

Judges 9:28

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Gaal the son of Ebed said, Who is Abimelech, and who is Shechem, that we should serve him? is not he the son of Jerubbaal? and Zebul his officer? serve the men of Hamor the father of Shechem: for why should we serve him?

Analysis

And Gaal the son of Ebed said, Who is Abimelech, and who is Shechem, that we should serve him? is not he the son of Jerubbaal? and Zebul his officer? serve the men of Hamor the father of Shechem: for why should we serve him?

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

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

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

וַיֹּאמֶר	גַּל עַל	בֶּן	עַבְדֹּ	מִי	אֲבִימֶלֶךְ	וְיִמִּי
said	And Gaal	him is not he the son	of Ebed	H4310	Who is Abimelech	H4310
H559	H1603	H1121	H5651		H40	
וְשָׁכָם	כִּי	נַעֲבָדְנוּ	הֲלֹא	בֶּן		
and who is Shechem	H3588	for why should we serve	H3808	him is not he the son		
H7927		H5647		H1121		
יֵרֻבְבָּאֵל	וְזִבְלִי	פְּקִידֹו	נַעֲבָדְנוּ	אֶת־	אֲנִישׁ־יִ	
of Jerubbaal	and Zebul	his officer	for why should we serve	H853	H376	
H3378	H2083	H6496	H5647			
חַמּוֹר	אָבִי	שָׁכָם	וַיֵּצֵא	נַעֲבָדְנוּ		
of Hamor	the father	and who is Shechem	H4069	for why should we serve		
H2544	H1	H7927		H5647		
אֶנְחִנּוּ:						
H587						

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 34:2 (Parallel theme): And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her.

Genesis 34:6 (Parallel theme): And Hamor the father of Shechem went out unto Jacob to commune with him.

1 Samuel 25:10 (Parallel theme): And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master.

1 Kings 12:16 (Parallel theme): So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents.

