

ABIMIELICH: THE BAD SEED

After Gideon leads an Israeli revolt and frees God's people from the Midianites we see them immediately request his leadership in politics and life. He had begun his time in a leadership role proclaiming God as king and seeing to it that God received the glory for their victories. Now, he has to immediately remind them that God is still king, and he will not rule over them, God will rule over them. His life thereafter was peaceful as far as we can tell. He apparently loved the ladies, for he had no less than eight wives as well as concubines producing 71 sons. Upon his death at a ripe old age he was buried in his fathers tomb in Ophrah.

Immediately upon the death of the righteous judge, Israel immediately plays the harlot. They simply cannot stand the thought of not having a walking, talking leader whom they could touch and see. They went right back to worshipping Baal and had forgotten all about the true living God that had delivered them from adversity so many times. Amongst the rotten scoundrels was the illegitimate son of Gideon, Abimelech. He knew that the people wanted a king and he suspected that they would approach Gideons sons to determine a leader. As the son of Gideons concubine in Shechem, Abimelech had no stake in the claim of a Gideon inheritance due to his illegitimacy. He was not going to let that get in the way of his thirst for power as he went to the elders of his family (his mothers brothers) and coerced them into funding his war campaign. He took the bit of money that they gave him and paid a handful of worthless and reckless men to assist him in killing his brothers. Thinking that he was in the clear, he departed and claimed the land of Israel as his own. Unbeknownst to him, the youngest son of Gideon, Jotham, was left behind as he was the local hide and seek champion and was never found by the heathens.

Once the dust has settled and Abimelech has been crowned king, Jotham boldly goes to the top of Mount Girizim to let everyone, including Abimelech, know that the idea of an earthly king is a terrible idea. He does not say so to Abimelech's face but he doesn't need to. The loud proclamation that he declares from the mountain top is sure to reach his beady little ears. Jotham gives a parable concerning trees asking for a king. When asked to be king, the olive tree declines saying I would have to cease producing oil that honors God so that I may preside over trees. The fig tree declines, saying I would have to give up my sweetness and good fruit that honors God that I may preside over trees. The vine when asked, says I certainly will not give up my new wine that pleases God and man so that I can sway over trees. The bramble, however, says if you anoint me as king I will provide you shade, if you choose not my shade my fires will devour you. Jotham goes on to say, you chose to dishonor Gideons legacy by anointing the son of his servant as your king and presiding over the death of his sons. If this pleases you then by all means rejoice and be glad, but if not may the fires of Abimelech devour

you for what you have done. How is that for a convicting message? Like our faithful minister here says, "that'll preach".

After three years of reign there began to be dissention in the ranks with ill will rising between Abimelech and the others. The people of Shechem were growing convicted and had decided to find a way to provoke Abimelech so that his downfall may be sped up. As they began to ambush and steal from his citizens (as a means of provocation) a man by the name of Gaal had earned their trust and decided that he would put an end to the rule of Abimelech. Gaal however was no match for Abimelech's army and was chased out of Shechem swiftly. This was the beginning of a tyrannical tirade on the part of Abimelech who went on a bit of a pillaging spree until he came to the city of Thebez. Upon initial entry it appeared that it would be an easy acquisition, but the people had made their way into a tower in the middle of the city and locked themselves in. As Abimelech approached the tower and attempted to burn it down, a certain woman sees him below and drops her upper millstone directly on his head, crushing his skull. A crossbow once fell from its resting place as I was straightening my garage and landed on my head, a mere two foot drop and it hurt and bled profusely. I can't imagine what a millstone being dropped from presumably 30 feet or more would do to a mans skull. Still, as a man ever-mindful of his pride, he petitions one of his soldiers to run him through with his sword so that he may not be known as a man killed by a woman. Thus the Lord repaid his wickedness and saw to it that he suffered a grizzly death for what he had done to the sons of Gideon. Likewise, the people of Israel suffered the curse of Jotham for demanding an earthly king and forsaking the one true God. So we see once again the cycle of rebellion once again by the children of God; Israel rebels, God disciplines them, Israel repents, God raises up a judge, eat, sleep, repeat.

This was unlike the previous papers on the judges because it did not discuss a judge. It did, however, give a little insight into what the rebellion of Gods people looks like and just how quickly it can arise. How quickly does spiritual rebellion arise in our lives? Once we put down our Bibles, step away from church service or leave the company of a like-minded saint how long does it take for our thoughts and actions to focus on earthly inspiration? In 1Thes. 5:16-18 there is a reason that the apostle Paul focuses on ceaseless prayer. It keeps us mindful of who the one true king is and where our inspiration should lie. Let us pray to be forever mindful of our Savior and give thanks for a God that is always there to welcome us with open arms after our daily bouts of rebellion.