

King of the Trees

Judges 8:29 – 9:57

by Don Falkos

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Gideon had seventy sons by his many wives. He also had a son named Abimelech by a concubine who lived in Shechem. After Gideon's death, Abimelech convinced the people of Shechem to make him their king. He hired mercenaries, who killed the seventy sons of Gideon with the exception of the youngest, Jotham, who escaped.

When the people of Shechem had gathered to crown Abimelech, Jotham called out to the crowd, "When the Trees decided they wanted a king, they asked Olive Tree, Fig Tree, and Grape Vine, all of whom declined. Then, in desperation, the Trees asked Thornbush to be their king. He replied, 'If you really want me for your king, so be it. But if not, beware! My branches would make excellent kindling for a fire that would burn you all to the ground.'

"You have killed the sons of Gideon and made this son of a slave girl your king. May you destroy each other with the fires of deceit and hatred." Then Jotham fled for his life.

Abimelech ruled Israel for three years. Then the people of Shechem rebelled. When Abimelech attacked, they barricaded themselves inside a tower. Abimelech set it on fire. The tower burned to the ground, killing everyone inside.

Abimelech went to destroy another rebellious city. Again the people took refuge inside a tower. As Abimelech prepared to burn down the tower a woman on the roof dropped a millstone on his head, cracking his skull. He begged one of his soldiers, "Run me through with your sword so no one can say that I was killed by a woman." And so Abimelech died.