

## Judges 4 - 9: From Deborah to Gideon

### INTRODUCTION.

- A. In our last study, we saw that Israel had failed to take the land of Canaan. As a result, the remaining inhabitants would become a thorn and a stumbling block to the nation of Israel. Israel began to practice the idolatry of the land. They were judged by God.
- B. God established an era of judges, beginning with Othniel. Othniel was followed by Ehud, and then Shamgar.
- C. In this lesson, we will study the following judges: Deborah and Gideon. In addition, we will also study the rampage of Abimelech.
- D. Let us begin our study with Deborah.

### I. JUDGE: DEBORAH. (4:1 - 5:31)

- A. After the death of Ehud, the Israelites returned to doing evil. (4:1-3)
  - 1. The Lord sold Israel into the hand of Jabin, king of Canaan. (vs 2)
  - 2. The commander of Jabin's army was Sisera. (vs 2)
  - 3. Jabin oppressed the Israelites for twenty years, using 900 chariots of iron. As a result, the Israelites cried out to the Lord. (vs 3)
- B. During this time, Deborah, a prophetess, was judging Israel. Deborah reminded Barak of the Lord's command for Barak to battle Jabin and his army. (4:4-10)
- C. Sisera heard that Barak had gone up to Mount Tabor. Sisera gathered all his chariots to go up against Barak. (4:11-16)
- D. After his army was defeated, Sisera fled to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite. After Sisera went to sleep, Jael killed him with a tent stake. Jael called for Barak. (4:17-22)
- E. Deborah and Barak sang a song praising the Lord. (5:1-30)
- F. The Israelites had forty years of rest. (5:31)

### II. JUDGE: GIDEON. (6:1 - 8:33)

- A. After forty years of rest, the Israelites did evil in the sight of the Lord. As a result, the Lord delivered them into the hand of the Midianites for seven years. (6:1-6)
- B. When the children of Israel cried out to the Lord, the Lord sent a prophet to Israel. The prophet delivered a message from the Lord. The prophet reminded the people that the Lord had delivered the Israelites on many occasions. However, Israel had chosen to not obey the Lord. (6:7-10)

- C. An angel of the Lord called Gideon to deliver the people of Israel. (6:11-24)
- D. The Lord told Gideon to go and tear down the altar of Baal that belonged to his father. (6:25-32)
- E. The Midianites and Amalekites gathered in the Valley of Jezreel led by Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon who then blew the trumpet and the Abiezrites gathered behind him. Gideon also sent messengers throughout Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali. (6:33-35)
- F. Before going into battle, Gideon asked twice to see a sign to show that the Lord would save Israel. (6:36-40)
- G. Gideon gathered all the people who were with him beside the well of Harod. The Lord told Gideon that there were too many people. The Lord gave Gideon instructions on how to thin down the number of people. Gideon retained 300 men. (7:1-8)
- H. The Lord gave Gideon a sign of victory to come. This sign came through the dream of an unnamed individual. (7:9-14)
- I. Gideon and his 300 men attacked the camp of the Midianites and Amalekites. The army of the enemy fled and was pursued by the men of Israel. (7:15-25)
- J. The men of Ephraim were initially upset with Gideon for not calling them into the fight. However, Gideon made the point that the Lord had delivered the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb into their hands. (8:1-3)
- K. Gideon and his men tried to get some bread from the people of Succoth. The leaders of Succoth refused to help Gideon and his men. Gideon promised to punish the leaders of Succoth on his way back through that area. Gideon also tried to get help from the city of Penuel. The men of Penuel refused and Gideon promised retribution. (8:4-9)
- L. Gideon and his men hunted down Zebah and Zalmunna and their armies, about 15,000 men. Gideon and his men attacked the army. Zebah and Zalmunna fled, and Gideon pursued. Gideon took the two kings and terrified the whole army. (8:10-12)
- M. Gideon took Zebah and Zalmunna and returned to the cities of Succoth and Penuel and punished both cities. (8:13-17)
- N. Gideon killed Zebah and Zalmunna. (8:18-21)
- O. The men of Israel wanted Gideon to rule over them, him and his sons. Gideon refused saying that the Lord should rule over them. Gideon made an ephod (a priestly garment, shoulder-cape or mantle, outer garment) and set it up in his city. This ephod became a snare to Gideon and his house. All of Israel played the harlot with the ephod. Gideon was subdued or humbled before the Israelites. The country

was quite for 40 years in the days of Gideon. (8:22-28)

### **III. THE RAMPAGE OF ABIMELECH. (8:29 - 9:57)**

- A. Gideon (Jerubbaal) had 70 sons and many wives. He had one wife by a concubine in Shechem. His name was Abimelech. Gideon died at a good old age and was buried in the tomb of his father, Joash. (8:29-32)
- B. After Gideon died, the Israelites made Baal-Berith their god. The Israelites also did not show kindness to the house of Gideon. (8:33-35)
- C. Abimelech, the son of Gideon and a concubine, told the men of Shechem that it would be better for him to reign over the men of Shechem instead of the 70 sons of Gideon. (9:1-3)
- D. Abimelech hired men to follow him. Abimelech killed the 70 sons of Gideon, except for Jotham, who escaped. (9:4-21)
- E. Jotham stood on the top of Mount Gerizim, the mount of blessings, and brought a cursing upon the Abimelech and the men of Shechem. (9:22-25)
- F. Gaal, the son of Ebed, began a rebellion against Abimelech. (9:26-29)
- G. Abimelech heard of Gaal's revolt and set up an ambush. Gaal and his men fought against Abimelech and was defeated. (9:30-41)
- H. Abimelech and his men killed some of the citizens of Shechem, took the city, demolished the city, and sowed salt in the city. (9:42-45)
- I. The men of the tower of Shechem gathered against Abimelech. Abimelech killed the people of the tower, about a thousand men and women. (9:46-49)
- J. Abimelech took the city of Thebez. The men and women fled to the tower. Abimelech set about to burn the tower. A woman dropped a millstone on Abimelech's head. Abimelech told his armor bearer to kill him so it would not be said that he was killed by a woman. (9:50-55)
- K. The wickedness of Abimelech was repaid as well as the wickedness of the men of Shechem. (9:56-57)

### **IV. LESSONS LEARNED.**

- A. One person can defeat sin and wickedness.
  - 1. Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, killed Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army. (Judges 4:17-24)
  - 2. While certain battles are easier fought in the company of other Christians, a single Christian can still stand, with Jesus Christ, against sin. Most challenges require Christians to stand first on their own strength and resolve,

then to stand with others.

- a. I Timothy 6:11-12 - fight the good fight
  - b. I Corinthians 16:13 - "Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong." (NKJV)
  - c. Galatians 5:1 - "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage." (NKJV)
  - d. Ephesians 6:10-11 - put on the whole armor of God
- B. We can proclaim God when everyone else is against God.
1. Gideon tore down the altar of Baal and the wooden image. He then built an altar to the Lord and offered a sacrifice on the new altar. (Judges 6:21-27)
  2. There are times when our stand as Christians will not be popular. Our choices and actions must stay godly, no matter how unpopular the world.
    - a. Matthew 5:13-16 - Christians are to be different. Christians are to be lights in a dark world.
    - b. When a person is performing on stage, the lights are dimmed, and the spot light shines. The spot light singles out a particular person or group of people for all to see. When we live faithful lives, it is as if a spot light is shining on us so that all the world may see our good works and glorify God.
- C. The Lord can give victory by 300. The Lord can give victory by two.
1. God sent Gideon into battle with only 300 men. God gave Gideon and his army victory. God gave victory by few, not by many. (Judges 7:1-25)
  2. With Jesus on our side, we will always have victory. By two, Jesus and our will to obey, we can be victorious over sin and death. (I Corinthians 15:54-57 - victory through Jesus Christ)
- D. We must follow the rightful leader.
1. The men of Shechem followed Abimelech rather than the sons of Gideon. The men of Shechem paid the price. (Judges 9:1-57)
  2. We have only one true leader, Jesus Christ. Jesus is our King and will remain so until He returns. (I Corinthians 15:24-28)

## CONCLUSION.

- A. In this lesson, we covered the story of Deborah, Gideon, and the rampage of

Abimelech.

- B. In future lessons we will examine the stories of Jephthah and Samson, in addition to more incidences of sin in Israel.
- C. As we close this lesson, let us remember the lessons learned from our study.
  - 1. You can defeat sin and wickedness.
  - 2. You can proclaim God when everyone else is against God.
  - 3. When you stand with Jesus, you will be victorious.
  - 4. You must follow Jesus, your rightful leader.
- D. If you are not a Christian, then follow Jesus today. If you will follow Jesus, then you will have victory, defeating sin and death. You can then proclaim God to a lost world.

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Judges 4 - 9: From Deborah to Gideon -- September 16, 2001 -- File # 670  
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