

Series: Biblical Heroes and Zeros – week 16

CDOBC – beginning (*Resuming*) on 11/6/11

Title: “Abimelech”

December 4, 2011

Judges 9

OBJECTIVE: To help us realize the dangers of living without God, and the responsibility righteous people have to serve.

Announcements

- Welcome / guests – communication cards
- Church Directory
- Dessert & Carol Night – tonight – 6 p.m.
- Men’s Breakfast
- AWANA – Dale Beyer
- Share the Good News of Christmas! Invitation packets – take as many as you need!

Read 9:1-21 during service (after offering)

Judges 9 is one of the darkest chapters in the bible, and it’s the longest chapter in the book of Judges.

In Judges 6-8 we read of Gideon and his great faith in God and the great victories God gave him.

In chapter 9, we are introduced to one of Gideon’s sons, his name was Abimelech.

Gideon was a great man of God – a hero of the faith. After his great military victories, the people wanted to make him king, but he refused because he knew that God was the true ‘king’ over Israel.

But Gideon didn’t finish well. As the years went by, he wandered away from the principles that had guided him and blessed him. He

took many wives, and fathered 70 sons! One of these sons was

Abimelech. However, Abimelech’s mom was not one of Gideon’s wives, but a Canaanite concubine from the town of Shechem (8:31).

Upon Gideon’s death (8:33), the nation turned away from God, and worshipped Baal (Canaanite god), and the text tells that the people “...did

not remember the LORD their God, who had rescued them from the hands of all their enemies on every side. They also failed to show kindness to the family of Gideon for all the good things he had done for them.” (8:34-35)

In the midst of this religious and political turmoil, Abimelech enters the spotlight.

As we walk through Judges chapter 9 this morning, I want you realize some important truths in this chapter that still apply to your life today. In this chapter, we will see the importance of including God in our life’s decisions. We’ll also touch on matters of a political nature – not in a partisan sense, but we’ll see how important it is for us in our role as citizens to use Godly wisdom as we select leaders for our great nation. We’ll also see how we need to be involved in the larger community, not just focused on our own lives.

Read Judges 9

Life without God leads to pain and death.

When you leave God out of the picture, pain and death will follow.

We see this clearly in the account of Abimelech – and in those who followed him. Nowhere does Abimelech ever seek after the Lord, nowhere do we read of him praying for God’s direction, wisdom, or blessing. Abimelech was not a follower of God – he was a follower of himself. He was his own god! When he first began his political pursuit, he took money from the temple of Baal-Berith (9:4), and with that money he hired a gang of assassins and terrorists who would do much of his

dirty work throughout his 3-year reign. The fact that he took that money shows us that he had no loyalty to God.

After getting the support of the people of Shechem, Abimelech took his gang of thugs and murdered all the other sons of Gideon – thus removing anyone who might claim a link to Gideon and therefore a link to rule over the region.

It was after this murderous rampage that the people of Shechem and Beth Millo held a coronation ceremony and made Abimelech king.

Selfish ambition leads to evil acts.

Ambition is a good thing, if it is guided by humility and God's Word. I believe part of the image of God we have been created with is our ambition. "Fill the earth and subdue it..." requires ambition! But when our ambition becomes selfish and concerned only with our own ascent, it becomes a dangerous motivation that knows no limits or morals.

Selfish ambition quickly becomes coveting what others have and you'll stop at nothing to get it. Warren Wiersbe says that *"Coveting is the last of the Ten Commandments, but breaking it is the first step toward breaking the other nine."* (Be Available, An Old

Testament Study-Judges, by: Warren W. Wiersbe, p. 80)

Philippians 2:3-4

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."

Abimelech only thought of himself. He didn't care about anyone else! He wanted one thing – power – and nothing was

going to keep him from it. Murdering his brothers and the citizens of Shechem were nothing but a means to an end because of his selfish ambition.

Taking a stand for righteousness may be costly.

The bright spot of chapter 9 is Jotham. He was the youngest of Gideon's sons, yet he stood up against the great injustice and incredible evil of Abimelech.

Not only did he stand up, but he was wise enough to understand the dynamics of the situation.

In his parable of the various trees, I believe he also condemns the good and righteous people who stood in the distance and allowed evil Abimelech to take power.

Where were the brave, righteous men as Gideon's 70 sons were murdered?

How come there wasn't a great outrage and battle to save innocent blood?

Irish poet William Butler Yeats penned a line in his poem "The Second coming":

*"The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity."*

We've all heard the quote by Edmund Burke:

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

Edmund Burke (1729-1797)

You've probably heard or seen the news reports that surface every once in a while of some brutal crime being committed in

a public area, yet nobody in the vicinity of the crime steps in to protect the victim.

This is an extreme case, but it points out that people are hesitant to take a public stand against evil.

Some are even hesitant to interject truth and righteousness into a conversation that is glorifying or commending a lie or some form of immorality!

“But you must remember, my fellow-citizens, that eternal vigilance by the people is the price of liberty, and that you must pay the price if you wish to secure the blessing. It behooves you, therefore, to be watchful in your States as well as in the Federal Government.” -- Andrew Jackson, Farewell Address, March 4,

1837

“One man with courage makes a majority.” -- Andrew Jackson, 1832
Jotham stood up – and spoke truth, and he did so at his own peril, as he needed to flee the area to escape Abimelech’s wrath.

Righteous people need to serve.

In his parable of the trees, the olive tree, fig tree, and the vine represent people of good standing who have good things to contribute to the society. However, they were unwilling to sacrifice for the honor of being made king, which meant those most qualified and gifted to lead were unwilling to do so. After the trees, the only one left was the “bramble” – or the thorn-bush (vs. 15). The thorn-bush’s claim that the others could find rest in its shade is laughable since the thorn-bush is basically a ground cover that only grows a few feet high. The

thorn-bush represents Abimelech who is the leader or politician who makes great claims and promises, but is incapable of keeping them, and never intends to either! The only thing the thorn-bush is good for is to spread fire to the other trees! The other trees are a blessing to the people (oil, fruit, wine), but the thorn-bush is cursed by the farmers and property owners because of the nuisance it is to control. Jotham's indictment is not only at the "good trees" for their unwillingness to sacrifice for the greater good, but for the lack of wisdom and the selfish ambition which led to the people choosing Abimelech – the thorn-bush – as their king. He prophesies that the "cedars of Lebanon" (the leading citizens of Shechem) would be destroyed by fire (vs. 15), and that the citizens of Shechem and Beth Millo would destroy Abimelech (vs. 20).

Application

Rejecting God will lead to destruction.

Standing up for righteousness may cost you.

Examine a leader's claims – see vs. 15

Examine their character and the veracity of their claims.

If you have something to offer (the community, town, church) then serve – get involved.

Close in prayer