

## Abimelech: Evil Destroys Evil

### The Death of Gideon and the Birth of Abimelech Judges 8:29-35

Israel's compromised desire for a king demonstrates their rejection of the Lord as King

- Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the LORD will rule over you." Judges 8:23
- As soon as the leader dies, the people whore after idols.
- "When we want the thing more than we want the one who provides it, we have fallen prone to the corrupting core of idolatry." Dale Ralph Davis

Rejection of God leads to rejection of people (Judges 8:34-35)

- "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, 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." Judges 8:34-35
  - "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" <sup>37</sup> And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup> This is the great and first commandment. <sup>39</sup> And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. <sup>40</sup> On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." Matthew 22:36-40

### Abimelech's deception brings him into power (9:1-6)

- Generational sin and faithlessness
  - Born from the polygamy of Gideon to a concubine
  - Name means "my father is king" demonstrating the faithlessness of Gideon
- Self-glorification, deception, and murder
  - Was not called by God
  - Was made king by the people, not by God
  - Used deception, murder, and fear to become king
  - Surrounded himself with "worthless and reckless fellows"

### Jotham Escapes and Indicts Abimelech: A Curse from Mount Gerizim (9:7-21)

- Shechem: God's covenant with Abraham
  - "Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him." Genesis 12:6-7

- Mount Gerizim: a mountain of blessing
  - “And when the LORD your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it, you shall set the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal.” Deuteronomy 11:29
    - Deuteronomy 27-28
      - Moses commanded the Israelites upon entering the land to go to Mount Ebal and build an altar. Six of the tribes were to stand on Mount Ebal and pronounce the curses of the Law, while the other six tribes were to stand opposite on Mount Gerazim and pronounce the blessings of the Law.
  - “And all Israel, sojourner as well as native born, with their elders and officers and their judges, stood on opposite sides of the ark before the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, half of them in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded at the first, to bless the people of Israel.” Joshua 8:33



- The fable (7-15): Curses from the mountain of blessing
  - Olive trees, fig trees, and vines were valuable and produced the main crops of the Israelite agricultural economy.
  - Brambles were used for fire and offers no shade, thus making it worthless.
    - Abimelech is worthless and will be fuel for destruction
  - The fable is designed to show the ridiculousness of choosing Abimelech as king.
- The rebuke (16-21)
  - “If you have acted in good faith and integrity...”

### **The Chaos and Destruction (9:22-57)**

- God is silent, but not absent
  - The judgement comes unseen. (evil spirits)
  - The judgement comes after a period of time. (3 years)
  - The judgement comes through the outworking of human sin.
    - The greatest sin of the people and of Abimelech led to their greatest downfall and their death.
    - God in His judgement uses the tools of human rebellion against those who rebel.
- The present reality of God's judgement
  - "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth." Romans 1:18
  - "Therefore God gave them up..."
    - To the lusts of the heart, dishonorable passions, a debased mind
    - "They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless." Romans 1:29-31
  - A slow decay: working silently and unobserved
- God uses evil to destroy evil
  - "Thus God returned the evil of Abimelech, which he committed against his father in killing his seventy brothers. And God also made all the evil of the men of Shechem return on their heads, and upon them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal." Judges 9:56-57
    - Fulfillment of the indictment from Jotham in Judges 9:20
  - "And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the prostitute. They will make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire, for God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and handing over their royal power to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled." Revelation 17:16-17
    - There is no fellowship in evil. Evil has no lasting cohesion. It does not care for its own; it only uses its own.

**The Lord's Merciful Salvation (10:1-5)**

- Tola: after Abimelech saved Israel 23 years
  - Who did Tola rise to save Israel from? Tola saved Israel from itself.
    - God's people ultimately, need a leader who will rescue us from ourselves, from the failings and ambitions of our own hearts, and from the divisions and strife among us.
- Jair: 22 years of peace
  - "He does not allow blasting to go on forever, does not allow his people to be trampled ad infinitum; but it is his way after the Valley of the Shadow to anoint our heads with oil, after sorrow and sighing to grant joy and gladness. Yahweh is the gracious God who never allows 'Abimelech' to be the last word for his people." Dale Ralph Davis

**Discussion Questions**

1. In what ways does loving God empower us to love others?
2. Where are we prone to want something more than the one who provides it? What happens when we try to force our own way instead of patiently waiting and trusting in the Lord?
3. Can you reflect on a time or season in your life where the Lord allowed you to experience His judgement? How was this sanctifying to you?
4. How can we recognize the tendency for "slow decay" in our spiritual lives?
5. In what ways do we need to be saved from ourselves?

- Discord between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem (evil spirit)
  - Gaal: seeking to take control with the men of Shechem
  - Zebul seeking to maintain control for Abimelech
  - Gaal driven out by Abimelech and Zebul
  - Abimelech captures and destroys Shechem
  - Abimelech burns the Tower of Shechem with the leaders (1000 people)
  - Captures Thebez and the leaders escape to the tower
  - When Abimelech goes to burn the tower, an unnamed woman drops a millstone on his head.
  - Abimelech orders his own death to avoid death from a woman