

Abimelech and Jephthah

Judges 8: 28-35

How many sons did Gideon have?

What relationship did Abimelek have with his brothers?

What did the Israelites do after Gideon died?

How did they treat his family?

Judges 9: 1-2

Where did Abimelek go?

What did he want?

Judges 9: 3-4

Why did the Shechemites want to follow Abimelech?

Where did they get the money to support him?

What did he do with the money?

Judges 9: 5-6

What did Abimelek do?

How did the people respond?

How do Abimelek's actions compare to his father, Gideon? See Judges 8: 22-23.

Did God want a king in Israel?

Who was supposed to be king?

Abimelek's name means "my father is king." What does that have to do with what we learned so far?

Judges 9: 7-15

What three trees were used?

How did they compare to Gideon?

What did the trees represent?

What was the point of the parable?

Judges 9: 7:16-21

What curse did he give the people?

Look back at verse 7. Where did Jotham stand?

What was interesting about that place? Deuteronomy 8: 11-29

What did Jotham do?

Jotham's name means "Jehovah is perfect." How does that relate to his parable?

The parable of the fruit trees have been interpreted several ways throughout history. One Jewish rabbi taught that the trees represented the previous judges. Trees in Jewish culture are symbolic for men or nations. Othniel was represented by the olive tree, for in Jeremiah 11:16, Judah is represented by an olive tree, and Othniel was from Judah. The fig tree represented Debra because the figs were sweet. The vine represented Barak and Gideon, and of course the thornbush represented Abimelek.

Another interpretation is that the fig tree represents the law, for in some rabbinic teachings the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is the fig since Adam and Eve dressed themselves in fig leaves.* (See Genesis 3:7). In addition throughout scripture God's law is described as sweet. (See Psalm 119: 103; Psalm 19: 10; Ezekiel 3: 3; Revelation 10: 10). In this interpretation the olive tree would represent the church. Paul directly ties the church to the olive tree in Romans 11. The oil from the olive tree would represent the Holy Spirit poured out on the church. The vine would represent Christ, as he calls himself the True Vine in John 15. The wine could be communion or his blood that was shed. The thornbush would be Satan in this interpretation.

*Note: Other rabbinic teachers attribute the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden as an etrog, grapes, wheat, or nuts.

All three trees have also been used to represent Israel throughout the Bible, so they could refer to different stages or aspects of Israel. Or it could just represent 3 of Gideon's sons.

Judges 9: 22-25

What did God do to get justice?

What did the men of Shechem do?

What does this show us about God's sovereignty?

Judges 9: 26-29

What did Gaal want to do?

Judges 9: 30-35

Who was helping Abimelek?

Judges 9: 36-41

Was Abimelek successful?

Judges 9: 42-45

Now what did Abimelek do?

Was he successful?

Judges 9: 46-49

What was his next plan?

Was he successful?

Judges 9: 50-55

What happened to Abimelek?

So, who all died in this account?

Judges 9: 56-57

Why did all this destruction and lost lives happen?

How was what had happened similar to Jotham's parable?

Judges 10: 1-2

Who was the next judge?

How long did he reign?

Judges 10: 3-4

Who was the next judge?

How long did he reign?

Judges 10: 6-9

What did the Israelites do?

What was the Lord's response?

Judges 10: 10

What did affliction lead the Israelites to do?

Judges 10: 11-14

How does God respond?

Judges 10: 15-16

What did the Israelites eventually do?

Then how did the Lord respond?

Judges 10: 17-18

What did they offer to the person who had the courage to lead them?

Judges 11: 1-3

What do we know about Jephthah?

How did his family treat him?

Judges 11: 4-10

What did the elders of Gilead want from him?

What did they offer him?

Judges 11: 11-13

What did the Ammonites claim was the problem?

Judges 11: 14-27

How did Jephthah handle the situation? V14-22

Were his claims valid?

Who did he give credit to for the land becoming theirs? See verses 21, 23.

What does he appeal to when corresponding with the Ammonite king? See verses 24-26.

What judgement does he make about the Ammonites action See verse 27.

Who does he appeal to? See verse 27.

Compare that to Genesis 16:5 and 1 Samuel 24: 8-15.

Judges 11:28

Did the king of Ammon listen to Jephthah's appeal?

Judges 11:29-31

What came on Jephthah?

Has the Holy Spirit come to God's people yet?

Who else had God's Spirit come upon? See Judges 3: 10, Judges 6:34; and Numbers 11: 25-29.

What did Jephthah make?

Why do you think this might be problematic?

Is God specific about the types of animals that can be sacrificed? See Leviticus 1: 2-3, 14.

What are the chances of that animal coming out of the house?

What do we know about vows? See Deuteronomy 23: 21-23; and Numbers 30:2.

What advice does Ecclesiastes 5:1-5 have about vows?

How does a vow affect your spouse? See Numbers 30.

How are you at keeping your promises?

What advice does Jesus give us about vows in Matthew 5: 33-37?

Why do you think it is beneficial to let your *yes* be *yes* and your *no* be *no*?

How can you apply this truth to your life?

What caveat does James give? See James 4: 13-17.

How can you apply this to your life?

Judges 11: 32-33

Was he successful?

Judges 11: 34-35

How much did his vow cost him?

What truth did he acknowledge about the vow?

How does that enforce Jesus's teaching of not making vows?

Based on the passage in Matthew and Ecclesiastes, do you think God is happy when we make vows?

What is the motive that most people have when making vows to the Lord?

Have you ever tried to manipulate God this way?

Judges 11: 36-40

How did his daughter respond?

What did she request?

Can you relate to Jephthah's daughter in verse 37?

However, what else was the problem with this vow? See Leviticus 18: 21; Leviticus 20: 2-5; Deuteronomy 12: 31; and Deuteronomy 18: 9-11.

Read 1 Samuel 14: 24-30, 37-45. How was Jonathan rescued from the foolish vow of his father?

What should the people in Jephthah's community have done?

But even after all this what does Hebrews 11: 32 give Jephthah credit for?

Do you think it was for sacrificing his daughter or dealing with the Ammonites or both?

Judges 12: 1

What were the Ephraimites upset about?

Judges 12: 2-3

What was Jephthah's response?

Judges 12: 4-7

What did he do to the Ephraimites because of their deception and slander?

What test did he use to see if they were truly an Ephraimite?

How long did he lead for?

Judges 12: 8-10

Who was the next judge?

How long did he lead for?

Judges 12: 11-12

Who was the next judge?

How long did he lead for?

Judges 12: 13-14

Who was the next judge?

How long did he lead for?

Reflection Question: How does the story of the judges impact your faith life