

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles with me to Judges 9

We spent the last three Wed night studies on the life Gideon –

And the Lord used Gideon to deliver Israel from Midianites,

And one of the things that we saw in our studies is that the Lord did in a way to demonstrate that it was He who brought deliverance.

It wasn't by man's might that the Gideon defeated the Midianites – because the Lord only allowed him to have a 300 unarmed army to go against 135k Midianites.

However, after delivering the Israelites – as we saw in our study last week, it appeared that Gideon forgot to give God all the glory.

The people wanted to make him king –

And he said the right thing – he declined and told them that the Lord was going to rule over them –

But we saw that his actions didn't match up with his words

He said he didn't want to be king – but we saw that he sure wanted to live like a king.

He wanted the spoils of victory like a king

He had many wives like a king

He had many sons like a king

He had at least one concubine – who gave him a son and he decided to name him – Abimelech which means - “son of a king”

So when Gideon died – he left a void – and as we will see in our text this evening, it was a void that Abimelech wanted to fill.

Gideon might not have wanted to be king – but Abimelech did.

Let's pray...

[Jdg 9:1-57 NKJV] 1 Then Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal (Gideon) went to Shechem, to his mother's brothers, and spoke with them and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, saying, 2 "Please speak in the hearing of all the men of Shechem: 'Which is better for you, that all seventy of the sons of Jerubbaal reign over you, or that one reign over you?' Remember that I [am] your own flesh and bone." 3 And his mother's brothers spoke all these words concerning him in the hearing of all the men of Shechem; and their heart was inclined to follow Abimelech, for they said, "He is our brother."

One of the things that I mentioned last week – was that Abimelech, because he was the son of a concubine – he didn't have any right to his father's inheritance.

Gideon's inheritance belonged to the seventy sons he had with his wives.

With Gideon dead, he was #71 on the depth-chart for leadership.

So Abimelech goes to his family members in Shechem –

Now, to truly understand what is going on here – Shechem is a much bigger city than Ophrah – where Gideon's other sons lives

So Abimelech is making a power mover here.

He is telling his uncles –

“Wouldn't it be better to just have one person in charge?

And since I'm related to you, why not pick me - after all, think about my name – my father was the king!

So, Abimelech's uncles held a meeting with the men of Shechem & laid out the proposition and all the men of Shechem agreed and threw their support behind Abimelech.

4 So they gave him seventy [shekels] of silver from the temple of Baal-Berith, with which Abimelech hired worthless and reckless men; and they followed him.

I want you to think about the irony here –

Abimelech's father was Gideon who was known as Jerrubaal – the one who contended with Baal

Yet, here we see the people taking money from one of the temples of Baal to give to Abimelech to hire these goons that are going to help him to power.

These goons are going to be paid 1 shekel for each of Gideon's sons that they are going to kill.

5 Then he went to his father's house at Ophrah and killed his brothers, the seventy sons of Jerubbaal, on one stone. But Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left, because he hid himself.

So Abimelech – with the help of these men, they gather the brothers and execute them one at a time – most likely from oldest to youngest

I had you make a note that they were executed on one stone – meaning that they were most likely offered up as human sacrifices to the god of Baal.

But notice, one of the sons escaped – the youngest.

6 And all the men of Shechem gathered together, all of Beth Millo, and they went and made Abimelech king beside the terebinth tree at the pillar that [was] in Shechem.

They make Abimelech king –

He was ruling over the people of Shechem

But I want you to notice where they make him king –

Besides the terebinth tree

This is the same terebinth tree where the Lord appeared to Abram (Gen 12)

This is the same place where Jacob buried the idols that Leah and Rachel had stolen from their father as he called his family back to God

The pillar here refers to the monument that Joshua made with the people – in reaffirming their obedience to God (Joshua 24)

And here, Abimelech taints all that sacred history because of his selfish ambitions.

7 Now when they told Jotham, he went and stood on top of Mount Gerizim, and lifted his voice and cried out. And he said to them: "Listen to me, you men of Shechem, That God may listen to you!

Jotham – the youngest son – when he finds out that the men have made Abimelech king – he goes up to Mt Gerizem – which is a hill next to Shechem

And he challenges the people of Shechem with a parable/fable -

8 "The trees once went forth to anoint a king over them. And they said to the olive tree, 'Reign over us!' 9 But the olive tree said to them, 'Should I cease giving my oil, With which they honor God and men, And go to sway over trees?'

10 "Then the trees said to the fig tree, 'You come [and] reign over us!' 11 But the fig tree said to them, 'Should I cease my sweetness and my good fruit, And go to sway over trees?' 12 "Then the trees said to the vine, 'You come [and] reign over us!' 13 But the vine said to them, 'Should I cease my new wine, Which cheers [both] God and men, And go to sway over trees?' 14 "Then all the trees said to the bramble, 'You come [and] reign over us!'"

So from verse 8-14, we have a good portion of the parable.

The trees want a king

They go to the olive tree, they go to the fig tree and then they go to the vine –

None of the first three had any ambitions in ruling over the trees.

They were more than content with what God had made them, and the work He had given them to do.

Their only concern was fruitfulness.

They had no envy, no selfish ambition.

They wanted to just keep cranking-out olives, and figs, and grapes, for God's glory, and for the good of men.

All the judges up to this point would be a good example of one of these trees.

Then the trees went to the bramble – think of the bramble as a small cholla

15 And the bramble said to the trees, 'If in truth you anoint me as king over you, [Then] come [and] take shelter in my shade; But if not, let fire come out of the bramble And devour the cedars of Lebanon!'

Jotham's point in verse 15 is that the bramble is unfit for the trees to shelter under it.

Nevertheless, if the trees refuse to take shelter under it, the bramble will combust & set them on fire.

Abimelech is the bramble

The people have made him king –

But he is an unfit king – and Jotham is warning the people that the alliance they had made with him would come back to bite them.

16 "Now therefore, if you have acted in truth and sincerity in making Abimelech king, and if you have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done to him as he deserves-- 17 "for my father fought for you, risked his life, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian; 18 "but you have risen up against my father's house this day, and killed his seventy sons on one stone, and made Abimelech, the son of his female servant, king over the men of Shechem, because he is your brother-- 19 "if then you have acted in truth and sincerity with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, [then] rejoice in Abimelech, and let him

also rejoice in you. 20 "But if not, let fire come from Abimelech and devour the men of Shechem and Beth Millo; and let fire come from the men of Shechem and from Beth Millo and devour Abimelech!" 21 And Jotham ran away and fled; and he went to Beer and dwelt there, for fear of Abimelech his brother.

Jotham's message to the men of Shechem -

You reap what you sow.

You benefitted from what my father did – and you turn around and killed all his sons

He says that if what they've done is right & good, then fine.

But if it's wrong, then may the men of Shechem and Abimelech be proven worthy of each other in their mutual destruction.

Having said his piece, Jotham splits, & we don't hear from him again.

Notice, God gave him a word, and he spoke it, at great risk, and through much personal difficulty.

He did it with dignity and integrity. He did not seek retaliation or revenge; he left that with God.

22 After Abimelech had reigned over Israel three years, 23 God sent a spirit of ill will between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech, 24 that the crime [done] to the seventy sons of

Jerubbaal might be settled and their blood be laid on Abimelech their brother, who killed them, and on the men of Shechem, who aided him in the killing of his brothers. 25 And the men of Shechem set men in ambush against him on the tops of the mountains, and they robbed all who passed by them along that way; and it was told Abimelech.

So here we see that after three years – the men of Shechem are no longer happy with Abimelech.

So they start disrupting the trade routes around town –

Remember, if Abimelech is king – it is his responsibility to keep order

So the men of Shechem are trying to make him look bad.

26 Now Gaal the son of Ebed came with his brothers and went over to Shechem; and the men of Shechem put their confidence in him. 27 So they went out into the fields, and gathered [grapes] from their vineyards and trod [them], and made merry. And they went into the house of their god, and ate and drank, and cursed Abimelech.

This individual Gaal shows up –

He is a Canaanite.

And the men of Shechem – they want to get rid of Abimelech – so they decide to make an alliance with Gaal

And as they are celebrating the wine harvest – after drinking some liquid courage – Gaal decides that he is going to challenge Abimelech

28 Then Gaal the son of Ebed said, "Who [is] Abimelech, and who [is] Shechem, that we should serve him? [Is he] not the son of Jerubbaal, and [is not] Zebul his officer? Serve the men of Hamor the father of Shechem; but why should we serve him? 29 "If only this people were under my authority! Then I would remove Abimelech." So he said to Abimelech, "Increase your army and come out!"

Gaal played the race card. Abimelech identified with the men of Shechem, as their kin, because of his mom.

But his dad was an Israelite –

“Why are we letting this half-Jew rule over us? I could do a much better job than Abimelech – I’m 100% Canaanite”

Keep in mind that he is drunk.

30 When Zebul, the ruler of the city, heard the words of Gaal the son of Ebed, his anger was aroused. 31 And he sent messengers to Abimelech secretly, saying, "Take note! Gaal the son of Ebed and his brothers have come to Shechem; and here they are, fortifying the city against you. 32 "Now therefore, get up by night,

you and the people who [are] with you, and lie in wait in the field. 33 "And it shall be, as soon as the sun is up in the morning, [that] you shall rise early and rush upon the city; and [when] he and the people who are with him come out against you, you may then do to them as you find opportunity." 34 So Abimelech and all the people who [were] with him rose by night, and lay in wait against Shechem in four companies. 35 When Gaal the son of Ebed went out and stood in the entrance to the city gate, Abimelech and the people who [were] with him rose from lying in wait. 36 And when Gaal saw the people, he said to Zebul, "Look, people are coming down from the tops of the mountains!" But Zebul said to him, "You see the shadows of the mountains as [if they were] men." 37 So Gaal spoke again and said, "See, people are coming down from the center of the land, and another company is coming from the Diviners' Terebinth Tree." 38 Then Zebul said to him, "Where indeed [is] your mouth now, with which you said, 'Who is Abimelech, that we should serve him?' [Are] not these the people whom you despised? Go out, if you will, and fight with them now." 39 So Gaal went out, leading the men of Shechem, and fought with Abimelech. 40 And Abimelech chased him, and he fled from him; and many fell wounded, to the [very] entrance of the gate. 41 Then Abimelech dwelt at Arumah, and Zebul drove out Gaal and his brothers, so that they would not dwell in Shechem.

Zebul sends word to Abimelech that Gaal is talking smack

He tells Abimelech that he should attack early in the morning

In the morning, Gaal is in the midst of a hangover.

He thinks he sees an approaching army – but Zebul tells him that he is seeing pink elephants – Zebu is on Abimelech's side - he is trying to get him to delay calling his forces together

And finally Gaal realizes that they are being attacked but it is too late to assemble his troops together and they are defeated.

He never saw it coming until it was too late – keep this in your mind – because the same thing is going to happen to Abimelech.

42 And it came about on the next day that the people went out into the field, and they told Abimelech. 43 So he took his people, divided them into three companies, and lay in wait in the field. And he looked, and there were the people, coming out of the city; and he rose against them and attacked them. 44 Then Abimelech and the company that [was] with him rushed forward and stood at the entrance of the gate of the city; and the [other] two companies rushed upon all who [were] in the fields and killed them.

Remember what Jotham said in the parable about the bramble –

He said, if you aren't right in this, Abimelech is going to burn you –

And that is exactly what Abimelech is doing here –

The people go to work in the fields – as they go pick grapes, Abimelech kills them

45 So Abimelech fought against the city all that day; he took the city and killed the people who [were] in it; and he demolished the city and sowed it with salt.

Not only did he kill the people, he destroyed the land by pouring salt on it - this makes the land worthless, you won't be able to grow anything again.

46 Now when all the men of the tower of Shechem had heard [that], they entered the stronghold of the temple of the god Berith. 47 And it was told Abimelech that all the men of the tower of Shechem were gathered together. 48 Then Abimelech went up to Mount Zalmon, he and all the people who [were] with him. And Abimelech took an ax in his hand and cut down a bough from the trees, and took it and laid [it] on his shoulder; then he said to the people who were with him, "What you have seen me do, make haste [and] do as I [have done]." 49 So each of the people likewise cut down his own bough and followed Abimelech, put [them] against the stronghold, and set the stronghold on fire above them, so that all the people of the tower of Shechem died, about a thousand men and women.

Abimelech finds out that there are men that are gathered in the temple – they were hiding out.

Abimelech cuts a branch from a tree and tells his men to do the same thing – and they take those branches and set fire to the temple with the men that were hiding out.

Again – we see the parable that Jotham had spoken to the people

Abimelech is going to burn you – and that is exactly what he did.

50 Then Abimelech went to Thebez, and he encamped against Thebez and took it. 51 But there was a strong tower in the city, and all the men and women--all the people of the city--fled there and shut themselves in; then they went up to the top of the tower. 52 So Abimelech came as far as the tower and fought against it; and he drew near the door of the tower to burn it with fire.

Notice how Abimelech seems to be prospering.

He defeated Gaal.

He overwhelmed the men of Shechem.

And now he has his eyes set on Thebez

He just came from burning a bunch of guys in Shechem – he has his eyes set on doing the same thing here – if it ain't broke. Why fix it.

He is making it look easy

Church -

Just because evil seems to be prospering is no reason to think God is not at work.

He is always working all things together for His glory, and for our good.

No one had any thoughts of divine intervention - yet God's intervention had brought Abimelech, of his own free will, to this very spot.

53 But a certain woman dropped an upper millstone on Abimelech's head and crushed his skull.

Abimelech was overconfident – he had done this before – it was easy

And then the unexpected -

A certain woman dropped an upper millstone –

This was the stone used to make wheat & bread.

It was the rolling pin of that day – would weigh about 5-7 pounds – but dropped from a high distance – it would easily cause damage.

54 Then he called quickly to the young man, his armorbearer, and said to him, "Draw your sword and kill me, lest men say of me, 'A woman killed him.'" So his young man thrust him through, and he died. 55 And when the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they departed, every man to his place.

When Abimelech realized the weapon that had killed him was a kitchen utensil hurled by a woman, he was undone!

So he asked that his servant kill him before he died of the wound, & forever have the reputation of having been killed by a woman.

As soon as Abimelech was dead, his men quit fighting.

The whole battle was over one thing – Abimelech’s pride.

56 Thus God repaid the wickedness of Abimelech, which he had done to his father by killing his seventy brothers. 57 And all the evil of the men of Shechem God returned on their own heads, and on them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal.

[Gal 6:7 NKJV] 7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

That is what we see here in chapter 9 –

Abimelech sowed a seed when he killed his seventy half brothers

He wanted to be crowned – he wanted to fill the void left by his father and in the end, he was crowned with a millstone

May God deliver from walking in the footsteps of Abimelech?

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

