

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles with me to Judges 11

We are continuing our verse by verse study through the Book of Judges

And one of the things we have seen through the first ten chapters in this book – is Israel go through periods of trusting God and then they go through periods of rebellion.

So, these “judges” were individuals that God raised up to get the nation back on track – God used these individuals to not only deliver the Israelites from their enemies but also to turn them back to the Lord.

This evening, we are going to be introduced to a new judge -

His name is Jephthah

And the thing we will see about Jephthah is that he, like some of the judges before him, had serious flaws, we will see him make mistakes –

However, what we learn from Jephthah was that he was faithful and God still used him to fulfill His purpose.

Let's pray...

So, I know it has been three weeks since we were in the book of Judges –

So a quick recap.

In chapter 10, we were introduced to two judges, Tola and Jair

These two judges brought a period of peace and prosperity to Israel.

And if you do the math – it was 45 years that this went on.

However, when Jair died, the Children of Israel continued to do evil in the sight of the Lord.

Once again, they rebelled.

And instead of worshipping the One True God, they began worshipping all the Canaanite gods instead.

So God allowed the Ammonites and the Philistines to oppress them once again.

And when they cried out to God the first times, God answered, “Why don’t you ask for help from the other gods you have been serving?”

God knew they were sorry, they were remorseful – but they were not willing to repent.

So later on in the chapter, they put away their gods – they admit that they have sinned

And chapter 10 ends with the Children of Israel assembling an army to fight against the Ammonites – however, they lacked one thing – and that was that they had no leader.

And that lead us to ch 11 -

[Jdg 11:1-40 NKJV] 1 Now Jephthah the **Gileadite** was **a mighty man of valor**, but he [was] the **son of a harlot**; and Gilead begot Jephthah. 2 Gilead's wife bore sons; and when his wife's sons grew up, they drove Jephthah out, and said to him, "You shall have no inheritance in our father's house, for you [are] the son of another woman."

So here in verse 1, we are introduced to Jephthah

He was a Gileadite – meaning that he was from the region that was east of the Jordan.

The area were the two and a half tribes decided settle –

One of those tribes was Manasseh – the grandson of Manasseh was Gilead – and so forth the area was known as Gilead.

And as we see here, his father's name was Gilead also – this could have been his real name or it could be that this is a title –

So his dad was an important guy in Gilead.

So, not only was he the son of an important guy, he was also a mighty man of valor -

This was the title that the Angel of the Lord gave to Gideon back in Judges 6

He had a reputation as a warrior –

What were the Children of Israel looking for? A leader right, someone to lead their armies against the Ammonites.

But, he was also the son of a harlot. (prostitute) oh - oh

However, his dad took him into the family, he grew up with his half-brothers and everything was good until dad died.

Then the brothers kicked him out because he had no right to the inheritance.

3 Then Jephthah fled from his brothers and dwelt in the land of Tob; and worthless men banded together with Jephthah and went out [raiding] with him.

I had you make a note of the word "fed"

Because the connotation here is that his well-being was in jeopardy.

His brothers didn't give him two months to move out – he ran out with nothing.

He became an outcast

He was rejected

And one of the things we see over and over in the bible is that God uses outcasts / He uses those that have been rejected by men.

Joseph was an outcast / he was rejected by his brothers

David was rejected by Saul

Jeremiah and the prophets, rejected because of the message they were bringing

Jesus, rejected as well.

So Jephthah goes to the land of Tob and he becomes a raider / a pirate

He forms his own little army and they raided towns.

Now, the question is – who did they raid?

I am pretty sure he didn't raid the Israelites – because we will see here shortly that they are going to come and ask him for help.

He and his gang raided the Canaanite cities – Israel's enemy.

4 It came to pass after a time that the people of Ammon (descendants of Lot) made war against Israel. 5 And so it was, when the people of Ammon made war against Israel, that the elders of Gilead went to get Jephthah from the land of Tob. 6 Then they said to Jephthah, "Come and be our commander, that we may fight against the people of Ammon."

So now, the Ammonites are fighting against the Israelites – the Israelites still do not have a leader and somehow they realize that Jephthah was the guy that was supposed to lead them.

I say somehow, because we really don't know.

Maybe the priests told the elders? Maybe they heard the stories of his raiding? Maybe they remembered what a mighty man of valor he was.

7 So Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, "Did you not hate me, and expel me from my father's house? Why have you come to me now when you are in distress?"

The offer was on the table.

But there was unfinished business.

These elders had done nothing to aid Jephthah when he was rejected and exiled by the only family he had ever known.

As far as Jephthah knew, they were still against him.

I don't think Jephthah was looking for an apology or anything like that.

He wanted to know if they were willing to be at peace with him.

He is not holding a grudge against them – he just wants to know if they still hate him.

He can't lead them if they hate him.

Keep in mind that some of these elders might have been his brothers.

8 And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, "That is why we have turned again to you now, that you may go with us and fight against the people of Ammon, and **be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead."**

The elders of Gilead are asking Jephthah to not only lead them in battle – but also to rule over them.

To be God's judge.

They were simply confirming what God had already appointed.

9 So Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, "If you take me back home to fight against the people of Ammon, and the LORD delivers them to me, shall I be your head?" 10 And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, "The LORD will be a witness between us, if we do not do according to your words." 11 Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and commander over them; and Jephthah spoke all his words before the LORD in Mizpah.

Notice that Jephthah once again, he is not harboring any ill will against the elders of Gilead. "If you take me back home" - after all they had done to Jephthah, he considered Gilead his home.

But notice also what he says there in verse 9 – he recognizes that if he is victorious, it is going to be only because the Lord has given him victory.

Do you really recognize me as God's judge?

And their answer – yes we do.

And they made Jephthah their leader in Mizpah.

12 Now Jephthah sent messengers to the king of the people of Ammon, saying, "What do you have against me, that you have come to fight against me in my land?"

So the first order of business for Jephthah was to try diplomacy.

Remember, Jephthah was a warrior – he could have gone in there and starting killing people

But that is not what God commanded them to do according to His law.

Church, one of the things we are going to see over and over again in this chapter is that Jephthah was a man who studied God's word – he knew it and he lived it.

[Deu 20:10-12 NKJV] 10 "When you go near a city to fight against it, then proclaim an offer of peace to it. 11 "And it shall be that if they accept your offer of peace, and open to you, then all the people [who are] found in it shall be placed under tribute to you, and serve you. 12 "Now if [the city] will not make peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it.

Why are you attacking us?

What's your beef - Ammon

Maybe there was a misunderstanding – maybe there was a way to negotiate a deal.

13 And the king of the people of Ammon answered the messengers of Jephthah, "Because Israel took away my land when they came up out of Egypt, from the Arnon as far as the Jabbok, and to the Jordan. Now therefore, restore those [lands] peaceably."

The Ammonite ruler replied that Israel had stolen the land east of the Jordan from them, so the Ammonites were simply taking back what belonged to them.

Church, this is the same argument we hear today in the Middle East.

2600 years later – Israel stole our land.

Israel is the occupier – they are in the land that doesn't belong to them.

It belongs to the Palestinians –

There is a good chunk of people today that claim that the Jews never lived in Israel and there was never a king named Solomon who built a temple on the Temple Mount.

However, the Ammonite king, just like many today - have it all wrong.

He is changing the historical facts –

So what Jephthah is going to do for the next few verses is give the king of the Ammonites, not only a history lesson – but a bible lesson – which reveal the truth of how the Children of Israel settled upon the land in question.

Remember, Jephthah knew God's word.

14 So Jephthah again sent messengers to the king of the people of Ammon, 15 and said to him, "Thus says Jephthah: 'Israel did not take away the land of Moab, nor the land of the people of Ammon; 16 'for when Israel came up from Egypt, they walked through the wilderness as far as the Red Sea and came to Kadesh. 17 'Then Israel sent messengers to the king of Edom, saying, "Please let me pass through your land." But the king of Edom would not heed. And in like manner they sent to the king of Moab, but he would not [consent]. So Israel remained in Kadesh. 18 'And they went along through the wilderness and bypassed the land of Edom and the land of Moab, came to the east side of the land of Moab, and encamped on the other side of the Arnon. But they did not enter the border of Moab, for the Arnon [was] the border of Moab.

In Deut 2 – you can read it later on

God tells the Children of Israel – as you wander the wilderness - don't mess with the Moabites and the Edomites – that land is not yours.

So when Moses was leading the Children of Israel through the wilderness, when they got to the land of the Moabites and the Edomites, he asked for permission to go through their land but the king said “no”

So the Children of Israel were careful to walk around their land in order to get to the Promised Land.

Remember, the king of the Ammonites says that the land was stolen.

That it belonged to them.

19 'Then Israel sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, king of Heshbon; and Israel said to him, "Please let us pass through your land into our place." 20

'But Sihon did not trust Israel to pass through his territory. So Sihon gathered all his people together, encamped in Jahaz, and fought against Israel.

So the same thing happened when they came to the land of Amorites –

However, their king – not only denies the request, he attacks the Children of Israel.

It was a premeditated attack -

21 'And the LORD God of Israel delivered Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they defeated them. Thus Israel gained possession of all the land of the Amorites, who inhabited that country. 22 'They took possession of all the territory of the Amorites, from the Arnon to the Jabbok and from the wilderness to the Jordan. 23 'And now the LORD God of Israel has dispossessed the Amorites from before His people Israel; should you then possess it?

So because Sihon attacked them, God delivered the Children of Israel from the Ammorites and therefore the land of the Ammorites became theirs.

In Numbers 21:24, Moses was careful to note that the Children of Israel did not take any land that belonged to the Ammonites.

[Num 21:24 NKJV] 24 Then Israel defeated him (king of the Ammorites) with the edge of the sword, and took possession of his land from the Arnon to the Jabbok, as far as the people of Ammon; for the border of the people of Ammon [was] fortified.

Jephthah's challenge to the Ammonite king was – “When did this territory ever belong to you?”

It was Ammorite land – it was never Ammonite land and God gave it to us as a spoil of His victory.

24 'Will you not possess whatever Chemosh your god gives you to possess? So whatever the LORD our God takes possession of before us, we will possess.

Jephthah challenges the king of the Ammonites now – “If you think your god is stronger than our God, bring it on!”

If they believed they should possess what they thought their god Chemosh gave them, did it not make sense that Israel should possess what they knew the Lord gave them?

25 'And now, [are] you any better than Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab? Did he ever strive against Israel? Did he ever fight against them?

Balak was the king that tried to get Balaam to put a curse on the Children of Israel.

And that is where the talking donkey comes in – Num 22

So what Jephthah is saying here is – Balak tried to mess with us and was unsuccessful – your gods failed against the One True God – what makes you think you have a chance.

26 'While Israel dwelt in Heshbon and its villages, in Aroer and its villages, and in all the cities along the banks of the Arnon, for three hundred years, why did you not recover [them] within that time?

Here we have Jephthah's final diplomacy message –

We've been in this land for 300 years and no one has said anything.

If this land belonged to you – why have you waited this long to lay claim to it.

27 'Therefore I have not sinned against you, but you wronged me by fighting against me. May the LORD, the Judge, render judgment this day between the children of Israel and the people of Ammon.' " 28 However, the king of the people of Ammon did not heed the words which Jephthah sent him.

After providing the ammonite king the bible lesson, Jephthah concludes that the only reason that the Ammonites are plundering the Israelites is because they like to plunder – not because they have a claim to the land.

So Jephthah says, God is going to determine who is right and who is wrong in this matter today.

29 Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he passed through Gilead and Manasseh, and passed through Mizpah of Gilead; and from Mizpah of Gilead he advanced [toward] the people of Ammon.

The Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah,

This means that Jephthah was God's guy – confirmation

Jephthah was an illegitimate son, he was a hoodlum, a raider – yet God said to him, "You're the one for this job"

And most significantly, it means that Jephthah had God's favor & power and gave him what he needed to defeat the Ammonites.

All Jephthah needed to ensure the outcome of the Battle – God's presence & power.

30 And Jephthah made a vow to the LORD, and said, "If You will indeed deliver the people of Ammon into my hands, 31 "then it will be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the people of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD's, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering."

In verse twenty-nine, the Spirit came upon Jephthah.

End of story – victory was assured.

However, here in verse 30, Jephthah made a vow to the Lord

Did God ask him to make a vow? No

Were there any conditions to Jephthah receiving the Spirit? No

All Jephthah need do was believe God and receive the Spirit as His gift.

Here is the thing church –

The vow was all Jephthah, it was all flesh, it was an attempt to earn God's gift by adding something that needed to be obeyed.

Sometimes we do it as well.

If you heal me from this sickness, I promise to read my bible every day and go to church

If you fix this situation I am in, I promise to not do that sin anymore.

We need to be careful what we promise to God, and then be careful that we learn to follow through on our word.

[Ecc 5:4-5 NKJV] 4 When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; For [He has] no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed-- 5 Better not to vow than to vow and not pay.

A commonly overlooked and unappreciated sin among God's people is the sin of broken vows – promising things to God and failing to live up to the vow.

Jephthah's vow -

"If You do this Lord, if You give me victory, then I will promise to do such and such"

If You do this???

God had already promised Him victory by having the Spirit of the Lord come upon him – he didn't need to do it.

What harm could such a simple vow be? After all, burnt offerings were prescribed by the Law. Read (Lev 1 or Lev 6)

It sounded very spiritual right?

The problem was that he wasn't thinking of what he promised.

Because burnt offering was the complete destruction of the animal in an effort to renew the relationship between Holy God and sinful man.

That is why God gave the Israelites specific instructions as to the types of burnt offerings and what they symbolized.

It was usually a bull, sheep or goat – unblemished -

Whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me – I will offer that as a burnt offering.

What if it would have been an animal with a blemish or an unclean animal – a pig???

32 So Jephthah advanced toward the people of Ammon to fight against them, and the LORD delivered them into his hands. 33 And he defeated them from Aroer as far as Minnith--twenty cities--and to Abel Keramim, with a very great slaughter. Thus the people of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel.

Here we see that the Lord gave the Israelites victory –

It was a great slaughter – it wasn't even close.

Jephthah was victorious, but not on account of his vow.

The Lord honored his vow – the question is, will Jephthah honor his promise.

This time of celebration for the Children of Israel is going to be permanently tainted the joy of Israel's victory for generations to come – because of Jephthah's vow.

And we will have to wait until next week to find out.

I want to end with this.

Those who honor God:

- Will not be quick to make vows to God.
- Will be serious about fulfilling vows made.
- Will regard broken vows as sins to be confessed and to be repented of.

Amen

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I

accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

