

Two Roots of Israel's Sin

Why did Israel keep returning to idolatry? Why did Israel keep looking for a king?

Judges 8.33–9.21

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Prelude:

I. Old Testament history shows Israel's long slide into idolatry.

- A. Why did this great nation,
 - 1. that was favored by the one true and living God,
 - 2. continue to turn to many false and dead gods?
- B. Turning away from God never helps a nation or an individual.
 - 1. The increasing secularization of our nation will hurt us.
 - 2. Why are Americans doing this?

II. We also wonder why Israel wanted a king.

- A. Gideon refused their offer.
- B. However, one of his sons will accept the offer.
- C. During the days of the last judge, Samuel, they wanted a king,
 - 1. so God gave them Saul, and
 - 2. they were sorry they asked.

Persuasion:

I. Judges 8.33–35 – History repeats itself

33 So it was, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel again played the harlot with the Baals, and made Baal-Berith their god.

- A. Gideon's body had hardly become cold before Israel got back to idolatry.
 - 1. Israel again acted like a harlot.
 - 2. Remember Judges 8.27?

27 Then Gideon made it into an ephod and set it up in his city, Ophrah. And all Israel played the harlot with it there. It became a snare to Gideon

and to his house (Jdg 8.27).

- a) "From playing *the harlot after* Gideon's ephod it was but a short step to worship the Canaanite fertility idols" (Roehrs).

B. Israel cried out to God when in trouble, but

1. they forgot Him when He took the trouble away,

34 Thus the children of Israel did not remember the LORD their God, who had delivered them from the hands of all their enemies on every side; 35 nor did they show kindness to the house of Jerubbaal (Gideon) in accordance with the good he had done for Israel (Jdg 8.34–35).

- a) First, Israel failed to remember Yahweh their God.
- b) Second, they failed to show kindness Gideon's family.

2. These two go hand in hand.

- a) If you forget God, you will not want to remember His people.
- b) If you forget His people, you will not want to remember God.

C. Now we will see what happens when

1. people forget God and
2. fail to show kindness to His people.

II. Judges 9.1–6 – Israel made a king

1 Then Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem, to his mother's brothers, and spoke with them and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, saying, 2 "Please speak in the hearing of all the men of Shechem. 'Which is better for you, that all seventy of the sons of Jerubbaal reign over you, or that one reign over you?' Remember that I am your own flesh and bone" (Jdg 9.1–6).

A. Saul was Israel's first God-approved king.

1. Israel forgot why Gideon refused to be king,

22 Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, "Rule over us, both you and

your son, and your grandson also; for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian.” 23 But Gideon said to them, “I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the LORD shall rule over you” (Jdg 8.22–23).

2. Abimelech went against the wishes of God and his father.
3. Look at his devious ways in verse 2.

B. Family supported family,

3 And his mother's brothers spoke all these words concerning him in the hearing of all the men of Shechem; and their heart was inclined to follow Abimelech, for they said, “He is our brother” (Jdg 9.3).

1. They could not resist someone who claimed to be speaking for them.
2. Be careful of flattery.

C. They did more than failing to show kindness,

4 So they gave him seventy shekels of silver from the temple of Baal-Berith, with which Abimelech hired worthless and reckless men; and they followed him. 5a Then he went to his father's house at Ophrah and killed his brothers, the seventy sons of Jerubbaal, on one stone (Jdg 9.4–5a).

1. What moved Abimelech to commit such a horrible thing?
 - a) He coveted power.
 - b) Do not underestimate the power of covetousness.
 - (1) Listen to Second Kings 11, for
 - (2) for it reveals a sin that is unthinkable for most people,

1 When Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal heirs. 2 But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him away from among the king's sons who were being murdered; and they hid him and his nurse in the bedroom, from Athaliah, so that he was not killed (2Ki 11.1–2).

2. Judas betrayed Jesus out of covetousness.
3. Abimelech was not counted among the seventy sons of Gideon,
 - a) because Abimelech was the son of a concubine (8.31).
 - b) "Such wholesale slaughters have always been common Eastern monarchies, and are among the fruits of polygamy" (Fuller).
4. Sadly, the kings of Midian killed all Gideon's brothers,
 - a) one of his sons kills all his brothers.

D. One escaped,

But Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left, because he hid himself. 6 And all the men of Shechem gathered together, all of Beth Millo, and they went and made Abimelech king beside the terebinth tree at the pillar that was in Shechem (Jdg 9.5b–6).

III. Judges 9.7–21 – The curse of Jotham

7 Now when they told Jotham, he went and stood on top of Mount Gerizim, and lifted his voice and cried out. And he said to them. "Listen to me, you men of Shechem, That God may listen to you!" (Jdg 9.7–21).

A. Jotham's fable was of God.

1. Therefore, refusing to hear it,
2. was refusing to hear God.

B. The trees looked for a king,

8 "The trees once went forth to anoint a king over them. And they said to the olive tree, 'Reign over us!' 9 But the olive tree said to them, 'Should I cease giving my oil, With which they honor God and men, And go to sway over trees?' 10 Then the trees said to the fig tree, 'You come and reign over us!' 11 But the fig tree said to them, 'Should I cease my sweetness and my good fruit, And go to sway over trees?' 12 Then the trees said to the vine, 'You come and reign over us!' 13 But the vine said to them, 'Should I cease my new wine, Which cheers both God and men, And go to sway over trees?'" (Jdg 9.8–13).

1. The olive and fig trees and the vine saw their purpose in life.
2. What was their purpose?
 - a) They were happy serving God and His people.
 - b) God had not intended for these two trees and vine to be kings.

C. Evil accepted the offer,

14 "Then all the trees said to the bramble, 'You come and reign over us!' 15 And the bramble said to the trees, 'If in truth you anoint me as king over you, Then come and take shelter in my shade; But if not, let fire come out of the bramble And devour the cedars of Lebanon!'" (Jdg 9.14–15).

1. How could a bramble, a thorn bush, provide shade for trees?
2. They were so desperate for a leader that they choose anyone.
 - a) Abimelech could not and would be a beneficial ruler.
 - b) How could a murderer benefit the people?

D. Jotham made the people think,

16 Now therefore, if you have acted in truth and sincerity in making Abimelech king, and if you have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done to him as he deserves— 17 for my father fought for you, risked his life, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian; 18 but you have risen up against my father's house this day, and killed his seventy sons on one stone, and made Abimelech, the son of his female servant, king over the men of Shechem, because he is your brother— 19 if then you have acted in truth and sincerity with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, then rejoice in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you (Jdg 9.16–19).

1. Jotham knew how to make these people think.
2. Did truth and sincerity back them in making Abimelech king?
 - a) They had no truth from God.
 - b) It was not sincere to repay a man
 - (1) who delivered them from an oppressive evil
 - (2) by killing his children.

E. The rebels would self-destruct,

20 But if not, let fire come from Abimelech and devour the men of Shechem and Beth Millo; and let fire come from the men of Shechem and from Beth Millo and devour Abimelech!" (Jdg 9.20).

1. If truth and sincerity had not been the basis of their actions,
 - a) then let them reap as they have sown.
 - b) Let them be killed as they have killed.
2. The kind of people we are determines the kind of death we experience.

F. Sometimes you just have to run,

21 And Jotham ran away and fled; and he went to Beer and dwelt there, for fear of Abimelech his brother (Jdg 9.21).

1. We never hear from Jotham again.
2. However, his words, the words of God, endured and had their fulfillment.

Exhortation:

I. How have you reacted to God?

II. How have you reacted to Christians who have sought to bring us sound congregations?

III. Are you ready to be saved?

- A. God is ready to receive you.
- B. Be sure you are ready to go to Him and stay with Him forever.