

Judges Chapter 09 Commentary

1 ¶ "And Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem unto his mother's brethren, and communed with them, and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, saying, 2 Speak, I pray you, in the ears of all the men of Shechem, Whether is better for you, either that all the sons of Jerubbaal, which are threescore and ten persons, reign over you, or that one reign over you? remember also that I am your bone and your flesh."

Gideon's name for this child may have pointed him in the direction he takes. The first definition of Abimelech is *father of (the) king*; and the root words, means *to ascend to the throne or induct into royalty, king or royal*.

With the death of Gideon, Israel again turns from God to idolatry. This time God does not use outsiders to bring Israel to repentance, rather, the destruction comes from within, Now, we shall see the aftermath of Gideon's living an ungodly lifestyle set forth in his children from his multiple wives. Abimelech's mother, one of Gideon's wives, was from Shechem. Abimelech goes to the people of Shechem and politics them to set him up to reign as king. He is seeking a position to which God has not him.

People tend to assume that the leadership should continue in the same family lineage, forgetting that God has told Israel that he will choose their leaders. Understand, sometimes it is God's will, that the rulership of Israel be passed down through the family lineage. However, when men turn from God, God often changes leadership to a new family. This is true in the natural aspect, only; because God has chosen one of his family, his Son, to be king forever over the family of God's people.

Our lesson: Spiritually; If a person is seeking an office, which God has not called him to, mark that man and do not allow him to gain his goal. He will bring much discord and destruction into the church. This is also true in the natural aspect. A person seeking office, for the wrong reason, is a person you do not want in that office. It will surely bring much trouble and sorrow to those affected thereby.

3 "And his mother's brethren spake of him in the ears of all the men of Shechem all these words: and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech; for they said, He is our brother. 4 And they gave him threescore and ten pieces of silver out of the house of Baalberith, wherewith Abimelech hired vain and light persons, which followed him."

They give Abimelech money, from the house of their false god, which he uses to hire persons to go around with him. This gives him the appearance of being a person of importance. We know that he is not called by God to the office, because he must hire people to follow him. God always draws the people to those he appoints. Notice, that Abimelech does not hire godly, or goodly, persons, but rather, ungodly persons.

Another principle to look for in the church; if others begin to promote one for an office, who is not God called to that office in the church, mark that group and the person they are promoting. Surely, this action will bring trouble and confusion into the church. Any time there is the promotion of man it will have bad results. Only the promotion of God given gifts, with all glory and praise directed to God, will produce good fruit.

5 "And he went unto his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren the sons of Jerubbaal, being threescore and ten persons, upon one stone: notwithstanding yet Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left; for he hid himself. 6 And all the men of Shechem gathered together, and all the house of Millo, and went, and made Abimelech king, by the plain of the pillar that was in Shechem."

Apparently, his brethren, which dwelt in his father's house, did not know of Abimelech's actions at Shechem. Had they known, they would have taken precautions, and watched for his diabolical scheming. They are all slain but Jotham, who hid when he saw what was happening.

Matthew Henry points out: Israel has become so corrupted that they are insensitive to what is happening. No one comes forward to rebuke Abimelech for the murder of his very own family. We have witnessed this in the church, people become insensitive and fail to stand up when others are wronged.

Notice, after Abimelech does his dastardly deed of killing his family, they make him king. Certainly, this is an indication to us that this is not godly order.

May God grant his people such a love for him, if his name is maltreated, his people cannot keep quiet, but they will stand in defense of his honor. May God grant his people such a love for one another, that they cannot keep quiet, when one of their number is wounded or mistreated, but they will stand in defense of their honor.

7 ¶ "And when they told it to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you. 8 The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us. 9 But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? 10 And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, and reign over us. 11 But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees? 12 Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us. 13 And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? 14 Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us. 15 And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon."

When Jotham is told, of all that Abimelech and the men of Shechem have done; he stands upon mount Gerizim and prophesies. Jotham puts forth three tree parables and then the bramble parable. These parables set forth the truth that Abimelech, and the men of Shechem, have totally denied anything godly, and they have asked the devil to reign over them. Simply put; Jotham tells them they have done wrong and that they will be destroyed for their sin.

The lesson for us: If we seek to promote ourselves, we are not deserving of what we wish to acquire. If people try to promote us to positions, we know that God has not called us to fill, refuse to take such a position. Why? Because, it will be detrimental to you, and those promoting you. By seeking an office, or accepting an office, that God has not called you to fill; you are exercising the leadership of the devil in your life, seen in: **Ga 5:19-26; 19 "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envying, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such**

like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. 24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. 26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another."

16 "Now therefore, if ye have done truly and sincerely, in that ye have made Abimelech king, and if ye have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done unto him according to the deserving of his hands; 17 (For my father fought for you, and adventured his life far, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian: 18 And ye are risen up against my father's house this day, and have slain his sons, threescore and ten persons, upon one stone, and have made Abimelech, the son of his maidservant, king over the men of Shechem, because he is your brother;) 19 If ye then have dealt truly and sincerely with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, then rejoice ye in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you: 20 But if not, let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo; and let fire come out from the men of Shechem, and from the house of Millo, and devour Abimelech. 21 And Jotham ran away, and fled, and went to Beer, and dwelt there, for fear of Abimelech his brother."

It is interesting that Jotham is standing upon mount Gerizim, the mount of blessing, and not upon mount Ebal, the mount of curses. However, if you notice the tone of Jotham's prophesy, you will see that he puts the parables forth in question form, asking them to examine themselves for rightness, and asking if they are about God's business. Telling them; if you have done right, God will bless you, but, if you have not done right, God will punish you.

Jotham continues his prophesy. He tells them to weigh their actions in the balances and see if they have dealt fairly with Gideon's family. He reminds them, Gideon risked his life to free them from the Midianites. Finally, Jotham prophesies their destruction of each other, and flees for his own safety. Abimelech is to destroy the men of Shechem and the house of Millo, and the men of Shechem and the house of Millo is to destroy Abimelech. We will come back to this later in the chapter.

Our lesson is: we should examine all our actions to determine if they are of the flesh or after the commandment of God. I refer you back to the scripture again in: *Ga 5:19-26; 19 "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envying, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. 24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. 26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another."* If the intent of our hearts is any of the things described in *Ga 5:19-21*; we have evidence that we should refrain from doing the desires of our heart. If the intent of our hearts is any of the things described in *Ga 5:22-25*; we have evidence that the desires of our heart are in alignment with the will of God and "*thus saith the Lord.*"

22 ¶ "When Abimelech had reigned three years over Israel, 23 Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech:

24 That the cruelty done to the threescore and ten sons of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood be laid upon Abimelech their brother, which slew them; and upon the men of Shechem, which aided him in the killing of his brethren. 25 And the men of Shechem set liers in wait for him in the top of the mountains, and they robbed all that came along that way by them: and it was told Abimelech."

Some people will read **Jg 9:23** and accuse God of being the author of sin. However, I point out, it does not say that God created an evil spirit. God, being all powerful, directed the path of a spirit that was already evil, which already existed, to bring about the destruction of these evil men. Remember that Jesus told us: **Mr 3:25 "And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand."** We see that God has directed an evil spirit, probably against its own will, to the house of evil, and thus the divided house will fall. This action of God will fulfill the prophesy of Jotham.

Notice, Israel now has a self-proclaimed king, not a God appointed king. God sends an evil spirit to cause disquiet between Abimelech and the men of Shechem, who put him in this office. This is to fulfill the prophesy of Jotham, and to bring the sin of Abimelech in slaying his brethren upon his own head, and to bring the guilt of the men of Shechem for assisting in killing the sons of Gideon, upon their heads. This evil spirit brought about the separation of Abimelech and the men of Shechem so that they will be fighting each other.

26 "And Gaal the son of Ebed came with his brethren, and went over to Shechem: and the men of Shechem put their confidence in him. 27 And they went out into the fields, and gathered their vineyards, and trode the grapes, and made merry, and went into the house of their god, and did eat and drink, and cursed Abimelech. 28 And Gaal the son of Ebed said, Who is Abimelech, and who is Shechem, that we should serve him? is not he the son of Jerubbaal? and Zebul his officer? serve the men of Hamor the father of Shechem: for why should we serve him? 29 And would to God this people were under my hand! then would I remove Abimelech. And he said to Abimelech, Increase thine army, and come out."

Notice, the men of Shechem now forsake Abimelech, their hired king, and turn to Gaal. Thus, we see; the evil spirit has done its work separation. Gaal and his brethren come to the men of Shechem, and together they conspire against Abimelech. During their drunken partying, Gaal cursed Abimelech and Zebul, Abimelech's ruler in Shechem. Gaal tries to set himself up as king. Gaal sends forth a challenge to Abimelech to come to war against himself and the men of Shechem.

Notice how easily bought friendships, and allegiances, are changed. Only death separates true love and friendships. We see this very principle explained in: **Ro 8:35-39; 35 "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."** When we read this, it is easy to understand; there is no love of God in the hearts of Abimelech and his followers, nor in Gaal and his followers, and that all these have separated themselves from God. Jotham is the only one, in this chapter, that has spoken of God or stood for God.

30 "And when Zebul the ruler of the city heard the words of Gaal the son of Ebed, his anger was kindled. 31 And he sent messengers unto Abimelech privily, saying, Behold, Gaal the son of Ebed and his brethren be come to Shechem; and, behold, they fortify the city against thee. 32 Now therefore up by night, thou and the people that is with thee, and lie in wait in the field: 33 And it shall be, that in the morning, as soon as the sun is up, thou shalt rise early, and set upon the city: and, behold, when he and the people that is with him come out against thee, then mayest thou do to them as thou shalt find occasion. 34 And Abimelech rose up, and all the people that were with him, by night, and they laid wait against Shechem in four companies."

Zebul, who is ruler of the city, who is in league with Abimelech, sends a message to Abimelech; come by night and set a trap for Gaal and the men of Shechem, which Abimelech does. The evil spirit is still at work, accomplishing the fulfilment of Jotham's prophesy.

35 "And Gaal the son of Ebed went out, and stood in the entering of the gate of the city: and Abimelech rose up, and the people that were with him, from lying in wait. 36 And when Gaal saw the people, he said to Zebul, Behold, there come people down from the top of the mountains. And Zebul said unto him, Thou seest the shadow of the mountains as if they were men. 37 And Gaal spake again and said, See there come people down by the middle of the land, and another company come along by the plain of Meonenum. 38 Then said Zebul unto him, Where is now thy mouth, wherewith thou saidst, Who is Abimelech, that we should serve him? is not this the people that thou hast despised? go out, I pray now, and fight with them."

Gaal stands in the gate of the city to see if Abimelech is going to answer the challenge. Zebul, who is with him, deceives him until it is obvious, Abimelech is coming in force. Then Zebul challenges Gaal to go out and make good of his bragging.

39 "And Gaal went out before the men of Shechem, and fought with Abimelech. 40 And Abimelech chased him, and he fled before him, and many were overthrown and wounded, even unto the entering of the gate. 41 And Abimelech dwelt at Arumah: and Zebul thrust out Gaal and his brethren, that they should not dwell in Shechem. 42 And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people went out into the field; and they told Abimelech. 43 And he took the people, and divided them into three companies, and laid wait in the field, and looked, and, behold, the people were come forth out of the city; and he rose up against them, and smote them. 44 And Abimelech, and the company that was with him, rushed forward, and stood in the entering of the gate of the city: and the two other companies ran upon all the people that were in the fields, and slew them. 45 And Abimelech fought against the city all that day; and he took the city, and slew the people that was therein, and beat down the city, and sowed it with salt."

Gaal, and the men of Shechem, are beaten in battle and flee back into the city. Zebul, the ruler of the city, drives them out of Shechem. Abimelech is told of what has happened. He sets another trap and makes war upon them. This time he destroys them and the city of Shechem.

"**and sowed it with salt.**" We understand that too much salt makes the ground barren. However, this is a city and would not have had much in the way of sustenance growing in it. Sowing the city with salt, after destroying it, was a sign; the conquerors detested what the city represented, and they did not wish it to be like it was again.

46 "And when all the men of the tower of Shechem heard that, they entered into an hold of the house of the god Berith. 47 And it was told Abimelech, that all the men of the tower of Shechem were gathered together. 48 And Abimelech gat him up to mount Zalmon, he and all the people that were with him; and Abimelech took an axe in his hand, and cut down a bough from the trees, and took it, and laid it on his shoulder, and said unto the people that were with him, What ye have seen me do, make haste, and do as I have done. 49 And all the people likewise cut down every man his bough, and followed Abimelech, and put them to the hold, and set the hold on fire upon them; so that all the men of the tower of Shechem died also, about a thousand men and women."

Apparently, the house of Millo, as well as the men of Shechem, were the occupants of this tower of Shechem. Those still alive flee to the tower of their god Berith. Abimelech has everyone cut down branches of trees and they burn the tower of this false god, and the occupants thereof die.

Once again, we point out: Berith is an idol, made by men's hands, and idols have no power to deliver or save. Thus, we see that half of Jotham's prophesy has been fulfilled, with the destruction of the men of Shechem.

50 ¶ "Then went Abimelech to Thebez, and encamped against Thebez, and took it. 51 But there was a strong tower within the city, and thither fled all the men and women, and all they of the city, and shut it to them, and gat them up to the top of the tower. 52 And Abimelech came unto the tower, and fought against it, and went hard unto the door of the tower to burn it with fire. 53 And a certain woman cast a piece of a millstone upon Abimelech's head, and all to brake his skull. 54 Then he called hastily unto the young man his armourbearer, and said unto him, Draw thy sword, and slay me, that men say not of me, A woman slew him. And 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 unto his place. 56 Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech, which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren: 57 And all the evil of the men of Shechem did God render upon their heads: and upon them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal."

Apparently, the house of Millo, as well as the men of Shechem, were the occupants Thebez. The time has come for Abimelech to meet his end as prophesied by Jotham. This must be true to fulfill the prophesy of Jotham. Abimelech attempts to burn the doors of the tower down, and when he draws near the wall, a woman cast a millstone down and hits him in the head. He realizes that he is dying. He does not want the shame of being slain by a woman upon his name, wherefore, he asks one of his young followers to kill him. Seeing that Abimelech is dead, the warfare is ended, and the Israelites return to their homes. Now, the other half of Jotham's prophesy is fulfilled.

Thus, we see a principle set forth that we would do well to remember. The principle of self-promotion. It got Abimelech a short season of glory in the eyes of men, but he found no favor in the eyes of God. When he promoted himself, God warned him of what his end would be by the prophesy of Jotham. Abimelech did not heed the warning and is brought to his prophesied end. God may, but does not need to, send us prophets to tell us of our outcome if we promote ourselves. Why? Because God has given us his word of truth, the King James bible, which contains all the warning that we need.

We have seen, and heard of, those who promote themselves to be in offices of the church, which God has not called them to fill. There is always the same result as we see in this chapter, much fighting and disputing among brethren. Listen to these scriptures which teach us this lesson:

- **Ps 75:4-10; 4 "I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly: and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn: 5 Lift not up your horn on high: speak not with a stiff neck. 6 ¶ For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. 7 But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another. 8 For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them. 9 But I will declare forever; I will sing praises to the God of Jacob. 10 All the horns of the wicked also will I cut off; but the horns of the righteous shall be exalted."** Here we see the destruction of self-promotion and the exaltation of godliness.
- **Pr 3:29-35; 29 "Devise not evil against thy neighbour, seeing he dwelleth securely by thee. 30 Strive not with a man without cause, if he have done thee no harm. 31 Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways. 32 For the froward is abomination to the LORD: but his secret is with the righteous. 33 The curse of the LORD is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just. 34 Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly. 35 The wise shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the promotion of fools."**

Both scriptures tell us the end result of self-promotion.

We see a prophetic picture set forth in this chapter. We see Abimelech as a type of the serpent, the devil, and the woman that cast down the stone as a picture of the church of Jesus Christ. The devil is hard at work in this world trying to promote himself to be king of the world. In all his actions, he is overcome by the power of Jesus each time a sinner is born again and added to the family of God. As King David said: **Ps 18:2 "The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower."** So, the church of Christ Jesus is our high tower to whom we turn. We enter into his courts and the fortress of his love and have security there. The devil is continually trying to destroy God's chosen people and in so doing he will draw near and attempt to burn down the door. However, Christ is the door, and the devil cannot move him out of his place.

Did you notice: **Jg 9:53 "And a certain woman cast a piece of a millstone upon Abimelech's head, and all to brake his skull."** That certain woman is a picture of the church of Jesus Christ, secure in her tower of defense, Jesus Christ. As King David told us: **Ps 94:22 "But the LORD is my defence; and my God is the rock of my refuge."** So, there was one rock cast down from heaven to earth and it brake the skull of the devil. Therein is our deliverance. When we are attacked by the temptations of sin, we need only to give the devil and the temptation the Word of God, and like the stone that brake Abimelech's skull, the Word of God will rebuke the temptations of sin and the devil. We know this to be true for Jesus set this example for us when tempted by Satan in the wilderness. With each temptation Jesus rebuked Satan with a verse of scripture.

Herein, we see the eternal security of the church and all of God's people, and the overthrow of the serpent, which was so prophesied in: **Ge 3:15 "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."** Christ Jesus us the seed of the woman and has indeed bruised the head of all evil, the devil, and we know that the final victory will come in the end of time according to the King James bible. Christ shall return in judgment, Satan will finally, and forever, be cast down, and God's people will have eternal peace. Praise God for the Rock of our salvation and the finished work which has secured us eternally in the family of God.

May God give us humble hearts and minds, willing to serve God in whatever position he appoints us to fill. Let us fill our positions with gladness and singleness of heart, whereby, God would protect us and make us fruitful in his service. Pray that God will keep self-promotion, and self-will, under subjection in our lives, that we do not incur his wrath and destruction. Let us always remember and give all praise and glory to God. We have the God appointed Judge and King, Christ Jesus, to rule and reign over us, in mercy, grace, love, and righteousness. Hallelujah! Praise ye the Lord!