

Judges, Sermon #32

Fast track—little bit of time and a long story

Judges 9

This chapter is about Abimelech

Who did he kill? half-brothers How many? 69

One got away—“Joe Thum”—pronounced a curse on Abimelech—he was a bramble bush—worthless

Three divisions in Chapter 9—three stages of Abimelech’s political career

How he got it (**vs. 1-21**), how he kept it (vs. 22-49), how he lost it (vs. 50-57)

I’ve entitled tonight’s message “The Chickens Come Home to Roost”

Let us pray.

After three years—vs. 22—of relative success, Abimelech found himself in trouble. It's one thing to acquire a throne and quite something else to defend and retain it.

The root of the rebellion was a spirit of division aroused by God between Abimelech and the people of Shechem

Now, Shechem had helped Abimelech

Vs. 23

God who is sovereign sends a demon—God rules over good and evil spirits.

The “evil spirit of division” was sent by God Himself – vs. 23

Time to pay the piper—three years later—God remembers—sometimes we forget.

God's purpose was to bring judgment upon this tyrant and upon the citizens of Shechem because of their horrible deeds to Gideon's sons.

The reason God sent—cruelty to Shechem—vs. 24—they aided Abimelech in a vicious killing of 69 men—aided and abetted

Aiding and abetting—to assist the perpetrator of a crime

According to the U.S. laws, the aider and abetter is just as guilty as the perpetrator.

The Shechemites started to work against the king—vs. 25

The leaders of Shechem hired bandits

They began to ambush and rob the caravans that passed by the city on the nearby trade routes.

Abimelech is losing money and reputation.

The loyalty of these people was gone.

With Abimelech's popularity waning in Shechem, a new character emerges on the scene named Gaal (Gayle), a man who knew a good opportunity when he saw it.

He gained the confidence of the men of Shechem – vs. 26

★Gaal set out to exploit the displeasure of the citizens by seeking their political support.

When a crowd was gathered to celebrate a harvest festival—This religious festival included drinking—Gaal openly criticized Abimelech’s administration.

He and his brothers cursed Abimelech (v. 27)—slandering

Who is Abimelech?

Isn’t his father an Israeli?

A great lesson is revealed here: The words of criticism often get back to the person criticized.

Gaal appealed to their racial loyalty and ethnic pride and heritage—exactly what Abimelech angered to get the Shechemites to join him.

Gaal continues to get cockier as the wine continues to flow.

The cry of the day is, “Who is Abimelech that we should serve him? You don’t need Abimelech, you need me!”

Gaal closed his festival address by saying, “I would say to Abimelech, ‘Increase your army and come out!’”—the boasting of Gaal

Gaal reminds me of the kids I knew in school who would boast and brag in front of their friends, acting real tough, but when they were alone and isolated they were not so tough after all.

Chicoteque Island with my uncle’s family

Gaal (Gayle) believes he can make himself bigger and more important by verbally cutting down Abimelech.

Do we practice this tactic?

The effectiveness of a person is by his character, actions, and responsibility, not the assassination of the character of another person!

Gaal believes he is a much better ruler than Abimelech and is about to have his skills tested.

He has put his foot in his mouth and is about to eat his crow.

Proverbs 18:7, *“A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul.”*

Proverbs 13:3, *“He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.”*

Zebul (Zee-buhl)

Day two—the defeat of Gaal

Where is your big mouth now? Put up or shut up!

Vs. 42

Day three—the punishment of Shechem

Abimelech had one more score to settle, and that was with the citizens of Shechem

The next morning, when the people of Shechem went out of the city to work in the fields, Abimelech set an ambush, blocked the city gate, and slaughtered the trapped citizens.

Indeed, the fire did “come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon” (v. 15).

Vs. 45

The battle was not an easy conquest.

Abimelech was forced to press the attack all day.

But when he captured the city, he killed the people and destroyed the city.

Once the city was destroyed, he spread salt all over it to make it infertile, symbolizing that it was to remain utterly desolate, uninhabited. (v. 45).

The Shechemites are plundered and they are no longer able to resist—begging for mercy.

Groans of agony ripple throughout the city, cries of death shriek through the streets from widows and mothers weeping for their dead sons, husbands, and friends. The town that aided in the slaughter of Gideon’s sons is wounded, dying, and dead!

Vs. 46

The “tower of Shechem” was the place where the aristocracy of Shechem lived, although we don’t know where it was located with reference to the main city.

About 1,000 people—the leaders and aristocracy of Shechem—burned to death (v. 49).

Abimelech with an axe in his hand marches his troops to the woods and cuts off a limb of a tree and rests it upon his shoulder.

He orders the troops, “What I have done, you do also!”

With every soldier armed with tree limbs, they march to the tower and one by one they pile the branches around the tower and set it ablaze like a giant bonfire.

See the smoke fog up the sky.

See the arms of the flames climb the tower as the red embers shoot upward.

Hear the screams of a thousand men and women from the tower, “Fire! Fire!” and then silence.

Shechem is fully wiped out—the chickens have come home to roost!

Let us stand for closing invitation.

Jesus said . . .

“Vengeance is Mine; I will repay,” saith the Lord.