

# History Repeats Itself

*Revival*

By Tom Hill

**Bible Text:** Judges 8:33—10:5

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The only lesson we have learned from history is that we have not learned from history. Some philosopher said centuries ago, “Unless we learn from history, we are doomed to repeat it.” And sadly we repeat history over and over again. We look at our nation. We repeat history in our nation. Some of the ailments that are forefathers fled foreign lands to come here to enjoy freedom from them, we find them slowly coming upon us in our day.

Well, it certainly describes the children of Israel as well. Their history repeated itself over and over again. As we have studied the book of Judges we can see that vividly described for us occasion after occasion they would go into sin. They would turn from God. Their enemies would suppress them. God would hear their cry for relief. He would provide a judge, a savior who would lead them in victory over their enemies. As long as that judge would live they would enjoy peace and safety, but, of course, eventually that judge would die and the cycle would repeat itself again. They never learned from history. For they constantly repeated it.

We come to a passage in Scripture this morning that describes that very cycle. We last looked at Gideon, one of the more well known of the judges in the history of Israel, the man who brought victory to Israel though only 300 men. Of course, he didn't do it on his own. God worked on their behalf.

In fact, those 300 men never entered into battle. God brought disarray to the enemy and they fought amongst themselves and they fled throughout the land away. So the 300 men of Gideon's armed forces never even had to raise a weapon. They pursued after four men who escaped and there they did have some engagement with the enemy, but only one at a time. And they destroyed those who escaped.

What we read in the end of Judges chapter eight the conclusion of Gideon's tenure as a Judge. We read in Judges eight verses 33 to 35.

As soon as Gideon died, the people of Israel turned again and whored after the Baals and made Baal-berith their god. And the people of Israel did not remember the LORD their God, who had delivered them from the hand of all their enemies on every side, and they did not show steadfast love to the

family of Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) in return for all the good that he had done to Israel.<sup>1</sup>

The Scriptures are very graphic in their description, aren't they? I know some people have said, "I wish I had a modern translation of the Bible so that I could understand it and I could read it and it would be easier for me to know and understand." You can't get any more graphic than that. They whored after other gods. They prostituted themselves in seeking after other gods rather than pursuing after the God who had manifested himself to them. That says they forgot him. They did not remember him. How could you forget? How could you forget all of the wondrous, miraculous things God did for them? He brought them out of Egypt, a miraculous event. He met them at Mount Sinai with such awe and wonder that the earth shook and lightning flashed and thunder and clouds of smoke, mighty graphic indeed. Throughout all the wilderness he provided food for them every day, every day, every day. Can you imagine the grocery store you would need in order to feed a million and a half to two million people every day, every day, every day for 40 years? And God did that. Miraculously he provided for them. He brought them into the Promised Land. And as long as they trusted God and obeyed him, they destroyed every enemy that came against them and they enjoyed peace and relief in their land.

Sadly, they turned away from God and refused to be faithful to him. And, thus, began the cycle. They turned from God. They did not remain faithful to the covenant promises they made with him. They told him, "You will be our God and only our God. We will not worship any other God but you. We will obey every one of your commands. We will destroy the enemies in the land and we will rid the land of them and we will occupy in your name." They did not remain faithful to those promises. Not only that, they compounded their infidelity and their unbelief by believing something that was not true.

It says that they whored after other gods, the baals. That comes as plural, because there were thousands of them, literally thousands of baals. They had baals for weather. They had baals for fertility. They had baals for territory. They had baals for sunshine. They had baals for rain, every conceivable thing that you could name they had an idol, a god for it.

So rather than worship the true and the living God who created all things and gave them life and breath and who revealed and manifested himself mightily on their behalf, they believed something wrong, something untrue and they began to worship and to seek after the baals, thousands of gods. Included in the balls was one God that they called Ashtoreth. Ashtoreth was a female goddess and they believed that by performing sexual orgies on high places in the land where they had built alters and a pole to represent the Ashera female god that they would go on those high places and they would practice sexual orgies hoping to satisfy those thousands of gods that they would then bless them.

They sunk pretty low, didn't they, in their unbelief and their is. Well their unbelief led to their iniquity. Their iniquity began with their insubordination to God by rejecting him, by not remembering him and all of the good things that he had done on their behalf. And their insubordination quickly turned to integration. They integrated the other nations

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<sup>1</sup> Judges 8:33-35.

among themselves and they intermarried with them. And God had specifically warned them, don't do that. Destroy all of the peoples of the nations there because if you don't, you will intermingle with them. You will intermarry with them and they will bring you into idolatry, exactly what happened.

They intermingled with them. They intermarried with them and they became idol worshippers just like them, worshipping their gods instead of the god who had revealed himself to them.

Well, as it progressed into idolatry and immorality, God faithful to his Word became their enemy. And he interfered with them. And in the past studies we saw how God went on the side of their enemies and would bring in other nations who would oppress them and suppress them, who would make them poverty stricken and take all of their goods and their foods and their crops, making them slaves.

On this occasion, after the death of Gideon, we did not see an incursion from enemy forces, but we saw God permit one man to rise up and suppress the people. And we read about him beginning in Judges chapter nine. I didn't record the whole chapter. It would take several pages to record it, so we just have a few of the highlights to introduce us to this man.

Judges nine verses one through six we read:

Now Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem to his mother's relatives and said to them and to the whole clan of his mother's family, "Say in the ears of all the leaders of Shechem, 'Which is better for you, that all seventy of the sons of Jerubbaal rule over you, or that one rule over you?' Remember also that I am your bone and your flesh." And his mother's relatives spoke all these words on his behalf in the ears of all the leaders of Shechem, and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech, for they said, "He is our brother." And they gave him seventy pieces of silver out of the house of Baal-berith with which Abimelech hired worthless and reckless fellows, who followed him. And 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. And all the leaders of Shechem came together, and all Beth-millo, and they went and made Abimelech king, by the oak of the pillar at Shechem.<sup>2</sup>

Abimelech was a son of Gideon through a concubine who lived in Shechem. Gideon had 70 other sons from his wives who lived in Ephraim, central Palestine. This son, Abimelech, rose up in the city of Shechem where he grew up with his mother and said, "Listen, people. Don't you think it is a better idea that just one of us rule over this city rather than divided among 70 people? Talk about red tape. I can eliminate all of that. Just choose me."

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<sup>2</sup> Judges 9:1-6.

And they agreed. Why not have one of our own lead us? They gave him money. He hired a band of soldiers to work with him and they went back to the land of his half brothers and he slew them all except one, 69 in all, to eliminate the competition, to make sure he alone would stand as king. He came back to Shechem. Great as the coronation and the celebration and they crowned him the King of Shechem.

Throughout the rest of the chapter you can read about how he suppressed and dealt cruelly and wickedly with the people in the land of three years.

Shortly after they coronated him and crowned him as the king the one of his half brothers who escaped, Jotham, came to Shechem and gave a warning. And we read his warning recorded there in Judges nine verse number seven.

“When it was told to Jotham, he went and stood on top of Mount Gerizim and cried aloud and said to them, ‘Listen to me, you leaders of Shechem, that God may listen to you.’”<sup>3</sup>

And then he told them about how the end would come bitterly to them for having chosen Abimelech, a rascal and a rowdy as their king. It would come to no good end. God would bring judgment against them.

After three years of reign it seemed everything was going wonderful for Abimelech. Then trouble began that developed within the city of Shechem. A group of people banded together as rebels against Abimelech. And then went and hid in what they thought is a safe tower. Unfortunately it was made out of wood and when Abimelech heard that these rebels had gathered into this tower for protection he gathered his merry band of ne'er-do-wells. They cut down branches of trees, planted them around the base of this wooden tower and set it afire and destroyed all of the people within the tower.

While there were a few people who didn't go to that tower for safety, they went to a second location of safety. And we read about them in verses 50 to 57 from Judges chapter nine. It says:

Then Abimelech went to Thebez and encamped against Thebez and captured it. But there was a strong tower within the city, and all the men and women and all the leaders of the city fled to it and shut themselves in, and they went up to the roof of the tower. And Abimelech came to the tower and fought against it and drew near to the door of the tower to burn it with fire. And a certain woman threw an upper millstone on Abimelech's head and crushed his skull. Then he called quickly to the young man his armor-bearer and said to him, “Draw your sword and kill me, lest they say of me, ‘A woman killed him.’” And his young man thrust him through, and he died. And when the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, everyone departed to his home. Thus God returned the evil of Abimelech, which he committed against his father in killing his

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<sup>3</sup> Judges 9:7.

seventy brothers. And God also made all the evil of the men of Shechem return on their heads, and upon them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal.<sup>4</sup>

Just as Jotham had foretold by choosing Abimelech, this wicked, worthless man as your king and chose to follow him, evil will come upon you. But go awhile, three years, but ultimately God brought judgment upon them for their sin.

After that we read the end of the cycle again in chapter 10.

After Abimelech there arose to save Israel Tola the son of Puah, son of Dodo, a man of Issachar, and he lived at Shamir in the hill country of Ephraim. And he judged Israel twenty-three years. Then he died and was buried at Shamir. After him arose Jair the Gileadite, who judged Israel twenty-two years. And he had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys, and they had thirty cities, called Havvoth-jair to this day, which are in the land of Gilead. And Jair died and was buried in Kamon.<sup>5</sup>

God heard their cry. He provided for them saviors who came and defeated the enemies, restored peace to the land and they enjoyed it under the first one for 23 years and then following the second one of 22 years. And if you were to go to verse number six in Judges 10 you would read that the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of God.

Why would God provide this record and preserve it for the children of Israel? Because he did. He provided it for the children of Israel, the original recipients of this record. Why would God do that? First, he wanted them to know and he wanted to emphasize in their minds the wickedness of their sin. For we find repeated on all of these records the emphasis upon their sinfulness and their wickedness and their unbelief, how they failed to remain faithful to their promise of their pledge and their covenant that they had made with God. God had made covenants with them going back to their forefather Abraham. He promised that he would be with them. He promised them a land. He promised them relief from their enemies. And on Mount Sinai they made another covenant together.

“We will obey you. We will fulfill all of your commands. And you only will we worship and serve.”

When Joshua brought them to victory in the Promised Land, he repeated the covenants with them. On more than one occasion they went over them, reminding the people of the promises they had made. And his death, prior to his death he reviewed it with them again. And then each of the judges as they came along they knew God’s faithfulness and yet they would not remain faithful. They would choose to believe a lie rather than remain faithful to their promise to God to worship him and him alone.

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<sup>4</sup> Judges 9:50-57.

<sup>5</sup> Judges 10:1-5.

Not only did God want them to know their wickedness, he wanted them to know his character. Many people down through the centuries have developed a false notion about God, but it didn't come from the Bible, because in the Bible God has revealed himself, the multi facets of his character, aspects that to us would seem contradictory. But in God they balance completely. We find described for us here and revealed to us about God a severing God, God in charge of all things, even in charge of evil. For he permitted the evil to develop under all ... prior to all of the judges and even on this occasion. He permitted Abimelech to become the king. And he permitted Abimelech to kill those people as a punishment for their sin. We struggle with that. But that describes God's sovereignty. And then God in his sovereignty would bring to them a judge who would help them and grant them relief.

We also see in God's sovereignty within his control of all things, his wrath and judgment against sin. God hates sin. God doesn't just pat people on the top of the head and say, "Oh, that is all right. You will do better next time. That doesn't describe God. Nowhere in the Scriptures can you find that. God is a God of wrath against sin. He judges sin. And he brings punishment against those who continue in sin and practice sin as a lifestyle. And we see that described for us on this occasion. God brought judgment against them and God brings judgment in many different ways. One of the ways he brought it is in oppression. Oppression is a kind of judgment from God. And he brought judgment on them through Abimelech who suppressed them and oppressed them.

We see that God is also a God of mercy. In time he brought a judge who brought them security and safety, followed by another judge who brought them security and safety. And prior to these times he provided Gideon and the other judges describing for us God's faithfulness. The Scriptures tell us that though we remain faithless, he remains faithful. For he cannot lie. When he makes a promise, he keeps it. When he made a promise to Abraham and to Isaac and to Jacob, when he promised to them a land, he gave them that land. And even on these occasions when they had sinned against him, he brought in a judge, he brought in a warrior to preserve the land of them so that they could enjoy the promise for a time.

God is also faithful to his warning. For he warned them many times, "If you do not obey me, if you fail in your promise to me, I will become your enemy and I will bring enemies against you who will oppress you and suppress you and you will find yourselves away from me."

So they reveal the character and nature of God as well.

It also gives to them and gave to them a picture of God's redemption. I have recounted on many occasions how things started when God created the heavens and the earth. He created Adam and Eve morally upright, wholly righteous, without sin, gave them a few simple commands to follow. In time they yielded to the temptation of the devil through the serpent and they turned away from God.

In their sin they hid from God. They did not pursue after him even when they heard him

calling their names in the garden. They ran and hid, giving to us the first indication of what the Scriptures say throughout them that no man seeks after God. We really don't. He seeks after us, just like he did in the garden. He sought after Adam and Eve, identified to them their need of a Savior. They needed someone who would grant them relief from the oppression of the serpent. And his evil and his seed and he promised to them a Savior, one who would come and would crush the head of that serpent.

Throughout history God has provided numerous pictures for people and for his children, the children of Israel, his called out ones, pictures of how that would happen. This provides another picture. In their sinfulness, in their wickedness they needed grace. They could not reconcile themselves back to God. They could not overcome their sin on their own strength. God would provide for them a Savior in the form of a judge. The judge would come. He would lead them in victory. He would judge them and they would have relief, giving them a picture of his plan of redemption.

Ultimately the Scriptures reveal to us that plan of redemption fulfilled in his Son, Jesus Christ whom he gave to be the ultimate Savior, the one and only Savior of whom all of the previous pictures foretold. And he came and defeated Satan once and for all, that all who believe and trust in him as the children of Israel believed and trusted their judges, their saviors, if they would believe and trust this Savior, the one and only Savior as their Savior, they would experience rest and peace.

God wanted them to know that.

Well, how do these things correlate to you and me? Maybe you have seen some indications along the way as we have talked of how it kind of fits to us. But it fits us perfectly because the Scriptures that describe the conditions in that day describe conditions in our day. Just as those children of Israel did not remain faithful to God and chose to believe a lie and believed in a multitude of gods, that describes our day and age perfectly. We have a pluralistic world, not just a pluralistic nation, a pluralistic world. Multitudes of gods that people worship. And sadly we find people bowing the knee to those gods who cannot save them, who cannot help them. Worse yet, we find those who profess to know Jesus beginning to include parts of these other gods along with their worship of God as if that would work.

And they do it in this fashion.

I like to think of God as... And then they have a description of their god. Some characteristics you might find describing God in the Bible, many of them not. But the gods of many people of our day including those in Christian churches today only worship a God of their own making, a god who makes them feel good, a god pleasing in their own sight, a god of their own design, rather than pursuing after the God who has revealed himself in Scripture and pursuing after the truth and conforming their lives to the truth, they choose to conform their lives to error. And, thus, we see and observe the decline of our nation and we see the decline of the church of Jesus Christ today.

We are just like the children of Israel. We have failed to learn from history. And we follow the exact same pattern that we see described in the day of Abimelech, following after a multitude of gods.

It also fits our day because God provided a Savior for them. And God has provided a Savior for us, not just a savior, the Savior. And not just the Savior, but the Savior can become my Savior so that it goes beyond just a mere mental concept to become a living personal reality.

Because these events describe for us our condition in our day and time, therefore you and I must worship and call upon the Savior whom God has provided for people like you and me. He became the Savior in order that he might become your Savior, so that you and I can make it personal by calling upon him to save us and by trusting him as our own personal Savior. We can find redemption and forgiveness from sin and reconciliation back to God. And we will further find that as we cast our trust upon him as our Savior, that he by the Holy Spirit begins to work within us to make us back into the holy image in which God created man.

Where has the Spirit of God identified in your life your failure to believe him, to trust him, to call upon him as Savior, to trust him as Savior in your life, to begin to reproduce in you and to restore back in you the image of God and holiness?

How will you respond to that? Will you just set it aside and say, "Oh, well, this is the part of the message that Tom always comes to and we can just kind of set it aside. He will be done soon and we can go home"? Yeah, you can do that. You could also say, "Well, he has kind of startled my mind. I will think about some things and I will... maybe tomorrow. I got a full afternoon. Maybe tomorrow I will kind of make a mental note and..."

Unfortunately those mental notes tend to get lost, don't they? No, we only have today. How will you respond today? What changes do you need to make: Jesus made it very simple. Jesus when he announced the kingdom he just simply said, "Repent and believe." He just made it very simple.

Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

And when he comes in and saves us and he becomes our Savior, he then begins to work in us by his Holy Spirit to form us into his image, holy before God.

I pray that the Spirit of God will work in your life today to help you call upon Jesus as your Savior. Make him yours today and then trust him to work in you and to reconcile you to God and to restore you back into the image of God as he created us.

Let's close in prayer, shall we?