

Episode # 528 - Judges 9 Part 2: Abimelech Versus Ga'al

I. In the book of Judges, we have a brief record of the early history (the first centuries) of the history of the land of Israel. We see the leaders God chose, judges, who ruled under Jehovah, the King. Through the lives and work of these judges, we can learn about God's works and ways.

II. After the death of Gideon, the fifth judge, Abimelech, his son through his slave woman, conspired with the men of his mother's city of Shechem to execute all his brothers and pronounce himself king. Of all his brothers only Jotham, the youngest, escaped. He curses both Abimelech and the men of Shechem with a satirical fable, that they will destroy each other.

III. Abimelech and Ga'al. Judges 9:22-41.

- A. Judges 9:22. Abimelech "reigns" for three years. (Apparently some at least of the rest of Israel goes along with it!) Yet this is not recognized by God, and the first three years of Tola, the fourth judge, correspond with this.
- B. Verse 23. God sends a calamity-causing spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem. A "spirit" here is not a spirit-being, but means He set their minds against each other, causing trouble between the conspirators.
- C. Verse 24. Why God did this. Because of the violence done to the seventy sons of Jerubba'al. He will bring their blood-guiltiness on Abimelech and on the men of Shechem who strengthened his hands in doing this.
- D. Verse 25. They set an ambush, and robbed all those they caught in it. Perhaps Abimelech was just not enriching them fast enough! Abimelech learns of this disorder
- E. Verse 26. Ga'al (NOT kinsman redeemer, but "Loathing," the difference is in the ') the son of Ebed (Slave) comes to Shechem with his brothers, and they put confidence in him. Was he a rival robber chieftain to Abimelech?
- F. Verse 27. The time of grape harvest comes and they make wine. They throw a drinking party in the house of their god and curse Abimelech.
- G. Verse 28. Ga'al speaks boldly in Abimelech's absence. He belittles Abimelech. He also makes fun of Zebul (Exalted), a chief man in Shechem, for being his officer. He says they should serve the men of Hamor the father of Shechem. Hamor was a Hivite, one of the Canaanite tribes. His son dishonored Dinah, Jacob's daughter, and two of his sons wiped out the men of the city for it. Ga'al wants them to serve Canaanites!
- H. Verse 29. If only these people were under his control, he says, he would remove Abimelech! He taunts Abimelech to bring out his army and face him.
- I. Verse 30. Zebul the ruler of the city is naturally angry with Ga'al's words.
- J. Verse 31. He secretly sends men to Abimelech to warn him what Ga'al is doing.
- K. Verse 32. He advises them to come set an ambush at night in Shechem's fields.
- L. Verse 33. As soon as the sun rises, he can rise up and invade the city. When Ga'al and his men come out he is certain Abimelech can defeat him.
- M. Verse 34. Abimelech takes this advice and lays an ambush for Shechem at night in four companies (Hebrew heads).
- N. Verse 35. Ga'al gets up in the morning, perhaps still hung over from his party the night before, and stands in the entrance of the gate of the city. He sees Abimelech and his men get up from their lying in wait.
- O. Verse 36. He tells Zebul that he sees people coming down from the tops of the hills around the city. Zebul tells him he is just seeing the shadows of the hills and imagining that they are mortal men.

- P. Verse 37. He insists that he sees people coming through the middle of the land, and others along the plain of Meonenim (Sorcerers).
- Q. Verse 38. The trap is sprung. Zebul mocks him. Where are his big boasts against Abimelech now? He urges him to go out and fight Abimelech.
- R. Verse 39. Ga'al goes out with the men of Shechem to fight Abimelech.
- S. Verse 40. Ga'al is defeated and flees from Abimelech. Many are cut down or fatally wounded in the battle up to the entrance of the gate.
- T. Verse 41. Abimelech lives at Arumah (I Shall be Exalted) instead of Shechem. Meanwhile Zebul kicks Ga'al and his brothers out of Shechem.

IV. Abimelech destroys Shechem. Judges 9:42-49.

- A. Verse 42. Apparently Shechem thinks it is over. The men of the city go out to work in the field like normal, but Abimelech hears of it, and he has not forgotten the ambush.
- B. Verse 43. Abimelech gathers his men and divides them into three companies (heads). Why only three this time? Had he lost that many before? He sets an ambush in the field, and the people come out to work, as he heard. He springs the trap against them and kills them.
- C. Verse 44. Abimelech and his company ran to the gate of the city and guarded it. The other two companies went through the fields and slaughtered all the people. I wonder what Zebul thought of this? I doubt this is what he wanted or anticipated!
- D. Verse 45. Abimelech fights against the city all that day and captures it. He kills all the people in the city (including Zebul?), pulls down the city, and sows its farmland with salt. Of course this wrecked the land and meant the city could not be rebuilt.

VI. Abimelech was a wicked man who tried to set up a kingship in Israel, rejecting Jehovah as the true king. This was truly a rebellion against their true King. Abimelech's co-conspirators turned against him and he ended up fighting his own supporters, leading to their destruction. This is how all rebellion against the true God will ultimately end!