



## Lesson 82

# Abimelech: Tyrant of Israel

### Story Elements

- **Text:** Judges 8:29-9:57
  - **Setting:** circa 1200 B.C. at Shechem and its vicinity
  - **Main Characters:** God, Abimelech, Jotham, and Gaal
  - **Plot:** One of Gideon's sons becomes king of Israel through treachery.
  - **Key word(s):** "let \_\_\_\_\_ come out" (9:15, 20)
- **Climax:** **Judges 9:38** Then said Zebul unto him, Where is now thy mouth, wherewith thou saidst, Who is Abimelech, that we should serve him? is not this the people that thou hast despised? go out, I pray now, and fight with them.

## Introduction

1. (8:29-32) After Gideon's stunning victory over the Midianites, the Hebrews enjoyed peace for forty years.
  - a. Gideon lived for many years and "died in a good old age."
  - b. During his life, Gideon had many wives and sired \_\_\_\_\_ sons.
  - c. One of those sons, a child of a Shechemite concubine, was named \_\_\_\_\_.
  - d. (8:33-35) Sadly, as soon as Gideon died, Israel immediately went back to \_\_\_\_\_, forgetting God's goodness and Gideon's faith.

## Abimelech's Coup

2. (9:1-4) Abimelech went to Shechem and convinced the men that it would be better if he was king instead of having to be ruled over by seventy descendants of Gideon.
  - a. The Shechemites agreed and donated \_\_\_\_\_ silver pieces to Abimelech's political campaign.
  - b. (9:4-5) Abimelech used the money to hire *vain and light fellows*, or "idle, worthless vagabonds, the scum of society, who had nothing to lose, but much to gain from the success of a revolutionary movement."<sup>1</sup> With these hired thugs, Abimelech returned to Gideon's hometown and \_\_\_\_\_ all his half-brothers, slaying all of them on the same rock.
  - c. Only \_\_\_\_\_, Gideon's youngest son, survived the massacre because he was able to hide.

## Jotham's Curse

3. (9:6-7) Abimelech's supporters gathered near Shechem and officially made him king. When Jotham heard of this enthronement ceremony, he went to the top of Mt. Gerizim and preached a parable to Abimelech and his supporters.
  - a. Jotham introduced his sermon by saying, "Hearken unto me...that God may hearken unto you." Matthew Henry explains Jotham's words: "Those who expect God to hear their prayers must be willing to hear reason, to hear a faithful reproof, and to hear the complaints and appeals of wronged innocency. If we *turn away our ear from hearing the law, our prayer will be an \_\_\_\_\_*, Prov. 28:9."<sup>2</sup>
  - b. (9:8-20) Jotham went on to compare the Shechemites crowning Abimelech to trees who ask a \_\_\_\_\_ bush to reign over them. His parable was masterful in its symbolism of Abimelech's rule:
    - i. Abimelech, like a bramble, was worthless compared to the other sons of Gideon who followed their father's example and did not make themselves king.
    - ii. He was as incapable of leading Israel as a bramble is of providing adequate \_\_\_\_\_.

<sup>1</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 1 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 164.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 348.

- iii. Like a bramble, his destiny is burning, and his reign is doomed for the \_\_\_\_\_ of violence and upheaval.
  - iv. Jotham also rebuked Abimelech and his conspirators for their wickedness perpetrated against the house of Gideon and ended his sermon by pronouncing a curse upon all the parties involved: *let \_\_\_\_\_ come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo; and let \_\_\_\_\_ come out from the men of Shechem, and from the house of Millo, and devour Abimelech.*
- c. (9:21) Following his sermon, Jotham fled to \_\_\_\_\_ and lived in hiding.

## Gaal's Crow

4. (9:22-25) After three years, the LORD sent an evil spirit that stirred up strife between Abimelech and the men of Shechem. They set an \_\_\_\_\_ for Abimelech, but he was warned and stayed away from Shechem.
5. (9:26-29) Meanwhile, a man named \_\_\_\_\_ moved to Shechem and began to win the people's allegiance. During a drunken party, Gaal claimed he would make a better king than Abimelech and boasted that he would easily defeat Abimelech in battle.

APPLICATION → Gaal, as Matthew Henry described him, "aimed not to recover Shechem's liberty, only to change their tyrant."<sup>3</sup> Gaal is an illustration of Satan's temptations, which promise pleasure and prosperity but are really designed for \_\_\_\_\_ and destruction.

6. (9:30-34) Zebul, the city's official who was still loyal to Abimelech, sent word to his lord of Gaal's intent to the throne.
- a. Abimelech came that night with his army and prepared an ambush for the boastful Gaal.
  - b. (9:35-38) In the morning, Gaal saw Abimelech's army advancing towards the city. Zebul quipped, *Where is now thy \_\_\_\_\_, wherewith thou saidst, Who is Abimelech, that we should serve him? is not this the people that thou hast despised? go out, I pray now, and fight with them.*

## Abimelech's Conqueror

7. (9:39-49) Abimelech defeated Gaal, who fled away. Gaal's supporters were thrown out of the city, and Abimelech went on a violent rampage with his army.
- a. The survivors of Shechem, who had fled to a stronghold, were killed when Abimelech set the fort ablaze.
  - b. (9:50-57) Abimelech continued to nearby \_\_\_\_\_ and assaulted the city. Like Shechem, the people fled to a stronghold.
    - i. But this time, when Abimelech tried to set the tower on fire, a woman threw down a chunk of \_\_\_\_\_ which crushed his skull.
    - ii. In His dying moments, Abimelech asked his armor bearer, *Draw thy sword, and slay me, that men say not of me, A \_\_\_\_\_ slew him.*

APPLICATION → Abimelech and his followers are vivid examples of *Galatians 6:7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. 8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap \_\_\_\_\_; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.*

**Answer Key:** Key word(s): fire • 1. b. seventy; c. Abimelech; d. idolatry • 2. a. seventy; b. murdered; c. Jotham • 3. a. abomination; b. bramble; ii. shade; iii. fires; iv. fire, fire; c. Beer • 4. ambush • 5. Gaal → slavery • 6. b. mouth • 7 b. Thebez; i. millstone; ii. woman → corruption

<sup>3</sup> Henry, 349.