



Abimelech
The Son of Gideon and
A Wicked King

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Overview:

Abimelech, the son of Gideon

Abimelech was willing to destroy his family for power.

His story is told in Judges 8:31-9:57. He is also mentioned in 2 Samuel 11:21.

People who desire power always outnumber those who are able to use power wisely once they have it.

Perhaps this is because power has a way of taking over and controlling the person using it. This is especially true in cases of inherited but unmerited power.

Abimelech's life shows us what happens when hunger for power corrupts judgment. Abimelech's position in Gideon's family as the son of a concubine must have created great tension between him and Gideon's many other sons.

One against 70: such odds can either crush a person or make him ruthless. It is obvious which direction Abimelech chose.

Gideon's position as warrior and judge had placed Abimelech in an environment of power; Gideon's death provided an opportunity for this son to seize power.

Once the process began, the disastrous results were inevitable. A person's thirst for power is not satisfied when he gets power—it only becomes more intense.

Abimelech's life was consumed by that thirst.

King of Gerar

Abraham's Sojourn at Gerar, Sarah Is Taken by Abimelech

Genesis 20:1-8

Crooked policy will not prosper: it brings ourselves and others into danger. God gives Abimelech notice of his danger of sin, and his danger of death for his sin.

Every wilful sinner is a dead man, but Abimelech pleads ignorance.

If our consciences witness, that, however we may have been cheated into a snare, we have not knowingly sinned against God, it will be our rejoicing in the day of evil.

It is matter of comfort to those who are honest, that God knows their honesty, and will acknowledge it. It is a great mercy to be hindered from committing sin; of this God must have the glory.

But if we have ignorantly done wrong, that will not excuse us, if we knowingly persist in it. He that does wrong, whoever he is, prince or peasant, shall certainly receive for the wrong which he has done, unless he repent, and, if possible, make restitution.

Abimelech's Rebuke to Abraham

Genesis 20:9-13

See here much to blame, even in the father of the faithful. Mark his distrust of God, his undue care about life, his intent to deceive. He also threw temptation in the way of others, caused affliction to them, exposed himself and Sarah to just rebukes, and yet attempted an excuse.

These things are written for our warning, not for us to imitate. Even Abraham hath not whereof to glory. He cannot be justified by his works, but must be indebted for justification, to that righteousness which is upon all and unto all them that believe.

We must not condemn all as hypocrites who fall into sin, if they do not continue in it. But let the unhumbled and impenitent take heed that they do not sin on, thinking that grace may abound.

Abimelech, being warned of God, takes the warning; and being truly afraid of sin and its consequences, he rose early to pursue the directions given him.

Abimelech Restores Sarah

Genesis 20:14-18

We often trouble ourselves, and even are led into temptation and sin, by groundless suspicions; and find the fear of God where we expected it not.

Agreements to deceive generally end in shame and sorrow; and restraints from sin, though by suffering, should be thankfully acknowledged.

Though the Lord rebuke, yet he will pardon and deliver his people, and he will give them favour in the sight of those with whom they sojourn; and overrule their infirmities, when they are humbled for them, so that they shall prove useful to themselves and others.

Abimelech's Covenant with Abraham

Genesis 21:22-34

Abimelech felt sure that the promises of God would be fulfilled to Abraham. It is wise to connect ourselves with those who are blessed of God; and we ought to requite kindness to those who have been kind to us.

Wells of water are scarce and valuable in eastern countries. Abraham took care to have his title to the well allowed, to prevent disputes in future.

No more can be expected from an honest man than that he be ready to do right, as soon as he knows he has done wrong. Abraham, being now in a good neighborhood, stayed a great while there. There he made, not only a constant practice, but an open profession of his religion.

There he called on the name of the Lord, as the everlasting God; probably in the grove he planted, which was his place of prayer. Abraham kept up public worship, in which his neighbours might join. Good men should do all they can to make others so.

Wherever we sojourn, we must neither neglect nor be ashamed of the worship of Jehovah. Gen 21:22-32

Isaac, Because of Famine, Goes to Gerar

Genesis 26:1-5 review

Isaac had been trained up in a believing dependence upon the Divine grant of the land of Canaan to him and his heirs; and now that there is a famine in the land, Isaac still cleaves to the covenant. The real worth of God's promises cannot be lessened to a believer by any cross providences that may befall him.

If God engage to be with us, and we are where he would have us to be, nothing but our own unbelief and distrust can prevent our comfort. The obedience of Abraham to the Divine command, was evidence of that faith, whereby, as a sinner, he was justified before God, and the effect of that love whereby true faith works.

God testifies that he approved this obedience, to encourage others, especially Isaac.

He Denies His Wife and Is Reproved by Abimelech

Genesis 26:6-11 review

There is nothing in Isaac's denial of his wife to be imitated, nor even excused. The temptation of Isaac is the same as that which overcame his father, and that in two instances. This rendered his conduct the greater sin.

The falls of those who are gone before us are so many rocks on which others have split; and the recording of them is like placing buoys to save future mariners. This Abimelech was not the same that lived in Abraham's days, but both acted rightly. The sins of professors shame them before those that are not themselves religious.

Abimelech Murders His Brethren, and Is Made King

Judges 9:1-6

The men of Shechem chose Abimelech king. God was not consulted whether they should have any king, much less who it should be.

If parents could see what their children would do, and what they are to suffer, their joy in them often would be turned into sorrow: we may be thankful that we cannot know what shall happen.

Above all, we should fear and watch against sin; for our evil conduct may produce fatal effects upon our families, after we are in our graves.

Jotham Rebukes the Shechemites

Judges 9:7-21

There was no occasion for the trees to choose a king, they are all the trees of the Lord which he has planted. Nor was there any occasion for Israel to set a king over them, for the Lord was their King.

Those who bear fruit for the public good, are justly respected and honoured by all that are wise, more than those who merely make a figure.

All these fruit-trees gave much the same reason for their refusal to be promoted over the trees; or, as the margin reads it, to go up and down for the trees.

To rule, involves a man in a great deal both of toil and care. Those who are preferred to public trust and power, must forego all private interests and advantages, for the good of others.

And those advanced to honour and dignity, are in great danger of losing their fruitfulness. For which reason, they that desire to do good, are afraid of being too great.

Jotham compares Abimelech to the bramble or thistle, a worthless plant, whose end is to be burned. Such a one was Abimelech.

The Shechemites conspire against Abimelech.

Judges 9:22-29 review

Abimelech is seated in the throne his father refused. But how long does this glory last? Stay but three years, and see the bramble withered and burned. The prosperity of the wicked is short and fickle. The Shechemites are plagued by no other hand than Abimelech's. They raised him unjustly to the throne; they first feel the weight of his sceptre.

Abimelech Destroys Shechem

Judges 30-49 review

Abimelech intended to punish the Shechemites for slighting him now, but God punished them for their serving him formerly in the murder of Gideon's sons. When God uses men as instruments in his hand to do his work, he means one thing, and they another. That, which they hoped would have been for their welfare, proved a snare and a trap, as those will certainly find, who run to idols for shelter; such will prove a refuge of lies.

Abimelech Slain

9:50-57 review

The Shechemites were ruined by Abimelech; now he is reckoned with, who was their leader in villany. Evil pursues sinners, and sometimes overtakes them, when not only at ease, but triumphant.

Though wickedness may prosper a while, it will not prosper always. The history of mankind, if truly told, would greatly resemble that of this chapter.

The records of what are called splendid events present to us such contests for power.

Such scenes, though praised of men, fully explain the Scripture doctrine of the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the human heart, the force of men's lust, and the effect of Satan's influence.

Lord, thou has given us thy word of truth and righteousness, O pour upon us thy spirit of purity, peace, and love, and write thy holy law in our hearts.

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Judges 9:50-57

Then Abimelech attacked the city of Thebez and captured it. But there was a strong tower inside the city, and the entire population fled to it. They barricaded themselves in and climbed up to the roof of the tower.

Abimelech followed them to attack the tower. But as he prepared to set fire to the entrance, a woman on the roof threw down a millstone that landed on Abimelech's head and crushed his skull.

He said to his young armor bearer, "Draw your sword and kill me! Don't let it be said that a woman killed Abimelech!" So the young man stabbed him with his sword, and he died.

When Abimelech's men saw that he was dead, they disbanded and returned to their homes.

Thus, God punished Abimelech for the evil he had done against his father by murdering his seventy brothers. God also punished the men of Shechem for all their evil. So the curse of Jotham son of Gideon came true.

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Life Application:

How ironic that Abimelech was fatally injured by a woman! The contrast between Abimelech and the great people of the Bible is great. He wanted to control the nation; they were willing to be controlled by God.

Key verses: “Thus God repaid the wickedness that Abimelech had done to his father by murdering his seventy brothers. God also made the men of Shechem pay for all their wickedness. The curse of Jotham son of Jerub-Baal came on them”

Be not weary in well doing, for in due time you will reap your reward.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Verse Concept: Matthew Henry's Concept Bible Commentary.