

I. The Conspiracy Begins (vv 1-3).**A.** Who is Abimelech? (Jdg 8:31)**B.** Abimelech relies upon unwholesome loyalties and family ties, starting by convincing his own family, and then spreading the word around to others.

- 1) Our desire to be ruled by a single king and not many tyrants
- 2) Our desire to rule ourselves
- 3) Our desire to be ruled by our family and those like us

C. Observations and Applications on Abimelech's Conspiracy

- 1) Temptation often takes the form of twisting a good thing
- 2) Sin can often be the excess of a legitimate desire.
- 3) Sin spreads in communities like leaven.
- 4) A plot is known by its punchline.
- 5) The Word of God must rule our lives, as well as our loyalties.

II. Abimelech's Rise to Power (vv 4-6).**A.** The progression of how Abimelech rose to power:

- 1) Bribery —Note,
 - (a) The costliness of sin
 - (b) The murderousness of idolatry (Jer 23:11-14)
- 2) Unqualified deputies
- 3) Unchecked fidelity
- 4) Systematic murder
- 5) False pronouncements of kingship

B. Abimelech as Anti-Judge, being the Usurper of authority and Perverter of truth and goodness.

- 1) As seen from his purpose (2 Thes 2:3-4)
- 2) As seen from his actions (Rev 13:5-7)
- 3) As seen from false qualification of succession
 - a) Explanation — Abimelech viewed himself as qualified to be king because he is Gideon's son, but this is faulty for two obvious reasons:
 - i. Because Gideon was not a king, and did not desire such an authority. (Jdg 8:23)

- ii. Because he was not a legitimate heir and could not hold a legitimate office (2 Cor 11:12-15)

c) Application — There are many today in the Church who claim, like Abimelech, a false authority based on some kind of succession.

- i. The claim of Apostolic Succession, as a trump over biblical doctrine, as in Rome or Eastern Orthodoxy.
- ii. The claim of Apostleship, as in charismatic cults (Acts 1:21-22).

- 4) As seen from his self-declared ordination (Jn 10:1-2)

C. Uses from the Text

- 1) Do not confuse immediate prosperity with God's blessing and commendation (Jdg 9:22-24)
- 2) Take comfort in the Lord that he always preserves a remnant (1 Kgs 19:10; Rev 3:1, 4)
- 3) Take comfort, but do not take pride, if you are faithful in a crooked and perverse generation.

III. Jotham's Curse (vv 7-21).**A.** The place of Jotham's parable (Dt 11:29)**B.** The characters of the story

- 1) The trees (of the forest)
- 2) The olive tree (Psalm 52:8)
- 3) The fig tree (Song 2:13).
- 4) The vine (Psa 103:15, 4:7).
- 5) The bramble

C. The plot of the story**D.** The point of the story

- 1) As made clear in the opening address
- 2) To taunt the folly of the Shechemites
- 3) To pronounce a curse upon (Psa 58:9)

E. Uses from the Text

- 1) The nobility and goodness of contentment
- 2) The baseness and sinfulness of desire for worldliness (1 Jn 2:16-17)
- 3) The end of all the wicked
- 4) The simple duty of the Christian