

Judges 9:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Speak, I pray you, in the ears of all the men of Shechem, Whether is better for you, either that all the sons of Jerubbaal, which are threescore and ten persons, reign over you, or that one reign over you? remember also that I am your bone and your flesh.

Analysis

Speak, I pray you, in the ears of all the men of Shechem, Whether is better for you, either that all the sons of Jerubbaal, which are threescore and ten persons, reign over you, or that one reign over you? remember also that I am your bone and your flesh.

This verse contributes to the narrative of Abimelech's tyrannical reign and judgment. The Book of Judges documents Israel's cyclical pattern of apostasy and deliverance, revealing both human depravity and divine mercy. Each cycle begins with Israel doing evil (usually Baal worship), followed by God's judgment through foreign oppression, Israel's cry for deliverance, God raising up a judge, temporary peace, then renewed apostasy after the judge dies.

Theologically, this pattern demonstrates several crucial truths:

1. Human inability to maintain covenant faithfulness apart from God's transforming grace
2. God's justice in punishing covenant violation through the curses of Deuteronomy 28
3. God's mercy in responding to repentant cries with deliverance

4. The inadequacy of repeated deliverances to produce lasting transformation, pointing to the need for the New Covenant with God's law written on hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

The judges themselves foreshadow Christ—they are divinely appointed deliverers who save Israel from enemies.

Yet their imperfections and temporary victories point to the need for the perfect Judge who would provide permanent deliverance. Jesus fulfills the judges' typology, being the ultimate "sent one" who conquers spiritual enemies definitively through His death and resurrection, providing eternal salvation rather than temporary political relief.

Historical Context

Historical Setting: The Book of Judges spans approximately 350-400 years (c. 1375-1050 BCE) during the Late Bronze Age collapse and early Iron Age. This period saw the disintegration of major empires (Hittites, Mycenaeans) and weakening of Egyptian control over Canaan, creating a power vacuum filled by emerging peoples including Philistines (Sea Peoples), Aramaeans, and regional kingdoms. The decentralized tribal structure left Israel vulnerable to external oppression and internal chaos.

Cultural Context: This passage relates to Abimelech's tyrannical reign and judgment. Canaanite religion dominated the region, centered on Baal (storm/fertility god), Asherah (mother goddess), and Anat (war goddess). Archaeological discoveries at Ugarit (Ras Shamra) have provided extensive information about Canaanite mythology and religious practices. Baal worship involved ritual prostitution, child sacrifice, and fertility rites tied to agricultural seasons. Israel's persistent attraction to these gods demonstrates the strong cultural pressure to conform to surrounding nations' religious practices.

The material culture of this period shows gradual Israelite settlement in the Canaanite hill country, with simpler pottery and architecture than coastal Canaanite cities. Iron technology was beginning to spread, giving military advantage to peoples who mastered it (note the Philistines' iron monopoly, 1

Samuel 13:19-22). The absence of centralized government during the judges period stands in stark contrast to the bureaucratic city-states of Canaan and the imperial administration of Egypt and Mesopotamia. This political structure reflected Israel's theocratic ideal—God as king—yet the repeated cycles of apostasy showed this ideal required more than political structures; it demanded heart transformation.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does this passage about Abimelech's tyrannical reign and judgment reveal God's character in dealing with persistent human rebellion and incomplete obedience?
2. What patterns of spiritual compromise or incomplete obedience in your own life mirror Israel's failures during the judges period?
3. How does understanding the cyclical nature of sin and deliverance in Judges help you appreciate Christ's perfect and final deliverance from sin's power?

Interlinear Text

מִהּ	שָׁכֶם	בְּנֵל	כָּל	בְּאֶזְנֵי	נָא	דְּבָרָו
Speak	H4994	I pray you in the ears	H3605	of all the men	H1167	of Shechem
H1696		H241			H1167	H4100
וּבָטַח	לִפְנֵיכֶם	מִשְׁלֵךְ	מִשְׁלֵךְ	שְׁבָעִים	אַיִשׁ	
Whether is better	H0	reign	H0	which are threescore and ten	H7657	persons
H2896		H4910			H376	
כָּל	בְּנֵי	עַל	מִשְׁלֵךְ	אִם	יְרֻבָּאֵל	אַיִשׁ
H3605	for you either that all the sons	of Jerubbaal	H518	reign	H0	persons
	H1121	H3378	H4910		H376	
אַתָּה	זְכָרָתְךָ	כִּי	עַצְמָךְ			
over you or that one	over you remember	H3588	also that I am your bone			
H259	H2142	H6106				
אָנִי	וּבָשָׁרְךָ					
and your flesh	H589					
H1320						

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 29:14 (Parallel theme): And Laban said to him, Surely thou art my bone and my flesh. And he abode with him the space of a month.

Judges 8:30 (Parallel theme): And Gideon had threescore and ten sons of his body begotten: for he had many wives.

Hebrews 2:14 (Parallel theme): Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

1 Chronicles 11:1 (Parallel theme): Then all Israel gathered themselves to David unto Hebron, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh.

