



THE trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, *Reign thou over us.* ⁹ But the olive tree said unto them, *Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?* ¹⁰ And the trees said to the fig tree, *Come thou, and reign over us.* ¹¹ But the fig tree said unto them, *Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?* ¹² Then said the trees unto the vine, *Come thou, and reign over us.* ¹³ And the vine said unto them, *Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?* ¹⁴ Then said all the trees unto the bramble, *Come thou, and reign over us.* ¹⁵ And the bramble said unto the trees, *If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.* (Judges 9:8-15)

The Lord God led His people out of the hard bondage of Egypt, across the dry bed of the Red Sea, and dwelt in their midst in the Tabernacle for the forty years of their wandering in the Wilderness. At last, they viewed the Promised land beyond Jordan Waters. Only those who were born in the Wilderness were allowed to cross over, except for Joshua and Caleb whose faith never faltered in the Wilderness Journey. Now the Lord chose Joshua to lead Israel into that Land of Promise and held back Jordan Waters so that the multitudes crossed over on dry land once more.

All those years in the Wilderness, God had led the Children of Israel and had been their Sovereign Lord despite their murmuring. Now, in the Land of Promise, the people apostatized against God once again. God sent the Midianites against them to aggravate their peace, steal their wheat, and take many young captives. The people then realized their wickedness and cried out to God – one of those few times that they turned to Him in Canaan as their King. God heard their disparaging cry and sent them a young prophet/farmer to lead the armies of Israel. The story is long, but you can read the

details from Judges chapters six through eight. In the end, Gideon's three hundred men killed more than 120,000 among the Midianites and their ally, the Amalekites.

Gideon was a righteous man who shunned greater responsibility. When the people of Israel asked him to be their king, he declined, *And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall rule over you.* (Judges 8:23). Gideon made one grievous error: he had an ephod erected to his glory outside the gate of Ophrah. Instead of taking Gideon's counsel to heart and accepting the Lord as their Ruler, they did what many nations blessed of the Lord have done (including our own blessed America) and rejected the Lord to rule over them and chose dishonorable men who were an offense to the eyes of the Lord God.

For the interim period of rejection of the Lord as Ruler, we read that they had NO king in Israel – every man did that which was right in his own sight. This leads to hedonism and resembles closely *nihilism*. Remember the concluding verse of Judges: *In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.* (Judges 21:25)

And it came to pass, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel turned again, and went a whoring after Baalim, and made Baalberith their god. 34 And the children of Israel remembered not the LORD their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side: 35 Neither shewed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, namely, Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had shewed unto Israel. (Judges 8:33-35)

After the rejected rulership of the Lord, the people turned to the vilest and lowliest men of wicked character and disposition to serve as their ruler. That is where our parable begins. IN order to gain the rulership, Abimelech, a son of Gideon (or Jerubbaal) murdered all of the other sons of Gideon except the youngest son, Jotham, who hid from the terror. It was this circumstance that led to Jotham's proclamation from Mt. Gerizim overlooking Shechem (Sychar in the New Testament of Jacob's Well).

The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us. The trees in this parable represents people and tribes much as states and races of people in America). The Olive Tree is of particular interest here since it is a noble tree of peace and of bountiful fruit. It is also one of the few fruit-bearing trees that remains green all year round. This would seem a fitting tree, if any were suitable, to rule over the other trees. But it is not in the nature of such a bountiful tree to seek power over others. *But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?* The main desire of the Olive Tree was to serve both God and man in accordance with the Two Great Commandments of our Lord. The Olive Tree is often compared to the Church by nature.

And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, and reign over us. Now here is a tree that might seem even more receptive than the Olive Tree. It is not a stately tree, but is usually bushy and very leafy. It provides fruit for man and even beasts such as birds and squirrels. It cannot be proud of its appearance, so maybe a grasp at power could lend prestige to an otherwise unremarkable (in appearance) tree. Yet the Fig Tree has a purpose given by God to benefit others. It will not be dissuaded from its original purpose. *But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?* Each of us as Christians have a calling in God. It is of the utmost importance that we serve in that calling to the rejection of any other worldly considerations – including political and social.

Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us. It seems that the trees keep seeking out trees that are lower and lower to the earth. The Olive Tree may grow to a height of forty feet, but the Fig Tree does not usually exceed thirty feet in height. Like the Olive Tree, the Fig Tree is aware of its calling in God to provide a delicious benefit in its sweet fruit: *But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?* Good fruit-bearing trees never seek to be exalted above that purpose for which God created them. The same is true of good men and women who know their calling in God and will not forfeit that calling regardless the worldly temptations.

If the trees could not get another tree of equal stature to rule over them, they will lower their sights to a less prominent (in size) bush, but certainly not less in importance – The Vine! *“Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us.”* When men (and trees) begin to opt for any Sovereign to rule over them other than God, they continually look lower and lower to find them. I hope this sounds familiar to those who would vote for some of the low-life scoundrels the American people have elected to public office over the past several decades. What did the Vine answer? *And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?* The Vine, of all trees, knows its great calling in God. Its fruit serves to symbolize the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ shed for us. Its wine is a type of the warming and exhilarating witness of the Holy Ghost to us. So, none of the fruit bearing trees will desert their calling in God.

How much lower can these erring trees look to find a ruler fitting for themselves? Instead of looking down, they should be looking UP. But looking DOWN seems the last resort for these trees and for the masses of people who seek government to be their god instead of the Lord God!

Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us. Of what worth is the bramble? It is a thorny scrub bush that chokes out other plants. It cares only for itself. It hurts man or beast who tries to pass through its prickly branches. If it gives up anything of worth (they are good only for burning), the beneficiary will have paid a heavy cost in wounds and scratches. But how did this low-life shrub answer to the trees? *And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.* How low must the trust be when placed in the shadow of the bramble. Its leaves are puny, and its shadow low to the ground. This bramble will demand worship, as do all socialist dictators, and will put its subjects very LOW! If obedience is not total, it will destroy the most stately of trees among it – the Cedars of Lebanon. These cedars are the same used by Solomon in the building of the Temple.

If we examine the ashes of great empires that have preceded us, we will find that they all perished by rejecting their purpose and calling in God and opted for the lowest among them to become their king. Look to South America (Venezuela), Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Persia (Iran), Rome, Greece, or look to the destabilizing policies of our preceding administrations in dividing our people and enacting socialist and enslaving legislation. Remember our calling in God both as a nation, and as Christians, and do not veer from it.