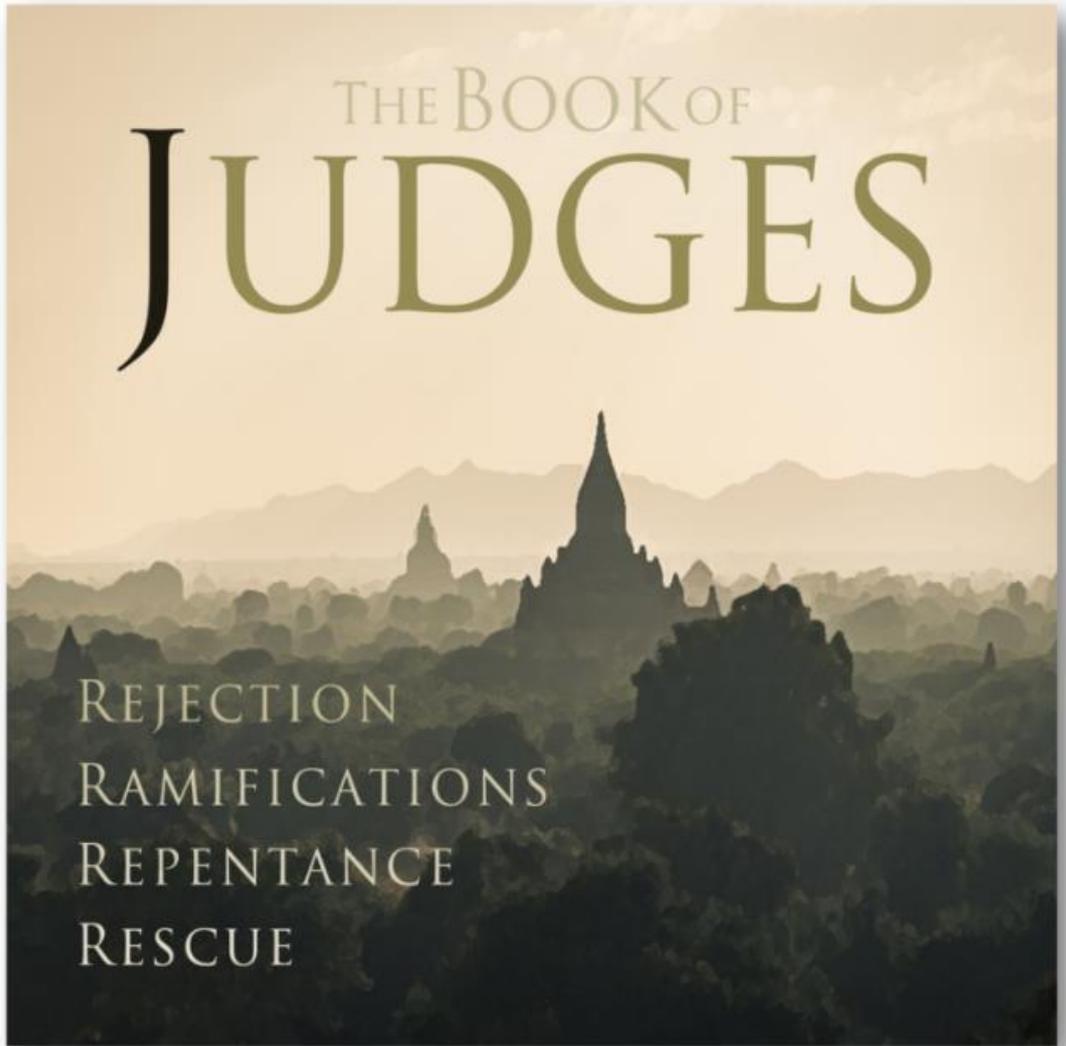


BOOK OF JUDGES



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CHAPTER 9

## RISE AND FALL OF ABIMELECH



### 1-3 Abimelech rise to power

- 1) • Abimelech was a son of Gideon (Jerubaal) by his one concubine.
  - The children of concubines were never in the line of succession to their father:
    - unless he specifically arranged that
    - these children held **a lower** status in society of **Jacob** and his concubines in Genesis 21:31 - 4:24
  - In Jacob's day the sons of the concubines persecuted **the chosen son**, Joseph...
  - Here the one son persecutes and kills the legitimate sons in order to rule himself.
- 2) Abimelech was born and reared in Shechem. He got **his brothers**
  - to agree to let **him** reign – the others had no **DESIRE** for **Power**
  - No successor to Gideon had been chosen **because** no **MONARCHY** had been set up.

**vs 3** (NB) Abimelech got his mother's brothers **ie on his mother's side in** Shechem to agree. The **actual** succession belonged to the brothers on **his father's** side (Gideon's side). So the leaders of Shechem agreed to accept Abimelech as their leader: King?

**4-5** His **mother's** family gave him "start-up money" from the "temple" of the idol. Abimelech used the money to hire murderers to go to Ophrah and kill all of Gideon's sons and heirs. He wanted **no rivals** to **his** leadership.

→ Notice the absence of a call from God  
the absence of grace or guidance from the Holy Spirit  
the absence of **EXTERNAL** crisis calling for deliverance for the Chosen People.

- this is the **human will** at its worst – there is NO wisdom, discernment, love, mercy or grace... all is disorder, sin and death.
- a person who murders his way to power is an enemy of the people of God.



*Rise of Abimelech*

**vs 6** Shechem makes Abimelech king

which is worse (i) the murderer or (ii) those who crown him king afterwards?  
- so they **approved** of murder?

**Now** the Chosen People have an **INTERNAL** crisis

a) they have rejected **The Lord God** as their King

b) and chose a brutal, cowardly murderer to rule over them.

- they have chosen the Kingdom of darkness... which will lead to **civil war** because the reign of darkness is also a **reign of death**

C.S. Lewis: "Where, except in uncreated Light, can darkness be drowned?"

Jn 1:4-5 **The light shines in darkness and the darkness can never extinguish it**

Jn 3:19-20 **... but the people loved darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil.**

**All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed.**

1 Jn 1:5 **God is light. There is no darkness in him at all**

Is 5:20 **How horrible it will be for those who call evil good and good evil... who turn light into darkness**

Ps 82:5 **These oppressors know nothing, they are so ignorant! They wander about in darkness, while the whole world is shaken to the core.**

**vs 6** Abimelech's coronation took place at the **SAME TREE** where Joshua placed a copy of the Law of God: Jos 24:26

- the Word of God was there – but did anyone **read** or obey it?
- Abimelech was the first person to be crowned king over God's People
  - his reign was short but ran roughshod over **God's** requirements for anyone holding that office!

\* In later history another man Rehoboam broke away from the People of God after the death of King Solomon – taking 10 of the 12 tribes into apostasy with him (1 Kg 12:1,25) ... he **also** went to **Shechem** to secure his kingship – even though the **city itself** was in ruins by then.

**7 – 15** Jotham's Fable: his prophetic warning to those who chose Abimelech

- Jotham survived the murder of his brothers at Ophrah (vs 5)
- His prophetic poem was addressed to the men (leaders) of Shechem who had just made a disastrous decision in crowning Abimelech.

1) **Listen to me... that God may listen to you!**

The Word of God comes through the Prophet. If they **HEAR** it, they will turn back to God who will hear their prayers.

2) **The trees** symbolise the leaders of God's People **The Olive... Fig... Vine** there were golden figures of olive, fig and vine standing in the Presence of God in the Temple in later history.

3) All 3 of them were **TOO IMPORTANT** in **God's** Reign and descend to seeking **human power**

- especially with violence.

cf Jn 6:15 the Chosen People wanted to make **Jesus** King in the sense of being a military leader to fight and conquer the Romans.

- **His** Mission – to save Humanity from its sins – was far too important to descend to such

unworthy activity: Jn 6:15

**But** when He had given His Service to Humanity He **was** proclaimed King: Jn 19:19

a) **The olive** provided oil and food to nourish the People of God.

b) **The Fig** provided food to nourish the People of God.

c) **The Vine** gave joy through its wine and food...

**14-15** **The Thorn Bush** (JB) (Bramble) (KJV)

- this was the useless plant – it gave nothing but **PAIN** through its thorns... it was used for **scourging** and **kindle for fire**

- “take shelter in my shade” was ironic. The thorn bush was a low plant which gave no shelter.
- In the great heat and drought of Summer, the thorn bush could **catch fire** spontaneously and cause terrific damage by bur**VIP** down forests.
  - the **cedars of Lebanon** were the most prized trees for **CONSTRUCTION**.

The murderous despot kills his rivals – who were better than him!

**The Lesson:** History shows that weak, worthless, wicked men thrust themselves into positions of power... and in the end bring ruin upon themselves and on the people who accept their rule.

**Prophetic Message**

Jesus came to redeem Humanity from **itself** and its foolish decisions

a) He is **The True Vine**: Jn 15 Jesus **is** that Vine and we are **His Branches**...

b) He is **The Olive Tree** and the Holy Spirit is His **Olive oil**

Olive trees are beaten and crushed to produce its oil.

- Jesus was beaten and crushed in order to give us the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus' Agony took place in Gethsemane – the olive press! The Gethsemane was an instrument to crush the olives to get the oil from them.