

“Temporal Judgment”
Judges 9
(Preached at Trinity, April 26, 2015)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. At the end of Chapter 8 we read that Israel had forgotten God and embraced the gods of the Canaanites.
Judges 8:33-34 NAU - "Then it came about, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the sons of Israel again played the harlot with the Baals, and made Baal-berith their god. ³⁴ Thus the sons of Israel did not remember the LORD their God, who had delivered them from the hands of all their enemies on every side"
2. As we entered Chapter 9 we encountered the continued decline of Israel and the resulting display of wickedness.
As I pointed out, it wasn't that they forgot who God was. It isn't likely they forgot God's mighty deeds of deliverance. It's that they were no longer controlled by what they knew. God no longer made any difference in their lives.
3. The name Yahweh is found 175 times in the Book of Judges but not once in Chapter 9. God was no longer prominent in their lives. They had fallen more and more under the influence of the Canaanites. They were now worshippers of the Canaanite gods. But we must not pretend that God was not still in sovereign control over every aspect of their lives. He may have been absent from their thoughts but He was very much in control.
4. God's wrath was kindled upon their wickedness. God used Jotham as a prophetic voice.
Judges 9:7 NAU - "Listen to me, O men of Shechem, that God may listen to you."
Judges 9:19-20 NAU - "if then you have dealt in truth and integrity with Jerubbaal and his house this day, rejoice in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you. ²⁰ "But if not, let fire come out from Abimelech and consume the men of Shechem and Beth-millo; and let fire come out from the men of Shechem and from Beth-millo, and consume Abimelech."
5. Shechem and Abimelech turned on each other and both were destroyed. At the end of the chapter we find the ultimate source of their destruction.
Judges 9:56-57 NAU - "Thus God repaid the wickedness of Abimelech, which he had done to his father in killing his seventy brothers. ⁵⁷ Also God returned all the wickedness of the men of Shechem on their heads, and the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal came upon them."
6. I title tonight's sermon, "God's Temporal Judgment." When we think of God's judgment our minds usually turn towards eternity when all men will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. There is coming a future judgment.

- A. Each of us will stand accountable for ourselves before Christ.
Romans 14:10 – “But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God.”
2 Corinthians 5:10 – “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”
- B. At this judgment the eternal condition of every human being will be revealed.
1. For some eternity will be spent in indescribable joys in the presence of Christ
 - a. Heaven is a place free from sin—free from trial and torment, free of suffering and sadness, free of disaster and destruction. It is a place free from loss.
 - b. Death will no longer threaten us – only eternal life
 - c. Most important, Heaven is the presence of Christ. For eternity we will glory in His infinite excellence. We will behold His beauty. Heaven is a place where we will know in full the love of Christ. The communion we thirst for now will be full in eternity
 - d. Christ has designed for us a place of everlasting joy
It is described as the new heavens and new earth – a place untainted by sin.
 2. For others eternity will be filled with torment and indescribable anguish
Matthew 13:49-50 NAU - "So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, ⁵⁰ and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
 - a. Hell is the ultimate expression of the wrath of God. It is a place where men will be eternally given over to their sin.
 - b. Hell is described as a lake of fire that will bring endless torment and suffering – heat that will singe the flesh, yet the flesh will never die.
 - c. It is described as a place of darkness – no beauty, no pleasures – only darkness
 - d. The lusts of the condemned will only be intensified.
They’ll lust after cars and houses, all of the material things they had upon the earth but there will be nothing. They will long for good food. They will never taste of a soft drink or even a sip of water.
 - e. Those in hell will be surrounded by Satan and his demons who with their cruelty will only add to the torment
 - f. Those in hell will be completely void of love or compassion.
Those in hell will spend eternity in the midst of bitter hatred and enmity
 - g. Those in hell will know no mercy. There will be no hope. They will cry in anguish yet their cries will go unheard by God

7. The judgment of God is fearful. Men should tremble at the thought of standing before God.
Hebrews 10:31 NAU - "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God."
8. We must understand, however, that God's wrath is already kindled.
Romans 1:18 NAU - "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,"
9. God's wrath is being stored up unto the final judgment but we need to understand that God often brings judgment upon sin in this life—temporal judgment. It is important here to distinguish between the lost and the redeemed.
- A. For God's people who have trusted in Christ they will never taste of His wrath. Jesus has fully met the demands of the Law and His blood has cleansed us from all sin.
Romans 8:1 NAU - "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."
- B. God deals with us tenderly and with pity as a Father to His children. God will chasten us but it will be from His love to discipline and correct and draw us near to Him in holiness.
Hebrews 12:6-7 NAS - "For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives." ⁷ It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his father does not discipline?*"
- C. For the lost, however, God's judgment is punitive. It is His just retribution against sin. It is a foretaste of what is to come.
10. I want to set before you tonight three aspects of God's temporal judgment.
- I. It comes unexpectedly, sometimes quickly but often after considerable time has elapsed
- II. It comes unseen – God's means of judgment is often mysterious
- III. It is always a just recompense for sin
- I. It comes unexpectedly, sometimes quickly but often after considerable time has elapsed
- A. How long had Abimelech schemed in his heart lusting for power and authority?
1. He was the illegitimate son – one born of a concubine
 He was born in Shechem apart from the other sons
2. After the death of his father his wicked heart devised a scheme that was unimaginable. First he convinced the leaders of Shechem to make him their king and then he murdered every other possible heir.
Judges 9:5 NAU - "Then he went to his father's house at Ophrah and killed his brothers the sons of Jerubbaal, seventy men, on one stone. But Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left, for he hid himself."
3. You can imagine how proud he was as he was crowned as their king.
Verse 22 tells us he reigned over Israel for three years.

4. For three years he ruled. His authority was supreme. He had no fear of God. From every external observation it would appear his actions were being blessed of God. But God moves according to His timing. Even when Abimelech was enjoying his kingly reign he was under God's wrath.
- B. The righteous have often been confused by the apparent blessings upon the wicked
- Psalms 73:3-5 NAU** - "For I was envious of the arrogant As I saw the prosperity of the wicked. ⁴ For there are no pains in their death, And their body is fat. ⁵ They are not in trouble as *other* men, Nor are they plagued like mankind."
1. We see musicians, actors, and athletes living in mansions and driving expensive cars.
 2. Spurgeon wrote of them: "From their youth up these men, who deserve perdition, revel in prosperity. They deserve to be hung in chains, and chains are hung about their necks; they are worthy to be chased from the world, and yet the world becomes all their own."
- C. This is nothing more than a token of God's wonderful mercy and forbearance upon fallen humanity
1. He causes the crops of wicked farmers to grow – but it is an act of His mercy
 2. Such mercy should cause all men to flee to Him praising Him for His mercy and seeking forgiveness for their sin.
 3. God's delay of judgment causes most men to vainly deceive themselves that all is well. They cannot imagine that God is angry at them.
 4. God makes it clear that His mercy and compassion in no way removes His wrath and judgment.
- Exodus 34:6-7 NAU** - "God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; ⁷ who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished"
- D. As the wicked continue their wickedness it sometimes seems that God is absent
1. The wicked do unspeakable things and appear to get away with it
 2. God's delay of judgment will cause multitudes to perish as Satan whispers in their ear that all is well.
- II. It comes unseen – God's means of judgment is often mysterious
- A. The prophecy of Jotham was dismissed
- Judges 9:19-20 NAU** - "if then you have dealt in truth and integrity with Jerubbaal and his house this day, rejoice in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you. ²⁰ "But if not, let fire come out from Abimelech and consume the men of Shechem and Beth-millo; and let fire come out from the men of Shechem and from Beth-millo, and consume Abimelech."
1. Jotham fled and was forgotten. What was this fire he was rambling about? They could not have imagined how God would bring it to pass. After all, Abimelech was enjoying his reign and Shechem loved their new king.

2. **Verse 23** speaks of a great enmity God raised up between Shechem and Abimelech.
Judges 9:23 NAU - "Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem"
 - a. It could have been a spirit from the realm of darkness
 - b. More likely it is simply talking about the stirrings of sinful human flesh rising up in hatred. God grants us favor with one another and stirs peace and unity. He can also withdraw peace and conflict will quickly take root.

3. Before long the enmity was unleashed. The Shechemites made plans for an ambush. Abimelech found out their plan and set his own ambush. After defeating the city of Shechem the leaders fled to the inner chamber of the temple. Following the leadership of Abimelech the tower was set on fire. We read in **Verse 49**

"all the men of the tower of Shechem also died, about a thousand men and women."

Thus Shechem fell to the righteous judgment of God.

4. But the bloodthirstiness of Abimelech had not been satisfied. He went to the nearby city of Thebez and captured it. They people did as Shechem and fled to the tower and Abimelech determined to repeat his dastardly deed of burning the people to death. Only God had different plans.
Judges 9:52-53 NAU - "So Abimelech came to the tower and fought against it, and approached the entrance of the tower to burn it with fire. ⁵³ But a certain woman threw an upper millstone on Abimelech's head, crushing his skull."

- B. God's dealings with sinful man are endless in scope
 1. He can bring judgment in unimaginable ways
 2. The very thing lusted after can become an object of disgust.
 - a. How many marriages that begin as lust soon become despised?
 - b. We use the expression buyer's remorse to describe the failure of earthly things to bring satisfaction
 3. God can give neighbors over to their reprobate minds ending in terrible feuds, usually over some trivial matter.
 It can happen in families, at work – anywhere where people follow the sinful desires of the heart.
 4. The man or woman proud of their body can become consumed with disease.
 5. We cannot dismiss the suffering of Aids or other STDs that are the direct result of sin.

III. It is always a just recompense for sin

- A. Abimelech and the Shechemites suffered the just consequence of their sin
 1. The text makes it clear that this was the work of God's judgment
Judges 9:56-57 NAU - "Thus God repaid the wickedness of Abimelech, which he had done to his father in killing his seventy brothers. ⁵⁷ Also God returned all the wickedness of the men of Shechem on their heads, and the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal came upon them."

2. We often hear people anguishing over the problem of suffering in the world. How can a good God allow bad things to happen? One person put it, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" The question makes a wrong conclusion. It is presuming God is making good people suffer. The truth is we live in a fallen world. A better question would be, "Why do good things happen to sinful people?"
- B. All of the good things enjoyed in this life are by grace and mercy
1. This is true even of the elect
Lamentations 3:22-23 KJV - "*It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. ²³ They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.*"
 2. We owe God our love and allegiance. We owe Him the worship He deserves.
Psalms 2:11-12 KJV - "Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. ¹² Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish *from* the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed *are* all they that put their trust in him."
- C. God is a God of perfect justice. Both His eternal and His temporal judgments are just.
1. When God destroyed the whole world in Noah's day He was just in doing so.
Genesis 6:5 NAU - "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."
 2. When Abraham heard that God was about to destroy Sodom he went before God presuming that God might destroy the righteous with the wicked.
Genesis 18:25 NAU - "Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are *treated* alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly? So the LORD said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare the whole place on their account."
But God did not find 50, 45, 40, 30, 20, or even 10. It would seem that Lot was the only one and God removed him.
 3. The Shechemites burning to death in the tower seems cruel. But it was just. As it was with Nadab and Abihu whom God struck with lightning, with Uzza who reached out to steady the ox cart, and with Ananias and Sapphira.

Conclusion:

1. God is holy; infinitely pure. God is also just; He operates with perfect judgment. As a perfectly just and holy God He must execute perfect justice—He must judge sin. But He unleashes His wrath in His way in His time.
2. We must understand however. The wicked are already under God's wrath.
Psalms 5:5-6 NAU - "The boastful shall not stand before Your eyes; You hate all who do iniquity. ⁶ You destroy those who speak falsehood; The LORD abhors the man of bloodshed and deceit."
Psalms 7:11-13 NAU - " God is a righteous judge, And a God who has indignation every day. ¹² If a man does not repent, He will sharpen His sword; He has bent His bow and made it ready. ¹³ He has also prepared for Himself deadly weapons; He makes His arrows fiery shafts."
3. God's justice will prevail.
Romans 12:19 NAS - "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord"