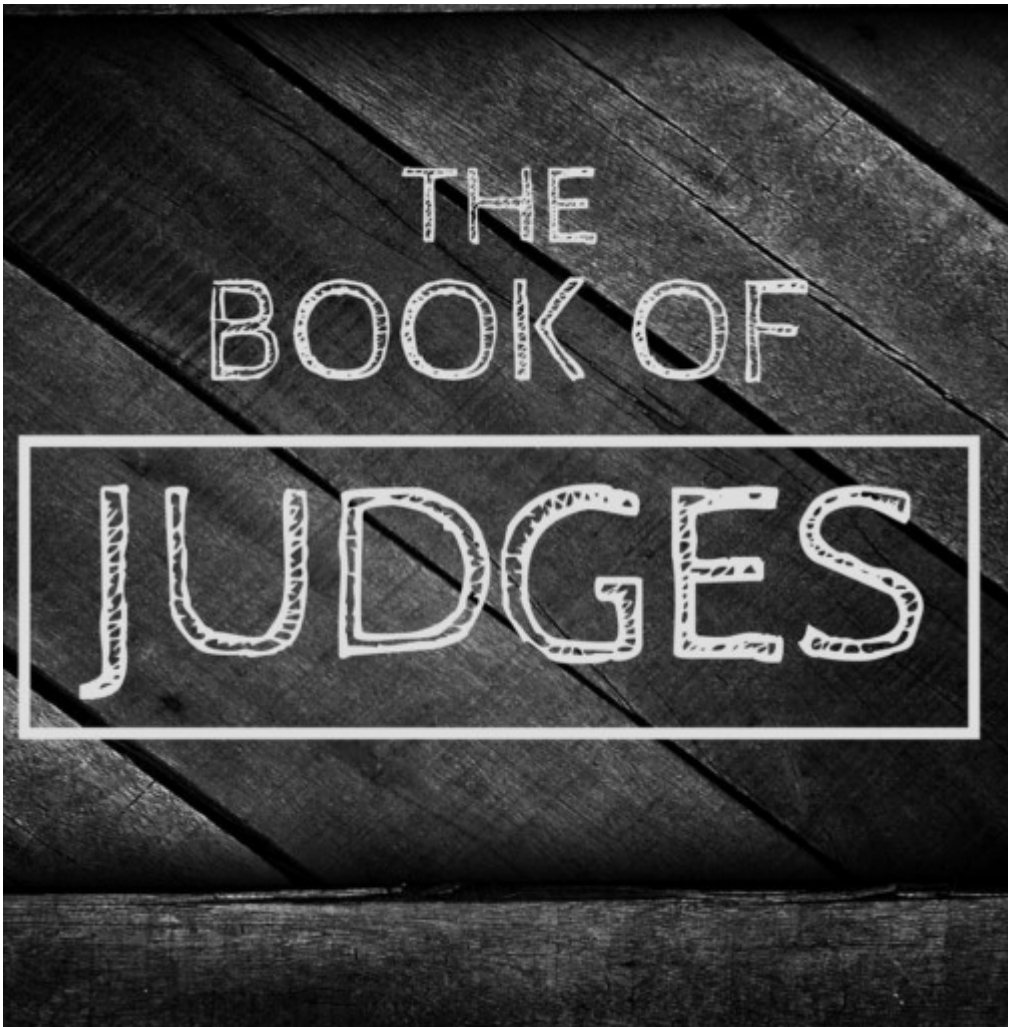


Let's Worship God

21st-26th March 2022
Judges



JUDGES

Monday - Judges 9:1-6 - A King for Israel?

Last week we learned that after the great victory over the Midianites the people of Israel desired to make Gideon their king. Gideon rightly refused saying "the LORD will rule over you." However, Gideon proceeded to live like a king, demanding tribute of the people and taking many wives for himself as well as a concubine in the city of Shechem. It says much that the son this woman bore to Gideon was named Abimelech, for "Abimelech" means "my father is king." We also learned of Gideon's tragic decision to make an ephod of the gold brought to him as tribute from the spoils of the war against the Midianites. This ephod became a source of false worship for the Israelites - even for Gideon and his family.

After Gideon's death, Israel once again forsook the LORD altogether, worshipping Baal-berith, which means "Baal of the covenant." The Israelites have rejected the covenanted God of Israel in favor of a "covenant" with a false god. Gideon's son, Abimelech, takes advantage of this degenerated situation in Israel to make himself king. By means of his mother's family connections in Shechem, he gets the leaders of that important and centrally-located city to support his claims to kingship. Though Gideon may have rejected the kingship of Israel for himself and his sons after him, many Israelites seem content to ignore Gideon's express wishes and let his son rule over them. As Judges 9:22 tells us, Abimelech will rule as king over Israel for three years. This was not simply an ignoring of Gideon's wishes, this was a rejection of the LORD God. Gideon had said "The LORD will rule over you." Israel is now saying, "No! The LORD will not rule over us." Instead they turn to the worship of a false god and accept the rule of a cruel and wicked king. Again we see how quickly a nation can turn from God. May nations that have turned from Him repent and acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Questions

1. What does "Abimelech" mean? Why is this significant?
2. What two things did the people do that showed they had rejected the LORD?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that the nations will acknowledge the Lordship of Christ.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Thus God returned the evil of Abimelech, which he committed against his father by killing his seventy brothers." Judges 9:56

Praise: Psalm 49 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

JUDGES

Tuesday - Judges 9:1-6 - A Very Wicked Deed

Abimelech became king in Israel by means of a very wicked deed. Besides Abimelech, Gideon had had seventy sons by his many wives. If Abimelech's supposed right to rule over Israel came from the fact that he was a son of Gideon, there were seventy other men who could make the same claim. In fact, since they were sons of Gideon's wives while Abimelech was the son of a concubine (a secondary wife who was more a slave than a bride), their claims were stronger than his. Having rejected the rule of the LORD the Israelites seem to have made the assumption that they must be ruled by Gideon's heirs. Abimelech presents the men of Shechem with this choice: either they will be ruled by seventy sons of Gideon who are not closely related to them, or they can be ruled by one of their own.

The men of Shechem choose to support Abimelech because he is closely related to them. They take money from the temple of Baal-berith and hire "worthless and reckless fellows" to follow Abimelech. Abimelech leads them to his father's house at Ophrah and they murder all but one of his brothers. Worse still, that they do so "on one stone" suggests they killed these men as human sacrifices to their false god. After this, the leaders of Shechem and Beth-Millo (the fortress at Shechem) declare Abimelech king.

Like the men of Shechem, people today are inclined to choose leader not based on the righteousness, wisdom, or experience of the candidates, but based on their own self-interest. They choose those whom they think will get them the most advantages in life. If we are privileged to have a say in who our leaders are, let us choose those who are evidently godly and wise, not simply those whom we think will get us advantages over our neighbors.

Questions

1. Why did the men of Shechem support Abimelech?
2. How did they eliminate the sons of Gideon?
3. Why would they murder them "on one stone"?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that people will choose leaders for godly and not selfish reasons.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Thus God returned the evil of Abimelech, which he committed against his father by killing his seventy brothers." Judges 9:56

Praise: Psalm 50 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

JUDGES

Wednesday -Judges 9:7-15 - Jotham's Parable

Yesterday, we noted that all but one of Abimelech's brothers were murdered. The one who survived was Jotham, Gideon's youngest son, who hid from Abimelech and his worthless and reckless men. When Jotham hears that the men of Shechem have declared Abimelech to be king, he goes to Mount Gerizim, which overlooks Shechem, and cries out a parable to them. In the parable, the trees desire to have a king, but all those who are worthy and valuable - the olive tree, the fig tree, and the grape vine - decline because they have better things to do as they fulfill the purposes for which God made them. The only one willing to be king was the worthless bramble.

Jotham is saying that, in this era in which the LORD, alone, is supposed to be King of Israel, those who may have the qualifications to be king will reject the office, until such time as God reveals that it is His purpose to make a man king. Only a worthless man would accept kingship when it is the will of the people, alone, and not the revealed will of God. Such a kingship, not offered or accepted in good faith, will prove disastrous, like a fire lit in the brambles devouring the cedars of Lebanon.

No matter what form of civil government you and I live under, ultimately it is the LORD who is King. Jesus Christ, who is both the LORD God and Man, is the rightful ruler of all the nations. One day every knee will bow to Him and every tongue will confess that He is LORD (as Philippians 2:10-11 says). Until then, as Psalm 2 tells us, the rulers of the earth are warned to acknowledge the Son of God's rule over them, or they will suffer dire consequences. May we solemnly warn those in power of their responsibility to acknowledge Christ's rule.

Questions

1. Who was supposed to be King in Israel in the time of the judges?
2. Who does the bramble represent in Jotham's parable?
3. Who is the ultimate King of all nations?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that Christ be honored as King of the nations.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Thus God returned the evil of Abimelech, which he committed against his father by killing his seventy brothers." Judges 9:56

Praise: Psalm 51 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

JUDGES

Thursday - Judges 9:15-21 - Jotham's Curse

In Joshua 8, fulfilling God's Word to Moses in Deuteronomy 27:12, Mount Gerizim was the place from which blessings Israel would receive if the nation kept covenant with the LORD were pronounced. Now, Mount Gerizim is the site of the pronouncement of a curse. In Jotham's parable, when the trees choose the worthless bramble to be their king, the bramble declares "If in good faith you are anointing me king over you, then come and take refuge in my shade, but if not, let fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon."

Jotham declares that if the men of Shechem have made Abimelech king in good faith and integrity then they should rejoice in Abimelech and Abimelech should rejoice in them. However, if they have not done so with integrity, then may they destroy one another. In making this pronouncement, Jotham points out that they have not acted with integrity. Rather, Abimelech was made king out of self-ish motives and it was accomplished through the murder and human sacrifice of the sons of the man who had led them in victory over their enemies. Thus, Jotham's words are a curse. Because Abimelech and the men of Shechem have done wickedly, Jotham declares they will destroy one another. The rest of chapter nine shows that God heeded Jotham's words and caused Abimelech and the men of Shechem to destroy one another.

Psalm 5:6 says of God "You destroy those who speak lies; the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man." God is not pleased when we fail to act with integrity. May our dealings with others be done with honesty and love of neighbor.

Questions

1. Did Abimelech and his allies act with integrity?
2. What did Jotham declare would be the result of their actions?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that God will help us to be honest and righteous in all our dealings.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Thus God returned the evil of Abimelech, which he committed against his father by killing his seventy brothers." Judges 9:56

Praise: Psalm 52 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

JUDGES

Friday - Judges 9:22-25 - The LORD Sows Dissent

Today, we see Jotham's curse begin to take effect. God was pleased to cause Abimelech and the men of Shechem to be His instrument of destruction, each for the other. He begins by sending an evil spirit between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem. Whether this means a demonic spirit, specifically, or, more generally, a mood of suspicion and distrust is unclear. What is clear is that, by the LORD's providence, when Abimelech has ruled three years in Israel, he and the men who made him king have a falling out. The leaders of Shechem send men into the mountains to rob everyone who pass by. No doubt this disrupts commerce that is enriching Abimelech, but it also likely sows discontent among the people. Why is Abimelech not keeping order in the land? Would not a good king be able to keep his people secure as they travel? Abimelech learns of what the Shechemites are doing, and thus the alliance which brought him to kingship begins to fall apart.

It is important to note that these circumstances are ordained by God. Verse 24 makes it clear that this is God's judgment on Abimelech for the murder of his brothers and on the men of Shechem for giving him the support that made the murder possible. Once again, we see that God is Sovereign. He is in control of all events to such a degree that even the sinful motives and actions of mankind are used for His good purposes. God is not the Author of sin, but He sinlessly uses even the wickedness of man to carry out His plan.

We can take great comfort in knowing that our faithful God is in control, causing even the great evils mankind commits to work for the good of His people.

Questions

1. How did God begin to bring about Jotham's curse?
2. Why did God do this?
3. When God uses the sinful desires of men to bring about His plan, does that make God the Author of sin?

Prayer Points

1. Praise God for His sinless use of sin.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Thus God returned the evil of Abimelech, which he committed against his father by killing his seventy brothers." Judges 9:56

Praise: Psalm 53 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

JUDGES

Saturday - Judges 9:26-29 - A Conspiracy

The LORD causes the division between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem to grow as another man related to the men of Shechem, Gaal the son of Ebed, moves into the city. Rejoicing at his arrival, the Shechemites hold a festival, eating and drinking in the house of their god (that is, the temple of Baal-berith). At this celebration, they speak hatefully of Abimelech. Much as Abimelech had asked the men of Shechem why the sons of Jerubaal (Gideon) should rule over them when one of their own, also a son of Gideon, could be their ruler, Gaal asks "Who is Abimelech and who are we of Shechem that we should serve him?" As the people are gathered in the house of Baal, Gaal makes a point of asking of Abimelech, "Is he not the son of Jerubaal?" In other words, he asks, "Is not this the son of the man called 'Let Baal contend' because he destroyed the altar of Baal whom we worship?" Gaal indicates it would be better to serve the original heathen inhabitants of the city who had been destroyed by the sons of Jacob (Genesis 34) than to serve Abimelech. He says that if the people of Shechem will make him their leader, he will challenge Abimelech to battle and overthrow him.

Thus, the LORD escalates the tension between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem, bringing the curse of Jotham closer and closer to fulfillment.

Questions

1. Why does Gaal suggest Abimelech should not be ruler? Why is he careful to remind the people that Abimelech is the son of Jerubaal?
2. What does Gaal promise he will do if the Shechemites make him their leader?
3. What is God doing through these events?

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

"Thus God returned the evil of Abimelech, which he committed against his father by killing his seventy brothers." Judges 9:56

Praise: Psalm 54 - 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!**

Let's Worship God is produced
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If you have any queries please contact - rpchurchscotland@gmail.com