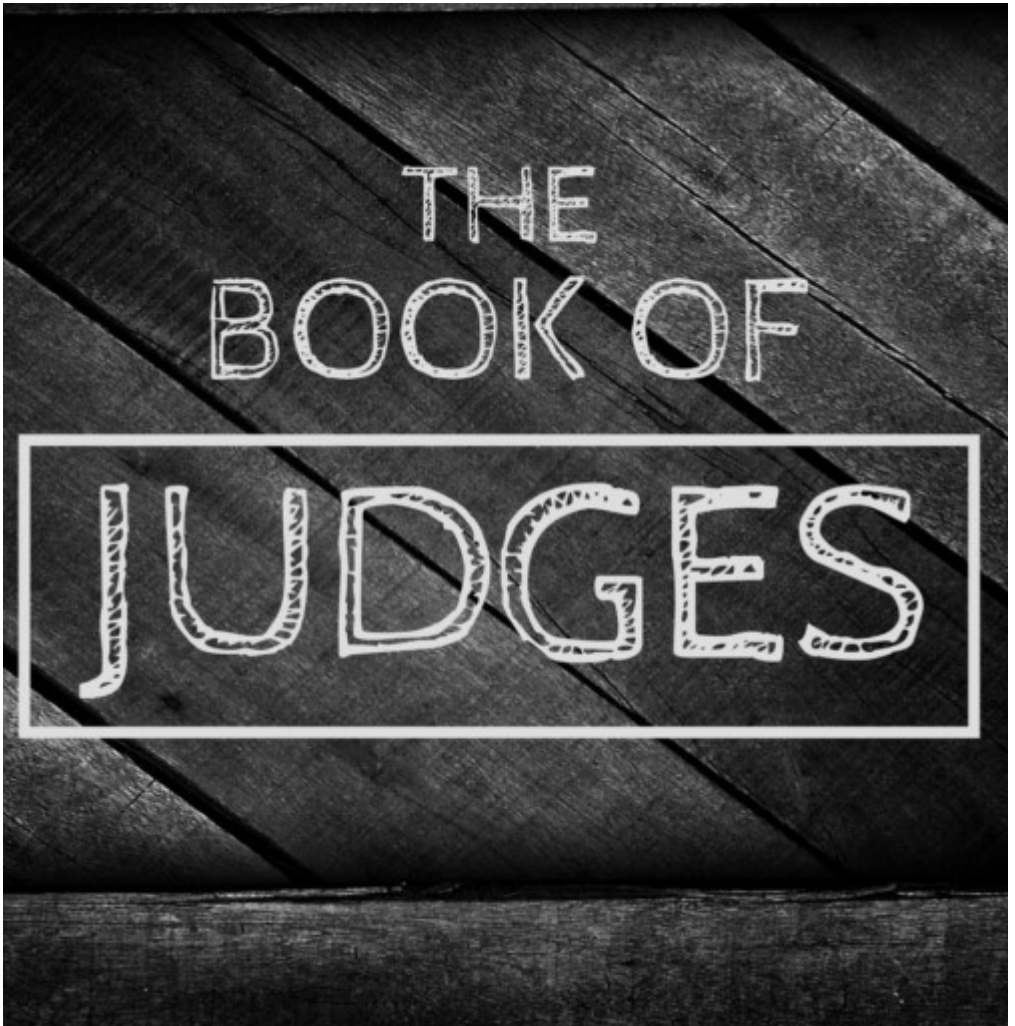


Let's Worship God

28th March - 2nd April 2022
Judges



JUDGES

Monday - Judges 9:30-33 - A Counter Conspiracy

We ended last week's study with the conspiracy of Gaal and the men of Shechem to overthrow Abimelech. Today, we learn of a counter-conspiracy. Zebul, the man Abimelech has left in charge of Shechem, hears of Gaal's plot against Abimelech. He sends messengers warning Abimelech of the conspiracy and advises him to make a sneak attack on the city. Zebul encourages Abimelech to move his army by night so that they will be in position for a surprise assault at dawn.

This counter-conspiracy furthers God's plan to bring about the destruction of Abimelech and the men of Shechem who supported his murder of his brothers. First, the leaders of Shechem undermined Abimelech's rule by ambushing and robbing people passing through the mountains. Then, Gaal the son of Ebed plotted with the Shechemites to challenge Abimelech to battle. Now, Zebul plots with Abimelech to take Shechem by surprise.

We often think that conflicts consist of "bad guys" against "good guys," but in many cases there are no "good guys." While there is such a thing as a just war, neither side in this case is just. Both Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem are wicked, and the LORD is bringing the consequences of their wickedness upon them. Once again, we see God's sovereign rule revealed in the Book of Judges. We also see that there is wisdom in making sure a cause is just before we take a side. In many debates and conflicts, both sides are wrong. We must make sure we are on God's side.

Questions

1. How is God's plan to bring about the downfall of Abimelech and the men of Shechem advanced in these verses?
2. What does this situation teach us about taking sides in conflicts?
3. On whose side should we make sure we stand in any conflict?

Prayer Points

1. Ask God for the wisdom always to choose His side.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"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 Jerubaal." Judges 9:57

Praise: Psalm 55 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

JUDGES

Tuesday - Judges 9:34-41 - Abimelech Defeats Gaal

As Zebul advised him, Abimelech moves his army overnight to attack Shechem at dawn. When Gaal sees Abimelech's men moving down the mountainside, Zebul convinces him that all he is seeing is the shadow of the mountains shifting as the sun rises. Thus, Gaal does not prepare for the attack. Next, Gaal sees Abimelech's men moving toward the city from the direction of the "Diviner's Oak" (most likely a tree at which rituals for the worship of false gods in an attempt to predict the future were performed). It is now unmistakable that Gaal and his allies are under attack. Zebul mocks Gaal for ever having bad-mouthed Abimelech and tells him now is the opportunity to fight Abimelech as he had boasted he would do.

Gaal and the leaders of Shechem go out to battle Abimelech and are quickly defeated. Gaal flees back into the city, but Zebul drives him and his family out again. Perhaps unwilling to trust the Shechemites, rather than staying in the city Abimelech takes up residence at the nearby town of Arumah.

In Judges 9:23, we learned that the LORD had stirred up suspicion and treachery between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem. This treacherous spirit escalated into outright plotting against one another. Now it has escalated into open warfare. Thus the LORD turns the plots of the wicked to their own destruction,

Psalm 7:15-16 says of the wicked man, "He makes a pit, digging it out, and falls into the hole that he has made. His mischief returns upon his own head and on his own skull his violence descends." Though it sometimes seems that evil men succeed in the world, God will cause their schemes to come to nothing and make them fall into ruin.

Questions

1. How does Zebul keep Gaal from preparing for Abimelech's attack?
2. What does God do with the plots of the wicked?

Prayer Points

1. Praise the LORD that He causes the plots of the wicked to come to nothing.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"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 Jerubaal." Judges 9:57

Praise: Psalm 56 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

JUDGES

Wednesday - Judges 9:42-49 - Abimelech Defeats Shechem

God has brought about the defeat of Gaal and, with him, many of the leaders of Shechem who aided Abimelech in his murder of the sons of Gideon, but God is not finished with the Shechemites. As we noted yesterday, after the battle, Abimelech took up residence at the nearby town of Arumah. The next day, the people of Shechem come out into the field. We are not told the reason for this. Whatever their reason for coming out, Abimelech decides to attack them. He divides his army into three forces. Leading one detachment to hold the city gates against people trying to flee to Shechem for refuge, he sends the other two forces to attack the people in the fields. Caught between these three forces, the Shechemites are slaughtered.

Abimelech then destroys the city and sows the ground with salt, making it impossible to grow crops there. The leaders still in the Tower of Shechem (the central stronghold of the city) take refuge in the temple of El-berith. ("El-berith" means "god of the covenant," but this is not the covenant LORD God of Israel. This is the father of the gods in Canaanite mythology). Abimelech cuts some brushwood with an axe and gets his men each to do the same. Piling the brush against the house of El-berith, they set fire to the temple and burn the remaining people of Shechem alive - about one-thousand men and women. While God is not the Author of these sinful acts, He is in ultimate control over all these events. Here we see another example of His sovereignty by which He uses man's evil intentions to bring about His good purposes. The LORD's purpose of justice and the punishment of sin is brought about through the wicked actions of Abimelech and the Shechemites.

Questions

1. How did the evil of the Shechemites bring about their destruction?
2. How did God use Abimelech's evil actions to bring about His justice?

Prayer Points

1. Thank God that He defeats His enemies.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"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 Jerubaal." Judges 9:57

Praise: Psalm 57 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

JUDGES

Thursday - Judges 9:50-57 - Abimelech Killed

The LORD has brought about the destruction of Shechem, as Jotham predicted in his curse (Judges 8:20). Now He has only to bring about Abimelech's downfall. We might ask, if Abimelech has destroyed Shechem, how can Shechem now be the instrument of Abimelech's destruction as the curse of Jotham stated? The answer is found in the town of Thebez.

Thebez is a town about ten miles northeast of Shechem. The conflict begun between Abimelech and Shechem continues as he attacks Thebez. (It is reasonable to speculate that some of Abimelech's enemies, such as the relatives of Gaal, who were driven out of Shechem might have fled to Thebez). Abimelech captures the city, but the people take refuge in the tower in the middle of the town. As he approaches the door of the tower, in order to burn it, a woman throws a millstone which crushes Abimelech's head. As he lays dying, he instructs his armor bearer to kill him with the sword, lest it be said a woman slew Abimelech. With Abimelech dead, his army falls apart.

Verse 56 tells us, "Thus God returned the evil of Abimelech, which he committed against his father in killing his seventy brothers." For their part in this foul deed, the leaders of Shechem and their city have been destroyed. Now, for his wicked treatment of his brothers, Abimelech is killed. Literally, his violence has descended on his own skull (Psalm 7:16). This is a picture, for us, of God's judgment to come. The LORD will not let sin go unpunished. Either we are in Christ, and thus, He has received the punishment due to our sins, or we will suffer the punishment ourselves. As Revelation 20:15 tells us, anyone whose name is not written in the book of life will be thrown into the lake of fire.

Questions

1. How did God return Abimelech's evil upon him?
2. What does this tell us about God's justice? Will He allow sin to go unpunished?

Prayer Points

1. Thank God that He has sent Jesus to bear the punishment for sin in the place of all who trust in Him.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"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 Jerubaal." Judges 9:57

Praise: Psalm 58 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

JUDGES

Friday - Judges 10:1-2 - Tola

We have noted before that there were twelve judges of Israel of whom the Book of Judges tells us. Six of these - Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson - are considered major judges. The history recorded in Judges gives us quite a bit of information about these leaders of God's people. Of the other six - Shamgar, Tola, Jair, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon - we are told very little, and, thus, they are called "minor" judges.

Today, we come to the brief account of the judgeship of Tola. After the time of Abimelech, Tola "arose to save Israel." We are not told from whom or what he saved Israel. Perhaps it was from the civil strife caused by Abimelech's conflict with Shechem. We learn that he was a man of the tribe of Issachar. His father was named Puah, and his grandfather was Dodo. We also learn that he lived at Shamir in the land of the tribe of Ephraim, which illustrates that such judgeships went beyond the level of tribal government.

That we know little of the minor judges does not mean they are unimportant. Today, many people labor for the Kingdom of God in obscurity and the only earthly record of such service may be on a membership roll or in a file of ministers' credentials. In Matthew 23:12, Jesus says, "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." If you labor for Christ's kingdom, rejoice that He knows what you are doing, even if few others do.

Questions

1. Why is Tola considered a "minor" judge?
2. Does this mean he was unimportant?
3. What does Jesus say about our work for His kingdom, even if no one on earth notices it in our lifetime?

Prayer Points

1. Ask God to help us to be humble.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"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 Jerubaal." Judges 9:57

Praise: Psalm 59 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

JUDGES

Saturday - Judges 10:3-5 - Jair

Today we come to another of the "minor" judges, Jair. Jair judged Israel following Tola's twenty-three year judgeship. Jair was a Gileadite, meaning he was from the half of the tribe of Manasseh who lived on the east side of the Jordan River. The twenty-two years of his judgeship must have been a prosperous time. That Jair had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys indicates that he had a great deal of wealth. Furthermore, that each of these sons controlled a city indicates great political power

The cities controlled by Jair's sons came to be known as Havvoth-Jair, that is "towns of Jair." In Numbers 32, Deuteronomy 3, and Joshua 13, we find that there already were "towns of Jair" named for a man of Manasseh in the time of Moses who captured several villages in Bashan. To these were added in the same region thirty more towns that came to be known as Havvoth-Jair because they were controlled by Jair's sons. One of these towns was likely Kamon, where Jair was buried when he died. Some Bible scholars believe it was during the judgeship of Jair that the events recorded in the Book of Ruth took place.

Though we know little of Jair, we know that the LORD was pleased to use him to maintain peace in the land for twenty-two years. May God continue to use many people of whom we may never hear, this side of heaven, to bring peace and prosperity to His Church.

Questions

1. Why do we think Jair was wealthy?
2. How do we know he had great power in society?
3. How did God use Jair?

Prayer Points

1. Pray for the preaching and hearing of God's Word tomorrow.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters

Memory Verse

"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 Jerubaal." Judges 9:57

Praise: Psalm 60 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

The goal of Let's Worship God is to encourage and help you in your worship of God each day.

**God tells us that
Ezra read from
the book of the Law
day after day
and that
the people of God
were filled with joy!**

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