

“Jepthah”

Judges 10-12

Scripture Ref: Lev 18:21; Duet 18:10; Jer 32:35; Num 18:15; Lev 27:1-4; Eccl 5:2; Matt 5:33-37; Heb 4:16

When good people do dumb things...

Tola

10:1 After Abimelech there arose to save Israel **Tola the son of Puah**, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in the mountains of Ephraim. 2 He judged Israel twenty-three years; and he died and was buried in Shamir.

Jair

3 After him arose **Jair, a Gileadite**; and he judged Israel twenty-two years. 4 Now he had **thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys**; they also had thirty towns, which are called "Havoth Jair" to this day, which are in the land of Gilead. 5 And Jair died and was buried in Camon.

Israel Oppressed Again

6 Then the **children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals and the Ashtoreths, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the people of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines; and they forsook the LORD and did not serve Him.**

1. Once again – the ‘same old story’ – in a way we might be getting tired of it!
 - a. You have to wonder – why was Israel attracted to these other gods? Did they think the statues and idols just looked cooler?
 - b. Were they deceived – or convinced?
 - c. I think that the answer may lie closer to home – that the people were attracted to *what was associated with these gods*. For instance:
 - i. Baal, the weather god, was associated with financial success.
 - ii. Ashtoreth, the goddess of fertility, was associated with love, sex, and romance.
 - iii. If you study the false gods, you will find that each one appeals to the fleshly desires of man – (which makes sense since they were made up by men!)
2. That is the exact same problem that Christians today can get themselves into –
 - a. It’s not like the Christian wants to worship the gods of this world (wealth, power, sexual immorality, etc)

- b. **But your flesh can find it appealing – and just like the Israelites, it gets added to your worship!**
- c. **And in the long-run, back into oppression you go.**

7 So the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and He **sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the people of Ammon.** 8 From that year they harassed and oppressed the children of Israel for **eighteen years** - all the children of Israel who were on the other side of the Jordan in the land of the Amorites, in Gilead. 9 Moreover the people of Ammon crossed over the Jordan to fight against Judah also, against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim, so that Israel was **severely distressed.**

- 3. **You would think that Israel would lean something: Israel was never *blessed* when they served these other gods.**
 - a. **Instead, they were harassed and oppressed; they were severely distressed –**
 - b. **And just like then, the Christian steps out with the gods of this world, because “it’s what I want”**
 - c. **And God, being a gracious God, give that Christian what they want**
 - d. **But once you open the door – sin takes you...**
 - i. **Farther than you wanted to go**
 - ii. **Cost you more than you wanted to pay**
 - iii. **Keeps you longer than you wanted to stay!**
- 4. **There are many Christians today who have gone after the gods of this world, and are now ‘severely distressed’**
 - a. **They wanted to be there – but know they don’t**
 - b. **They wish they knew how to get out**
 - c. **There is a way!**

10 And the children of Israel **cried out to the LORD**, saying, "We have sinned against You, because we have both forsaken our God and served the Baals!"

11 So the LORD said to the children of Israel, "**Did I not deliver you** from the Egyptians and from the Amorites and from the people of Ammon and from the Philistines? 12 Also the Sidonians and Amalekites and Maonites oppressed you; and you cried out to Me, and I delivered you from their hand. 13 Yet you have forsaken Me and served other gods. **Therefore I will deliver you no more. 14 Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in your time of distress.**"

- 5. **You have to wonder – How did God speak to them? Perhaps a prophet**

- a. And “Why did God tell them ‘cry out to your gods?’ Doesn’t that seem a little cold for God?
- b. Maybe it is God allowing the Israelites to come to terms with where they are – to come to a place of true repentance.

15 And the children of Israel said to the LORD, "We have sinned! **Do to us whatever seems best to You; only deliver us this day, we pray.**" 16 So they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the LORD. **And His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel.**

6. We have to understand that God looked upon disobedient Israel with compassion, not hatred.
 - a. It was "difficult" for God to allow Israel to stay in their misery, though it was best for them.
 - b. Like the perfect loving parent, God hated to see Israel suffer, even when it was good for them.
 - c. He longed to rescue them but would not do it until it was *good* for them

17 Then the people of Ammon gathered together and encamped in Gilead. And the children of Israel assembled together and encamped in Mizpah. 18 And the people, the leaders of Gilead, said to one another, "**Who is the man who will begin the fight against the people of Ammon?** He shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead."

Jephthah

Judges 11 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.**" 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.

7. “Went our raiding” might not be the best translation – more “they went out with him” (raiding might be italicized in your bible)

4 It came to pass after a time that the people of Ammon 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."**

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?**"

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.**"

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.

Jephthah Goes to War

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?**"

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."

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. 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.** 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? 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. 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? 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?** 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.

Jephthah's Vow and Victory

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. 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."**

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.**

8. **This to me is a real paradox – in verse 29 we read “Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah”,**
 - a. **then in verse 30 he makes this vow to God that he will offer up whatever comes out of his front door after he wins the battle.**
 - b. **Lets see what happens...**

Jephthah's Daughter

34 When Jephthah came to his house at Mizpah, **there was his daughter**, coming out to meet him with timbrels and dancing; and she was his **only child**. Besides her he had neither son nor daughter. 35 And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he tore his clothes, and said, **"Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low! You are among those who trouble me! For I have given my word to the LORD, and I cannot go back on it."**

36 So she said to him, "My father, if you have given your word to the LORD, do to me according to what has gone out of your mouth, because the LORD has avenged you of your enemies, the people of Ammon." 37 Then she said to her father, "Let this thing be done for me: let me alone for two months, that I may go and wander on the mountains and **bewail my virginity**, my friends and I."

38 So he said, "Go." And he sent her away for two months; and she went with her friends, and bewailed her virginity on the mountains. 39 And it was so at the end of two months that she returned to her father, and **he carried out his vow with her which he had vowed. She knew no man.**

And it became a custom in Israel 40 that the daughters of Israel went four days each year to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite.

9. So the question is – did Jephthah sacrifice his daughter to the Lord?

a. Vote??

b. There are three possibilities...

i. He killed his daughter as an offering to the Lord

ii. He didn't kill her, and this is just a fabrication

iii. He did something else, and we don't have the full story.

10. He did it: Certainly a possibility, but there are a few problems

a. Sacrifice humans is not only a sin, it is detestable to God

Lev 18:21 And you shall not let any of your descendants pass through the fire to Molech,

Deut 18:10 There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire,

Jer 32:35

*35 And they built the high places of Baal which are in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire to Molech, which I did not command them, nor did it come into My mind that they should do this **abomination**, to cause Judah to sin.'*

b. It would seem unlikely that Jephthah would do this, even less unlikely that I would not be commented on.

11. He lied – well, we'll just never be able to prove or disprove that position

12. He did something else

The Provision

Num 18:15

15 "Everything that first opens the womb of all flesh, which they bring to the LORD, whether man or beast, shall be yours; nevertheless the firstborn of man you shall surely redeem, and the firstborn of unclean animals you shall redeem.

Lev 27:1-4

Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When a man consecrates by a vow certain persons to

the LORD, according to your valuation, 3 if your valuation is of a male from twenty years old up to sixty years old, then your valuation shall be fifty shekels of silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary. 4 If it is a female, then your valuation shall be thirty shekels;

- a. **IOW – this applied to the firstborn – they belonged to the Lord, you were to offer them as as “burnt offering”, except for clean animals and – PEOPLE – whom you would consecrate, or set apart, with a financial donation.**
- b. **It would seem likely that Jephthah would have followed the proscribed law, and not killed his daughter, but from that time forward she belonged to the Lord**
- c. **She could not marry – hence the statements:**

that I may go and wander on the mountains and **bewail my virginity...**
... **he carried out his vow with her which he had vowed. She knew no man**

The Two Points

13.#1 – a Picture of Jesus – who redeemed us!

14. But the point is not whether or not you should follow through with some rash vow that you made to the Lord, but that you should be careful with what you vow to the Lord.

Eccl 5:2

*2 Do not be rash with your mouth,
And let not your heart utter anything hastily before God.
For God is in heaven, and you on earth;
Therefore let your words be few.*

- a. **How many times have people said “Lord, get me out of this and I will _____ (fill in the blank)?”**
- b. **Look – you don’t need to make some grand promise to God in order to get His attention.**
- c. **That’s why Jesus said so plainly:**

Matt 5:33-37

"Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.' 34 But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; 35 nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. 36 Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. 37 But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

- d. If you need help from God, just come to Him and ask Him – plainly and without big promises!
15. **Thing is – God knows already what you will and wont do – He knows your future – what good is it to make some promise of what you will do – God already knows!**
- a. **And He grants your request NOT based on what you promise, but based on His grace and mercy – because we do not deserve anything, promise or no promise!**
 - b. **And when we approach God with our request based on His mercy, then we stay avoid the risk of thinking we can manipulate God, or that because of our great promise He will do this or that...**

*Heb 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may **obtain mercy and find grace** to help in time of need.*

Jephthah's Conflict with Ephraim

Judges 12 1 Then the **men of Ephraim** gathered together, crossed over toward Zaphon, and said to Jephthah, "**Why did you cross over to fight against the people of Ammon, and did not call us to go with you? We will burn your house down on you with fire!**"

16. **Interesting because Gilead was of the tribe of Manasseh, who was the brother of Ephraim – sons of Joseph.**
- a. **This is an example of how sin will divide – cause enmity between people**
 - b. **As our flesh reigns, our relationships turn south.**

When Poor Hebrew can get you killed!

2 And Jephthah said to them, "My people and I were in a great struggle with the people of Ammon; and **when I called you, you did not deliver me out of their hands.** 3 So when I saw that you would not deliver me, I took my life in my hands and crossed over against the people of Ammon; and the LORD delivered them into my hand. Why then have you come up to me this day to fight against me?"

4 Now Jephthah gathered together **all the men of Gilead and fought against Ephraim.** And the men of **Gilead defeated Ephraim, because they said, "You Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites and among the Manassites."** 5 The Gileadites seized the fords of the Jordan before the Ephraimites arrived. And when any Ephraimite who escaped said, "Let me cross over," the men of Gilead would say to him, "**Are you an Ephraimite?**" If he said, "No," 6 then they would say to him, "**Then say, 'Shibboleth!'**" And he would say, "**Sibboleth,**" for he could not pronounce it right. Then they would take him and kill him at the fords of the Jordan. There fell at that time forty-two thousand Ephraimites.

17. Apparently the men of Ephraim were better at talking than fighting!

7 And Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then Jephthah the Gileadite died and was buried among the cities of Gilead.

Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon

8 After him, **Ibzan of Bethlehem** judged Israel. 9 He had thirty sons. And he gave away thirty daughters in marriage, and brought in thirty daughters from elsewhere for his sons. He judged Israel seven years. 10 Then Ibzan died and was buried at Bethlehem.

11 After him, **Elon the Zebulunite** judged Israel. He judged Israel ten years. 12 And Elon the Zebulunite died and was buried at Aijalon in the country of Zebulun. 13 After him, **Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite** judged Israel. 14 He had forty sons and thirty grandsons, who rode on seventy young donkeys. He judged Israel eight years. 15 Then Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the mountains of the Amalekites.

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