Crossroads International Church Singapore Dr. Rick Griffith

25 September 2016 Message 5 of 12

NLT 40 Minutes

**Abimelech: A Thornbush Rules the Trees**

Title

***Judges 8:33–9:57***

**Topic:** Followership

**Subject:** Why don’t we have better leaders?

**Complement:** Because we don’t first have better followers. (All people deserve their leader.)

**Purpose:** The listeners will identify one area where they can be a better follower of Christ.

**Meditation:** “Everyone worships” video

# Introduction

### Interest: The US presidential election is in five weeks and has everyone perplexed how the people must choose between two unpopular candidates. Like the days of the judges, the two candidates have a higher disapproval rating than approval rating! How did that happen? How can the people elect those whom they despise?

Both  
(3 slides)

### Curiosity: Why is it that we often have choices of leaders, but none of these choices is desirable? Why don’t we have better leaders?

Why?

#### Well, apathy and division rules. These two candidates were chosen from the votes of only 9% of the electorate! Yes, when you take out those who cannot vote, those who never vote, and those who chose not to vote in the primaries—along with those who voted for other parties—only 9% of America chose *either* Trump or Clinton as nominees.

9% Close

9% Far

#### Even more significantly, leaders will never be better than the people who select them. The moral decline in the US as a whole now shows up in the undesirable options to choose from for president.

Moral Decline

#### This leads us to the key point of our text today that I want to share upfront. So here’s the…

### Main Idea: *All people deserve their leader*. You got a leader? That’s because you chose him or her. Of course, this applies only when you have a choice. In some cases, others take over without our voice.

Main Idea

### Background: We have been seeing in our study of Judges that Israel worshipped idols, so it had idolaters to choose from as leaders.

Band-Aids

Judges

Downward Spiral

Gideon’s 300

#### Our series is called “Band-Aids on a Gunshot Wound.” That means you have serious problems but not serious solutions to address them!

Everyone Worships

##### Of course, here is the corollary point: Everyone worships (embedded video).

##### We all worship something, but Israel had the basic problem of worshipping the wrong God as seen in the theme verse in 21:25.

Key Verse

##### This led to a downward spiral of leaders and other nations oppressing them, but in today’s text we’ll see it even got worse with civil war—a self-inflicted “gunshot wound,” if you will.

#### Last week we saw that Gideon won a fantastic victory for Israel that brought 40 years of peace. With 300 men he defeated 135,000 Midianites and Eastern peoples.

Ephod

#### However, those 40 years of glory also had some cracks in the armor when Gideon tortured some who opposed him, made an ephod that the people worshipped, as well as him giving birth though his concubine to a son named Abimelech. Nevertheless, Israel was ushered into an entire generation without war.

8:26

### Preview: Today let’s see how this leadership crisis was actually caused by the people themselves, and then draw some principles from this to live by.

Preview  
• Lessons

Abimelech Intro

### Text: Judges 8:33–9:57 tells us the sad story of Abimelech.

(The familiar cycle in Judges begins with Cycle 5 where…)

# I. Israel’s five-fold sin pattern was self-inflicted (8:33–9:57).

MP

[The people couldn’t blame anyone else beside themselves for their woes.]

## Israel’s sin pattern got even worse than the earlier ones:

### Sin: Israel sinned against the LORD by worshipping the Baals (8:33-35).

#### The essence of the sin was sexual, which starts in last weeks’ text of 8:29-32.

##### The four cycles in the book of Judges so far should have clued us into all-familiar patterns of sin. Simply stated, the one thing we learn from sin is that we don’t learn from sin! We see others sin and suffer terrible consequences, but then we do the same without learning from their mistakes.

Four Cycles

Redefining Sex

##### One such area of sin is sexual relationships apart from marriage. We used to call this “sexual immorality” or “fornication,” but that sounds too sinful. So now we call it a “fling” or an “affair” or a “one night stand.” It would be better to call these a “failure” or an “affront” or a “one night fall.” Instead of the nice-sounding “mistress” we actually have the not-so-nice sounding “adulteress.”

• Failure

• Fling

##### In the days of the judges, women with whom men committed sexual immorality were called concubines. The BKC calls the concubine “a secondary wife who might live with her own family and be visited occasionally by her husband.” Basically, they gave sexual pleasure without commitment. Of course, in a day with no real birth control, there was the possibility of pregnancy as a result. Such was the case in today’s text.

• Concubine

#### Was it OK for Gideon to marry so many wives that he had 70 sons (8:30)?

Q&A

1. Polygamy

##### The text doesn’t say this as something God either approved or disapproved. This is simply a statement of fact.

##### Of course, wherever we find polygamy in the Bible, we find a host of other problems, such as jealousy, idolatry, and murder. Today’s text is no exception!

#### Was it OK for Gideon to have a concubine (8:31)?

2. Concubine

##### Now this is different than the rather bland statement about the many wives. We see this in the fact that the woman’s name isn’t noted, as well as her being from the town of ill repute called Shechem.

##### All this sets the reader up to expect nothing good to come about from the son of this unnamed concubine—and we aren’t disappointed! Actually, we *are* disappointed, but at least we’re expecting to be disappointed!

Baal Worship

Sin

#### The sin associated with sex was idolatry (sin cycle of 8:33-35).

##### Baal worship was sexual at it core.

##### Baal’s altar in Syria stood all the way until 2015. More about that later…

Altar  
(2 slides)

### Servitude: Israel’s idolatry led to the *fellow Israelite* Abimelech terrorizing the land (9:1-49).

Servitude

#### What does the name *Abimelech* mean (8:31; 9:1)?

8:23

##### After his great victory, the people had asked Gideon to be their king (8:22), but he refused, saying, “I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you. The LORD will rule over you” (8:23). He doesn’t say which son he was talking about!

Hills

• “King”

Name

Map

Trees  
• 4x

##### So none of his 70 sons ruled. However, the one illegitimate son he named Abimelech, which, ironically, means “My father is king”! Gibeon began well, but in his latter years, Gideon blew it and wanted to be called king. How sad.

#### Abimelech revealed the sad state of the people as a whole in the north of Israel.

##### He sought power (9:1-2). What was Shechem noted for (9:1)?

###### “The city of Shechem had been a significant religious center since the time of Abraham (Gen. 12:6-7). It was located in the narrow valley between the prominent hills of Gerizim and Ebal, the site of the recitation under Joshua of the blessings and cursings of the Law (Josh. 8:30-35) [Vol. 1, p. 397] and of the further covenant renewal ceremony before Joshua’s death (Josh. 24:1-28)” (BKC, 396-97).

Shechem

###### “Shechem was situated on a strategic crossroads of the latitudinal route ascending from the coastal highway in the west and descending to Adam, on the Jordan River, and the longitudinal route along the central ridge from Jerusalem in the south to the northern accesses to the Jezreel Valley” (BKC, 397).

Dead   
(9:3-5)

Joshua’s Speech

##### He gained power (9:3).

###### Why did the people of Shechem want such a scoundrel as a leader (9:3)?

The people saw that Abimelech was from their city and that settled it for them. What kind of reputation he had was irrelevant. What kind of experience he had didn’t matter either. Was he honorable? No one investigated.

In fact, the first actions of Abimelech showed his true colors. He couldn’t raise a real army because he lived respectably and earned their trust, so they raided their temple to pay “reckless adventurers” (read scoundrels) to kill Abimelech’s own brothers!

###### Basically, the people of Shechem couldn’t get a leader any better than them.

##### He abused his power (9:4-5).

9:6

##### He was crowned king (9:6).

##### He was challenged by Jotham (9:7-21).

Hill

###### What’s the point of Jotham’s parable about the various types of trees ruling over the other trees (9:7-15)?

Each of these trees was too busy doing its job to take on a leadership role.

The point is this: Only someone without a worthy work will want to rule over scoundrels. “The major point of Jotham’s parable was that only worthless people seek to lord it over others, for worthy individuals are too busy in useful tasks to seek such places of authority” (BKC).

Flying Tumbleweed

9:15a Tumbleweed

Fire

Supplicate

Salvation

“Jotham employed extreme irony in this statement, for the puny thornbush at the foot of other trees scarcely casts a shadow. The threat of fire coming out of the thornbush, however, was real for farmers feared the wildfires that could spread quickly through the dried tinder of thornbushes” (BKC).

Terror

##### He terrorized the land (9:22-55).

### ~~Supplication~~: Israel never requested God for deliverance from Abimelech (Absent).

### Salvation: An *unnamed woman* in Thebez—though not called a judge—delivered Israel from Abimelech by killing him with a millstone (9:50-57).

Millstone  
(2 slides)

### ~~Silence~~: No period of peace followed with no one ruling so story goes straight to Tola (Absent).

No Peace

## As Israel degenerated morally, both the behavior and results got worse.

### What resulted from Abimelech’s rule (9:22-57)?

#### In a word, his rule led to destruction. No cities were built, the population didn’t increase but only people were murdered. No one learned piety from the king, and no prosperity came.

#### It also led to justice. Ultimately God caused Abimelech to come to a sad end due to the murder of his brothers. The city of Shechem also paid for their wickedness (9:57).

### As we will see in the coming weeks, when people reject God, things can only get worse instead of better.

(So what is the key lesson for us here? What’s the main idea?)

# II. All people deserve their leader.

MI

[Sometimes we get conquered, true…  
but when we choose our own leader, we choose one like us.]

## Every couple deserves each other.

Couples

### My professor who taught me how to counsel others told me he had one basic rule for marriage counseling: “Every couple deserves each other.” You may think you deserve a better spouse than you got, but your spouse may then be thinking the same thing! Since you both went into the marriage willingly, you both did the best you could. You deserve each other.

### The same applies to the selection of leaders. Wicked people don’t deserve a great, godly leader, so they don’t choose one. If they have one, they soon throw him out due to their own wickedness.

Leaders

### The problem during the time of the judges wasn’t that they didn’t have good leaders. Their problem wasn’t that their leaders got worse as time went on. It’s true that the leaders got worse, but that was the result, not the cause. The issue was the people, who chose to serve idols over the living and true God.

### So here is the main idea of this passage: “Every people deserves its leaders.” The followers always warrant the leaders they get. Godless people choose godless leaders. Righteous people earn the privilege of being headed by godly people.

No Name Abimelech

MI

## A leadership crisis begins with a followership crisis.

Sin

### Sin: We sin against the LORD by worshipping anything and anyone but Jesus (8:33-35).

#### Baal was worshipped then.

Altar

#### ISIS destroyed the Baal altar in 2014.

ISIS

#### Baal is making a comeback now.

NYC

### Servitude: Our idolatry leads to one of our own terrorizing our world (9:1-49).

Servitude

#### Aleppo is a current example.

#### The city was absolutely devastated this week.

#### No wonder no one wants to name their son Abimelech!

### ~~Supplication~~: We must not neglect to ask God for deliverance (Absent).

Supplicate

### Salvation: God *always* answers prayer of repentance by giving us salvation in Jesus (9:50-57).

Silence

Salvation

### ~~Silence~~: Life still has struggles but life in Christ always has God’s peace as well (Absent).

(Why don’t we have better leaders? Because we don’t first have better followers.)

# Conclusion

### All people deserve their leader (Main Idea).

### We need to make God our leader rather than show favoritism based on family ties. But how can we do that? How can we follow God better?

Nepotism Cartoon

### Exhortation: How can you be a better follower?

Discipleship

#### First follow Jesus.

• Jesus

#### Then develop godly qualities.

• Qualities

### Prayer

Prayer

# Preliminary Questions

**Verses Questions**

# Context: What did the author record just prior to this passage?

### Gideon won a fantastic victory for Israel that brought 40 years of peace. With 300 men he defeated 135,000 Midianites and Eastern peoples.

### However, those 40 years of glory also had some cracks in the armor when Gideon tortured some who opposed him, made an ephod that the people worshipped, as well as him giving birth though his concubine to a son named Abimelech.

# Purpose: Why is this passage in the Bible?

### My professor who taught me how to counsel others told me he had one basic rule for marriage counseling: “Every couple deserves each other.” You may think you deserve a better spouse than you got, but your spouse may then be thinking the same thing! Since you both went into the marriage willingly, you both did the best you could. You deserve each other.

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### So here is the main idea of this passage: “Every people deserves its leaders.” The followers always warrant the leaders they get. Godless people choose godless leaders. Righteous people earn the privilege of being headed by godly people.

# Background: What historical context helps us understand this passage?

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### One such area of sin is sexual relationships apart from marriage. We used to call this “sexual immorality” or “fornication,” but that sounds too sinful. So now we call it a “fling” or an “affair” or a “one night stand.” It would be better to call these a “failure” or an “affront” or a “one night fall.” Instead of the nice-sounding “mistress” we actually have the not-so-nice sounding “adulteress.”

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# Tentative Subject/Complement Statements

Text

# Possible Illustrations

### The US presidential election is in five weeks. Like the days of the judges, the two candidates have a higher *dis*approval rating than *approval* rating!

#### How did that happen? How can the people elect those whom they despise?

#### The answer: The leaders will never be better than the people who select them. The moral decline in the US as a whole now shows up in the undesirable options to choose from for president.

# Possible Applications

### Once our church matures to the point that it deserves a better pastor, God will bring him! Until then, you have me.

### Choose leaders based on merit, not kinship. There should be no nepotism in God’s family.

### Grow in character so God can increase your capacity. Character precedes capacity. Join our Man2Man study of the integrity required of a leader.

# OT Survey Judges Class Notes

**Introduction**

**I. Title** The name Judges (~yjip.vo *sopetim*) refers to those who "act as law-giver, judge, governor" (BDB 1047b 1b). However, the book itself demonstrates that the term applies not only to those who *maintain* justice and settle disputes, but also liberate or *deliver* the people first before ruling and administering justice (2:16, 18).

**II. Authorship**

A. External Evidence: The Talmud (Tractate *Baba Bathra* 14b) ascribes to Samuel the books of Judges, Ruth, and Samuel.

B. Internal Evidence: The author is anonymous, but the Jewish tradition regarding Samuel's authorship makes good sense for several reasons:

1. The repeated phrase "in those days Israel had no king" (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25) places the writing between the beginning of Saul's reign and the divided monarchy, which makes the earliest possible date at 1043 BC when Saul became king.

2. The fact that the Jebusites still inhabited Jerusalem when the book was penned (1:21) places the latest possible date of writing before 1004 BC when David conquered the city (2 Sam. 5:5-9).

While other evidence can be cited, these two factors alone place the writing during the time of Samuel when Israel had a king (#1 above) and that king was either Saul or David (#2 above). Although a contemporary of Samuel could have reported this history, the Jewish tradition and fact that Samuel was a writer (1 Sam. 10:25) provide strong evidence that he wrote the book.

**III. Circumstances**

A. Date: The above information cites proof that Judges was written after the coronation of Saul (1043 BC) and before David's conquest of Jerusalem (1004 BC). Some critics feel this date is too early since a summation of the rules of each judge yields 410 years (too many years to fit between Joshua and Saul's times). However, due to overlapping judgeships, the events covered in the book span approximately 341 years (from about 1390 BC-1049 BC; cf. p. 96) and therefore end just before the time of the book's composition.

B. Recipients: The early monarchy date reveals that the original readers of this historical account constitute the Jews who recently experienced the change from a theocracy to a monarchy.

C. Occasion: Judges records life in Israel during the final days of the theocracy when the nation officially operated under the rule of God. However, in reality Israel did not submit to His authority since "everyone did as he saw fit," or more literally, "every man did what was right in his own eyes" (17:6; 21:25; NASB). The oft-mentioned motto "Israel had no king" coupled with this anarchy statement in these two references indicates that the book may have been composed as a defense for the monarchy—that Israel needed to be united under the rule of a righteous king.

**IV. Characteristics**

A. In contrast to the *national* leadership of Moses and/or Joshua in the Pentateuch and Book of Joshua, Judges is the first book in the Old Testament to record leadership by judges who ruled on a *local* level.

B. Judges is similar to Numbers in that it also contrasts the faithful, patient love of God with the faithless, impatient ingratitude of Israel in cycles.

1. Pattern: This sin of Israel follows a cyclical pattern which occurs in a five stage progression from sin to servitude to supplication to salvation to silence, then back to sin again as the cycles repeat themselves seven times.

2. The Seven Cycles of the Book of Judges (see chronology on p. 96):

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Cycle** | **Oppressor** | **Location**  **in Israel** | **Years of Oppression** | | **Deliverer** | | **Years of Peace** |
| 1  (3:7-11) | Mesopotamians | South | 8 | Othniel | | 40 | |
| 2  (3:12-30) | Moabites | Southeast | 18 | Ehud | | 80 | |
| Parenthesis (3:31) | Philistines | Southwest | – | Shamgar | | – | |
| 3  (chs. 4–5) | Canaanites | North | 20 | Deborah & Barak | | 40 | |
| 4  (6:1–8:32) | Midianites | Northcentral  (Ophrah) | 7 | Gideon | | 40 | |
| 5  (8:33–9:57) | Abimelech | Central | 3 | Unnamed Woman | | – | |
| Parenthesis (10:1-2) | – | Central  (Shamir) | – | Tola | | 23 | |
| Parenthesis (10:3-5) | – | East  (Komon,Gilead) | – | Jair | | 22 | |
| 6  (10:6–12:7) | Ammonites | East  (Zaphon, Gilead) | 18 | Jephthah | | 6 | |
| Parenthesis (12:8-10) | – | Southeast  (Bethlehem) | – | Ibzan | | 7 | |
| Parenthesis (12:11-12) | – | Northwest | – | Elon | | 10 | |
| Parenthesis (12:13-15) | – | Central  (Pirathon) | – | Abdon | | 8 | |
| 7  (chs. 13–16) | Philistines | Southwest  (Zorah) | 40 | Samson | | 20 | |
| Totals |  |  | 114 |  | | 296 | |

**Argument**

The repeated phrase "in those days Israel had no king" (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25) provides the key to unlocking the argument of Judges. The book chronicles the failure of the theocracy in the political and religious failure of the nation (1:1–2:5), the successive attempts of twelve judges to provide stability to the theocracy (2:6–16:31), and the complete spiritual and moral collapse of the nation (chs. 17–21). One may note that the four occurrences of the lack of a king (above) appear only in this third section of the book as evidence of the need for a righteous monarchy to replace the failed theocracy explained in the first sixteen chapters. Throughout the account God's merciful care contrasts sharply with the disobedience of His wayward people. The provision of judges is cited as an act of God's compassion (2:16, 18).

**Synthesis**

**Failure of the theocracy**

**1:1–2:5 Incomplete occupation/obedience**

1 Military

2:1-5 Spiritual

**2:6–16:31 Deliverance by Judges**

2:6–3:6 Introduction

3:7–16:31 12 Judges, 7 cycles

3:7-11 Othniel

3:12-31 Ehud

3:31 Shamgar

4–5 Deborah/Barak

6:1–8:28 Gideon

8:29–9:57 Unnamed woman

10:1-2 Tola

10:3-5 Jair

10:6–12:7 Jephthah

12:8-10 Izban

12:11-12 Elon

12:13-15 Abdon

13–16 Samson

**17–21 Need for Monarchy**

17–18 Religious failure

17 Micah's priest

18 Danite migration

19–21 Moral failure

19 Levite concubine disaster

20 Benjamites almost destroyed

21 Wives provided

21:25 Monarchy needed

**Outline**

**Summary Statement for the Book**

***Israel’s failure under the theocracy* due to faithless disobedience is contrasted with God's merciful care in disciplining and delivering Israel through judges to exhort submission *to its new, divinely appointed kings* in a righteous monarchy.**

**I. (1:1–2:5) Israel's political failure of incomplete occupation of Canaan results in a religious failure of incomplete obedience as an introduction to the failure of the theocracy and the need for Israel's deliverance.**

A. (Ch. 1) Israel's political-military failure to complete the conquest indicates that as a whole the tribes did not obey the LORD by exercising faith in God to claim His promise of the entire land.

B. (2:1-5) Israel's religious-spiritual failure resulting from the incomplete conquest is a breaking of the covenant by alliances and idolatry which the pre-incarnate Christ vows would snare them to teach the need for deliverance and the cost of incomplete obedience.

**II. (2:6–16:31) Israel's deliverance by God through twelve judges who seek to avert its seven cycles of sin demonstrates God's merciful care despite Israel’s failure during the theocracy.**

A. (2:6–3:6) The introduction to the twelve judges previews God's repeated provision of judges to deliver Israel from the remaining nations even though it breaks the covenant after the death of Joshua.

B. (3:7–16:31) Israel's deliverance through twelve judges during its downward moral spiral in seven cycles shows God's merciful provision each time the people turn from idols back to Him to teach the nation that God cannot be blamed for the failure of the theocracy.

1. (3:7-11) Cycle 1: Othniel (Caleb's nephew) delivers southern Israel from the Mesopotamians as God's merciful provision for the nation after it turns from idols to the LORD.

a. (3:7) Sin: Israel does evil by forgetting the LORD and serving the Baals and Asherahs.

b. (3:8) Servitude: God punishes the nation's idolatry through the oppression of Cushan-Rishathaim, King of Mesopotamia, for eight years.

c. (3:9a) Supplication: The nation cries out to the LORD for deliverance from its enemies.

d. (3:9b-10) Salvation: Othniel (Caleb's nephew) delivers southern Israel from the Mesopotamians as God's merciful provision for the nation.

e. (3:11) Silence: The nation experiences peace for forty years until Othniel dies.

2. (3:12-30) Cycle 2: Ehud delivers southeastern Israel from the Moabites by killing the fat King Eglon as God's merciful provision for the nation after it turns from idols to the LORD.

a. (3:12a) Sin: Israel again does evil before the LORD.

b. (3:12b-14) Servitude: God punishes the nation's disobedience through the oppression of King Eglon of Moab for eighteen years.

c. (3:15a) Supplication: The nation cries out to the LORD for deliverance from its enemy.

d. (3:15b-29) Salvation: Ehud delivers southeastern Israel from the Moabites by killing the fat King Eglon as God's merciful provision for the nation.

e. (3:30) Silence: The nation experiences peace for eighty years.

(3:31) Shamgar delivers southwestern Israel from the Philistines by killing six hundred men as God's merciful provision for the nation during the lifetime of Ehud.

3. (Chs. 4–5) Cycle 3: Deborah and Barak deliver northern Israel from the Canaanites and sing a song of victory as God's merciful provision for the nation after it turns from idols to the LORD.

a. (4:1) Sin: Israel again does evil before the LORD.

b. (4:2-3a) Servitude: God punishes the nation's disobedience through the oppression of Jabin, a king of Canaan, for twenty years.

c. (4:3b) Supplication: The nation cries out to the LORD for deliverance from its enemies.

d. (4:4–5:31a) Salvation: Deborah and Barak deliver northern Israel from the Canaanites and sing a song of victory as God's merciful provision for the nation.

e. (5:31b) Silence: The nation experiences peace for forty years.

4. (6:1–8:32) Cycle 4: Gideon delivers northcentral Israel from the Midianites as God's merciful provision for the nation after it turns from idols to the LORD.

a. (6:1a) Sin: Israel again does evil before the LORD.

b. (6:1b-6) Servitude: God punishes the nation's disobedience through the oppression of the Midianites, Amalekites, and other eastern peoples who ravage the land for seven years.

c. (6:7-10) Supplication: The nation cries out to the LORD for deliverance from its enemies.

d. (6:11–8:27) Salvation: Gideon delivers northcentral Israel from the Midianites as God's merciful provision for the nation.

1) (6:11-40) The pre-incarnate Christ calls, tests, empowers, and encourages Gideon to lead Israel against the Midianites, Amalekites, and other eastern peoples.

a) (6:11-24) Gideon is called to the task of leading Israel.

b) (6:25-32) Gideon is tested in his ability to obey the LORD through his destruction of Baal's altar.

c) (6:33-35) Gideon is empowered for service as the Midianites, Amalekites, and other eastern peoples camp opposite Israel for war.

d) (6:36-40) Gideon is encouraged by God in the confirmation of his call through a wet and dry fleece.

2) (7:1–8:21) Gideon delivers northcentral Israel from the Midianites as God's merciful provision for the nation according to His promise to protect His people when they are obedient.

3) (8:22-27) Gideon judges the people foolishly by making a golden ephod which the people worship.

e. (8:28-32) Silence: The nation experiences peace for forty years.

5. (8:33–9:57) Cycle 5: An unnamed woman delivers central Israel from Abimelech's vicious rule of fellow Israelites as God's merciful provision for the nation even though it never turns from idols to the LORD.

a. (8:33-35) Sin: Israel sins against the LORD by prostituting itself before the Baals.

b. (9:1-49) Servitude: The nation's breaking of the covenant allows oppression by one of its own–Gideon's son Abimelech–who usurps his father's desire for God's rulership by murdering sixty-nine of his half-brothers (all except Jotham).

c. (Absent) Supplication: No mention is made of Israel ever requesting God for deliverance from Abimelech.

d. (9:50-57) Salvation: Though not specifically designated a judge, an unnamed woman of Thebez delivers Israel from Abimelech by killing him with a millstone in Shechem.

e. (Absent) Silence: Since no judge delivers Israel from Abimelech no rulership is recorded and the account continues with Tola.

(10:1-2) Tola delivers central Israel from unrevealed oppressors as God's merciful provision for the nation.

(10:3-5) Jair leads eastern Israel as God's merciful provision for the nation.

6. (10:6–12:7) Cycle 6: Jephthah delivers eastern Israel from the Ammonites as God's merciful provision for the nation after it turns from idols to the LORD.

a. (10:6) Sin: Israel sins against the LORD by serving the gods of many nations.

b. (10:7-9) Servitude: The nation's breaking of the covenant in Gilead causes them to be oppressed by the Philistines and Ammonites for eighteen years.

c. (10:10-16) Supplication: The people cry out to God in repentance and rid themselves of idols.

d. (10:17–12:6) Salvation: Jephthah delivers eastern Israel from the Ammonites as God's merciful provision for Israel but fulfills a foolish vow by executing his daughter and executes 42,000 Ephraimites for their jealousy over his victory.

\* For views on the fate of Jephthah’s daughter, see page **Error! Bookmark not defined.**.

e. (12:7) Silence: Jephthah rules the land for six years.

(12:8-10) Izban leads southeastern Israel as God's merciful provision for the nation.

(12:11-12) Elon leads northwest Israel as God's merciful provision for the nation.

(12:13-15) Abdon leads central Israel as God's merciful provision for the nation.

7. (Chs. 13–16) Cycle 7: Samson delivers southwestern Israel from the Philistines as God's merciful provision for the nation even though it never turns from evil to God.

a. (13:1a) Sin: Israel again does evil before the LORD.

b. (13:1b) Servitude: God punishes the nation's disobedience through the oppression of the Philistines for forty years.

c. (Absent) Supplication: No mention is made of the nation crying out to the LORD for deliverance from its enemy.

d. (13:2–16:31) Salvation: Samson delivers southwestern Israel from the Philistines as God's merciful provision for the nation.

1) (13:2-25) The miraculous events surrounding Samson's birth indicate him as God's merciful provision for the nation.

2) (Ch. 14) Samson kills thirty Philistines after being deceived at his sinful wedding feast with a Philistine woman as God's agent for vengeance against the Philistines.

3) (Ch. 15) Once again as God's agent for vengeance against the Philistines, Samson burns their fields for giving his wife to his wedding attendant and kills one thousand Philistines after the murder of her and her father.

4) (Ch. 16) In Samson's downfall by succumbing to Delilah's nagging he dies with three thousand Philistines as his final act of vengeance upon Israel's enemy.

e. (Absent) Silence: No mention is made of the nation experiencing peace after Samson's twenty year rule.

**III.(Chs. 17–21) Israel's religious and moral failures portrayed through two Levites demonstrate the need for a righteous monarchy to replace the failed theocracy.**

A. (Chs. 17–18) The religious failure of the people seen in the hiring of a Levite pagan priest who blesses Dan's ungodly migration is recorded as evidence of the need for a righteous monarchy to replace the failed theocracy.

1. (Ch. 17) Micah's idolatry and hiring of a Levite as pagan priest exemplifies the personal religious apostasy in Israel to show the need for a righteous monarchy to replace the failed theocracy.

2. (Ch. 18) The Levite's godless blessing upon the selfish and faithless migration plan of the Danites reveals the tribal religious apostasy in Israel to show the need for a righteous monarchy to replace the failed theocracy.

B. (Chs. 19–21) The moral failure of the people in the Benjamite murder of a Levite's concubine and the national retaliation is recorded as evidence of the need for a righteous monarchy to replace the failed theocracy.

1. (Ch. 19) Benjamites in Gibeah rape and kill the concubine of a Levite traveling through their area, who then cuts her into twelve pieces and sends one to each tribe in Israel–an illustration of the rampant immorality in the failed theocracy.

2. (Ch. 20) The 400,000 warriors of the other eleven tribes destroy in three days 26,100\* of the 26,700 Benjamite soldiers in addition to all the women and children, thus nearly destroying the entire tribe except 600 men who fled into the desert .

\* The 25,100 killed (20:35) excludes 1000 Benjamites killed on days 1 & 2 of battle.

3. (21:1-24) Israelites preserve the tribe of Benjamin by providing wives for the 600 living Benjamites through killing everyone in Jabesh Gilead except 400 virgins and stealing 200 virgins at a festival at Shiloh–both godless attempts to undo their wrong.

4. (21:25) The closing statement of relativism as the people’s ethical standard reiterates the moral failure of the people to indicate the need for a righteous monarchy to replace the failed theocracy.

**Abimelech: A Thornbush Rules the Trees**

***Judges 8:33–9:57***

**Exegetical Outline (Steps 2-3)**

# *Exegetical Idea*: Cycle 5: An unnamed woman delivered central Israel from Abimelech's vicious rule of fellow Israelites as God's merciful provision for the nation even though it never turned from idols to the LORD (8:33–9:57).

# 1. Sin: Israel sinned against the LORD by worshipping the Baals (8:33-35).

# 2. Servitude: Israel’s idolatry led to the fellow Israelite Abimelech terrorizing the land (9:1-49).

# 3. ~~Supplication~~: Israel never requested God for deliverance from Abimelech (Absent).

# 4. Salvation: An unnamed woman in Thebez—though not called a judge—delivered Israel from Abimelech by killing him with a millstone (9:50-57).

# 5. ~~Silence~~: No period of peace followed with no one ruling so story goes straight to Tola (Absent).

**Purpose or Desired Listener Response (Step 4)**

The listeners will identify one area where they can be a better follower of Christ.

**Homiletical Outline** (Simple deductive form)

# Introduction

### Interest: The US presidential race has everyone perplexed how the people must choose between two unpopular candidates.

### Curiosity: Why is it that we often have choices, but none of these choices is desirable? Why don’t we have better leaders?

### Main Idea: All people deserve their leader.

### Background: Israel worshipped idols, so it had idolaters to choose from as leaders.

#### Our series is called “Band-Aids on a Gunshot Wound.” That means you have serious problems but not serious solutions to address them!

#### We all worship something, but Israel had the basic problem of worshipping the wrong God.

#### This led to other nations oppressing them, but in today’s text we’ll see it even got worse with civil war—a self-inflicted “gunshot wound,” if you will.

### Preview: Let’s see how this leadership crisis was actually caused by the people themselves, and then draw some principles to live by.

### Text: Judges 8:33–9:57 tells us the sad story of Abimelech.

(The familiar cycle in Judges begins with Cycle 5 where…)

# I. Israel’s five-fold sin pattern was self-inflicted (8:33–9:57).

[The people couldn’t blame anyone else beside themselves for their woes.]

## Israel’s sin pattern got even worse than the earlier ones:

### Sin: Israel sinned against the LORD by worshipping the Baals (8:33-35).

### Servitude: Israel’s idolatry led to the *fellow Israelite* Abimelech terrorizing the land (9:1-49).

### ~~Supplication~~: Israel never requested God for deliverance from Abimelech (Absent).

### Salvation: An *unnamed woman* in Thebez—though not called a judge—delivered Israel from Abimelech by killing him with a millstone (9:50-57).

### ~~Silence~~: No period of peace followed with no one ruling so story goes straight to Tola (Absent).

## As Israel degenerated morally, both the behavior and results got worse.

(What is the key lesson for us here? What’s the main idea?)

# II. All people deserve their leader (Main Idea).

[Sometimes we get conquered, true…  
but when we choose our own leader, we choose one like us.]

## Every couple deserves each other.

## A leadership crisis begins with a followership crisis.

### Sin: We sin against the LORD by worshipping anything and anyone but Jesus (8:33-35).

### Servitude: Our idolatry leads to bad leaders from among us (9:1-49).

### ~~Supplication~~: We must not neglect to ask God for deliverance (Absent).

### Salvation: God *always* answers prayer of repentance by giving us salvation in Jesus (9:50-57).

### ~~Silence~~: Life still has struggles but life in Christ always have God’s peace as well (Absent).

(Why don’t we have better leaders? Because we don’t first have better followers.)

# Conclusion

### All people deserve their leader (Main Idea repeated).

### Exhortation: How can you be a better follower?

#### First follow Jesus.

#### Then develop godly qualities.

### Prayer



**Rick Griffith**

25 September 2016

Message 5 of 12

**Abimelech: A Thornbush Rules the Trees**

***Judges 8:33–9:57***

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### Sin: Israel sinned against the LORD by worshipping the Baals (8:33-35).

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## Every couple deserves each other.

## A leadership crisis begins with a followership crisis.

### Sin: We sin against the LORD by worshipping anything and anyone but Jesus (8:33-35).

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(Why don’t we have better leaders? Because we don’t first have better followers.)

# Conclusion

### All people deserve their leader (Main Idea).

### Exhortation: How can you be a better follower?

#### First follow Jesus.

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Text

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