for all the good that he had done to Israel.

3. Pre-Observations

- a. In the book of judges, we see this cycle of God saving, the people rebelling in sin, God raising up a judge, then God saves them through that judge, then the people enjoy peace and rest right before what? Right before “the people of Israel did what was evil”

b. **Here’s a graph of it**

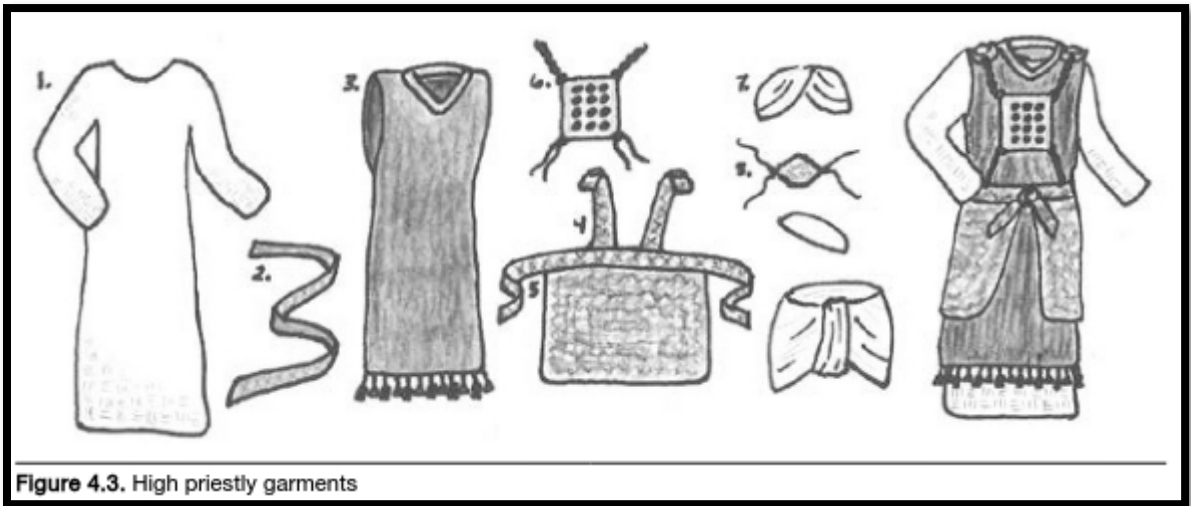
What happens when...	Israel "makes evil":
Joshua dies:	2:11 And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord
After the judges die this happens:	3:7 And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord
Othniel dies:	3:12 And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord
Ehud dies:	4:1 And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord
Barak dies:	6:1 The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord
Jair dies:	10:6 The people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord
Abdon dies:	13:1 And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord

- c. I’m bringing this up because when we see a story of God’s deliverance it is another opportunity to check to see what the outcome of that deliverance/salvation is. God saves, so now how are God’s people going to react?

- d. We read this in the book of Judges repeatedly, but this story starts off already in the negative. Without Gideon even dying the people of Israel react with a hard heart. Things have already started off worse than before.
4. Observations -Verse 22 **Judges 8:22** Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, “Rule over us, you and your son and your grandson also, for you have saved us from the hand of Midian.”
- a. As with any kind of advertising, this story grabs our attention right from the beginning. It starts out with an intense, whiplash inducing assessment of the men of Israel.
 - b. The men of Israel ask Gideon to rule over them, with his son and grandson, effectively what they are asking for is for Gideon to set up a dynastic kingdom. Gideon should be a king and his sons after him. They want a dynasty because all the nations around them have dynastic kings. This is the first time in all of the Bible that the people of God ask for a king. They want to be ruled like the other nations because their hearts are set on being people like the nations around them. Their hearts are set on not being set apart. Therefore, their hearts are set on not being with God.
 - i. And before we take issue with this as a unique problem with the people of Israel, I would draw to all our minds, how we become like the godless culture around us because of the sin in our own hearts. This isn't a unique OT Israelite problem.
 - c. Then we get the most damning of all assessments of the Israelites in that verse: “you have saved us from the hand of Midian”. Who saved them? This is a crazy inaccurate statement and if you just read it casually you might miss the weightiness of this assessment. The word for “saved” is the same word used time and again for “deliver”, “help”, “rescue”, “spare”, “victory”. It’s one word, embedded in the name of “Joshua” and it’s always, only ever used to refer to God when it concerns saving the people of Israel. Sure, God uses the judges of Israel to save Israel, but salvation, deliverance, help, rescue, being spared, are always ultimately tied to what YHWH does.
 - d. In fact God goes as far as to confirm this is what He wants to communicate when He says in **Joshua 7:2**: “The Lord said to Gideon, “The people with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel boast over me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me.’”
God went out of His way to demonstrate that it wasn't Gideon alone that saves. It was salvation through the judges, but only because God was with them and raised them up to begin with. How could Israel ever hope to defeat enemies that God Himself had raised up? To say that they could defeat their enemies apart from God is to say that they themselves could defeat God.
 - e. So it starts out pretty rough. But before I go on, I want to point something out. First, wanting a king isn't a bad thing. God says in Gen 17 that kings would come from Abraham. So we should be expecting kings. The Israelite's bible at this time also gave specific instruction for kings and how they were to act. **Deut. 17:15** “you may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD your God will choose.”. Israel was supposed to have a king, but the king is supposed to be chosen by God, and not by the people. God's kingdom is not a democracy. He is King and He alone chooses who can serve as a human-authority figure.
 - i. This is true in the time of Judges, this is true in the church today. No one who self declares authority in God's church is probably called by God. God calls, ordains, appoints, and raises up leaders.
5. General theme – Israel **presumes** to bless themselves
- a. The people of Israel decide to “bless themselves” with something God promised to give and decided to take a gift God was going to give anyway on their own terms and in their own time. They presume to take a king on their own terms. They presume to acquire the gift before its time.
 - b. Here is the great tragedy about this beginning. God would raise up a king for them anyway. God had already promised in Genesis 17 that He would raise up a king.
 - c. We see this failure repeat itself over and over in the Bible and we see it all over this chapter. God gives them one thing, judges, and when they get and things are going great-
 - d. they want another thing they think is better, dynastic kings like the other nations.

6. Observation verse 23: **8:23** “Gideon said to them, “I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the Lord will rule over you.” “
- Here Gideon gives an amazing half answer. Sure it is YHWH who will rule over you, but he doesn’t quite correct them on the fact that YHWH also saved them. His silence here is deafening. And it’s not like NOW YHWH will rule over them, He’s been ruling them as king this whole time (See Deut. 33:5).
 - It’s also a partly right answer because Gideon says he’s not going to rule over them, but then just goes on and acts like a king. How do we know he acts like a king? Because 1) he takes a massive spoil- 1700 shekels, or 40-50 pounds worth of gold, or, roughly \$1.5million, and 2) his kid’s name is “my father is king”, verse 31, Abimelech. 3) The spoil includes that of the kings themselves. The text points out the purple garments of kings in verse 26.
7. Observation verse 24
- 8:24** “And Gideon said to them, “Let me make a request of you: every one of you give me the earrings from his spoil.” (For they had golden earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.)“
 - This essentially is the exact same repeat of what happens in Exodus 32. And I want to read that section with you, just to refamiliarize ourselves with the story. Because this is a rather long story, let me just recount the events. First God rescues/saves/delivers Israel from Egypt, then He speaks to them at mount Sinai. God enters into a covenant with them so that they might be a priestly nation to the rest of the world. They meet God at the mountain, God speaks to everyone the words of the Law, Moses comes down, they agree to live in a way that reflects God’s character. They enter into a marriage agreement. Moses then goes back up the mountain, and gets instructions on how God and His people are going to meet. This is an important verse in all of this, God says **Exodus 25:2** “2 “Speak to the people of Israel, that they take for me a contribution. From every man whose heart moves him you shall receive the contribution for me.””. The people of God are going to meet in this little garden of Eden tent thing (Jesus’ pack n’ play) and God tells Moses that the people are to give him the spoils that Israel took from Egypt to build this place where God and His people are going to meet. The spoils are supposed to be taken from willing heart mind you and be used to build the tabernacle and the priestly garments (which includes the ephod).
 - It is while God is giving Moses instructions on the tabernacle, instructions on how to use all that spoil they got from Egypt, during that conversation between God and Moses, the people of Israel get impatient and presume to bless themselves.
 - It reads “**Exodus 32:1** When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, “Up, make (a.sah) us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.” ” As God instructs Moses on the tabernacle, the people don’t want to wait for that blessing, so the people ask (like in Judges here) for something that isn’t of God which they think will benefit them. The people decide to make for themselves “gods who will go before them”. They want a god of their own making to bless them how they think they ought to be blessed so they “gift themselves” a god who goes before them.
 - And what does Aaron do? Aaron does what Gideon will later do. Aaron says **Exodus 32:2** “So Aaron said to them, “Take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.”” The word for rings and earrings are the same. He asks for gold earrings and fashions them into an idol so that the people might have a god that “goes before them” as they travel out of Egypt.
 - Gideon presumes to act like Aaron (who was called by God) and makes a similar request, with the same kind of tastelessness that Aaron had. Even if Gideon had the best intentions, this was a bad idea.
8. Observation verse 25 - **Judges 8:25** And they answered, “We will willingly give them.” And they spread a cloak, and every man threw in it the earrings of his spoil.
- Gideon leads Israel to sin, and read how tragic this is, they “willingly give”. No one is coercing this tax on the people, the people are so corrupt they willingly give their gold income for Gideon’s cause.
 - Quick reminder here is that there is nothing wrong with the Israelites gathering the spoils of war. In fact God tells them to enjoy the spoils, see Deut. 20:14. The tragedy is greater when we realize we like the Israelites enjoy sinning with the things God blesses us with.

- ii. All spoil is for their enjoyment unless God says they aren't supposed to have. And what's the point of the spoils of war? The point of all the spoil is that it is meant to build up a place of worship for God. Whether land or tabernacle, or temple or home. If they don't turn spoil into worship, they turn it into something for the self, or idolatry.
9. Observation verse 27 - **Judges 8:27** *And Gideon made an ephod of it and put it in his city, in Ophrah. And all Israel whored after it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and to his family.*
- a. After taking a king's ransom, Gideon makes a high priest garment and just like Aaron, the people commit idolatry to it. An Ephod is something that the priests wore in service to God in God's meeting place- the tabernacle. Regular Levitical priests wore a linen ephod, but the high priest wore the blinged out ephod. It had gold and precious gems on it. This ephod allowed the person God chose to bear the name of all of Israel before God so that God would remember Israel (not because He forgot, but to be mindful of Israel). As God remembers His people through this mediator, this mediator (the high priest) represents God to Israel.
 - b. **Here's a picture of an ephod #4 - High priestly garments drawing by Carmen Joy Imes.**



- c. Gideon makes this High Priest's garment, a false religious item and sets up a new place of worship in Ophrah. Maybe he doesn't want to go all the way back to Shiloh to worship at the tabernacle there? Perhaps he didn't want to make the journey whenever he would need to inquire of God. He had the priestly garment that contained the Urim and Thummim which were used of the High Priest to inquire of God to get yes and no answers. Perhaps he thinks he can act like a priest because of the sacrifice he was part of in chapter 6. Or because he's judge and will need to ask God questions, perhaps he thinks he can make the article of clothing that makes God give answers.
 - d. The point being, is that Gideon takes a responsibility that is not his to take.
10. General Theme – Gideon presumes to bless himself
- a. Gideon presumes on himself being a king. We've seen how his actions don't match his statement and his actions presume to give himself a life that God hasn't given him yet.
 - b. But here Gideon presumes again by presuming the role of a priest, and not just any priest, the high priest! Gideon does what the first high priest does, so that he can fashion himself a high priest's garment. In doing so, Gideon establishes for himself another dynasty. He may have rejected the kingly dynasty, but he certainly agrees to create a priestly dynasty since High priests are succeeded by their sons.
 - c. Gideon takes on the role of God who establishes the who gets to act as high priest. Gideon takes on the role of someone who can speak for God, without God assigning him this office.
11. Summary and transition –
- a. In great tragedy we see Israel and Gideon presuming to take from God's hands blessings that they want on their own terms.
 - b. This is the story of the bible.
 - i. Adam and Eve presume to bless themselves to be like God and they take the fruit.

- ii. Abraham presumes to take the gift of a child that God promises and has a son with his concubine. Ishmael is a product of Abraham seizing his own blessing, and Ishmael’s sons are now in this passage hundreds of years later oppressing Abraham’s other son, Isaac.
- iii. Aaron presumes to make a god for Israel to lead them on their journey out of Egypt.
- iv. Israel presumes to make for themselves a political solution to all the oppression by having a leader like all the other nations, and
- v. Gideon follows up with presuming to take the spoils of a king while acting as a high priest.
- c. All of this is a great, great tragedy. First because it’s betrayal to God who blesses us with all these things in the first place. But second it’s a great, great tragedy because God was going to bless them with these things anyway.
- d. Here’s an image

The Sin	The Tragedy: God was going to give the blessing at the right time
Adam presumes by taking from the tree of knowledge of good and evil to become like God	God was always going to give Adam the knowledge of good and evil and have us be like God (1 Kings 3:9, John 1:12, 2 Pet 1:3-4)
Abraham presumes by taking the gift of the promise of a child by impregnating Hagar	God was always going to give Abraham a child, but it was going to be with his wife
Aaron presumes to make a god who would lead them out of Egypt	God was always going to give Aaron a God to lead them out of Egypt, but it was going to be in a pillar of fire and smoke
Israel presumes to make for themselves a king	God was always going to give Israel in the book of Judges a dynastic king, but the right king was David because God chose them
Gideon presumes in acting like a king and a high priest	God was always planning on having a priest-king. He promises that in Zechariah 6:9-15 and gives us Jesus as described in Hebrews 8:1-2

12. Us today

- a. Are we not like the Israelites? Do we not fabricate blessings of our own making? Do we not reject God’s timing? Do we all not presume to bless ourselves? To make for ourselves a solution of our own making?

13. Based on our passage and our cycle of sin, we would need the following solutions

- a. We need a faithful Israel who does not presume to bless himself
- b. We need a faithful Judge who can lead the people and not presume to take on more than what’s assigned
- c. We need a faithful King who does not presume to take a king’s spoil for the sake of being like the other kings
- d. We need a faithful High priest who is readily available in Shiloh or in Ophrah or anywhere else we need help

14. We obviously need the faithful Israelite, High Priest, King who Judges all. We need Jesus.

- a. Consider how much Jesus doesn’t presume His roles as we read this familiar verse:
Philippians 2:6-8 *6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*
- b. Of all persons who could presume anything, Jesus would have been that One. Yet, He does not.
- c. Even now!!

15. How then shall we live?

- a. Even now God doesn’t presume but waits for His perfect timing. Is life going well? Even now, wait on the Lord and ask God for direction. Even now, especially if you are facing the hardships of life, do not seek to escape the hardships of life without running to God. Jesus did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped. Run to the one who when he had no food or shelter rejected the kingdoms of the world because it wasn’t His time. That God is the kind of God who is not far off. If He wasn’t far off from us when He could have been here on earth, then Jesus isn’t far off now. If Jesus is not yet taking the whole world now when He rightly has claim to it, then there is only one reason why, it is not the time to take the Kingdoms of this world. He is waiting on His Father’s timing and the work of The Spirit in the church.
 - i. If He hasn’t given you relief from your suffering yet, He is not far from us when we suffer, wait for His timing of when the suffering will end, and it will. We don’t wait alone we wait with Jesus

who is waiting for His Father's timing, for the work of The Spirit. Run to Him and stay there until the end, it will be so much better than the gift we might give, or rather take for ourselves.