

12/1/13

Jephthah, Zeal Without Knowledge
Judges 11:1-40

One of the values of studying the Bible is being able to see how God uses so many different people and at the same time to see the foolish things that same person will do, even though God uses them.

* David is a good example by his conduct with both Bathsheba and Uriah that displeased God.

But the eighth judge Jephthah will help us to see a man through the eyes of religious sincerity of heart in order to please God, but completely unbiblical.

So we want to look at Jephthah the judge to deliver Israel from their enemies, which is presented to us through a three-fold lens: Judges 11:1-40

- I. Jephthah the social outcast. vs. 1-11
- II. Jephthah the military captain. vs. 12-28
- III. Jephthah the religious fool. vs. 29-40

I. Jephthah the social outcast. vs. 1-11

A. He is identified in four ways. vs. 1

- 1. Jephthah was identified as “Now Jephthah the Gileadite”. vs. 1a
 - a. His name “the Gileadite”, refer to his father whose name was Gilead.

- b. His name also refer to the city he was born, on the east side of the Jordan River, modern day Jordan.

- c. The same Gilead, the seventh judge was from, Jair. judges. 10:3

2. Jephthah was identified as “a mighty man of valor”. vs. 1a

- a. He was a mighty man of valor “gibbowr chayil” meaning he was a man of strength, ability and efficiency and in warfare, a courageous man.

- b. He would be successful in excursions on the enemies of Israel. vs. 3

3. Jephthah was identified as “the son of an harlot”. vs. 1b

- a. The Hebrew word “zonah” is used for a woman consecrated or devoted to prostitution in connection with the abominable worship of Asherah or Astarte, the Syrian Venus.

* This word is used as a direct prohibition of sexual union, apart from holy matrimony, being treated as common. Deut. 23:17;
Hos. 4:14

- b. Some try to make her an innkeeper like Rahab, both are foreign to the text.

- 1) In the time of Solomon harlots appeared openly in the streets, and he solemnly warns against them. Prov. 7:12; 9:14

- 2) Tamar played the harlot, as she sat by the wayside as a consecrated harlot.
- 4. Jephthah was identified as “begotten of Gilead”. vs. 1d
 - a. He was the illegitimate son of Gilead, a descendant of Gilead the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, called after the name of his great ancestor. 1Chron. 7:14, 17
 - b. His means, Yahweh will open, the root means to ungird, loose or set free.
- B. He was rejected by his half-brothers. vs. 2-3
 - 1. The wife of Gilead “bore sons” to him. vs. 2a-c
 - a. The number of sons is in the plural, more than one. vs. 2a
 - b. The process of time the legitimate sons of Gilead did not want to affiliate with their illegitimate half-brother, “and when his wife’s sons grew up, they drove Jephthah out.” vs. 2b-c
 - 2. The reason behind the expulsion was due to the inheritance rights. vs. 2d-f
 - a. They declared their resentment of him having any part of the inheritance, “You shall have no inheritance in our father’s house.” vs. 2d-e
 - * The exclusion is made clear, “our father’s house”, not his.

- b. They expressed their disdain for him, “for you *are* the son of another woman.” vs. 2f
 - 1) Jephthah’s mother is called “another woman” or in the KJV a “strange woman”, “acher”, denoting that she was of foreign extraction and not from Israel.
 - 2) Jephthah was not only an illegitimate son of a harlot, but she was a woman not of Israel.
- 3. The man Jephthah removed himself from his step-brothers. vs. 3a
 - a. He “fled from his brothers”, indicating he separated himself, with the idea of hast or quickly.
 - 1) The rejection must of hurt him.
 - 2) The feeling of being all alone had to have hit him hard.
 - b. He “dwelt in the land of Tob”.
 - 1) Tob was near Syria, a district on the east of Jordan, about 13 miles south-east of the Sea of Galilee.
 - 2) The northern boundary of Perea, between Syria and the land of Ammon, whose modern name is Taiyibeh. 2Sam. 10:6, 8
 - 3) Tob is seen by some as the owner or governor of the district.
- 4. The man Jephthah was joined by a group of men. vs. 3b

- a. The men came to Jephthah, “and worthless men banded together with Jephthah”, as David. 1Sam. 22:2
* The word worthless “reyq rake”, means empty, those whose pockets were empty; without money, no employment or property, nothing to live upon, just like Jephthah.
 - b. The men were attacking the enemies of Israel, “and went out *raiding* with him.”
 - 1) The word “raiding” in italics means it is not in the original text, but inserted to help the understanding, but it can give a wrong idea.
 - 2) “The son of Gilead being a valiant man, they enlisted themselves under him and went out with him; not on any bad design, as to rob and plunder as the italicized word “raiding” implies, but to get their living by hunting; or rather by making excursions into the enemy's country, and carrying off booty, on which they lived.”
- C. He was sought out by men from the town of his step-brothers, due to the threat of war.
vs. 4-11
- 1. The solicitation was for the help of Jephthah. vs. 4-6

- a. The invaders were descendants of Lot's younger daughter, “It came to pass after a time that the people of Ammon made war against Israel.” vs. 4
* God had delivered them up to Ammon and the Philistines, so they were looking for a leader. Judges 10:7, 18
 - b. The delegation traveled to seek Jephthah, “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.” vs. 5
 - c. The proposal was that he be their military leader, “elders asked him to be their commander, that they might fight against the people of Ammon.” vs. 6
2. The consternation toward the elders was expressed by Jephthah. vs. 7-8
- a. The man Jephthah rebuked them for being opportunists, “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?” vs. 7
 - b. The elders admitted their motive for seeking him was their present threat by Ammon, 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.” vs. 8

3. The negotiation was settled to secure the help of Jephthah. vs. 9-11
 - a. He did not trust them, in view of their past rejection of him, so he proposed the condition of being their leader after delivering them, “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?” vs. 9
 - b. The elders verified their words by an oath to Yahweh, “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.” vs. 10
 - c. Jephthah returned back home, “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. vs. 11
 - 1) He was made both head of the people and military commander.

- 2) Mizpah means “watch-tower” the look-out, the place in Gilead named by Laban, who overtook Jacob. Gen. 31:49
- 2) The idea behind the name was that Laban could not trust Jacob, so God would have to watch him, the same idea is here for Jephthah and the Gileadites, no coincidence.

Illustration

John Newton wrote the hymn Amazing Grace. As he thought upon the words: “By the grace of God I am what I am,” he said, “I am not what I ought to be. How imperfect and deficient I am! I am not what I wish to be, Though I am not what I ought to be, I can truly say that I am not what I once was--a slave to sin and Satan. I can heartily say with Paul: ‘By the grace of God I am what I am!’” #3833

Application

1. When a society is moral and ethical there is a social conscience that benefits society.
 - a. There being an absolute knowledge of right and wrong.
 - b. There being absolute consequences wrong is chosen over right.
 - c. The moral and ethical standing of a person stands for their character and name.
 - d. This brings about productivity in work, safety to people and civility between people.

* “My son, do not forget my law, But let your heart keep my commands; For length of days and long life And peace they will add to you. Let not mercy and truth forsake you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart, *And* so find favor and high esteem In the sight of God and man.” Prov. 3:1-4

2. When a society become amoral there is the lose of social conscience, having very few benefits.
 - a. Truth, virtue and character is looked down upon and considered to be a waste of time and considering oneself to be better than others, a bigotry and hypocrite.
 - b. Few to no consequences for wrong or evil.
 - c. Productivity in work goes down, people are not safe, civility and authority are destroyed.
 - d. There is a destruction to marriage, family, individual responsibility and a belief in God.
 - e. Individualism is the focus, the worship of creation and judging anyone is wrong, so society consists of people using each other for whatever their needs are, without any concern for the individual.

* “Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of vanity, And sin as if with a cart rope; That say, “Let Him make speed *and* hasten His work, That we may see *it*; And let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near and come, That we may know *it*.” Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness

for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to *those who are* wise in their own eyes, And prudent in their own sight!” Is. 5:18-21

3. Aren’t you glad that regardless of your background, you are a child of God.
 - a. All your sins have been forgiven. Acts 4:12
 - b. You are a new creation. 2Cor. 5:17
 - c. You are a joint-heir with Jesus Christ. Rom. 8:17

Jephtah was a social outcast, due to the circumstances of his birth!

II. Jephthah the military captain. vs. 12-28

- A. Jephthah sent envoys to the king of Ammon. vs. 12-13
 1. He asked the King what he had against him, “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?”. vs. 12
 2. The King accused Israel of having taken his land when they came out of Egypt, “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.” vs. 13

- B.** Jephthah sent a second envoy to the King of Ammon to correct his accusations by reviewing their history. vs. 14-23
1. He denied the accusations of Israel taking the land of Moab and Ammon. vs. 14-15
 - a. The meaning is that they stole it by merely occupying it.
 - b. The charge was false. Num. 20:14-22; 21:21-35; Deut. 2:10
 2. He declared the steps Israel took to ask permission to pass through the land, as they come out of Egypt. vs. 16-20
 - a. From Egypt they came through the Red Sea to Kadesh. vs. 16
 - b. Israel sent messengers to the Kings of Edom and Moab, for permission to pass through the land, but were refused, so they went along the wilderness bypassing their land. vs. 17-18
 - c. Israel did the same with Sihon King of the Amorites and Heshbon, but Sihon did not trust Israel, so he gathered all his people at Jahaz and fought against Israel. vs. 19-20
 3. He declared that Israel had acquired the land by defeating the king of the Amorites. vs. 21-23

- 1) The Lord delivered Sihon and Israel defeated him. vs. 21a-b
 - 2) Israel took the land of the Amorites, from Arnon to the Jabbak and from the wilderness to the Jordan, from the middle of the Dead Sea, 50 miles north, on the east side. vs. 21c-22
* Deut. 3:16; Josh. 13:16
 - 3) The Lord had dispossess the Amorites before Israel, how could they think of repossessing the land? vs. 23
- C.** Jephthah denounced the King of Ammon by open rebuke. vs. 24-26
1. He rebuked him by common reason to his devotion to Chemosh his god, “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.” vs. 24
 2. He rebuked him by thinking he was more capable against them than Balak king of Moab, ““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?” vs. 25
 3. He rebuked him by his long procrastination to recover the land, ““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?
vs. 26

4. Jephthah declared the king of Ammon had no legitimate claim on the land. vs. 27-28
 - a. He stated his innocence in the matter as Israel's representative, "Therefore I have not sinned against you, but you wronged me by fighting against me." vs. 27a-b
 - b. He commended himself the ultimate judge, "May the LORD, the Judge, render judgment this day between the children of Israel and the people of Ammon." vs. 27c-d
 - c. His words fell on deaf ears, "However, the king of the people of Ammon did not heed the words which Jephthah sent him." vs. 28

Illustration

"Lord when I am wrong, make me willing to change; when I am right, make, me easy to live with. So strengthen me that the power of my example will far exceed the authority of my rank."
 #3022

Application

1. There are people that accuse Christians of killing many in the name of God, in the past.

- a. They are referring to the Holy Crusades to free the Holy Land from the infidels, the Muslims.
 - b. But the truth is that it was the Religious Catholic Church by the edict of the Pope that was responsible for the murder and slaughter of both Muslims and Christians.
 - c. People have grouped together Catholics, protestants, Morons, into one big category of Christians.
 - d. The believer needs to explain the confusion and distinctions from a true believer.
 - * "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." 1Pet. 3:15
2. Today we are living in days like the time of the judges.
- a. Our American history is being revised and rewritten by our humanistic and liberal atheistic educators.
 - b. Our founding Fathers are being accused of being nothing but deists and atheists, who had no intention of establishing a nation under God.
 - c. Our Constitution has been trampled on, ignored, said to have flaws and that we need to do away with it.
 - d. So each of us as Americans need to know our history, at least as good as Jephthah knew

his, going back 300 years, in order to not fall prey to the indoctrination of our day.

* “Therefore be careful to observe *them*; for this *is* your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, ‘Surely this great nation *is* a wise and understanding people.’ “For what great nation *is there* that has God *so* near to it, as the LORD our God *is* to us, for, whatever *reason* we may call upon Him? And what great nation *is there* that has *such* statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day? Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren.” Deut. 4:6-9

Jephtah was the military captain due to the circumstances of war!

III. Jephthah the religious fool. vs. 29-40

A. He was chosen and prepared by God to defeat the Ammonites. vs. 29

1. He was super-naturally empowered as the eight judge, “Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah.” vs. 29a

- a. The Spirit of God enabled him to be victorious, just as Gideon and the other judges.
 - b. The natural ability of being a mighty man of valor without the Spirit of God means nothing.
 - c. He judged for 6 years. Judges 12:7
2. His route towards the battle is recorded, “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.” vs. 29b-d
- a. The journey allowed the gathering of men from Israel.
 - b. The journey took them right into the enemies land.

B. He was moved to make a vow to God to insure his victory over the Ammonites. vs. 30-31

1. Jephthah vows as a religious man, “And Jephthah said, “If You will indeed deliver the people of Ammon into my hands”.” vs. 30
 - a. He attempted to get God on his side.
 - b. He bargained with God in a time of need.
2. Jephthah vowed as a pagan, “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." vs. 31

- a. He vowed to offer to the Lord the first thing that came out of the door of his house. vs. 31a-c
- b. He vowed a burnt offering, of dedication and consecration to God, totally consumed on the altar. vs. 31d

C. He was given victory by the Lord. vs. 32-33

1. Jephthah rode into battle, "So Jephthah advanced toward the people of Ammon to fight against them, and the LORD delivered them into his hands." vs. 32
 - a. Once again Jephthah was the instrument, like Gideon
 - b. Once again the LORD defeated the enemy.
2. Jephthah conquered the Ammonites, "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. vs. 33
 - a. The territory was vast from Aroer to Minnith.
 - b. The cities taken were twenty. vs. 33a-d
 - c. The slaughter was great.
 - d. The submission to Israel was complete. vs. 33e

D. He was foolish enough to follow through with his vow. vs. 34-40

1. Jephthah arrived home to be greeted by his daughter. vs. 34
 - a. She was the first thing to come out of his house, "When Jephthah came to his house at Mizpah, there was his daughter." vs. 34a
 - b. She came out celebrating his victory, "coming out to meet him with timbrels and dancing." vs. 34a-b
 - * Much like Miriam, after the victory over the Egyptians in the Red Sea. Ex. 15:20-21; 1Sam. 18:6-7
 - c. She was the only child, "and she *was* his only child. Besides her he had neither son nor daughter." vs. 34c-d
2. Jephthah played the fool. vs. 35
 - a. He expressed his grief physically, "And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he tore his clothes." vs. 35a-c
 - b. He blamed his daughter for his sad circumstance, "and said, "Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low! You are among those who trouble me!" vs. 35d-h
 - c. He was too religious to retract his vow or acknowledge his error, "For I have given my word to the LORD, and I cannot go back on it." vs. 35i-j
 - * Remember the idea behind the name Mizpah "watch-tower" "look out",

- God was watching foolish Jephthah!
- 1) The Law never required a vow, but if one was made the person had to keep it. Num. 30:2; Lev. 18:21
 - 2) The vow of Jephthah was a direct contradiction of the Law, it did not require or allowed human sacrifice.
 - * This was a practice of the heather, an abomination before God. 2Kings 16:3; 17:17; 21:6; Jer. 7:31; Mic. 6:7
 - 3) The vow is in accord with the time of the judges when every man was doing what was right in their own eyes, due to the fact that there was no King on the throne of Israel. Judges 17:6; 21:25
 - * When godly men do not occupy places of leadership, as examples and teach object and moral right from wrong, there will be every kind of evil, sin and religious beliefs passed of as acceptable and even at time related to the Bible and the God of the Bible!
 - d. Jephthah is named as one of the hero's of faith for trusting God to deliver him, yet God did not condoned this heinous act, just like

- He did not condoned the sexual escapades of Samson. Heb. 11:32
3. Jephthah allowed his daughter to go along with his religious vow to her own destruction. vs. 36
 - a. She was committed to the pagan practice, "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." vs. 36a-d
 - * This is a perfect example of religious ignorance that believes they are pleasing God.
 - b. She syncretized the pagan practice with Yahweh, "because the LORD has avenged you of your enemies, the people of Ammon." vs. 36e
 - * This is a religious abuse of the power that holds people bound in ignorance by perpetuating ignorance about God and the things of God.
 4. Jephthah allowed his daughter to bewail her virginity. vs. 37-38
 - a. The request was hers, "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." vs. 37

- b. The event is recorded, “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.” vs. 38
- 5. Jephthah perpetuated his religious ignorance. vs. 39-40
 - a. He sacrifice her to God, “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.” vs. 39a-b
 - 1) The sacrifice of his daughter was always taught by commentators and historians, until the Middle Ages, in attempt to soften the horrible act.
 - 2) God did not honor the act nor required it.
 - 3) God may use a person, but it does not mean all that they do is of the Lord or in accord with His word.
 - * Therefore everything has to be examined by the word!
 - 4) Some would have the text to teach that Jephthah committed her to a life of perpetual virginity, much like the Catholic convents for women.
 - a)) The context would hinder that interpretation in my observation.

- b)) The words of Jephthah imply a person walking out of his house. 11:31a-c
- c)) The offering was a burnt offering, for dedication and consecration. Judges 11:31d
- d)) The response of Jephthah as his daughter walked out confirms his understanding of his vow to mean her death. Judges 11:35
- 5) Others have attempted to make a topological teaching of Christ and the Father in the offering of Jephthah’s daughter, spiritualizing it completely out of context. (Alexander White)
- b. He sacrificed her as a virgin, “She knew no man.” vs. 39c
 - 1) Being a virgin was commendable, in view of the time she was living.
 - 2) Allowing herself to go along with the foolish vow was uncommendable.
- c. He caused the heinous act to become a commemorated religious custom, as the ruling judge, “And it became a custom in Israel *that* the daughters of Israel went four days each year to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite.as the daughters of Israel remembered the daughter of Jephthah four days each year. vs. 39d-40

- 1) Religious customs and practices are hard to brake, they hold people bound in their ignorance!
- 2) Religious customs at times add to the persons hurt in doing things that may hinder, destroy or waste their lives away in solitude as in a monastery reaching no one!

Illustration

In the Philippines men get crucified on crosses at Easter to relive the crucifixion through religious zeal, yet God does not demand it nor is pleased with it!

Application

1. There are many people who are religious and call themselves “Christians”, but are not.
 - a. They may be moral.
 - b. They may be ethical.
 - c. They may even be people of character.
 - d. That does not make them a Christian.
 - * Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Jn. 3:3
2. There are religious people who will twist the Scriptures and interpret them subjectively.
 - a. Giving them a foreign meaning from the context.
 - b. To prove what they are teaching or saying, out of context.

- c. To deceive the new Christian, the simple or gullible person.
 - * “as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, since you know *this* beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory both now and forever. Amen.” 2Pet. 3:16-18
3. There are many well intended people who make vows to God that God never asked of them.
 - a. To never marry, when they do not have the gift of celibacy, such as priest and nuns.
 - b. To dress a certain way to deny any worldliness or fashion.
 - c. To dedicate themselves to a life of solitude from all civilization.
 - * “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.” Eccl. 5:2

Jephthah was a religious fool, due to the circumstances of sacrificing his daughter!

Conclusion

This is Jephthah the eighth judge, who delivered Israel from their enemies, presented to us through a three-fold lens:

- I.** Jephthah was a social outcast, due to the circumstances of his birth!
- II.** Jephthah was the military captain, due to the circumstances of war!
- III.** Jephthah was a religious fool, due to the circumstances of sacrificing his daughter!