

Bibles???

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

Turn your bibles with me to the book of Judges –

Before the evening is done, we are going to see the end of Jephthah's reign as judges as well as three other judges that are briefly mentioned in ch 12 –

And then next Wednesday, Lord willing, we will begin the reign of Samson.

Let's pray...

So we ended our study last Wednesday night with a cliff hanger,

We were introduced to Jephthah, the son of a harlot, who was kicked out of his house by his step brothers when his father died.

He was an outcast – but he was also a mighty man of valor.

He was leading a bunch of bad dudes as they went around raiding Canaanite villages.

And by the grace of God, God said, I'm choosing this guy to lead my people – I'm choosing this guy to deliver my people from the oppression of the Ammonites – I'm choosing this guy to turn the people back to Me.

And we learned in verse 29 that the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah – guaranteeing him victory.

And he makes a vow without thinking it through.

He was scared – it was all flesh

And he pretty much says – “If you give me victory Lord – when I go home, I will offer whatever comes out of my house as a burnt offering”

God delivers the Ammonites into Jephthah's hands – it wasn't even close. It was a great slaughter.

This was supposed to be a time of celebration for Jephthah

He gets to back home – he no longer is an outcast – he is a hero

So, he goes home

He can't wait to offer up the burn offering to the Lord as a statement of his thanks.

[Jdg 11:34-40 NKJV] 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.

So Jephthah gets closer to his home and he is expecting a goat or a cow to come out to him – and it is his daughter

Not only is it his daughter – it is his only child.

As his only child, his daughter would be the one who would have to carry on her father's family and name in Israel

Moses had given the command that if a man had no sons, his daughter could receive her father's land and keep it in his name, even if she married into another family

but now that Jephthah has made this vow to the Lord, because she is his only child, his name and family will die out in Israel

Please note how the daughter approaches her father -

She is meeting him with timbrels (tambourine) and dancing – she is full of joy and she is expressing joy!!!!

Church, there is so much symbolism that is going on here.

Paul wrote to the churches in Galatia that a fruit of the Spirit is “joy.” Gal 5:22-23

The apostle Peter speaks of the believer rejoicing “with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 1 Peter 1:8

Jephthah’s daughter, here, represented the joy and rejoicing that ought to have resulted from her father simply taking God at His Word.

Had Jephthah not made the vow – both of them would be rejoicing

But because Jephthah added works to his faith, joy was destroyed, and rejoicing was turned into mourning.

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."

Jephthah is blaming his daughter.

"It is your fault – it is because of you that there could be no joy"

That is not true – it was all, his fault.

Jephthah was the one who made the vow.

I want you to think about this –

Jephthah, at any time, could have torn his clothes and repented for making the vow.

"God, I am sorry for making the rash vow. I was scared. I wasn't thinking it through. It was a lapse in my faith"

But notice that he didn't -

He refused to repent of his vow, instead saying "I have given my word... I cannot go back on it."

In other words, he was too religious to admit he had been wrong... And too proud to renounce what he had done.

"If anyone finds out that I repented of my vow, they are going to think that I am less spiritual"

Think of the Pharisees – they thought they were spiritually superior to anyone else because they kept the Sabbath – however, it only exposed their spiritual bankruptcy.

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."

"Dad, I know you are a man of integrity – don't back down."

Whatever you promised to God – do.

He has already been faithful – now it is your turn.

What an amazing young lady.

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.

Jephthah's daughter is saying – "Let me go with my friends up in the hills for two months and cry with my friends for what is about to happen"

And Jephthah allows her to go for two months.

Now, if I was the daughter, I probably would have taken off once I got to the top pf the first hill.

However, Jephthah's daughter was willing to submit for the glory of God.

She gave-up the pleasures of this life - a husband, children, grandchildren - in order to bring glory to God in obedience to her father.

In other words, her obedience to God, her desire to bring God glory was more important than anything else in life – including her happiness.

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.

So she came home after two months and Jephthah honored his vow.

Now, the big question is – did he offer her as a sacrifice.

If you read commentaries – many will say that Jephthah didn't sacrifice her – but consecrated her to the Lord – meaning that she would spend the rest of her life working in the tabernacle.

And the argument is that human sacrifice was strongly prohibited according to God's law. - in fact, it is called an abomination to God.

That was something the pagan nations did

That was one of the reasons that God sent the Assyrians and Babylonians to judge Israel and Judah because they were offering their children to Molech.

I think it is a valid argument

However, I believe that Jephthah did offer her as a burnt offering.

And the reason I say this is because in Leviticus 27, there is an out clause for anyone who concentrated someone to the Lord and they wanted to redeem the person.

So according to the law, if Jephthah truly meant that he was wanted to consecrate her to the Lord – all he would need to do was pay 30 shekles of silver – no questions asked. She would be free. He would have honored the vow.

And from what we saw in chapter 11 – Jephthah was someone who knew God's word.

He made a promise to the Lord and he kept.

And I believe that is the lesson here in chapter 11.

Not whether he sacrificed her or not –

It about us keeping our commitments to Him

And we keep our commitments to Him in response to what He has already done on our behalf – we look to the cross.

And as I look to the cross, I cannot help but say, "I need to be committed to You"

[Jdg 12:1-15 NKJV] 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!"

Now, one thing to remember was that Jephthah was a Gileadite.

Meaning that he was from the tribe of Manasseh.

And if you remember from the book of Genesis, Manasseh and Ephraim were the sons of Joseph.

Manasseh was the oldest.

However, Jacob blessed Ephraim over Manasseh

The tribe of Ephraim would therefore be greater than Manasseh.

So the Ephraimites – they get word that Jephthah defeated the Ammonites and then they come to Jephthah and start complaining.

"Hey Jephthah – why didn't you let us know that you were going to battle the Ammonites – why weren't we invited?"

Now, if this sounds familiar – it should.

Because the Ephraimites did the same thing when Gideon and the 300 defeated the Midianites.

Now, back in ch 8, Gideon was able to talk his way out of the conflict through diplomacy.

He told the Ephraimites what they wanted to hear – that everything about them was better.

However, Jephthah handles them differently.

The Ephraimites are a great example of those who are chronic complainers.

They never do anything themselves, but are always there to criticize & complain what others do.

When someone makes a suggestion – they are the first ones to complain about why it is not going to work.

And then when it does work, they get angry that they weren't invited to be a part of it.

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?"

Jephthah tells the Ephraimites that he is pretty sure that he had sent a call out to them.

From his perspective, they didn't answer, so he proceeded without them.

So it most likely was a simple misunderstanding.

By the way, many conflicts in church – are just simple misunderstandings as well -

Apostle Paul – in 1 Cor 13 – the love chapter

He says that love -

[1Co 13:7 NKJV] 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

When he says that love believes all things.

That's a Christian way of saying that we give others the benefit of the doubt - but with more emphasis on believing the best of them, and not the worst.

That is how we are to handle misunderstandings.

So Jephthah is clearly showing no bad intent in the misunderstanding.

But we will see that things are far from being resolved.

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."

Here is the underling reason that the Ephraimites were upset.

Remember, they said they were upset because they were not invited to fight against the Ammonites.

But here, it is revealed that the reason they have come to fight is because they believe that the Gileadites are nothing more than trailer trash.

Remember that Jephthah was the son of a prostitute.

In Gilead, Jephthah attracted an army of similar misfits.

The Ephraimites were 100% right.

Jephthah and his men were trailer trash

However, what they missed out on - was that God had used Jephthah and his men despite their trailer trashiness.

And Jephthah and his men defeated the Ephraimites.

So they were great in numbers – they were good at trash talking – but they were horrible warriors.

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,"

Now, in order to understand what is going on –

The Ephraimites have lost

Many of them are now retreating – they are going back home to lick their wounds.

The Gileadites – they don't want them to escape, so they make a run and try to cut them off before they cross the Jordan River.

So they go to the fords – the area in the river where it is easiest for people to cross over – remember, no bridges during this time.

Now, the problem between the Ephraimites and the Gileadites was that they all looked the same, they wore the same style clothes and it was easy for an Ephraimite to say he was a Gileadite in order to escape.

The only difference was in the dialect that they spoke.

Remember, the Ephraimites had insulted the parentage of Jephthah.

Now the Ephraimites had to deny their own heritage in order to live.

But it was a trap, because they were asked to pronounce something that no Ephraimite could.

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.

For 300 years, the Gileadites and the Ephraimites had been separated from each other by the Jordan River – and in those 300 years, the Gileadites no longer pronounced the “sh”

So when someone tried to cross, the Giliadites would tell them, say “Shibboleth”

And because they were incapable of pronouncing the “sh” – they were captured and killed.

Their speech betrayed them.

I am reminded of Peter that night that he betrayed Jesus.

Remember, he went to warm himself and a servant girl accused him of being one of those who hung out with Jesus

“Surely you are one of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows it.” Mark 14:70

Peter was saying Siboleth – and his speech betrayed him.

Paul in his letter to the church in Corinth –

[1Co 12:3 NKJV] 3 Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

What Paul is saying here –

if you want to know what a person is really all about, just listen to them; not just a single phrase, but the whole tenor of their conversation.

This is true for all of us & the people we meet every day.

If you want to know what a person is thinking about, what their values are, & whether they believe in God, just listen to them for a few hours.

If you want to know whether or not they're saved, listen for how they speak about Jesus.

Their view of Him determines their destiny.

Church, Jesus is the shibboleth of eternal life.

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

So Jephthah dies

And then we have another judge Ibzan

He had 60 children –

He is the opposite of Jephthah – who had one.

This tells us that God can

use us despite our personal circumstances. The way the apostle

Paul once put it, we learn how to serve God whether we are abased or abounding:

(Phil 4:12)

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.**

The scriptures don't tell us much about Elon –

**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.**

Abdon was an Ephraimite.

That brings us full circle - at least with regard to the verses we've read today.

After the Ephraimites were nearly wiped-out, twenty-three years later one of them is God's choice to be Israel's hero.

He was a sibboleth guy, who might have harbored a deep resentment, but God saw him as able to judge - and that meant he was able to unite where there had once been envy, strife, and division.

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,

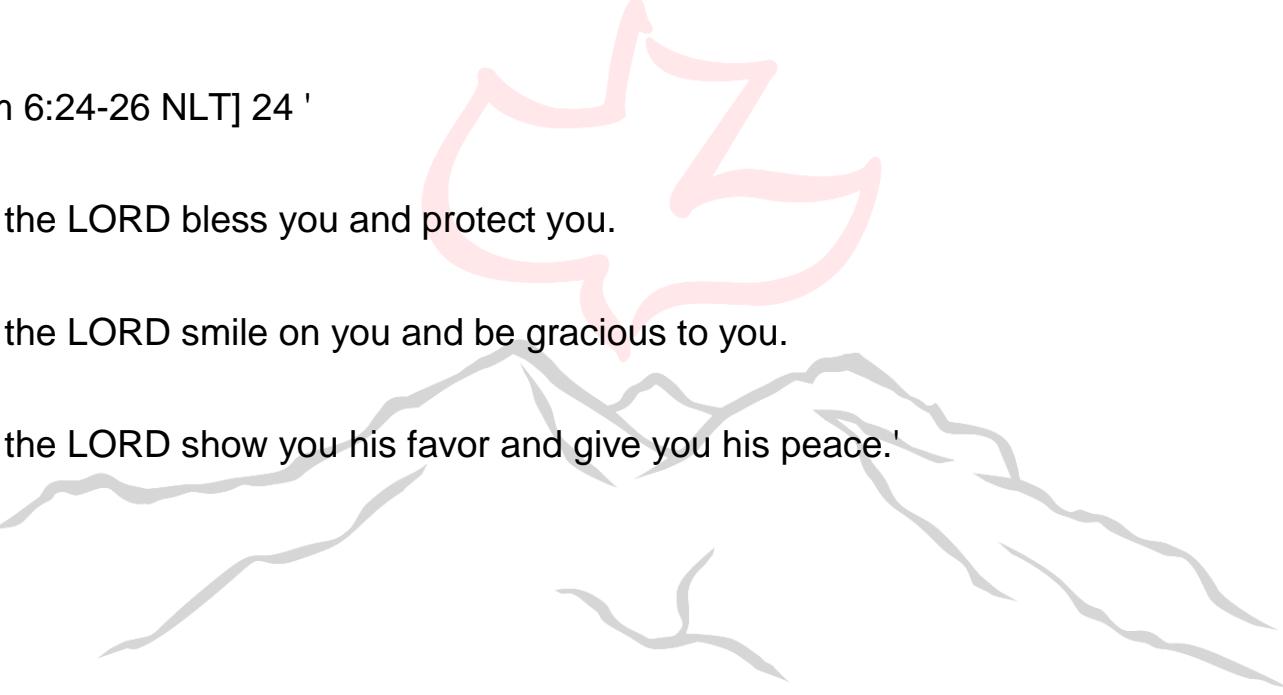
I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name 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.'



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