

Judges Chapter 9 Part 4

The rest of chapter 9 was something that could be dealt with in a single lesson. Not!

Last week, Jotham gave us his parable which was like a prophecy. This week, Jotham applies some of this parable to the current events of his day.

Before we get into the text of the NASB, I prefer to give you an alternate translation by Trent Butler which attempts to be more literal but has some interpretation intermixed. In other words, it has some of its own problems.

We break into the scene here with Jotham applying his parable to Shechem.

Judges 9:16 “Therefore if you have acted faithfully and with integrity when you crowned Abimelech king and if you have done the good thing in relation to Jerubbaal and to his house and if you have paid back to him what his work deserved—

Judges 9:17 when my father fought for you and put his soul on the line for you to rescue you from the hand of Midian—

Judges 9:18 but you opposed my father’s house today, you murdered his seventy sons, each on the same stone, and you crowned Abimelech, the son of his slave girl, king over

Judges Chapter 9 Part 4
Judges Chapter 9

the lords of Shechem just because he was your brother—

Judges 9:19 if in faithfulness and in integrity you have acted today in relation to Jerubbaal and to his house, then rejoice in Abimelech so that he may, yes, even he, may rejoice in you.

Judges 9:20 But if that is not the case, may fire go out from Abimelech so that it consumes the lords of Shechem and Beth-millo and so that fire may go out from the lords of Shechem and from Beth-millo so that it consumes Abimelech.

Now let's start with the NASB.

Judges 9:16 “Now then, if you have acted with honesty and integrity in making Abimelech king, and if you have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have dealt with him as he deserved—

If. Robbie Dean suggested that if this were in the Greek, this would be a Greek second class condition: If and it is NOT true. Jotham and his audience know the truth. It's like a TV police show with the “perp” in the interrogation room with the police. The policeman says, “I know what you did. You know what you did. Now just come clean about it. Things will go better for you if you do.”

Acted. This word can mean acted, or do. I will note below that this word is used three times in this verse.

Judges Chapter 9 Part 4
Judges Chapter 9

Honesty. This noun comes from the verb “Amen,” a word for faith. So the noun can mean faith, faithfulness, truth.

Integrity. This word can mean blameless, complete, integrity, perfect, unblemished. This is a word used in association with animals to be used in the Levitical sacrifices. They were to be unblemished.

There is also, perhaps, a hidden play on words. Jotham’s name means Yahweh is perfect or unblemished: Jo (for Yaheweh) and tham for perfect, complete, unblemished. This word for “unblemished” is from the same root as the word above translated by the NASB as “integrity.” So, the thought is, “God is Integrity,” even if the people of Shechem falsely claim integrity in a shady deal.

These words could be used of Jesus Christ, not of people complicit in condoning what we would call murder.

In making Abimelech king. Assume for a minute that Jerubbaal/Gideon actually was some kind of ruler. When he refused the offer to rule, he specifically said his son would not be ruler to follow him. Yet, here we are in a situation that would indicate there is a succession to Jerubbaal’s rule, like a king. If so, there were normal rules. The eldest son of the ruler would inherit. If he couldn’t serve than a younger one would. Now, Abimelech killed the 70 sons. He erroneously thought he had killed all the sons of Jerubbaal except himself thereby setting him to be the logical choice. But when Jotham is found to be alive, he should have become king. And, Abimelech is, as we already know, the son of a concubine. As such he should not even be considered to become king. So as the story progresses, the man who should be king has to hide. The man who should not be king is made king. The world is upside down and backwards. Sound familiar to current events?

Judges Chapter 9 Part 4
Judges Chapter 9

There are many comparisons that could be made. There are two sides to this description by Jotham: 1) How the Shechemites dealt with Abimelech and how they dealt with Jerubbaal/Gideon and his family.

Dealt. This is the same word used for how the Shechemites could have acted toward Abimelech. By using the same word, he is drawing a parallel. You acted this way toward Abimelech and you acted that way toward Jerubbaal.

This exact same word is used three times in this verse:

Judges 9:16 “Now then, if (1) you have acted with honesty and integrity in making Abimelech king, and if (2) you have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and (3) have dealt with him as he deserved—

1. Acted with honesty and integrity in making Abimelech king
2. Acted good with Jerubbaal and his house
3. Acted as he deserved

Well. Trent Butler put it this way: “...if you have done the good thing in relation to Jerubbaal.”

As he deserved. Trent Butler put it this way: “if you have paid back to him what his work deserved.”

House. Remember from last week, in this context, it does not mean the physical house, but the family of Jerubbaal. And now, with the seventy sons killed, Jotham is the next in line to inherit, not Abimelech.

Judges 9:17 for my father fought for you, and risked his life and saved you from the hand of Midian;

Father. Interesting contrast. Abimelech emphasized his mother's side of the family. Here Jotham emphasizes his father's side of the family. Brings to mind the song, "On my Father's side." The integrity of his father, although not completely unblemished, was exemplary. Abimelech made the case that he was their flesh and blood on his mother's side. T

For him the issue was who he was by blood. Jotham made the case that his father did something for them. He saved them. For Jotham, the issue was accomplishments.

The author of Judges shows Jotham making the contrast of the way the people of Shechem are acting in contrast to the way Jerubbaal acted in saving them.

Fought for you. I am going to take a small excursion in the Hebrew which may be beneficial to you. This word for fight does mean fight. But look at some of the places in the Bible where this is used:

1. Moses' encouragement to the sons of Israel while in the wilderness shortly after exiting Egypt but just before crossing the Red Sea.

Exodus 14:13 But Moses said to the people, "Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will perform for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again, ever.

Exodus 14:14 The Lord will fight for you, while you keep silent."

Judges Chapter 9 Part 4
Judges Chapter 9

So the Lord will fight for the people and will save them. Gideon as the instrument of God, fought for them with the result that they were saved from the Midianites. And, as was said a few weeks ago, the Midianites were never a serious threat to Israel ever again.

2. Moses recounts the conquests and encourages the sons of Israel for the coming battles when they enter the land.

Deuteronomy 3:22 Do not fear them, for the Lord your God is the One fighting for you.

3. Moses encourages the sons of Israel for the coming battles by saying what the priest should say to the warriors prior to battle.

Deuteronomy 20:3 He (the priest) shall say to them, 'Hear, Israel, you are approaching the battle against your enemies today. Do not be fainthearted. Do not be afraid, or panic, or be terrified by them,

Deuteronomy 20:4 for the Lord your God is the One who is going with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.

4. Joshua spoke to God that the Sun and Moon stand still. The author of the book of Joshua said:

Joshua 10:14 There was no day like that before it or after it, when the LORD listened to the voice of a man; for the LORD fought for Israel.

There are other uses of the word and certainly other uses after the time of the Judges. But, here is a thread going through Scripture that for

Judges Chapter 9 Part 4
Judges Chapter 9

believers that trust Him, God will fight for them. These quotes may have been available to the people at the time of the Judges. Certainly, the Torah would have been available through the priests in oral tradition if not written. This principle of the Lord fighting for you has a long history, starting with the Torah. And later as David said, “The battle is the Lord’s.”

In the case of Gideon, God fought for the sons of Israel using Gideon as his instrument of warfare. The end result of this is that Israel was “saved.”

Jesus, many years later, “fought” for the sons of Israel trying to get them to believe in Him, at the risk of His own life, dying on the cross with the result that anyone who believes is saved. Sort of a mini-gospel.

Risked his life. Literally soul. Here is a place that is appropriate to remind you what you are.

Remember for previous lessons from Herman on what you are. When born, we are body + soul, dichotomous. Christians also have a human spirit making us trichotomous. We also have the resident Holy Spirit. Death occurs when the soul leaves the body. For the Christian, the temporary physical body, the tent, is replaced with a resurrection body, one like Christ’s.

Here I want to emphasize this point to you that our physical bodies are temporary and in the New Testament, likened to a “tent.”

Peter expresses it in:

**1 Peter 1:13 I consider it right, as long as I am
in this *earthly dwelling*, to stir you up by way
of reminder,**

1 Peter 1:14 knowing that the laying aside of my *earthly dwelling* is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.

The word “dwelling” is a word for tent. The word “earthly” is in italics. In the Explanation of General Format in the NASB, “Italics are used in the text to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew or Greek but implied by it.” The implication of Peter’s statement is that the body, or “tent” is temporary and will be laid aside. Wuest uses the term to “remove as garment.”

Paul expresses this in:

2 Corinthians 5:1 For we know that if our earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made by hands, eternal in the heavens.

2 Corinthians 5:2 For indeed, in this *tent* (remember, in the NASB, if it is in *italics*, it is not actually in the text) we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven,

2 Corinthians 5:3 since in fact after putting it on, we will not be found naked.

2 Corinthians 5:4 For indeed, we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life.

2 Corinthians 5:5 Now He who prepared us for this very *purpose is* God, who gave us the Spirit as a pledge.

A couple of points:

1. Paul actually uses a word for “earthly” in 2 Corinthians 5:1
2. The word for dwelling in verses 1 and 2 are of a permanent building. This is not something like a tent which is put up one day and taken down the next.
3. This “building” or resurrection body allows us to participate as administrators of Jesus Christ’s rule in the Millennium, the Kingdom.

Judges 9:18 but in fact you have risen against my father’s house today and have killed his sons, seventy men, on one stone, and have made Abimelech, the son of his female slave, king over the leaders of Shechem, because he is your relative—

But in fact. Uh Oh! If and it is not true. You are terrible scoundrels.

You have risen. This verb was previously used in chapter 7 for Gideon to arise and go down to the Midianite camp. Gideon commanded his 300 to arise and subsequently gave instructions on how to “attack” the Midianites with “trumpets” and lights.

Killed. Just that. Later I will survey the word used for kill.

Female slave. This was dealt with last week or the week prior. This is not the word “slave,” but a word for a maid servant.

Judges Chapter 9 Part 4
Judges Chapter 9

One one stone. Again, previously mentioned. This might indicate this is a sacrifice to the god Baal.

Judges 9:19 so if you have acted with honesty and integrity toward Jerubbaal and his house this day, be joyful about Abimelech, and may he also be joyful about you.

Here is another “if and it is not true.”

Honesty and integrity. Words repeated from verse 16.

Joyful. This word was used previously in Jotham’s parable about the vine, “which cheers God and men.” There the verb is intensive. Here it is not intensive but in the imperative.

Judges 9:20 But if not, may fire come out of Abimelech and consume the leaders of Shechem and Beth-millo; and may fire come out of the leaders of Shechem and from Beth-millo, and consume Abimelech.”

But if not. This is the true state of affairs. They are not dealing honestly and with integrity.

Fire. Here is a reference back to the parable. And we will see that this is what happens. Those of Shechem not killed outright will be killed by fire. And Abimelech, will die while he is trying to set fire to another town. He is mortally wounded by a stone. But, before he can die of his wounds inflicted by a woman, he commands a man to kill him.

This is an oblique reminder that you cannot kill someone without God’s knowledge. If it is not his time, you cannot kill him. If it is his time, let God take care of the who and how.

Judges Chapter 9 Part 4
Judges Chapter 9

The application is that, as hard as it may seem to keep your anger in check in today's political environment, God is in charge. Don't get in his way.

**Judges 9:21 Then Jotham escaped and fled,
and went to Beer; and he stayed there
because of his brother Abimelech.**

Josephus says that Jotham escaped to the mountains. We see this throughout Jewish history. When in trouble, people flee to the mountains. This narrative starts with the sons of Israel hiding in caves in the hills (Judges 6:2). So in the beginning of the narrative, the sons of Israel have to hide in the mountains because of a foreign enemy. Here a son of Israel has to hide in the mountains because of a domestic enemy.

Escaped. This verb is used of the fleeing Midianite army. So now, the "good" guy Jotham is fleeing because of the evil Abimelech. The world is upside down and backwards.

Fled. Another word for flee.

Went. This is the word for "walk." I see "fled" and "went" as two verbs working together for Jotham. He fled with the purpose of going to Beer as a place of sanctuary. Perhaps there is an implied irony here. As I mentioned previously, Shechem was in the area of Ephraim but given to the Levites and identified as a city of refuge or sanctuary. Now Jotham flees the city of sanctuary and hides in the mountains for sanctuary. Everything is upside down and backwards.

My study of Judges is in some respects a "deep dive" into the Bible. However, there is an opportunity here to bring in Basic Doctrine. The book of Judges repeatedly deals with killing and death. So let us review some information on those topics.

Judges Chapter 9 Part 4
Judges Chapter 9

There is a separate handout from “Grace Notes” on the internet dealing with the doctrine of death. There are seven kinds of death. Let’s look at the handout briefly.

There is a version of this online at
<https://www2.gracenotes.info/topics/death.pdf>

Now, slowly I want to deal with the Old Testament (Hebrew) words for kill. It was my intention to have a single session dealing with ten words for kill. However, that doesn’t seem feasible. So instead, I will deal with one at a time. This week I want to deal with the first word, primarily from the TDOT. I do not want to get bogged down in the Hebrew. I just want you to see the range of meanings and some places and situations in which this word is used.

For reference, this word is “*harag*.” This seems to be a general word for kill, used in a variety of contexts. It is not the word for murder, but may include that meaning from a context.

According to the TDOT, there are 165 uses of this word in the Old Testament. Biblehub.com says there are 167. Closes enough. The following “categories” are artificial. It is difficult to pigeonhole the various “killings.” But it is useful as a starting point to make up some categories.

1. Killing Enemies in Battle

In the book of Joshua, in the attack on Ai, the sons of Israel killed all the inhabitants of the city:

Joshua 8:24 Now when Israel had finished killing all the inhabitants of Ai in the field in the wilderness where they pursued them, and all of them had fallen by the edge of the sword

until they were destroyed, then all Israel returned to Ai and struck it with the edge of the sword.

This was authorized by God, Joshua 8:1-2. In the book of Judges, there are other words used in the narratives for killing in battle which we will get to in due time.

The TDOT includes Judges 7:25, the killing of Oreb and Zeeb in this category:

Judges 7:25 And they captured the two leaders of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb, and they killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and they killed Zeeb at the wine press of Zeeb, while they pursued Midian; and they brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon from across the Jordan.

2. Killing Political Opponents

Per the TDOT, “In a later stage, *hrg* comes to be used to refer to the killing of domestic political opponents in cases of rebellion and revolution, when a new king takes the throne in order to remove unpopular claimants in disputes with the prophets,, or in the case of refusal to obey orders.” And when we come to the book of Judges, “Gideon, for example, destroys Penuel and kills all the men of the city when it refuses to give him aid and support in his battle with the Midianites (Jgs. 8:17).”

Judges 8:17 17 And he tore down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city.

3. Killing Personal Rivals

Judges Chapter 9 Part 4
Judges Chapter 9

Jacob cheated his brother Esau out of the blessing of the firstborn. As a result, Esau wants to kill him.

Genesis 27:41 So Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him; and Esau said to himself, “The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob.”

4. Killing as a Crime

After Moses kills an Egyptian that was beating a Hebrew, one of the Hebrews made the comment:

Exodus 2:13 Now he went out the next day, and behold, two Hebrews were fighting with each other; and he said to the offender, “Why are you striking your companion?”

Exodus 2:14 But he said, “Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?” Then Moses was afraid and said, “Surely the matter has become known!”

Exodus 2:15 When Pharaoh heard about this matter, he tried to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the presence of Pharaoh and settled in the land of Midian, and he sat down by a well.

So, in Pharaoh’s eyes, this was a crime.

5. Killing as a Punishment

Judges Chapter 9 Part 4
Judges Chapter 9

Capital punishment is commanded by God for murder. Here the word is used for murder. The point is that a man kills another in a treacherous way which equals murder. So by itself, this word is not used for murder. But, when amplified with other words, a killing with special circumstances, in this case “cunning” (NASB) or “subtility” (YLT) it can be murder.

Exodus 21:14 If, however, someone is enraged against his neighbor, so as to kill him in a cunning way, you are to take him even from My altar, to be put to death.

6. Yahweh/God as the Subject

According to the TDOT, “The varied spectrum of meanings of *hrg* is reflected in the passages where Yahweh appears as the subject: he punishes misdeeds; he is a military hero destroying enemies foreign and domestic; he kills personal opponents.”

Isaiah 14:29 “Do not rejoice, Philistia, all of you, Because the rod that struck you is broken; For from the serpent’s root a viper will come out, And its fruit will be a winged serpent.

Isaiah 14:30 Those who are most helpless will eat, And the poor will lie down in security; I will kill (not our word) your root with famine, And it will kill your survivors.