

OUR GOD'S FAILURES & FAITHFULNESS

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF JUDGES

Part 13 — “God’s Judgment of the Wicked” — August 10, 2025

Introduction: Reviewing the Cycle of the Judges

When you read the book of judges, a consistent pattern emerges. Israel falls into apostasy and abandons the Lord to serve other gods. The Lord permits enemies to rise up and to oppress them in accordance with His warnings to them (Deut. 28:15,25). The people would then cry out in their suffering and the Lord would raise up a deliverer for them who would lead them to victory. Although Gideon’s career as a judge followed this pattern, his decision to build an idolatrous shrine (Deut. 12:30-31) and to conduct himself as a king created a break in the cycle and led to the rise of Abimelech.

Main Point: The fall of Abimelech serves as a warning to us about the reality of God’s _____ which is both temporal and eternal.

Judges 9:22-57

Having conspired with the people of Shechem, Abimelech carried out the destruction of his father Gideon’s legacy. As an anti-judge, Abimelech was in many ways the natural result of Israel’s worship of Baal-Berith. Abimelech’s conspiracy was made possible by funds from the temple of Baal and, rather than delivering the people from an external enemy, one of their own became their oppressor.

Exposition:

I. Abimelech’s grip on power progressively declined. (9:22-25)

Observations:

(1) The term used to describe his “rule” suggests that he never possessed complete control in the region.

שׂוּר (śūr)— to be or act as prince, rule, contend, have power, prevail over

(2) God is highlighted as sending a “_____” that served to turn Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem against one another.

“an evil spirit”— The term *ra’a* does not necessarily have moral implications. It can have connotations of “not beneficial,” “bringing misfortune,” and “injurious.”

⇒ The spirit was the agent of God’s judgment upon them.

(3) The leaders of Shechem sought to impoverish Abimelech by attacking his _____.

Key Point: Self-_____ people tend to turn on one another eventually.

II. The leaders of Shechem conspired with another to overthrow Abimelech. (9:26-29)

Observations:

(1) It is possible that Gaal’s background was similar to that of Abimelech.

“...son of Ebed”

(2) Treachery and deceit are once again linked to _____ worship.

“Whereas the Shechemites had earlier gone into the temple of Baal-berith to get silver to raise an army to make Abimelech king, now they feast and drink in the temple of their god and curse Abimelech instead.” —Boda & Conway

Key Point: Our real enemy is no _____ of persons and will destroy even those who have served his purposes once they are no longer useful.

III. Abimelech was informed of their plot took vengeance upon the conspirators. (9:30-49)

Observations:

- (1) Zebul's decision to inform Abimelech about the conspiracy was likely self-serving.
- (2) Abimelech's actions once again perversely recall those of Gideon.

- (3) Abimelech eventually brought his wrath upon the city of Shechem and its leaders.

The City:

The Tower:

- (4) Abimelech's actions ironically recall the commands of God to Israel regarding their conquest of the land.

IV. God's judgment eventually came down upon Abimelech, ending his reign. (9:50-57)

Observations:

- (1) Abimelech's intent was clearly to do to Thebez what had been done to Shechem.

- (2) The Lord used a local _____ as the vessel of his judgment upon Abimelech.

"The fact that this woman is nameless also suggests that she is an agent, someone through whom YHWH is acting to carry out his plan of deliverance."
—Boday & Conway

- (3) The conclusion to the passage makes it clear that in this cycle, it was _____ who was Israel's Deliverer.

Key Point: The Lord sovereignly accomplishes His purposes through both direct and _____ means.

Assessing Abimelech

- As the anti-judge, Abimelech serves as a warning to Israel of the consequences of _____ leadership and the effects that it can have upon the nation.

Applying the Text

1. The _____ to acquire a position of power and influence is not in and of itself a bad thing.

Why do we seek this position?

Psa. 11:14a—Where there is no guidance, a people falls...

How will we seek this position?

Prov. 12:20—"Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil, but those who plan peace have joy."

With whom will we work to acquire this position?

Prov. 1:18-19—"But these men lie in wait for their own blood; they set an ambush for their own lives. Such are the ways of everyone who is greedy for unjust gain; it takes away the life of its possessors."

2. _____ things will be brought under the righteous judgment of God in time.

Ecc. 12:13-14—¹³The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. ¹⁴For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

2 Cor. 5:10—For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

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