When we get to Chapter 9, what we encounter stands apart from everything we have encountered thus far. What is so different?

1. We don’t see the familiar line, “And then the LORD raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel.”

2. The key figure in this story is not a person raised by God as a saviour or a rescuer, but rather all we know initially is that he is the son of Gideon.

3. The place and the people at the focus are not Israelites, nor are they Israel's enemies.

4. The focus of this story is not about judging or delivering, but ruling.

5. Finally, (and perhaps, most importantly), we can read the story of Abimelech from 8:34 to 10:6 and YHWH’s name is not mentioned.

And so, the key questions we need to ask ourselves as we dive into this story is this: what is the relationship between Abimelech and the Story of Israel? What is God doing in this Story? What are His people doing? How does all this connect to my life?

Truth & Integrity

The key to understanding what is going on is to look for key words that show up time and again.

Two words show up frequently. They are: ‘Emeth and tamim. They can best be translated as “Truth” and “Integrity”.

Discuss: When you hear the words “truth” and “integrity”, what comes to mind? What personal models have you experienced of someone living in truth and integrity? What does this look like?

The Rejection of Truth and Integrity (9:1-6)

Shechem
Joshua 8:30-35; 24:1-28

The Reminder of Truth and Integrity (9:7-21)

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1 Much of the content of this lecture is drawn from Michael Wilcock, The Message of Judges (Downers Grove: IVP, 1992), 89-105.
The Abandonment of Truth and Integrity (9:22-49)

"God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem".

How does this play out?

1. For starters, the people of Shechem now want to hurt Abimelech (not entirely sure why).
2. Gaal
3. Then we read about Abimelech retaliating against this attempted coup d'état.
4. Abimelech's anger is starting to burn.
5. Attacks Shechem itself and after a day of fighting, conquers the city, and then kills everyone in the city.
6. The Tower of Shechem

The Recovery of Truth and Integrity (9:50-57)

- Thebez
- 9:53 - “one stone”
- v. 56

God at Work

1. God has been working towards the punishment of Abimelech and Shechem for their sins.

2. God has allowed the very nature of evil to run its course. Michael Wilcock puts it, "God’s almighty power is seen most chiefly in his showing mercy and pity; He has little need to use it in judgment; He has but to take His restraining hand off the brake, and wicked men will run to their own destruction, and ‘all who take the sword will perish by the sword.’"

3. Mutual destruction is what happens to any society that cares little about truth and integrity.

4. In all this, God has limited the extent of the evil.

5. God’s providence is on display in this whole story.

6. God uses blatant examples of the lack of truth and integrity so that His truth and integrity are longed for, and cherished.
Lessons from Abimelech

1. Judgment falls on sin

2. This reminds us that God is under no obligation to show mercy to sinners or grace in the face of evil.

3. God is sovereign over evil.

4. God can use evil to discipline evildoers

5. Hell is for real

6. Unpleasant reading exists for our own good,

Epilogue: Tola, Jair and Truth & Integrity overridden?