

The Book of Judges
JEPHTHAH, THE JUDGE - THE CINDERELLA MAN
February 22, 2017

Session Six

This is one of the strangest stories in all the Word of God. Talk about handicaps!

- His mother was a prostitute
- He was exiled from his country early in his life
- He became the leader of a despised, rejected gang of “outlaws”

Yet God used him powerfully! Later in his life he did a decidedly stupid thing. That is something that I suspect many of us can relate to. Here is the first part of the biblical account of this man:

Judges 11:1-10

Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valour, and he was the son of an harlot: and Gilead begat Jephthah. [2] And Gilead's wife bare him sons; and his wife's sons grew up, and they thrust out Jephthah, and said unto him, Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house; for thou art the son of a strange woman. [3] Then Jephthah fled from his brethren, and dwelt in the land of Tob: and there were gathered vain men to Jephthah, and went out with him.

[4] And it came to pass in process of time, that the children of Ammon made war against Israel. [5] And it was so, that when the children of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob: [6] And they said unto Jephthah, Come, and be our captain, that we may fight with the children of Ammon. [7] And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, Did not ye hate me, and expel me out of my father's house? and why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress? [8] And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, Therefore we turn again to thee now, that thou mayest go with us, and fight against the children of Ammon, and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead. [9] And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, If ye bring me home again to fight against the children of Ammon, and the Lord deliver them before me, shall I be your head? [10] And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, The Lord be witness between us, if we do not so according to thy words.

Once again, Israel forsook the Lord and chased after false gods. Following deliverance from God from enemies, through the work of faithful judges, the cycles continued. Judges 10:6-7 **And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the**

1 **gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the**
2 **Philistines, and forsook the Lord, and served not him. [7] And the anger of the Lord**
3 **was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into**
4 **the hands of the children of Ammon.**

5
6 The Ammonites lived east of the Jordan River in what we commonly refer to today as the
7 Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

8
9 Same old story: Judges 10:10 **And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord,**
10 **saying, We have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and**
11 **also served Baalim.**

12
13 God's mercy is so gracious! Why would He even listen to these people? But the fact is
14 - He DID listen, and responded. In Gilead, near the headquarters of the Ammonites,
15 those most likely to suffer at their hands, the people of Israel wondered if anyone could
16 deliver them now. Judges 10:17-18 **Then the children of Ammon were gathered**
17 **together, and encamped in Gilead. And the children of Israel assembled themselves**
18 **together, and encamped in Mizpeh. (A town east of the Jordan) [18] And the people**
19 **and princes of Gilead said one to another, What man is he that will begin to fight**
20 **against the children of Ammon? he shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.**

21 22 JEPHTHAH

23
24 Our "hero of the moment" is now Jephthah, not probably someone you or I would choose
25 to lead Israel. But then - God is smarter than we are! Scriptures assure us that he was a
26 mighty man of bravery, valor, but he had several strikes against him: Judges 11:1-2
27 **Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valour, and he was the son of an**
28 **harlot: and Gilead begat Jephthah. [2] And Gilead's wife bare him sons; and his**
29 **wife's sons grew up, and they thrust out Jephthah, and said unto him, Thou shalt**
30 **not inherit in our father's house; for thou art the son of a strange woman.**

31
32 "A strange woman..." Proverbs 2:16 **To deliver thee from the strange woman, even**
33 **from the stranger which flattereth with her words;** Jephthah was the son of a
34 common heathen prostitute. He was an outcast...a pariah on so-called society. Verse
35 4 informs us that "in the process of time, Israel was attacked from Jordan (Ammon).
36 There apparently was no leadership available in Israel at that time until someone thought
37 of Jephthah, who by now was living IN THE LAND OF TOB, which would have been
38 some little town or place in what we now know as Jordan, east of the Jordan River.

39
40 When approached about leading Israel against Ammon, Jephthah was agreeable, but it

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1 would come with a price. Judges 11:9-10 **And Jephthah said unto the elders of**
2 **Gilead, If ye bring me home again to fight against the children of Ammon, and the**
3 **Lord deliver them before me, shall I be your head? [10] And the elders of Gilead**
4 **said unto Jephthah, The Lord be witness between us, if we do not so according to**
5 **thy words.**

6
7 It is interesting that two of the greatest leaders in the Old Testament came from an outcast
8 society. Here we have Jephthah...and long before we had Joseph. God sees us
9 differently than people do. The song writer Bennie Triplett wrote:

10 People often see you as you are outside
11 Jesus really knows you for He sees inside!

12 13 **AMMON'S DEMANDS OF ISRAEL**

14
15 One of the greatest challenges today is the land of Israel - and its geographic neighbors.
16 The Palestinians are clamoring for a two-state solution there, although when then-Prime
17 Minister Ehud Barak opened his government to such a situation, the late Yassir Arafat
18 demanded even more (tantamount to the Jews just disappearing off the face of the earth.)
19 It should also be noted that "Palestinians" are really Jordanians for whom the country of
20 Jordan itself has little patience or time.

21
22 This situation has been going on now for over 3,000 years. (Which certainly gives lie to
23 the Muslim claim that Jews are relatively new to the land, when, in fact, they were there
24 over 2,000 years BEFORE the birth of Mohammed.

25
26 Well, this situation of the Land was the reason for Ammon's enmity to Israel in the days
27 of the Judges and Jephthah. Judges 11:12-22 **And Jephthah sent messengers unto**
28 **the king of the children of Ammon, saying, What hast thou to do with me, that thou**
29 **art come against me to fight in my land? [13] And the king of the children of**
30 **Ammon answered unto the messengers of Jephthah, Because Israel took away my**
31 **land, when they came up out of Egypt, from Arnon even unto Jabbok, and unto**
32 **Jordan: now therefore restore those lands again peaceably. [14] And Jephthah sent**
33 **messengers again unto the king of the children of Ammon: [15] And said unto him,**
34 **Thus saith Jephthah, Israel took not away the land of Moab, nor the land of the**
35 **children of Ammon: [16] But when Israel came up from Egypt, and walked through**
36 **the wilderness unto the Red sea, and came to Kadesh; [17] Then Israel sent**
37 **messengers unto the king of Edom, saying, Let me, I pray thee, pass through thy**
38 **land: but the king of Edom would not hearken thereto. And in like manner they sent**
39 **unto the king of Moab: but he would not consent: and Israel abode in Kadesh. [18]**
40 **Then they went along through the wilderness, and compassed the land of Edom, and**

1 the land of Moab, and came by the east side of the land of Moab, and pitched on the
2 other side of Arnon, but came not within the border of Moab: for Arnon was the
3 border of Moab. [19] And Israel sent messengers unto Sihon king of the Amorites,
4 the king of Heshbon; and Israel said unto him, Let us pass, we pray thee, through
5 thy land into my place. [20] But Sihon trusted not Israel to pass through his coast:
6 but Sihon gathered all his people together, and pitched in Jahaz, and fought against
7 Israel. [21] And the Lord God of Israel delivered Sihon and all his people into the
8 hand of Israel, and they smote them: so Israel possessed all the land of the Amorites,
9 the inhabitants of that country. [22] And they possessed all the coasts of the
10 Amorites, from Arnon even unto Jabbok, and from the wilderness even unto
11 Jordan.

12
13 In the preceding verses (follow along on the map) it is clear that the land belonged to the
14 Israelites who gained it in a legitimate fashion. The Ammonites were attempting not
15 only to drive the Jews off the land, but, in fact, to exterminate them. This is precisely
16 what we see in Israel today. The Palestinian Authority “talks” a two-nation solution; but
17 the fact is they want the Jews gone (permanently). There is little evidence to show that
18 even a two-state solution in the Holy Land would solve anything. Some leader needs to
19 come along who understands that and has the authority to make Israel secure. And He IS
20 coming - His Name is Jesus Christ! Says who? Says God’s Word: Zech. 14:1-4
21 **Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of**
22 **thee. [2] For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall**
23 **be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go**
24 **forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.**
25 **[3] Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought**
26 **in the day of battle. [4] And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of**
27 **Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in**
28 **the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very**
29 **great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it**
30 **toward the south. Zech. 14:9 And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in**
31 **that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one.**

32
33 Jephthah attempted to solve the differences between Jordan and Israel peaceably through
34 negotiation. To no avail: Judges 11:28-29 **Howbeit the king of the children of**
35 **Ammon hearkened not unto the words of Jephthah which he sent him. [29] Then**
36 **the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead, and**
37 **Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed**
38 **over unto the children of Ammon.**

39
40 I can just visualize Jephthah and his army crossing over the Jordan through what is known

1 as the great Israel/Jordan rift. As Jephthah started that eastward attack, he apparently
2 got a look at the Ammonite military and grew apprehensive. He made a bad decision.
3 We need to give him a benefit of the doubt perhaps because he had spent years in exile -
4 and then suddenly was exalted to the highest position in the land. He made a
5 commitment (to God) that under normal circumstances doubt he would have made:
6 **Judges 11:30-31 And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, If thou shalt**
7 **without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, [31] Then it shall be,**
8 **that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in**
9 **peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up**
10 **for a burnt offering.**

11
12 I have to wonder what normally met him when he got home - an old faithful dog or
13 something similar?

14
15 What would cause Jephthah to make a rash vow like that? He did not need to. Gideon
16 understood "the battle was the Lord's!" In verse 29 of this chapter we were informed
17 that the spirit of the Lord had come upon him. He need nothing else!

18
19 Look what happened:

20
21 **Judges 11:34-35 And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his**
22 **daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only**
23 **child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter. [35] And it came to pass, when he**
24 **saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me**
25 **very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth**
26 **unto the Lord, and I cannot go back.**

27
28 Did Jephthah fulfill that awful vow? I don't believe so. I believe God understood his
29 foolishness in making that vow. Why would I believe that? Because in the great
30 GALLERY OF FAITH in Hebrews 11, Jephthah is listed: Hebrews 11:32 **And what**
31 **shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of**
32 **Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:**

33
34 Jephthah is listed there in some pretty "tall cotton:" Gideon, Barak, Samson, David and
35 Samuel. I believe God's laws overrode Jephthah's foolish vow for he understood:
36 Deut. 12:31 **Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God: for every abomination to**
37 **the Lord, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and**
38 **their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods.**

39
40 We all on occasion do some pretty unfortunate things....say some unfortunate words.

1 Just as God would not allow Abraham to offer Isaac, his son, as a sacrifice, I doubt if He
2 would have allowed Jephthah to follow suit.

3
4 I believe that scripture teaches that his daughter was consigned to perpetual virginity. I
5 doubtless would have loved to see her married and produce grandchildren. But that
6 would not happen, according to her own words: Judges 11:36-40 **And she said unto**
7 **him, My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to**
8 **that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the Lord hath taken**
9 **vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon. [37] And she**
10 **said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I**
11 **may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows.**
12 **[38] And he said, Go. And he sent her away for two months: and she went with her**
13 **companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains. [39] And it came to**
14 **pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her**
15 **according to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew no man. And it was a**
16 **custom in Israel, [40] That the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the**
17 **daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year.**

18
19 Apparently Jephthah's daughter never married. Rather she committed her life to God.
20 That word "lament" in verse 40 should read "celebrate." I do not believe God would
21 have allowed Jephthah to sacrifice her on a fiery altar.

22
23 But it should be noted here that this man KEPT HIS VOW, according to God's will. His
24 vow was something sacred. The Bible is very clear on our handling of personal vows:
25 Eccles. 5:2-5 **Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter**
26 **any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy**
27 **words be few. [3] For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a**
28 **fool's voice is known by multitude of words. [4] When thou vowest a vow unto God,**
29 **defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed.**
30 **[5] Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not**
31 **pay.**

32
33 When you were married, you made vows. God expects you to keep them. Many times
34 in a powerful church service, people will make vows to God....and often do not keep
35 them.

36
37 I remember my brief Bible school days in the early '50's. I saw many of those 600
38 students stand and weep before the Lord, making emotional vows of service to Him. So
39 many of them dropped away from God. There were reasons I am sure they thought were
40 valid. But they had made commitments to God, which they never kept. God keeps

1 records, my friend. And one day the books will be opened: Rev. 20:11-12 **And I saw**
2 **a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the**
3 **heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. [12] And I saw the dead,**
4 **small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book**
5 **was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things**
6 **which were written in the books, according to their works.**

7
8 Let us faithfully fulfill our commitments to God. Jephthah is a good lesson to us today.

9
10 Judges 12:7 **And Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then died Jephthah the**
11 **Gileadite, and was buried in one of the cities of Gilead.**

12
13 Before he died, according to this 12th chapter, Jephthah had to deal with an insurrection
14 from the tribe of Ephraim. These people wanted “position” in the successes of Jephthah
15 and when they did not get it, they revolted. According to Judges 12:4-6, it cost them
16 dearly - 42,000 men.

17
18 Jealousy is a terrible thing wherever it occurs. Philip. 2:3 **Let nothing be done**
19 **through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better**
20 **than themselves.**

21
22 The judges who followed Jephthah are not well known, nor are their exploits. They
23 were **Ibzan** who ruled for seven years, **Elon** who ruled for ten years, and then **Abdon** for
24 eight years,.

25
26 But they were followed by a legend: **SAMSON**, whom we will study next week.