

Judges 9:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when they told it to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you.

Analysis

And when they told it to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you.

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

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

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

וְגַדְלוּ	לְיוֹתָם	וַיֵּלֶךְ	וַיַּעֲמֵד	בְּרֹאשׁ	הָהָר
And when they told	it to Jotham	H1980	and stood	in the top	of mount
H5046	H3147		H5975	H7218	H2022
גֵּרְזִים	וַיִּשָּׂא	קוֹל	וַיִּקְרָא	וַיֹּאמֶר	לָהֶם
Gerizim	and lifted up	his voice	and cried	and said	H0 may hearken
H1630	H5375	H6963	H7121	H559	H8085
אֵלַי	בָּעַלִי	שֶׁחֶם	וַיִּשָּׂא	אֵלֵיכֶם	אֱלֹהִים:
H413	unto me ye men	of Shechem	may hearken	H413	that God
	H1167	H7927	H8085		H430

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 11:29 (References God): And it shall come to pass, when the LORD thy God hath brought thee in unto the land whither thou goest to possess it, that thou shalt put the blessing upon mount Gerizim, and the curse upon mount Ebal.

John 4:20 (Parallel theme): Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

Deuteronomy 27:12 (Parallel theme): These shall stand upon mount Gerizim to bless the people, when ye are come over Jordan; Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Joseph, and Benjamin:

Isaiah 1:15 (Parallel theme): And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

Proverbs 28:9 (Parallel theme): He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.

Proverbs 21:13 (Parallel theme): Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.

Joshua 8:33 (Parallel theme): And all Israel, and their elders, and officers, and their judges, stood on this side the ark and on that side before the priests the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, as well the stranger, as he that was born among them; half of them over against mount Gerizim, and half of them over against mount Ebal; as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel.