

1/12/20 - Judges 8:33-9:57 - "Abimelech: A Prideful Compromise"

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[0 : 00] So we are going to be back into the book of Judges, and it has been a while. We've been out of the book of Judges for quite some time, and I just wanted to state that today we have a long section of Scripture.

It's going to be 60 verses, so you might want to saddle up going on today. Okay, this is your warning to make a last-minute stop at the coffee bar for that one refill.

I will not be offended if you get up right now and go fill up your coffee, because trust me, I got my coffee. It is overflowing. I'm ready for the 60 verses. And we're back, and the cycle in Judges, the cycle of sin is spinning around for the fifth time in the book of Judges as we enter into Judges chapter 9.

And the previous Judges died. I think we have a graphic here to kind of show that cycle we spoke about earlier in the weeks on the computer. If you want to put that Judges cycle up, Dom, on the computer, the Judges cycle up on the screen.

There it is. And so the cycle is spinning around. The Judges died. Israel loses direction, and they forget all the good that the previous Judge had done.

[1 : 21] In this case, it was Gideon who had delivered Israel from the hand of the enemy, the Midianites in this time. Today, we're going to study a sad chapter which exposes the inner division that's beginning in Israel.

In this nation that is chosen by God, we all of a sudden see an inner division, and it's actually leading to civil war within the nation of Israel.

And we're going to break this section into three parts. The first part is going to be verses 1 through 6, where Abimelech conspires his way to become king over Israel.

The second part is going to be from verses 7 to 21, and that's going to be where God stands against the plans of Abimelech. And then part 3, Abimelech experiences the consequences.

In verse 22, all the way to verse 57. The book of Judges is a book about leadership. You can't put it any other way.

[2 : 24] It is a book about leadership. And me being a leadership guru, I just love books on leadership. I have many books on leadership, many books on strategies and all sorts of things and whatnot.

And this chapter can probably be best understood as leadership lessons from Gideon's son, and primarily dealing with poor leadership, but also poor followership in this chapter.

So we're going to take this in sections. It's going to be bite-sized for the sake of making sure that we're all tracking along with the meaning of this text. So saddle up.

It's going to be a little bit of a long one, but I'll pause for a periodic drink, and I encourage you to drink a sip of coffee as well. So while we're starting in chapter 9, let's remind ourselves, it's been a couple weeks, of where we left off.

So let's look at Judges 8, verse 33. Let's look back a little bit. We see the end of Gideon's story. It says, As soon as Gideon died, the people of Israel turned again and whored after the Baals and made Baal-bereth their god.

[3 : 39] And the people of Israel did not remember the Lord their god, who had delivered them from the hand of their enemy on every side. And they did not show steadfast love to the family of Jeroboam, that is, Gideon, in return for all the good that he had done to Israel.

Now, most heroes going into this chapter, most heroes go down in history as men or women who leave a positive legacy for the people who were to follow.

But Gideon left quite a sour note, and he created an ephod. He lived as a god, which duly led Israel into apostasy, but also was a snare to his whole family.

And we're going to see the depth of that snare today as we meet Gideon's son, Abimelech, who is the product of Gideon's backsliding. He's the son of a king. That's what his name means.

And he was also the son of a concubine, not even Gideon's wife. He had many wives. Abimelech was the son of a concubine as well. Abimelech was an outcast of the family, and while he had his father's genes, he really didn't have any of the father's rights.

[4 : 49] He had no family rights from Gideon. Let's pause for prayer as we go into chapter 9 and begin in God's Word. Let's pray.

Lord God, we are grateful to be gathered in your text, and we know that there's meaning behind every word, every verse, every chapter, and every genre of scripture, and the entire book.

All of it has meaning. And Father, let us find Christ in this text. Let us understand. Let your word come to life in this church. With your power, the power of the Holy Spirit, we know that we will understand, and we will be changed by this text.

And Father, we ask you to change us this morning. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. As we go into chapter 9, please read with me in this first scene.

Abimelech candidates and takes office in verse 1 through 6. Let's look at verse 1 through 4. It says, Now Abimelech, the son of Jerobel, 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, What is better for you, that all 70 of the sons of Jerobel rule over you, or that one rule over you?

[6 : 19] 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 70 pieces of silver out of the house of Belbereth, with which Abimelech hired worthless and reckless fellows who followed him.

Abimelech starts his campaign, stopping there for a minute. He starts his campaign with a very unique campaign trail, little campaign strategy. What better way of drumming up support than going to his closest followers, his closest people being his relatives, to drum up support, to implant his agenda, his little scheme that he was working out, into the ears of his own family?

Quite a way of drumming support, right? Who better is going to support you than your own family?

So, they were convinced, and they decided to fund his campaign. What funds were available?

Well, let's go to this false god, and we'll just take some of that money, and we'll fund you up good. We'll get the hats printed, the t-shirts made, we'll be waving the banners, and we'll be sending out the mailers for you.

[7 : 36] Sure, we're on your side, Abimelech. You got this. You are our family. Yeah. He played upon their desires to have someone ruling over them.

And Abimelech wanted this kingship very bad. And notice the driving force of their decisions, too. Their hearts inclined.

Look at me in verse 3. Their hearts inclined. But church, did God's will incline in unison? There is no trace of God raising up anyone as he did in the previous three, four cycles of the book of Judges.

So, out of Abimelech's bad leadership, we also have bad followership then as well. Because the people just played along, they played into his schemes, they played into the whispers. And they all had logical human arguments.

And their hearts inclined to it, so it made sense. This brings a very vital point of application. Just within the first four verses. The reminder to us, if Jesus Christ does not rule over us, our sinful nature will.

[8 : 44] Our own selfish desires, our own motives, what we can get out of other people and what we can get out of this life will rule over us. As Philippians 3, 5 says, I mean, Romans, that's later.

Romans 6, 16. It says, You see, we must never reject the true king.

Or else, an imposter, a usurper, will weasel their way to rule over us, fitting their own agenda. We must beware of those whispers in our ears which drown out the whispers of God.

Our hearts must incline towards God. What may seem logical to man does not always constitute God's will. Even if it makes sense, we must not play God.

And Israel is in trouble. As my vehicle seems to go through many seasons in life, that check engine light pops on and there's something wrong. Within the nation of Israel, their check engine light is

blaring.

[10:01] There's trouble headed down the road and it is flashing. So, I could only imagine the danger lurking ahead. You have an entitled man manipulating support from those who are closest to him.

And based on the source of their funds, Israel's man-appointed leader is getting his campaign supported by Baal from the temple to do Baal's bidding, essentially. And what a reality this is going to become.

So, the story continues. In verse 5 through 6, Abimelech turns and takes care of some loose ends. Verse 5 says, After the seed was planted with the family, and his closest and loyal followers of Abimelech were persuaded and their hearts inclined, everything was making sense.

Man, this is really going to suit us well and what we need. Abimelech is our family after all. We trust him. So, Abimelech returns home to Oprah to take care of some loose ends, which would hurt his conspiracy, which would hurt his campaigning to become king.

So, Abimelech is the prototype of an abusive leader. He leads for his own benefits. So far as to wipe out his entire competition, which was his brothers, 70 brothers on one stone.

[11:51] It's only due what benefits him. And like any false teacher of our day or any false teacher of the past, at face value, things seem exciting. They seem altruistic.

Like their agenda, their ideas, logic is behind it. It makes sense. But behind the empty promises is a concern for their own agenda. End of story.

And this brings us to another point of application. If Israel would have simply kept God as king, as he was when Gideon, when he was leading Gideon through the battles, the Lord was fighting on their behalf.

If they would have just remained and kept God as their king, how much devastation could have been avoided? Seventy men could have still lived in the life of Abimelech.

Abimelech could have been stopped at the moment that those whispers were called out when somebody whispered in their ear of this logical campaign before they even started.

[12:51] It could have been avoided. And that is good followership despite the bad leadership. This is important in our day of pragmatism and instant gratification.

The enemy knows of all of this in our human nature. And Satan will use vessels of destruction to benefit Satan's plans.

And they'll seem logical. So we must develop an instinctive suspicion of anyone or anything that might come in and weasel their way in the place of God that only belongs to Jesus Christ in our lives.

This is called discernment. So no convincing whisper should ever draw us away from doing someone else's bidding. No heart inclination will justify solutions based upon logic.

So I have a question going into, as we continue here, would you fall for such a conspiracy which someone plays upon your heartstrings?

[13:55] Going into scene two, we see God stands against Abimelech in verse 7 as the verses continue. In verses 7 through 15, Jotham, the youngest brother who hid himself from this massacre of all his brothers being slaughtered at the stone, stands up at the Mount of Gerizim.

And let's read in verse 7 through 15. It says, The trees once went out to anoint a king over them.

And they said to the olive tree, And the tree said to the vine, You come rain 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 rain 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.

[15:43] In one instance, Jotham, the son, comes out of hiding after the massacre of his brothers occurs. And he stands up in great faith and says, Listen to me, so that God may listen to you.

They were at his awarding, they were at his ceremony with Abimelech. He was all prestigious. And then all of a sudden the youngest brother comes out of the woodwork and speaks these words.

He catches the attention of all gathered at Shechem at this time at Abimelech's ceremony. Now, his words, yeah, odd. If you're not an artistic person, if you hate poetry, you're probably like, What in the world do you do with this?

The trees are talking, to the vine, to the olive tree. What's happening here? But what was told in these passages between 7 and 15 is called a fable, and it uses non-human elements. In this case, it was the trees that act in a human fashion to make a spiritual or a moral point. And so the unique thing that this fable served was to bring judgment over Israel, to give all who were gathered a chance to hear his words, and so that God may hear their words.

[16:58] In other words, they were called to evaluate their hearts and possibly repent of what was going on, all the wrong that was going on. So, looking at this fable, just to understand this for anybody who isn't artsy, the trees sought out some talented individual who bore great fruit in their lives, which could have been a trustworthy, you know, definitely a trusting, a candidate to rule over them.

But every tree that they spoke to, the olive tree, the fig tree, and the vine, they were confident in their own worth, and they all denied the request because they simply wanted to function as God intended them to function.

They knew who they were. They desired to continue to be what God created them to be, which brought blessing to both God and men. This is good followership, following after God. But, the trees look very low. Not even a fruit-bearing tree. A useless brush known as bramble is still, even to this day, an issue out in California in the driest parts.

Bramble just gets set on fire in the heat of the deserts. And they were so desperate to fill this void that they thought they needed to fill. And how confidently the bramble responded in this passage.

[18:23] And not just in acceptance, but also in demand, in a sense. There was so much sarcasm in this fable because the trees wouldn't have acted so foolishly. So the fable was applied, and Jotham continued to explain this to them.

If there was any doubts in their mind, he continued in verse 16. Look with me. He says, Now, therefore, if you acted in good faith and integrity when you made Abimelech king, and if you have dealt well with Jeroboam and his house and have done to him as his deeds deserved, for my father fought for you and risked his life and delivered you from the hand of Midian, and you have risen up against my father's house this day, and have killed his 70 sons on one stone, and have made Abimelech the son of his female servant, king over the leaders of Shechem because he is your relative, if then you have acted in good faith and integrity with Jeroboam and with his house this day, then rejoice in Abimelech and let him rejoice over you.

But if not, let fire come out of Abimelech, out from Abimelech, and devour the leaders of Shechem and Beth Milo, and let the fire come out from the leaders of Shechem and from Beth Milo, and devour Abimelech.

And Jotham ran away and went to, fled and went to Beer and lived there because of Abimelech, his brother. In connection to what Israel had done, they were essentially appointing a bramble king. The truth and the reality of this fable and of Jotham's words which he heeds the people of Shechem to respond to in repentance, to turn from their ways because the trees, the leaders of Shechem in this parable, this fable rather, the trees were acting foolishly in their fake search and failed to acknowledge the king already ruling over them.

[20:24] So they submitted themselves to a worthless man. This is bad followership based on the whispers and the logic. And Jotham gave Israel a chance.

They had a chance to evaluate their hearts and the situation in light of the sarcasm of the fable and he delivered a curse over them and he fled to Beer. And I wouldn't, I wouldn't, I wouldn't hold it against him.

I'd flee to Beer, flee to Beer as well to get away from this mess. What grace though. Church, what grace.

He says, listen to me that God may listen to you. This was a chance for the leaders of Shechem for all the wrong that they had done. Even Abimelech who was gathered at this time to repent of this wicked plan, this man-made plan, this whisper campaign to end.

For anyone who has fallen for the lies and the whispers of the enemy, God would be listening in for nothing but repentance. And this is our only response to God when we transgress against him, against the Lord.

[21:36] They had a chance to repent from acting upon their own will. And church, what grace we have received through Jesus Christ as well. When we find ourselves turning from our sinful nature, our desire to have something or to do something that makes sense in our own minds.

And so even at times we try to drum up support for the plans that we have. We turn ourselves from the Lordship of Christ and our actions speak louder than words sometimes.

We also must repent. This was paid for and bought for at the cross of Calvary. So for a while, it may seem, if you're stuck in that season, it may seem like there's a little bit of enjoyment and pleasure for sin.

For Abimelech, we see the season in his life, it lasted for three years, but eventually by the judgment of God over the sin committed, the Shechemites, the leaders of Shechem, would realize their mistake.

Eventually, their sin would find them out, just as God's judgment would eventually find us out as well. Again, the unique problem in this narrative is not just bad leadership.

[22 : 49] Yeah, Abimelech acted bad, but there's also bad followership from the leaders of Shechem, from those whispers that were received. It could have been stopped right then and there, dead in its tracks, but the whispers spread.

So Israel desired a capital K king. That was their desire, but they appointed for themselves a bramble king, a lowercase king, and settled with this bramble king who had nothing to offer them.

Unlike the king, the capital K king who would provide them everything that they would ever need.

They desired the king that we have right now, church, the king that hung on a cross.

We must also be careful not to not be turning from God's promises by our own devices, by our own choices, by our own foolishness. They will also be just as self-destructive as what we experience in this fable.

So I have a question. Would you fall victim to having your eager fleshly desires to lead you, or would you be patient to wait until the Lord commissions, until the Lord makes it clear how to act?

[24 : 03] And as we get to the final scene of this passage, scene three, and we're going to be going through 20, starting at verse 22. And now I could summarize, I could stand back and summarize all of this.

We just saw the appointing of this king. We saw the warning of what's going to happen with this king. They didn't listen, so what can you expect?

Within these next 25 verses, we can summarize that because of Abimelech's bad leadership, because of Israel's bad followership, a lot of people died and suffered greatly.

And we could just go on to verse 56 and 57 and conclude this passage. But I do want to take some slow steps through this. But as you can read on your own, verse 22 through 41, this is when Abimelech meets his match.

Somebody comes up to challenge him. His name is Gale. And he thinks that he is a confident, he thinks that he's confident, but when it comes to putting his money where his mouth is, he folds under the pressure of facing Abimelech and his giant army.

[25 : 15] And he was actually made a fool, which speaks highly that you can't fight sin with more sin. You can't do that. The only way to fight sin is through repentance.

And so Gale, the confident, this confident oppressor who comes in to try to replace Abimelech, fails miserably because he also tried to start a whisper campaign and got people to drum up supports and he failed miserably.

So if we pick up the story at verse 42, we'll read, read with me. After this battle, after Abimelech defeats Gale's army and all the people of Shechem, it says in verse 40, 42, on the following day, the people went out into the field and Abimelech was told.

He took his people and divided them into three companies and set an ambush in the fields. And he looked and saw people coming out of the city. So he rose against them and killed them.

Abimelech and the company and the company that was with him rushed forward and stood at the entrance of the gates of the city while the two companies rushed upon all who were there, all who were in the field and killed them.

[26 : 38] And Abimelech fought against the city, fought against the city all that day. He captured the city and killed the people who were in it and he raised the city and sowed it with salt.

In this passage, it's almost like Abimelech was out there. He had his troops ready. He defeated his opponents, Gael, who thought that he could rise up and take Abimelech's place as king.

And so while they're out there fighting the people of Shechem, well, why don't we just hit two birds with one stone? It's efficient. We're all battled. We're all suited. We got our men here. Let's just continue this war.

So they did hit two birds with one stone. They attacked the city and they defeated them. That is just what they did. They razed the city and sowed it with salt, meaning that the entire land was sowed with salt so that nothing could grow.

It was worthless ground to bear any fruit. It was useless. And as verse 46 continues, it says, when all the leaders of the tower of Shechem heard of it, they entered the stronghold of the house of Elbereth.

[27 : 49] Abimelech was told that all the leaders of the tower of Shechem were gathered together. And Abimelech went up to the mounds of Zalman, he and all the people who were with him. And Abimelech took an axe in his hand and cut down a bundle of brushwood and took it up and laid it on his shoulder.

And he said to the men who were with him, what you have seen me do, hurry and do as I have done. So every one of the men cut down a bundle and following Abimelech put it against the stronghold and they set the stronghold on fire over them so that all the people of the tower of Shechem also died, about a thousand men and women, introducing the bramble king coming to life. gathering bundles of wood and setting the stronghold on fire, the last remaining people of Shechem. We now see in this passage that going back to Jotham's curse, it was not far off the mark in the least bit when it said, fire coming out of Abimelech and devouring the leaders of Shechem. This is fulfilled prophecy in the curse. Abimelech's most loyal and close supporters had turned on him, the leaders of Shechem. They sided with this guy named Gael. And just as any prideful leader, if you betray them, you better be ready to be devoured and destroyed for your disloyalty to them. And this is exactly what happened. All one thousand men and women who sought shelter from Abimelech died in this furnace-like inferno. And how devastating, if you could imagine this being real history that happened.

[29 : 30] A thousand men and women dying in this furnace-like inferno. And in that fiery blaze, the leaders of Shechem, all who sided with this plan that was not God's plan, their sin had found them out even though they hid in a temple.

Through fire, their sin found them out even when they tried to hide. And verse 50 continues. It's kind of like a comical scene in a weird sense.

But in verse 50, then Abimelech went to Thebes and encamped against Thebes 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.

So, if there's any Marvel fans out there, anybody who's seen some Marvel movies, you're familiar with the Hulk.

[30 : 42] At this point, Abimelech is unhinged. There is no controlling this guy. He defeats the leaders of Shechem, the ones who turned against him and sided with this apostor named Gael who tried to overthrow him.

He put Gael in his place and he's going to put the leaders of Shechem in their place. He burnt the tower and it's like he's just filled with rage and pride and he's looking around and he sees another place and he's like, well, they sided with Shechem too.

Let's go there too, man. He's unhinged. There's no ability to control this guy. He is literally, in my mind reading this, I'm thinking the Hulk.

So Abimelech goes to the neighboring town, Thebes, which obviously sided with Shechem. And so if you side with Shechem, if you side with Gael, you are an enemy of this prideful monster, Abimelech.

And he reached his match when he arrived at this strong tower of Thebes. As in verse 52, it says, Abimelech fought against it. And the humor in this, think about it.

[31 : 52] This monster of a man, roid-raged up, fighting against a wall. He's fighting against this stronghold. Could you imagine just swinging his sword, just, ah, you know?

Imagine the comical scene that this author of Judges is trying to point out. This man was whacked out, completely unhinged. Probably a humorous situation indeed.

But you know the old saying, if you want it done right, have a woman do it. It's true. All right. Let's read 53.

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, a woman killed.

And he 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.

[33 : 03] Through the precise actions of the only one willing to stand up to this courageous, prideful monster, banging on walls, fighting against this stronghold, a mighty woman hoists up a millstone, which was a woman's domestic tool in this time.

It was common to her. And this woman, I wouldn't want to mess with this woman. She might give Joe Scrimm a run for his money. Hoisting a millstone, that's no easy feat. This woman drops it from several flights of stories, and the stone lands right on the head of this monster.

This sounds a lot like the story of jail, doesn't it? With the assassination of Cicero, as the woman uses a common weapon known to her to do God's will.

Because for an ancient warrior, the most dishonorable way to die was by the hands of a woman. And he knew this. And this guy was so consumed in his image and his pride, he's within his last breaths, and he still can't give it up.

He still can't say, okay, I was wrong, this is just all wrong, I repent. He has this bad boy, essentially, come up and thrust a sword in him and kill him, lest the people say that he died to the hands of a woman.

[34 : 27] And look at almost the humor in this. And all the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead and everyone departed to their home. They're just like, oh, well this is over, thank God.

All right, let's go back home. This is done. You know, what relief that must have been to have to yield and bow to this monster of a leader.

So the Lord used this millstone woman to bring judgment upon Abimelech. And the story resolves in verse 56, where we see God's sovereignty and his plan revealed.

It reads, Thus God returned the evil of Abimelech, which he committed against his father and killing his 70 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 Jeroboam. The Lord providentially brought justice against the leaders of Shechem who had abandoned the Lord based on a whisper.

[35 : 30] And also brought justice against Abimelech by the crushing blow of a woman. Look at the players involved in bringing great significance in God's plan too.

An unlikely youngest brother named Jotham standing up and having the courage and the faith to proclaim this curse over this nation, bringing God's judgments. A woman going in faith lifting this millstone.

If I were trying to lift a millstone, I'd probably be scared it was going to crush me. Trying to hoist it over a ledge. Probably would. And also, look at the bat boy.

The bat boy who made that final blow to Abimelech to kill him. All unlikely leaders, all unlikely characters in the story bringing great significance to God's plan and executing his judgments.

Church, if we survey the account of Abimelech through all the sin and the bloodshed, all on account of man playing God, we should see one thing clearly.

[36 : 36] In all these 60 verses, we should see one thing clearly. Man can never offer a viable solution. Regardless of the motives behind those solutions, man can never offer a viable solution to a problem only God was meant to solve.

All of our ideas, all of our logic will fall short of God's plan. God's plan. And just as the author of this book left its readers with prophetic insights, you want to know what this whole story meant?

The author of Judges brings about meaning to this whole story within the last two verses of the chapter. When repentance is required but neglected, church, disaster awaits.

There's no other way of putting it. When repentance is neglected, when it is required, disaster awaits. While God is always at work, he's always in control.

This is so true. He is always in control. Yes, he is sovereign. But look at all the chances, surveying through this, look at all the chances that man could have repented to hear Jotham's words so that God may hear them in their repentance.

[38 : 00] It was not a pretty sight and I would imagine quite painful and anger kindling for God to sit and watch the sin abound for three whole years of watching Abimelech just, all right, you think you're something, well, I'll take care of you eventually.

Go ahead and have your jollies right now because it's not going to last. And even Abimelech on his last dying breath, in a chance where he could have repented of all that he had done and turned back to God, pride still consumed him at his last dying breath and his bat boy ended his life. God was not an absentee ruler by the least bit. Abimelech thought he was the ruler but God was, the truth about it is God was the ever-present king. He never left the scene. He didn't forget Israel. He was waiting for repentance, for them to cry out to him. So, how do we make the same, how do we not make the same mistake as Israel? We'll rephrase that a little bit. When repentance is needed, we must respond in repentance, church. When we need to repent, when we transgress the Lord, we must repent. [39 : 16] We're saving ourselves of a whole lot of trouble. That means we pray, we ask God for help to us, we don't listen to the whispers of others that try to draw us off of our, draw our mind and our eyes off of the Lord.

We don't yield to our fleshly desires. We lay them all at the cross and in doing so, God will call and establish his plans in our lives when we yield to him.

Church, don't play God. Don't allow others to play God. This is within your control. What a great deal and agony that could have been avoided by simply yielding to Almighty God.

So maybe there's a power vacuum in your life that you feel, is there a void within your life that you're trying to fill based upon maybe logic, maybe your own wisdom, maybe things that make sense, maybe something that somebody else said and like convincing you, yeah, maybe, that's a good idea, Rick, yeah, let's go and do that.

Yeah, yeah. And don't consult the Lord at all. We must be careful not to allow our flesh to control the decisions of our lives. Our hearts are more, our hearts are very deceived, more than we can ever imagine.

[40 : 39] We must allow the word of God to align our minds and reshape our hearts and direct our lives rather than allowing our hearts to be inclined, inclining us to respond according to our fleshly desires and demands.

So if you are not in Christ this morning, if you're sitting here and yeah, wow, like what you're saying makes a lot of sense, maybe you feel that distance from God, maybe you have not repented yourself and turned your life to Christ and repented of your sin and came to know Him personally. What might you be searching for? You know, there's one thing for a nation of God's people to be searching for a king to, you know, undermining the lordship of Christ, but if you don't even know Jesus as your own king, what might you be searching for?

Status? Maybe wealth? Maybe that white picket fence family, you know, having everything go well? Maybe acquiring stuff?

Well, none of that stuff is bad in and of itself. Unless Jesus rules over all of that which you seek, your mission in life will always fail in finding order, proper order and meaning to your life as God requires it and as God has created it to be.

[42 : 03] This means submitting yourself to Jesus and His lordship today and experiencing what He has for your life and turning from the things that you think that you might have for your life or the things that you think that God might be, yeah, makes sense.

Take a pause and evaluate those motives. And for all gathered, sinners and saints, Christians and non-Christians, we must all beware of our hearts, the dangers that lurk within our own hearts.

Our hearts will incline us to look for something else when the current something isn't meeting or fulfilling our needs. We don't just, we don't, we just feel kind of disconnected at times in life.

The Bible also tells us to beware of false teachers who scratch itching ears. Tell us what we want to hear. Because who better to know how to divide the family of God, the body of Christ, than to lure the body of Christ away from one another based on appealing to their sinful nature in their hearts.

False teachers know how to lure you out of the family of God and into their plans and their agendas? Don't be so silly. Church, there is only one king and one Lord.

[43 : 19] We must beware of all attempts, personally and corporately, to fill the void that a place that only belongs to Jesus Christ in our lives. Whether we are his followers or his leaders, whoever we may be, we must be sure that he and he alone is Lord.

So, looking at the first scene in this book, let his lordship reign when the whispers are in his ear, in our ears to draw us off track.

To let his lordship reign. To let his lordship reign in the second scene. To let his lordship reign when we are being called to repent. When we hear those moments of a chance to repent.

Hear me so that God may hear you. That we won't be reluctant to just, yeah, that guy's crazy. But in our own doing, we repent. We are convicted by the Holy Spirit to repent.

And looking at the last scene, let his lordship, Jesus Christ's lordship reign at all times despite deception.

[44 : 24] Lest our motives and this deception to be revealed and our sinful plans that we built and that we're embarking on come crumbling down.

It'll save you a world of hurts. Let his lordship reign at all times. And may this also be so in our church family. The reigning kingship in leadership and in followership.

Let that be so here. Let's pray, church.