



The history of the Judges is broken down into seven period

- Tonight we look at the 5th and 6th period of judges

We pick up the text in Chapter 8:33

Judges 8:33–35 (NKJV)

³³ So it was, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel again played the harlot with the Baals, and made Baal-Berith their god. ³⁴ Thus the children of Israel did not remember the LORD their God, who had delivered them from the hands of all their enemies on every side; ³⁵ nor did they show kindness to the house of Jerubbaal (Gideon) in accordance with the good he had done for Israel.

- Here we see the pattern of grace interrupted...
- God tells Israel what life is like under condemnation
- Israel chooses condemnation over grace
- But in Chapter 9, we read about Israel's efforts to relieve their condemnation and guilt apart from God instead of calling out to God

Judges 9:1–2 (NKJV)

9 Then Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem, to his mother's brothers, and spoke with them and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, saying, ² "Please speak in the hearing of all the men of Shechem: 'Which is better for you, that all seventy of the sons of Jerubbaal reign over you, or that one reign over you?' Remember that I *am* your own flesh and bone."

Gideon refused to be king and declared his kids would not be king

- However, Abimelech had different plans and it would appear that the people of Shechem expected one of Gideon's sons to take his place
- Abimelech presents himself as the next king based on his relationship to Gideon... he was Gideon's illegitimate son by a Shechemite concubine
- He was the result of Gideon's momentary lapse in judgment
- His name means... "my father is king"
- What we are seeing is the early stages of Israel's desire for a King

I find it interesting that the further they get from God, the greater their need for a leader to take His place

- The idols have no power to rule because they cannot speak or act



- They've rejected the rule of God and if God is not reigning someone else will... it's the condition of man, you gotta serve somebody
- So as the spiritual life of the nation declines their need for a king increases until it reaches its climax in 1 Samuel 8

1 Samuel 8:19–20 (NKJV)

¹⁹ We will have a king over us, ²⁰ that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.”

- Thus, the men of Shechem chose for themselves a deliverer
- On the surface, you might say what's wrong with that?

Here's what's wrong... Fallen Man doesn't know what's best...

Judges 9:3–6 (NKJV)

³ And his mother's brothers spoke all these words concerning him in the hearing of all the men of Shechem; and their heart was inclined to follow Abimelech, for they said, "He is our brother." ⁴ So they gave him seventy *shekels* of silver from the temple of Baal-Berith, with which Abimelech hired worthless and reckless men; and they followed him. ⁵ Then he went to his father's house at Ophrah and killed his brothers, the seventy sons of Jerubbaal, on one stone. But Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left, because he hid himself. ⁶ And all the men of Shechem gathered together, all of Beth Millo, and they went and made Abimelech king beside the terebinth tree at the pillar that was in Shechem.

Wait a minute...

- Where did they get the money from? The temple of Baal Berith (whose name means Lord of the Covenant)
- This was the local Canaanite god of Shechem
- Interesting name in light of what happened at Shechem
- Shechem is the place where God makes a Covenant with the nation of Israel based on the blessings and the curses
- This demonic entity has usurped the place of God by declaring himself to be the Lord of that Covenant
- That's what the enemy does, He usurps the place of God in your life and sets himself up as lord of your life

What did Abimelech do with the money?



- He hired people to kill the rest of his family so no one would take his throne away from him
- He almost got away with it, but he left a witness – Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal (the Canaanite name for Gideon)
- What was Gideon doing with a Canaanite name?
- Jothan escapes to the top of Mount Gerazim and rebukes the men of Shechem thru a parable for making the murderer of Gideon's family king
- He then pronounces a curse over Abimelech and the men of Schechem and then runs for his life

Judges 9:22–25 (NKJV)

²² After Abimelech had reigned over Israel three years, ²³ God sent a spirit of ill will between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech, ²⁴ that the crime *done* to the seventy sons of Jerubbaal might be settled and their blood be laid on Abimelech their brother, who killed them, and on the men of Shechem, who aided him in the killing of his brothers. ²⁵ And the men of Shechem set men in ambush against him on the tops of the mountains, and they robbed all who passed by them along that way; and it was told Abimelech.

- Abimelech's reign has fallen so far short of their special relationship with God that God treats them as pagans
- The name Yahweh is not used speaking of the Covenant making God
- The name Elohim is used speaking of the God of Power and Might
- The demonic power behind their idolatry is released by God
- The first area of demonic attack is the break down of relationship
- Keep in mind that the reason Israel is in this situation is because they turned away from God and started worshipping Baal.
- In a sense, God is allowing Baal to rule over them and the result of Baal's reign is war between Abimelech and the men of Shechem

Now enters Gaal, the son of Ebed

- The men of Shechem turn against Abimelech and align with Gaal
- They have a party to celebrate their new treaty and as the wine gets flowing, so does Gaal's mouth
- He goes WWF on Abimelech and starts shooting his mouth off
- Zebul hears the words of Gaal and tells Abimelech
- Abimelech gathers four companies of troops and lies in ambush for Gaal



- They attack Gaal and run him out of town
- Then Abimelech attacks Shechem for turning against him and 1000 men and women go into the tower of Shechem for refuge
- Then Abimelech attacks and conquers the city of Thebez
- The citizens of Thebez take refuge in a strong tower within the city
- As Abimelech attempts to burn this tower, a woman throws a stone on his head and mortally wounds him
- Being a proud man, Abimelech didn't want it known that a woman killed him so he tells his armorbearer to kill him and so he dies

Judges 9:56–57 (NKJV)

⁵⁶ Thus God repaid the wickedness of Abimelech, which he had done to his father by killing his seventy brothers. ⁵⁷ And all the evil of the men of Shechem God returned on their own heads, and on them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal.

All because they would not follow the Lord

Judges 10:1–2 (NKJV)

10 After Abimelech there arose to save Israel Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in the mountains of Ephraim. ² He judged Israel twenty-three years; and he died and was buried in Shamir.

- Tola is referred to as a minor judge
- Not because he wasn't important, but because not much is written
- We are told he saved Israel, and Israel needed saving after Abimelech's short but wicked reign as king
- But the lack of information tells us that his government was stable and trouble free for 23 years

Judges 10:3–5 (NKJV)

³ After him arose Jair, a Gileadite; and he judged Israel twenty-two years. ⁴ Now he had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys; they also had thirty towns, which are called "Havoth Jair" to this day, which are in the land of Gilead. ⁵ And Jair died and was buried in Camon.

- Jair is another where not much is written about him



- We know he enjoyed prestige and popularity because they rode on 30 donkeys and owned 30 towns
- Jair's time as judge became more of a family business
- Although he judged for 22 years with no reported problems, the Nepotism he allowed didn't produce the quality of leadership needed to continue his example

Judges 10:6 (NKJV)

⁶ Then the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals and the Ashtoreths, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the people of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines; and they forsook the LORD and did not serve Him.

- Unbelief places you under condemnation and condemnation opens you to looking for other ways to satisfy guilt and cover shame
- Israel turned to Pagan religions – Baals, Ashtoreth, gods of Syria, Sidon, Moab, Ammon and the Philistines
- Pagan religion is the harnessing of “demonic supernatural power” in an attempt to remove condemnation apart from God's mercy.
- Once Israel rejected God's mercy, they began looking for substitutes
- Idolatry replaces the god-need with an idol which I can create and control
- The only problem is the idol has no power, because it is lifeless
- Therefore, I have to give it power by creating religious systems of worship that are based in a cathartic experience to give me an emotional release, but there is no real power to forgive sin and remove guilt
- It can't help me in times of need because I created it, therefore it can never be greater than I am in any given situation... it's always less
- So once again, Israel finds itself in trouble and the gods that it worships can't help them... so we read

Judges 10:10–14 (NKJV)

¹⁰ And the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, saying, “We have sinned against You, because we have both forsaken our God and served the Baals!”

¹¹ So the LORD said to the children of Israel, “*Did I not deliver you* from the Egyptians and from the Amorites and from the people of Ammon and from the Philistines? ¹² Also the Sidonians and Amalekites and Maonites



oppressed you; and you cried out to Me, and I delivered you from their hand. ¹³ Yet you have forsaken Me and served other gods. Therefore I will deliver you no more. ¹⁴ Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in your time of distress.”

The Lord said to the children of Israel... how did He speak?

- I believe this is another O.T. appearance of Jesus
- Many people say... if Jesus was standing right in front of me I would believe...
- Jesus is standing right in front of them and they still don't believe

Jesus tells them...

- Whatever you're trusting in... let them deliver you
- If you're trusting in money... let money deliver you
- If you're trusting in your job... let your job deliver you
- If you're trusting in people... let people deliver you
- But if you want the Lord to deliver you, then trust Him

The children of Israel cry out to the Lord... we have sinned

- Do whatever you want to do to us, but deliver us
- They have a prison conversion... YET
- God has mercy on his people and raises up another deliverer
- That's the grace of God

Judges 11:1–3 (NKJV)

11 Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valor, but he was the son of a harlot; and Gilead begot Jephthah. ² Gilead's wife bore sons; and when his wife's sons grew up, they drove Jephthah out, and said to him, "You shall have no inheritance in our father's house, for you *are* the son of another woman." ³ Then Jephthah fled from his brothers and dwelt in the land of Tob; and worthless men banded together with Jephthah and went out *raiding* with him.

I really like Jephthah

- Here's a guy that's had a hard life
- He would have never been voted most likely to succeed in his High School Yearbook
- He had a dark, shameful past – the son of a prostitute



- His dad was head of the tribe of Gilead and Gilead raised Jephthah in his home
- As Gilead had other kids, his full blooded sons let Jephthah know that not only did he not belong, but he didn't have a future with the family
- Imagine growing up in that kind of home – being told constantly that you were worthless, meaningless, didn't matter
- Having it thrown in your face – you're an accident, you don't deserve to live
- Eventually Jephthah's brothers would drive him out of the house
- Rejected, Jephthah turns to a life of crime in the land of Tob (which means good).
- Life was good for Jephthah – he had prestige, prominence, respect, money and possession from his life of crime

Meanwhile, back home Ammon declares war on Israel and they don't have anyone to command their armies

- It makes you wonder about the brothers that drove Jephthah out of town
- Why didn't they step up to the plate and lead the armies?
- Where were they? Maybe they didn't want to fight... they thought let's get Jephthah to do the dirty work for us
- Maybe they couldn't fight... they were too busy being the sons of a tribal leader that they didn't learn how to fight
- Maybe Jephthah's reputation as the leader of a band of marauders was known to such a degree that they thought... he's the best, let's get him
- Whatever the reason, the elders of Gilead seek out Jephthah and ask him to return

Judges 11:6–11 (NKJV)

⁶ Then they said to Jephthah, "Come and be our commander, that we may fight against the people of Ammon."

⁷ So Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, "Did you not hate me, and expel me from my father's house? Why have you come to me now when you are in distress?"

⁸ And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, "That is why we have turned again to you now, that you may go with us and fight against the people of Ammon, and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead."

⁹ So Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, "If you take me back home to fight against the people of Ammon, and the LORD delivers them to me, shall I be your head?"



¹⁰ And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, “The LORD will be a witness between us, if we do not do according to your words.” ¹¹ Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and commander over them; and Jephthah spoke all his words before the LORD in Mizpah.

Look back at Vs.1 – I think this is key

- You see two statements that I believe represent God’s perspective versus man’s perspective.
- God’s perspective: Mighty man of valor
- Man’s perspective: Son of a harlot
- We often say... God takes the rejects and makes something great out of them
- Let me give a different angle on that... God never doubted once in Jephthah’s greatness because God saw His greatness all along
- Many of you see yourselves from Man’s perspective – you can’t see past your weakness or your dark past
- But god sees you in light of who He created you to be – a daughter of destiny... a mighty man of valor.

Judges 11:12 (NKJV)

¹² Now Jephthah sent messengers to the king of the people of Ammon, saying, “What do you have against me, that you have come to fight against me in my land?”

- Ammon’s answer is interesting... it’s the same answer we hear from native Americans – you took our land, now give it back peaceably

(Vs. 14-27) Jephthah’s informs Ammon on how they acquired the land

- We asked nicely to pass through the land of Edom – but the King of Edom said no... and he didn’t attack Israel
- We asked nicely to pass through the land of Moab – but the King of Moab said no... and he didn’t attack Israel
- We asked nicely to pass through the land of Amon – but King Sihon said no and sent his armies to attack Israel
- Because they attacked Israel, God gave the land of the Ammonites to Israel



- So, if they want it back then they need to go to their god Chemosh and get him to give it back because we were given this land by our God
- By the way, we've occupied this land for 300 years, why didn't you take it before? Why are you waiting until now?
- Japhtah then puts it back on God

Judges 11:27–28 (NKJV)

²⁷ Therefore I have not sinned against you, but you wronged me by fighting against me. May the LORD, the Judge, render judgment this day between the children of Israel and the people of Ammon.' ” ²⁸ However, the king of the people of Ammon did not heed the words which Jephthah sent him.

(Vs. 29-32) Jephthah has an encounter with the Holy Spirit that transforms Him and he makes a vow

- If God gives me victory, whoever comes out of my house to meet me – I will dedicate to you
- What a foolish vow to make... he wasn't required to do this, but he did it
- He defeats the Ammonites, comes home and the first person that comes to greet him is his daughter... what a blow
- Jephthah keeps his vow, sends his daughter away for two months to mourn the fact that she will never marry or have kids and when she returns she is dedicated to the Lord
- Now... with everything Jephthah has done, you would think that the tribes of Israel would have been happy

Judges 12:1 (NKJV)

12 Then the men of Ephraim gathered together, crossed over toward Zaphon, and said to Jephthah, “Why did you cross over to fight against the people of Ammon, and did not call us to go with you? We will burn your house down on you with fire!”

What is going on here? What is Ephraim's problem?

- Ephraim doesn't want Jephthah to be judge over Israel
- Why? Because anyone from Gilead was looked down upon because they didn't enter into the promised land
- It's clear that Ephraim didn't consider Jephthah to be one of them.
- Additionally, Jephthah had to go into their territory to defeat the Ammonites...



- Who gives you the right to fight on our land without our permission?
- But Jephthah reminds them, when we needed your help before you wouldn't come, so I took matters into my own hands
- Better to ask forgiveness than to ask permission
- Gideon had the same problem with Ephraim in Judges 8:1
- But this time Ephraim threatens Jephthah personally – if you become judge, we will burn down your house
- A Civil War breaks out and the Gileadites defeat the Ephraimites
- They also seize the fords of the Jordan where they would cross
- As the Ephraimites are arriving, they ask them are you an Ephraimite? If they say No, then they would ask them to say Shibboleth
- Apparently the Ephraimites could not say this word and if they couldn't say the word they were killed
- We are told that 42,000 Ephraimites were killed
- You want to duke it out? Have it your way
- Jephthah judges Israel for 6 years

It is believed that the next three judges were in office simultaneously after Jephthah in different parts of Israel

- Their time is relatively uneventful –
- it would appear that Jephthah's time had a tremendous impact on the nation of Israel

Judges 12:8–15 (NKJV)

⁸ After him, Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel. ⁹ He had thirty sons. And he gave away thirty daughters in marriage, and brought in thirty daughters from elsewhere for his sons. He judged Israel seven years. ¹⁰ Then Ibzan died and was buried at Bethlehem.

¹¹ After him, Elon the Zebulunite judged Israel. He judged Israel ten years. ¹² And Elon the Zebulunite died and was buried at Aijalon in the country of Zebulun.

¹³ After him, Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite judged Israel. ¹⁴ He had forty sons and thirty grandsons, who rode on seventy young donkeys. He judged Israel eight years. ¹⁵ Then Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the mountains of the Amalekites.