

### From Judges to Jesus – Part 3

Gideon has died. Now, let's turn our attention to Abimelech. Abimelech killed his brothers – 70 in total, why? His purpose was to usurp the throne to worship himself. He continued on in his father's ways of bloodshed. Contrast this with 70 bulls being sacrificed at the feast of Tabernacles (**Numbers 29:12-34**). Instead of 70 bulls being sacrificed in the worship of God and thankfulness for His deliverance, Abimelech sacrifices 70 brothers in the worship of himself. For this heinous act, he was honored and made king (**Judges 9:4-6**). As if this wasn't bad enough, Abimelech is honored and installed as king by the tree where the stone at Shechem is standing. Why is this significant? This is the very place where Israel said they were going to follow God's laws and ways; and, now they have made it the place where they are rewarding the slaughter of their own people, and, honoring a usurper!

Abimelech's reign of bloodshed continues as he launches an attack against the people of Shechem: about 1,000 men and women died as a result of Abimelech setting fire to the tower of Shechem. The people ran to the tower of a false god they worshipped to seek deliverance that can only come from God Himself – seeking death to try and be delivered from death! Abimelech is not the only one who is sin-filled and broken! Abimelech's last attempt to burn down a tower with people in it, results in his death.

#### **Points to remember about Abimelech:**

- Godly promotion comes from self-sacrifice, not sacrificing others: Jesus didn't hand other people over to death so He could be exalted; He sacrificed Himself.
- In the kingdom of God, you can't sustain by force what can only be obtained through Christ-like humility: you may bulldoze your way into a position or title but you won't be able to sustain it because the way in which you obtained it, will be your undoing.
- Those who don't practice honor will never themselves be honored: you can't receive what you've never given or what you've never sown.

Here's truth: embracing sin darkens our understanding and hardens our hearts. When all you've ever known is sin, it takes the Holy Spirit working through prayers or a gospel message to speak God's message of deliverance to you. How many of us are so deceived at times that we run into the arms of sin believing that it can deliver us from our oppression, pain or trauma?

Some dangers we as Christians must be aware of are:

- Forgetting or treating the Word of God and our relationship with Christ as average.
- Starting to live as if sin can do more for us than God can by continuing to pursue sin and rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The more we practice deceit the more incapable we are of speaking or even recognizing the truth.

Now on to Jephthah: his father is Gilead, and his mother is a harlot. Gilead's wife had sons who drove Jephthah away when they got older because of the nature of his birth – they felt he was not entitled to share in their father's inheritance. He is forced from his hometown, goes on to become a warrior, and, then is made commander over all of Gilead, why? Because the people of his hometown need defense against the Ammonites. Jephthah accomplishes a **Passover-like deliverance**: just as the angel of death passes through the land of Egypt and smites Israel's enemies (**Exodus 12:12-13**), so Jephthah passes through Gilead into Ammon and does likewise (**Judges 11:32**).

The Lord delivered the Ammonites into the hands of Jephthah because of a foolish vow he made: the fulfillment of Jephthah's results with the Ammonites resulted in the loss of his firstborn and the end of his legacy (**Judges 11:29-32, 34-35, 37-40**). Due to the foolishness of Jephthah's vow, it became a custom in Israel that the daughters of Israel would lament four days each year for the daughter of Jephthah. An **anti-Passover trait** concerning Jephthah's vow:

- While the Passover becomes established as a statute in Israel, to be celebrated on an annual basis, the fate of Jephthah's daughter comes to be lamented as part of an annual custom.
- While two months after the Passover, Israel enters into a marriage covenant with YHWH on Mount Sinai (**Exodus 19, Jeremiah 2**), Jephthah's daughter returns from her two months in the mountains to die a virgin (**Judges 11:37-39**)

#### **Points to remember about Jephthah:**

- True victory in your life should never come at the expense of those closest to you.
- If there is no legacy left to live on, then was there ever really a victory or success to begin with?
- Do our breakthroughs create a fertile ground for more fruit to come forth or do our actions destroy the soil of our future?

#### **Final thoughts:**

The judges / deliverers continue in a downward trend of sin in the life of Israel

Israel is a picture of what happens to us when we surrender to pursuing sin and not the Lord - darkness overtakes our lives and more.

The rock at Shechem is a reminder to Israel of their inability to walk in God's law and His ways.