

Judges 9:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he went unto his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren the sons of Jerubbaal, being threescore and ten persons, upon one stone: notwithstanding yet Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left; for he hid himself.

Analysis

And he went unto his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren the sons of Jerubbaal, being threescore and ten persons, upon one stone: notwithstanding yet Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left; for he hid himself.

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

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

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

וַיֵּבֶן	בֵּית	אָבִיו	תֵּה	עַפְּרֵג	אָתָה	לִקְרֵב	אַחֲרֵי
And he went	house	unto his father's	at Ophrah	and slew	H853	his brethren	H251
H935	H1004	H1	H6084	H2026			
בֶּן	יְרֻבָּעַל	שְׁבָעַ יָם	אִישׁ	עַל	אַבָּן	אַחֲת	
son	of Jerubbaal	being threescore and ten	persons	H5921	stone	upon one	
H1121	H3378	H7657	H376		H68		H259
רִיתָה	יְוָתָם	בֶּן	יְרֻבָּעַל	פְּקָטָה	כִּי		
was left	notwithstanding yet Jotham	son	of Jerubbaal	the youngest	H3588		
H3498	H3147	H1121	H3378	H6996			
נִחְבַּא:							
for he hid							
H2244							

Additional Cross-References

2 Chronicles 21:4 (Parallel theme): Now when Jehoram was risen up to the kingdom of his father, he strengthened himself, and slew all his brethren with the sword, and divers also of the princes of Israel.

Judges 6:24 (Parallel theme): Then Gideon built an altar there unto the LORD, and called it Jehovah-shalom: unto this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

Matthew 2:20 (Parallel theme): Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life.

Matthew 2:16 (Parallel theme): Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.

2 Kings 10:17 (Parallel theme): And when he came to Samaria, he slew all that remained unto Ahab in Samaria, till he had destroyed him, according to the saying of the LORD, which he spake to Elijah.

Judges 9:2 (Parallel theme): 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.

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

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