



Week 4: “From Victims to Villains”

Text: Judges 8:32-12:15

Summary:

In Abimelech and Jephthah, we continue to see how the book of Judges is not just circular, but is a downward spiral. Abimelech is not even a “judge”; he comes to power through brute, murderous force, rather than being called by God. In fact, the next judges—Tola and Jair—appear to have rescued Israel from.... ISRAEL! The corruption and apostasy of the Israelites has reached a new low: Israel has gone from being mere victims of oppression to becoming the villains causing the oppression.

Although Jephthah is a judge, what is tragic is how little Jephthah himself knows about God. He seems to believe God is a God of grace, however, ends up murdering his own daughter to “earn” God’s blessing and afterwards goes on to murder many of his own countrymen. For the first time, there is no “peacetime” brought about by a judge. The people have become more evil, as well as their “heroes.” It is with much amazement we remind ourselves just how gracious God is, to work through such flawed individuals to save such a flawed people. Although these are some of Israel’s darkest moments, it ought to be a strong sign of hope to us to see that even as villains, God does not give up on saving us, even from ourselves.

Discussion Questions for Study:

1. Read Judges 9v1-6. How does Abimelech become a “judge”? How is this different from other judges?
2. Although Jephthah delivered Israel from the Ammonites, how does he treat his own daughter in 11v30-35 and his own countrymen (the Ephraimites) in 12v1-7?

Discussion Questions for Application:

1. Is leadership a reflection of the people, or are people shaped by their leadership? How does this relationship work within: the government, the family, the church? How should it work?
2. Abimelech and Jephthah were suppose to be “heroes.” Yet they were as evil as the nation of Israel. Read Jesus’ words in Mark 10:18. Who is the only one able to be the hero? Who then is the villain? And why do we try to make ourselves the hero?