

JUDGES 9:1-21
THE USURPER!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Judges chapter 9 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

Over the last several weeks we have been looking at the story of Gideon, a man that God raised up to deliver the children of Israel from their bondage at the hands of the Midianites.

And Gideon started out as a humble man. When God called him to defeat the Midianites, he could not believe it. He saw himself as nothing and thus, how can God do this through him? There must be others who were stronger, who were better than him.

And that was all true. Gideon was a nobody who was hiding from the Midianites, trying to thresh his wheat in a winepress!

And God took this humble man and showed him that it was not going to be by his strength, his power, his might, but this victory was going to be given to him by God, all he had to do was walk by faith.

And, as we saw, God gave Gideon a great victory. He had an army whittled down to 300 men. The Midianites had an army of 135,000 soldiers. Not good odds unless you add God into the picture for the children of Israel and once God was added to the picture, victory was certain!

Listen to what happened after God showed Gideon how two soldiers of Midian saw the demise of these Midianites in battle against Israel.

We are told in Judges 7:15-25, "**And so it was, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, that he worshiped. He returned to the camp of Israel, and said, 'Arise, for the Lord has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand.'**" Then he

divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet into every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and torches inside the pitchers. And he said to them, 'Look at me and do likewise; watch, and when I come to the edge of the camp you shall do as I do: When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then you also blow the trumpets on every side of the whole camp, and say, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outpost of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just as they had posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers that were in their hands. Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers - they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing - and they cried, 'The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!' And every man stood in his place all around the camp; and the whole army ran and cried out and fled. When the three hundred blew the trumpets, the Lord set every man's sword against his companion throughout the whole camp; and the army fled to Beth Acacia, toward Zererah, as far as the border of Abel Meholah, by Tabbath. And the men of Israel gathered together from Naphtali, Asher, and all Manasseh, and pursued the Midianites. Then Gideon sent messengers throughout all the mountains of Ephraim, saying, 'Come down against the Midianites, and seize from them the watering places as far as Beth Barah and the Jordan.' Then all the men of Ephraim gathered together and seized the watering places as far as Beth Barah and the Jordan. And they captured two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb. They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb they killed at the winepress of Zeeb. They pursued Midian and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side of the Jordan.'

God had given Gideon and the children of Israel this great victory over the Midianites. They were set free from the bondage that they were in for seven years!

Make no mistake about it, Gideon started this race of faith strong. But in any race, you must not only start the race, but you must also finish the race and finish the race strong!

And for Gideon, he did not do that. Yes, he started out as a humble man and after this victory, things changed and not for the good in regard to Gideon.

After this great victory the men of Israel came to Gideon and said to him, “**. . . ‘Rule over us, both you and your son, and your grandson also; for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian.’**” Judges 8:22.

In other words, the men of Israel wanted to make Gideon King and not only Gideon, but to pass the throne on to his children and grandchildren. And what I want you to notice is the reason that they wanted Gideon their King – “**for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian.**”

Was that true? Did Gideon give them this great victory?

Well, yes and no!

The reality here is that God gave them that great victory and God used Gideon to accomplish His work. But God is the one who gave them the victory and yet, we don’t see the children of Israel mention God. That is not a good thing.

And Gideon’s response to the men of Israel sounds so good, so humble. Listen to what he tells them. “**. . . ‘I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the LORD shall rule over you.’**” Judges 8:23.

Again, this sounds so good, so humble on the part of Gideon. His words were right on. He told the men of Israel that he did not want to be their King because it was the *LORD* who would rule over them!

But, as we have seen in our studies of Gideon, if our words don't match up to our deeds, then our words are empty. And that is exactly what we see here with Gideon.

Listen to what takes place in Judges 8:24-28, right after Gideon told the men of Israel that he did not want to rule over them. We are told, **“Then Gideon said to them, ‘I would like to make a request of you, that each of you would give me the earrings from his plunder.’ For they had golden earrings, because they were Ishmaelites. So they answered, ‘We will gladly give them.’ And they spread out a garment, and each man threw into it the earrings from his plunder. Now the weight of the gold earrings that he requested was one thousand seven hundred shekels of gold, besides the crescent ornaments, pendants, and purple robes which were on the kings of Midian, and besides the chains that were around their camels’ necks. Then Gideon made it into an ephod and set it up in his city, Ophrah. And all Israel played the harlot with it there. It became a snare to Gideon and to his house. Thus Midian was subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted their heads no more. And the country was quiet for forty years in the days of Gideon.”**

Gideon said that he did not want to be their King and yet, by his actions, he wanted to be treated like a King.

And what we see here for Gideon is that he started out strong, but in the end, we see that he is not finishing strong. Because of his actions, the things he was doing, **“... all Israel played the harlot with it [the ephod] there. It became a snare to Gideon and to his house.”** Judges 8:27.

And look at the actions of Gideon now. **“Then Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in his own house. Gideon had seventy sons who were his own offspring, for he had many wives. And his concubine who was in Shechem also bore him a son, whose name he called Abimelech.”** Judges 8:29-32.

Now as you read that you may not see a problem here, but there is a big problem that will manifest its ugly head here in Judges chapter 9

We are told that Gideon had many wives and seventy sons from those many wives that he had. And for many, they don't see this as a problem because this was common during that period of time. That was the norm for the day you might say.

But as much as the world was doing these things, the people of God should not have been doing them, and that goes for Gideon.

First of all, God established what a marriage is all about in the Garden of Eden. One man married to one woman! And Jesus even confirms that in the New Testament for us in Matthew chapter 19, asking the Jewish religious leaders if they have not read what the Scriptures say about marriage, speaking of the book of Genesis!

So Gideon knew this, he just didn't live it.

Not only did he have many wives, but he had a concubine who lived in Shechem, kind of a mistress on the side to have sexual relations when he traveled, I guess.

And with this concubine he had a son by the name of Abimelech. And, as we saw last week, his name means, ***“My father, a King.”***

Again, Gideon said that he did not want to be King and yet his actions spoke of him wanting to be King and that was his downfall! He names his son, who was born to Gideon's concubine, what he wanted to be, and I think that in the end, it will affect this young man named Abimelech.

I have called our study this morning – ***THE USURPER!*** And the reason for that is we are going to see Abimelech try to usurp the role as King!

I have broken down these verses we will be looking at this morning into three main points. They are,

THE ENTICEMENT – JUDGES 9:1-4

DEATH AND DESTRUCTION – 9:5-6

THE WARNING – JUDGES 9:7-21

One more point before we get to our text this morning and that has to do with the state of the children of Israel after the death of Gideon.

We are told that they once again played the harlot, they went after other god's and the result of their departure from the true and living God was this, "**Thus the children of Israel did not remember the Lord their God, who had delivered them from the hands of all their enemies on every side; nor did they show kindness to the house of Jerubbaal (Gideon) in accordance with the good he had done for Israel.**" Judges 8:34-35.

Keep that in mind as we go through our study this morning. The children of Israel are not walking with God. They are going after other gods. And that will lead them to what they do outwardly, they did not show kindness to the children of Gideon. That will play a big role in what we see play out here in Judges chapter 9. Not walking with the Lord and thus, manifesting the works of the flesh in their life.

So with that as our introduction, let's begin reading in Judges chapter 9, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us this morning as we look at the topic - ***THE USURPER!***

JUDGES 9

VERSES 1-4

As I have said, Gideon died, and God has not raised anyone up to fill that void in the land. Now, the reality was that God was the one on the throne, He was King!

And here is Abimelech, the son of Gideon through his concubine that lived in Shechem.

And, as I have said, a concubine was not a wife but someone you would live with and have sexual relations with.

Keep in mind that Gideon had many wives that lived with him, but not this concubine. And thus, his concubine and this son, Abimelech both lived in Shechem, in her father's house.

And the reason I believe this to be true, and not all do, is found in Judges 8:31, where we are told, "**And his concubine who was in Shechem also bore him a son, whose name he called Abimelech.**"

The Living Bible may make the point a little clearer as it tells us, "**He also had a concubine in Shechem, who presented him with a son named Abimelech.**"

Now let me make this point once again, it is important for us to understand this to see why all this was happening.

Let me ask you this. Why in the world did Gideon call his son "***Abimelech***"?

We aren't sure, but it is more of a title than a name and it means, like I have said, "***My father, a King.***"

Again, Gideon said that he did not want to be King and yet his actions spoke of him wanting to be King and that was his downfall!

And, I think it was the downfall of his son, Abimelech.

Also, because Abimelech was born out of this relationship with Gideon's concubine, he was probably seen as an outcast among his half-brothers, not really part of the family and I think that helped to set the stage for what we see taking place here.

It does not excuse his behavior or make it right, but it helped to facilitate it!

Since no one is in charge in Israel, Abimelech feels he might as well step up and seize the opportunity!

And to help facilitate this rise to power, he goes to his mother's brothers to stir the pot you might say.

Listen again to what Abimelech tells them. He said, "**Please speak in the hearing of all the men of Shechem: 'Which is better for you, that all seventy of the sons of Jerubbaal reign over you, or that one reign over you?' Remember that I am your own flesh and bone.**" Judges 9:2.

He is good. He tells them, and I will paraphrase this, *“Go and warn the people of Shechem. Someone is going to be King in the land. And if you think that one of Gideon’s sons becoming King will benefit you, you are dead wrong. They don’t even consider you family, even though I am a son of Gideon. And for that matter, they don’t even consider me a son of Gideon! So wouldn’t it be better for you to have me made your King, I am family and I will take care of you! I mean, who loves you baby! Obviously I will be kind to you, you are my relative and they aren’t and thus, you figure out how they will treat you! Go and tell the others this information and you choose who you want as your King, family or foe?”*

I told you, he was very good at stirring the pot and getting people to side with him.

Keep in mind that we have no indication that any of Gideon’s other sons wanted to be King. We have no indication that any of them was making plans to be King.

But that was not important to Abimelech, he just wanted the people to think about this, think about what might happen to them, even though it was not true, and that way the people of Shechem will side with him and turn against the children of Gideon. He would be King!

Again, they were not walking with the Lord, they were serving the false god’s and thus, they did not seek the Lord in what they should do, and we see how this played out. We are told, **“And his mother’s brothers spoke all these words concerning him in the hearing of all the men of Shechem; and their heart was inclined to follow Abimelech, for they said, ‘He is our brother.’”** Judges 9:3.

In other words, they sided with Abimelech and they told the people of Shechem and they listened and joined in this plan to seize the position of King, to make Abimelech King!

And out of that we are told, **“So they gave him seventy shekels of silver from the temple of Baal-Berith, with which Abimelech hired worthless and reckless men; and they followed him.”** Judges 9:4.

Don't think that the men of Shechem were not involved in this. They understood exactly what they were doing and to help assist Abimelech they gave him seventy shekels of silver and Abimelech uses this to gather some worthless men to go and kill his half-brothers, the sons of Gideon, all 70 of them.

I guess it was one shekel for each one!

And they get this money from the god they worshiped, from the temple of Baal-Berith.

In regard to this, Clarke made this interesting comment. He wrote, ***“A work begun under the name and influence of the devil is not likely to end to the glory of God, or to the welfare of men.”***

And how true that is as we will see and have seen even today!

In saying all that, let me ask you this. Did Abimelech's mother's brothers and the men of Shechem know that is what Abimelech would do with the money, kill all the sons of Gideon?

We aren't told but I think they didn't care. But they were not ignorant of what was going on here. Not at all. They closed their eyes to what was going on.

I think what we are basically seeing here is this. They were telling Abimelech, ***“Here's the money, don't tells what you are going to do with it. But just get the job done!”***

Again, they did not seek God and thus, what they were doing here was just trying to protect themselves and benefit from this relationship.

Make no mistake about it, this was all about their own personal gain and they were not concerned about how it was attained.

In Habakkuk 2:9, as God pronounces judgment, the second woe against Babylon, He says, **“Woe to him who covets evil gain for his house, That he may set his nest on high, That he may be delivered from the power of disaster!”**

And The Amplified Bible puts it like this, **“Woe to him who obtains wicked gain for his house, [who thinks by so doing] to set his nest on high that he may be preserved from calamity and delivered from the power of evil!”**

That is what Abimelech is doing here and he will not get away with it in the end!

It is as Isaiah 59:7-8 says, **“Their feet run to evil, And they make haste to shed innocent blood; Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; Wasting and destruction are in their paths. The way of peace they have not known, And there is no justice in their ways; They have made themselves crooked paths; Whoever takes that way shall not know peace.”**

How true that is!

Make no mistake about it, this was a great deal for the people of Shechem. It was *THE ENTICEMENT* for them, the hook that was dangling in front of them and they went for it and took that bait and they were hooked by Abimelech!

Let me show you how trying to attain something that is not yours to take, can lead to disaster and that will lead us to our next point.

In II Kings chapter 5 we see the story of Naaman, the commander of the army of the King of Syria.

And he was a good commander, his only problem was that he had leprosy.

Now in his endeavors, he and the Syrian army went on raids and brought back a young girl from the land of Israel. And this young girl was a slave to Naaman’s wife.

And one day, knowing the commander's condition, said to Naaman's wife, "**... 'If only my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! For he would heal him of his leprosy.'**" II Kings 5:3.

When Naaman hears of this he goes and tells the King who sends Naaman to the King of Israel with silver and gold and changes of clothing to pay for this prophet to heal Naaman from this leprosy!

When the King of Israel heard of what was requested he was afraid. He knew there was nothing he could do for this man and his leprosy.

And then Elisha gets wind of what is going on and he tells the King that he could heal this man.

And so Naaman high tails it over to the house of Elisha and Elisha does not even come out to meet this man. He sends his servant, Gehazi who tells Naaman to go and wash in the Jordan River seven times and he will be healed.

When Naaman hears that he is upset. He thought that this man of God should have come out to him and there should have been some great thing that needed to be done, not wash in the dirty Jordan River. He could have washed in any river in Damascus and be clean. Maybe from the dirt, but not from the leprosy!

Then, one of the servants of Naaman spoke forth and said, "**... 'My father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, "Wash, and be clean"?' So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.'**" II Kings 5:13-14.

And Naaman turns to the true and living God through all of this and he wants to pay this man of God who brought this healing to him.

And Elisha said to him, “**. . . ‘As the LORD lives, before whom I stand, I will receive nothing.’ And he urged him to take it, but he refused.**” II Kings 5:16.

So Naaman heads home, cleansed outwardly from the leprosy and I also believe he was cleansed inwardly as he turned to the Lord.

And let’s pick up this story in II Kings chapter 5, beginning in verse 19, where we are told, “**Then he [Elisha] said to him, ‘Go in peace.’ So he departed from him a short distance. But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, ‘Look, my master has spared Naaman this Syrian, while not receiving from his hands what he brought; but as the Lord lives, I will run after him and take something from him.’ So Gehazi pursued Naaman. When Naaman saw him running after him, he got down from the chariot to meet him, and said, ‘Is all well?’ And he said, ‘All is well. My master has sent me, saying, “Indeed, just now two young men of the sons of the prophets have come to me from the mountains of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of silver and two changes of garments.”’ So Naaman said, ‘Please, take two talents.’ And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and handed them to two of his servants; and they carried them on ahead of him. When he came to the citadel, he took them from their hand, and stored them away in the house; then he let the men go, and they departed.**” II Kings 5:19-24

So as Naaman heads back home, Gehazi sees this golden opportunity passing him by and thus, he could not just sit back and let this happen. ***THE ENTICEMENT!***

Therefore, he goes after Naaman to get some of this wealth. And do you see what Gehazi is doing here. He is rationalizing in his mind that what he is doing is not a sin. He has come to the conclusion that there is nothing wrong with receiving a gift.

And not only do we see this, but this little sin continues to grow and now he tells Naaman that a couple of guys, students from the school of the prophets came by after you left, and you know how it is to be a student, these guys have nothing. There were no school loans!

And so he tells Naaman that my master told him to go and obtain some money and clothes from you for these kids.

And Naaman responds accordingly. He sends these gifts with his servants to bring them back, but as they approach his house, he sends them away so that Elisha won't find out what is going on.

He was deliberately hiding them from Elisha because he knew what he was doing was wrong and yet he still did it!

We can hide things from people, but we can't hide anything from God. Listen to what we are told in II Kings 5 as we read on.

We are told, **“Now he went in and stood before his master. Elisha said to him, ‘Where did you go, Gehazi?’ And he said, ‘Your servant did not go anywhere.’ Then he said to him, ‘Did not my heart go with you when the man turned back from his chariot to meet you? Is it time to receive money and to receive clothing, olive groves and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male and female servants? Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and your descendants forever.’ And he went out from his presence leprous, as white as snow.”** II Kings 5:24-27.

You see, nothing good came from this as he tried to get something that was not his. Yes, the initial excitement but then death and destruction.

It is like this story that took place several years ago and it appeared in a Los Angeles newspaper. The story went like this,

A San Diego patrolman pulled over a driver and informed him that because he was wearing a seatbelt, he had just won \$5,000 in a safety competition!

“What are you going to do with the prize money?” the officer asked.

The man responded, “I guess I’ll go to driving school and get my license!”

At that moment his wife who was seated next to him chimed in, “Officer, don’t listen to him. His a smart-aleck when he is drunk!”

This woke up the guy in the backseat who, when he saw the officer, blurted out, “I knew we wouldn’t get far in this stolen car!”

And at that moment there was a knock from the trunk and a voice said, “Are we over the boarder yet?”

- Source Unknown

Funny, yes, but you see, **BUSTED!** And that was Gehazi. It was not that God did not provide for them, he just wanted more, and greed got the better of him and it brought him down and it will do the same in our lives!

Yes, **THE ENTICEMENT** in trying to usurp the throne for Abimelech, and the people of Shechem joined in and in the end, we see that this brought **DEATH AND DESTRUCTION!**

Let’s read on and see what takes place.

VERSES 5-6

Now to take care of this problem with his brothers, they have to be killed and thus, they will be out of the way.

And remember in Judges 9:4, with the money that the people of Shechem gave to him, seventy shekels of silver, he was able to hire “**worthless and reckless men.**”

And they followed Abimelech to his father’s house, Gideon’s house, in Ophrah and they killed, murdered the sons of Gideon, all but one, Jotham got away!

And if you still don’t see the reason that Abimelech did this, look at Judges 9:6 once again and you will clearly see the reason. We are told, “**And all the men of Shechem gathered together, all of Beth Millo, and they went and made Abimelech king beside the terebinth tree at the pillar that was in Shechem.**”

That is what he wanted. He got his family to go along with him. His family got the rest of the people of Shechem to join with them, and they made him King!

And here’s the thing. Anytime you are trying to usurp something, take something that is not yours, something that God never wanted you to have in the first place, it will leave a path of death and destruction in people’s lives. And that is exactly what we see here!

Now some may try to argue that maybe the people of Shechem did not understand this, maybe they just didn’t know.

That is not true, not at all. Let me show you what I mean.

Shechem is the place where God told Abraham that his descendants would inherit the land of Canaan.

Shechem was the area where Jacob told his family to put away their idols.

And if you remember from our study in Joshua, Shechem was the place the children of Israel gathered to hear the blessings from Mount Gerizim and the cursings from Mount Ebal.

So they knew what God wanted in their lives, they just didn't obey the Lord. You see, now it is the place where Abimelech is made King.

And, interestingly enough, his coronation took place by the same tree that Joshua had placed a copy of the Law of God.

Let me show you what I mean. In Joshua 24:25-27 we are told, **“So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. Then Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone, and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. And Joshua said to all the people, ‘Behold, this stone shall be a witness to us, for it has heard all the words of the Lord which He spoke to us. It shall therefore be a witness to you, lest you deny your God.’”**

Again, it was not that they did not know these things, they just didn't agree with them and they did their own thing.

Think about it. Right before them was this stone of witness and they refused to read it or heed it.

And I think as we read these stories of the children of Israel we are outraged at how brazen, how defiant they were towards God when God had already told them that He was their King and they needed to follow Him.

Now, before you say something foolish, like, ***“I would never do something like that!”***
Be careful.

You see, we have the book of the Law of God before us, the Bible. And God has told us what we should do and what we should not do. Not for salvation because our salvation is based upon the finished work of Christ.

But He has told us these things for our safety, for our protection, it is what is best for our lives. And yet, we can go after things, try to usurp things that God does not want us to have and in the process of trying to usurp these things, we leave a path of death and destruction!

Think about it. Adultery, for instance. Make no mistake about it, adultery leaves a path of death and destruction to the spouse, to the children, to other family members, to friends.

Let me share this with you and you will see what I mean. We are told,

We all know how word association works, right? I say something, and you say the first thing that comes to mind.

Adultery. What word comes to you? *Sex? Divorce? Devastation? Sin?* Some have told me, “It’s like a death.” During my 50 years of ministry as a pastor and evangelist, the word I heard repeated most was *heartbreaking*.

Few sins ignite the rush of emotion, anger, resentment and permanent hurt as does the betrayal of adultery. Throughout the Bible—from the Seventh Commandment to the final mention of sexual immorality and its spiritual counterpart in the Book of Revelation—adultery is the scarlet thread of human tragedy.

The prelude to adultery is the enticement and cultivation of physical desire: lust. Lust is desire out of control. Coveting encourages the mind and heart to desire what another person has.

Adultery is a direct contradiction and violation of the lifelong marriage covenant. The Scripture forbids sexual intercourse outside marriage. Adultery is a sin of huge proportion. But Jesus taught a deeper law affecting the heart: “But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28, NKJV).

This fantasy of the mind is so pervasive in all forms of media that temptation is relentless. The imagination of intimacy, as well as the act itself, not only brings God’s displeasure, but devastating consequences. So serious is the sin of adultery that the Apostle Paul tells the Corinthians, “Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers . . . will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-10, NIV).

The laws from Moses were specific. “If a man is found lying with a woman married to a husband, then both of them shall die—the man that lay with the woman, and the woman; so you shall put away the evil from Israel” (Deuteronomy 22:22, NKJV). Later Jeremiah said that the worship of other gods is adultery and a horrible violation of God’s name (Jeremiah 23:13-14).

For departing from God in spiritual apostasy, God calls His people “You adulterous wife!” (Ezekiel 16:32, NIV). To those who demanded more proof of Jesus than His words and miracles, He said, “You are a wicked and adulterous generation” (Cf. Matthew 16:4). The final and ultimate loss of fidelity to God is evidenced in the apostate church and the entire world being seduced by the “mother of harlots” (Revelation 17, NKJV).

Figuratively, the Hebrew word for adultery means “to apostasize or to abandon what you believe and revolt against your faith.” This is the inside motive of adultery, a conscientious but subtle form of resentment at not being free to do what the flesh craves. This was King David’s sin when he saw Bathsheba bathing. David liked what he saw and, over the objection of his servant, ordered her to be brought to him. He manipulated events and arranged the death of her husband.

Nathan the prophet confronted David by describing a rich man who, for his own personal pleasure, took a poor man’s only lamb. “You are the man,” Nathan said, warning that God would bring horrible consequences to his leadership and to his family (2 Samuel 12). Here is the heartbreak of adultery: David repented to the full extent, but what a price he paid! His family suffered rape, murder and betrayal. His kingdom was torn apart, and his rebellious son was killed violently.

Adultery damages nearly every relationship around it, including the extended family. Forgetting the goodness and mercy of God by giving in to immediate impulse and physical passion brings self-inflicted consequences to the body and soul: God removes His protective shield, and His blessing is forfeited.

- <https://bit.ly/3dbO8Ft>

And that is just one example where we find the transgressing of what God has told us in His Word will bring death and destruction to many people. There are all kinds of things God has said, has warned us about in His Word that we should not go down that path.

Things like covetousness, sexual sins, drugs, alcohol, the words we say, how we treat people, and-so-on.

You see, we have all the right information, but we can be like Abimelech and the people of Shechem and not listen or obey and that will bring ***DEATH AND DESTRUCTION*** to the people around us.

The wonderful thing is that God does give us a warning and then it is up to us to listen and obey. He is gracious, He is merciful, He is longsuffering towards us and thus, what we will look at next, ***THE WARNING!***

VERSES 7-21

Remember, of all the sons of Gideon, Jotham was the only one left, besides Abimelech. All the others were killed, they were murdered by Abimelech so that he could rise to power and become King!

And once Jotham hears what has happened, that he goes to the top of Mount Gerizim, which is about 800 feet in elevation, and it probably took him some 20 minutes to get to the top.

And from the top of Mount Gerizim he will be facing Shechem and he will be speaking to the people who have made Abimelech King and Abimelech himself!

You have to give Jotham a lot of credit. To do something like this was putting his life in jeopardy. But he is not going to hold back, he is going to speak forth the truths of God, and he will be rebuking the people of Shechem for making Abimelech their King.

And to do this he uses a parable and with this parable he is showing them what a foolish choice they made and a choice that is in opposition to God!

And make no mistake about it, the men of Shechem clearly understood what this parable was saying, that it was about them.

Let me give you this picture.

First of all, the trees spoke of the people, and they were looking for a King to rule over them.

So they first went to the olive tree, then the fig tree and then the vine, but they all refused.

And the picture here is that they all produced fruit and I believe that they represented Gideon and his sons.

And as we have seen in our studies, Gideon refused to be King, and also his sons rejected this as well.

Granted the actions of Gideon contradicted what he was saying, it seemed that he wanted to be King, but he did not have that title nor did his children.

Well, that is none had that title except now for Abimelech.

Now, in this parable, the olive tree, the fig tree and the vine refused so the trees then came to the bramble, that is all that was left.

Notice the picture that Jotham is painting here. The bramble was a worthless piece of tumble weed that was good for nothing.

It was only used to start fires.

It produced no fruit let alone trying to take shade under it, that was a joke.

And Jotham is speaking to the people and saying to them, ***“Is this what you chose to be your king, the bramble, Abimelech?”***

You see, he wanted them to see the foolishness of their decision but at this point, they refused to listen.

And listen again to what Abimelech said to the people, how he gave them an ultimatum, basically telling them, ***“Either elect me king or I will burn you to the ground!”*** (Judges 9:15)

Not a great way to start out your leadership, by threats, but that was Abimelech!

And Clarke gives us this insight to this parable, as he wrote, *“The condensed moral of the whole fable is this: Weak, worthless, and wicked men, will ever be foremost to thrust themselves into power; and, in the end, to bring ruin upon themselves, and on the unhappy people over whom they preside.”*

How true that is. Remember, you can try to get something that is not yours, you can use force or threats, but in the end, it brings **DEATH AND DESTRUCTION!**

The solution is don't go down that path or if you are, listen to the Lord and turn around, return to Him! That is the warning of Jotham to the men of Shechem!

And after this parable Jotham lets the people have it.

Jotham reminds them of how his father, Gideon not only fought for them, but he delivered them from the hands of the Midianites, and this is how they repay him, the kindness he showed them.

Jotham basically said, *“This man Gideon, this is the one you wanted to make King and now you have supported the effort to kill his offspring, all except for Abimelech, who is your brother. And now, after what he has done, you make him King? You are allowing the killer of Gideon's sons to rule over you! And, if you did nothing wrong, then enjoy Abimelech as your King but if you did do wrong, look out. A fire will not only devour you but also Abimelech!”*

In other words, if you are acting in truth and sincerity towards my family, then you have nothing to fear.

But if you are not, judgment is coming upon you and your city!

And make no mistake about it, like I have said, God is gracious, He is merciful, He is longsuffering and He will warn us of the danger we are heading towards, and then it is up to us to turn or face the consequences of our actions.

And let me make another point here because I think it truly fits in the day's we are living in.

We live in a country; we live in a world that is trying to usurp the throne from God. They can't do it, but they are still trying.

And we, like Jotham, are the watchman on the wall you might say, warning people of the dangers of replacing God with man. And yes, the world does not want to hear it, but it is what they need to hear.

And our prayer is that some would hear and turn from their wicked ways and receive Jesus as Lord and Savior of their lives.

And I realize that it is not an easy thing to do, but we must speak forth the truths of God found in the Word of God and warn people of the coming judgment of God!

Think of it like this. You are standing by a bridge and the bridge is out. It has been washed away by the raging river below it.

And as cars approach this bridge you hold up a sign warning them, "***The end is near!***" Just warning the people that the end of the road is close, the bridge is out!

And as cars pass by, they yell at you, "***You crazy doomsday prophet!***" And they drive on to their death.

And your buddy, who is standing next to you, after seeing dozens of cars drive by laughing and mocking you, tells you, "***Maybe you should change your sign to say, 'Bridge Out!'***"

Sorry, but you get the idea. People don't want to hear what we have to say, and that is not something we can change. Our responsibility, like it was here for Jotham, is to speak forth the truths of God, warn the people of what is coming.

And today, with all that is going on in the world, people are wondering what in the world is going on and it is time we tell them. Show them from the Scriptures.

You can't fight against God and win, and many have tried, and they have lost. And many will continue to try, and they too will lose.

So the two lessons here are these.

If you are heading in the wrong direction, you need to turn around, you need to heed the voice of God.

And for us as Christians, we need to be the spokesperson for God and let a world who is in darkness see the light of God!

Let me share these words with you from Warren Wiersbe. He wrote regarding these events,

Abimelech considered himself to be a stately tree of great value, but Jotham said he was nothing but a useless weed. What a blow to the new king's pride! When they chose Abimelech as their king, the men of Shechem didn't get useful olive oil, tasty figs, or cheery wine; they got only thorns – fuel for the fire.

Abimelech was actually trying to wrest [snatch] the kingdom away from God (Judg. 8:23), and the Lord permitted him to have a measure of success. But God was still on the throne and would see to it that man's selfish purposes would be frustrated.

It's a dangerous thing for us to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think (Rom. 12:3). We all need to discover the gifts God has given us and then use them in the place where He puts us.

Each member in the body of Christ is important (1 Cor. 12:12-31), and we all need one another and to minister to one another.

Since there's no competition in the work of the Lord (John 4:34-38; 1 Cor. 3:5-9), there's no need for us to promote ourselves. The important thing is that God receives the glory.

- Warren Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary -OT, p. 452

Amen to that!

Now for Jotham, after this tongue lashing, this rebuke and curse upon the people of Shechem and Abimelech, he high tails it away, having at least a 20-minute head start on them if they wanted to come after him.

And where does Jotham go, he goes into hiding in Beer.

No, he does not go hiding in a beer, trying to wash away all his troubles but in the city of Beer.

But, isn't that like many today that when trouble comes, they try to hide themselves away in beer and folks, that does not work; it only brings about more trouble.

Bring it to the Lord, rest in Him and do not be drunk with wine or beer but be filled with the Spirit of God!

Now as we will see as we continue on in our study of Judges chapter 9 next week, the prophecy of Jotham was not immediately fulfilled. There is about three years before judgment came. God gave them time to repent and return, they didn't and what He warned them of, came to pass!

Lessons to learn because, "**There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.**" Proverbs 16:25.

And the Lord tells us, "**Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death.**" Jeremiah 21:8. And He wants us to choose life!

Look at what we have seen this morning.

THE ENTICEMENT – and we saw here that the enticement was to usurp or grab for something that God did not want Abimelech to have and yet, he went after it! And that is never a good thing, ***NEVER!***

Then we looked at what happens when we go after what God does not want us to have and we saw that it brings ***DEATH AND DESTRUCTION*** – may we be wise and learn the lesson and not go down that path or if we are traveling down that path, to repent and return to the Lord!

And we closed with looking at how much God loves us and we saw ***THE WARNING*** – that God warns us in His Word what is good, what is profitable and what is dangerous and deadly, and we have to choose what to do. Not only that but we must share the warning of God with others, even though it will not make us popular, people will come against us.

It is as Jude admonishes us in the days we are living in, "**Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.**" Jude 3.