

Jotham's Fable

Within the confines of Judges 9 is one of the most imaginative fables told by man. It reminds one of Aesop's Fables in its vivid depictions and moral lessons. It is a wonderful example of the diversity of the Scriptures and its ability to connect with man on many different levels and through many different styles. It is the fable of Jotham.

Abimelech, the son of the great judge Gideon, sought to be the king of Shechem. When approached with the possibility, the men of Shechem were more than willing to provide him with the arrogantly desired crown (9:3-4). To secure his throne, Abimelech went and killed all 70 of his brothers, with the exception of Jotham who hid during the slaughter (Vs. 5).

When Abimelech formally became king, Jotham went to Mount Gerizim on the outskirts of Shechem and cried out to the men of Shechem:

“Listen to me, you leaders of Shechem, that God may listen to you. The trees once went out to anoint a king over them, and they said to the olive tree, ‘Reign over us.’ But the olive tree said to them, ‘Shall I leave my abundance, by which gods and men are honored, and go hold sway over the trees?’ And the trees said to the fig tree, ‘You come and reign over us.’ But the fig tree said to them, ‘Shall I leave my sweetness and my good fruit and go hold sway over the trees?’ And the trees said to the vine, ‘You come and reign over us.’ But the vine said to them, ‘Shall I leave my wine that cheers God and men and go hold sway over the trees?’ Then all the trees said to the bramble, ‘You come and reign over us.’ And the bramble said to the trees, ‘If in good faith you are anointing me king over you, then come and take refuge in my shade, but if not, let fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon.’” (Vs. 7-15)

The moral of the lesson: sometimes the one who desires the position of power the most is the one who is least fit to hold it and will destroy even the mightiest of his opponents.

Jotham convicted the men of Shechem of their betrayal of his father, Gideon, and all for which he stood (Vs. 16-20). He fled the region while Abimelech reigned over the people of Shechem.

The fable of Jotham is an excellent illustration that needs to be remembered in our society today and taught to our children. Many still have not learned the lessons of Jotham's fable. Yet, it must be remembered, because there are many brambles ready to destroy a willing people. ~~ Adam Cozort