

Lesson 7: Judges 9 Abimelech Builds Monarchy, Jotham's Parable, Abimelech's Downfall

In our last lesson we read about Gideon's success in battle with the Lord calling him to action. We also observed his change, from a poor and insignificant man, to a wealthy and powerful man with many wives and children. In this lesson his son rises to power and attempts to set himself up as king of Israel.

1. **Reflection. Have you ever had an experience with bad leadership either at work or with an organization or group?**

How can pride be the downfall of a leader?

2. **Read Judges 9:1-6 and footnotes. Also review Judges 8:29-35. Share any helpful information you find in your footnotes.**

Why did Abimelech's family have little loyalty to Gideon and his family?

Why did Abimelech kill his brothers?

Why did citizens of Shechem crown Abimelech king?

3. **How did Jotham escape being killed by his half-brother, Abimelech?**

See Judges 9:5

4. **Read Judges 9:7-15 and footnotes. Jotham is using an allegory to make a point. If the trees represent would-be kings, what kind of service does the olive tree say is better than being king?**

What does the fig tree say is better than being king?

What does the grape vines say is better than being king over trees?

What opinion do these three trees share? Hint -see also Mark 10:42-45 below.

Mark 10:42-45 "You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones make their authority over them felt. ⁴³ But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; ⁴⁴ whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. ⁴⁵ For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."

5. What is a buckthorn?

Does it really offer any shade?

What does this thorn bush threaten?

6. Read Judges 9:16-21 and footnotes. What does Jotham mean when he asks the people of Shechem if they *acted honorably and in good faith*?

Did Abimelech act honorably? Did the people of Shechem act in good faith?

Did Jotham stick around to hear their reply?

7. Read Judges 9:22-29 and footnotes. Read Genesis 33:18-20 below.

Genesis 33:18-20 Jacob arrived safely at the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Paddan-aram. He encamped in sight of the city. ¹⁹The plot of ground on which he had pitched his tent he bought for a hundred pieces of money from the descendants of Hamor, the father of Shechem. ²⁰He set up an altar there and invoked "El, the God of Israel."

Why did the Lord send an evil spirit to Shechem?

After a celebration of the harvest in the temple, where much wine was enjoyed, what does the visitor Gaal convince the "lords of Shechem" that he could do?

8. Read Judges 9:30-45. In the battle between Shechem and Abimelech, who wins?

Why did Abimelech sow the city with salt in 9:45?

9. Read Judges 9:46- 56 and footnotes.

What happened to the people of the Migdal-Shechem?

How did Abimelech die? Why did he ask to be killed?

10. What is the meaning of verses 56 and 57?

What was the curse of Jotham? (see Judges 9:8-15)