

ABIMELECH

JUDGES 9

Remember the 'Judges cycle' - Israel sins, God sends them into slavery, Israel cries out and God sends a Judge to rescue them. What we'll discover is that this doesn't happen in chapter 9. But before we get into that, we need to remember what happened at the end of the story of Gideon.

Background Briefing

Last time in Judges we met Gideon who became known as 'Jerubbaal', a name which spoke of his opposition to the worship of the pagan god, Baal. He was a man who trusted God, was used by God to defeat the Midianites, and when was asked to become king, he resisted and made the point that it is only the Lord who should rule (8:23).

But, things do start to slide for Jerubbaal. He led the people to prostitute themselves before an idol (8:27), and it's following his death that the nation's idolatry becomes full-blown (8:33). It's in the midst of this that he had one particular son named Abimelech (8:29-31)...

Read Judges 9:1-21

1. What is it about Abimelech's rise to power that makes him not a judge?
2. What does Abimelech ask? (v1-2) Why do the people accept?
3. Where do they find money for Abimelech? How does he use the money?
4. How does he become king?

Abimelech's name means 'my father is king' and Abimelech seems to think kingship is his right. This isn't a leader who God has appointed to save Israel, this is a leader who wants to take power so that he can rule.

He heads straight to his mother's family with the expectation that he should be ruling over them. And the place he goes to is important. Shechem is a place of great significance in the history of Israel. Just near Shechem is Mt Gerizim. That is where Moses told the people to stand and proclaim the blessings of the covenant (Deuteronomy 27:9-26). But now we see the opposite from blessings - we get Jotham's curse!

5. Who is Jotham? (v5)
6. What seems to be the point of Jotham's tale?

7. How does he apply it?

In this passage, Jotham says what he thinks of the deal between Shechem and Abimelech. Basically he's saying that Abimelech is pretty worthless! And not only that! He's also implying that Abimelech does not deserve to be made king by the people of Shechem. So he expects them to burn.

Read Judges 9:22-57

In these verses, we are introduced to new person, Gaal. But before that, something interesting happens.

8. What does God do after three years of Abimelech's rule?

9. Why did he do it v24?

10. What is the result?

And this is when Gaal comes on the scene...

11. How does he present himself to the people? What does he try to do?

12. What is the end result for Abimelech? What is fitting about this?

13. How do you think God is at work amidst all this evil? (v23-24, 56-57)

14. What is one word you would use to describe God's actions on Abimelech and the people of Shechem?

Jotham's speech earlier on foretold (more than he could have known) what was to come for Shechem. They were killed in the same way they killed others. And it isn't a coincidence or accident. Verses 23-24 and 56-57 tells us God is behind all these things. . Notice that Abimelech's demise is a scandalous/shocking death, akin to what happened to Ehud (chapter 3) or Sisera (chapter 4). This anti-judge is judged by God.

Read 2 Thessalonians 1:5-12

15. How certain is God's judgement on his enemies?

16. How should this affect our response when we see bad things happening?