

Jephthah: The Eighth Judge Judges 10-11

Introduction

Israel's culture was becoming more and more attached to paganism. Instead of Israel having a good influence on its neighbors, the neighbors were badly influencing the Israelites. Many Christians think they will be able to influence non-Christians by 'hanging out' with them. Sadly, this rarely works. Most of the time, bad has a stronger influence over good. This is because we naturally want to sin. Only God's Holy Spirit makes us able to resist the temptations of sin. It would be better for you to invite a non-Christian to a church event, than for you to put yourself in an awkward situation 'hanging out' with non-Christians.

Outline of Judges 10 and 11

- I. Sixth Cycle Seeks Deliverer - Judges 10
- II. Introducing Jephthah - Judges 11:1-11
- III. The Victory and Vow - Judges 11:12-40

I. Sixth Cycle Seeks Deliverer - Judges 10

After Abimelech's death, Tola became the next judge of Israel. The Bible does not tell us much about Tola. All we know is that he was from the tribe of Issachar, his father was Puah, and his grandfather was Dodo. He lived in Shamir, located in the mountains of Ephraim. From there, he judged Israel for twenty-three years. After Tola, Jair judged Israel for twenty-two years. He was a Gileadite from the eastern side of the Jordan River. He was known for having thirty sons who rode thirty donkeys and had thirty towns.

Then the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord. The Israelites started another cycle of disobedience to God. The phrase *in the sight of the Lord* does not mean God watched them do evil (although He does see everything). It means that their actions were evil according to God's law, which He had given them. In other words, they knew better.

Baal (male) and Ashtoreth (female) were the names for the Canaanite gods. They were figures carved in **corrupt** detail and worshiped in immoral ways. The idolatry was widespread in Sidon, Moab, Ammon, and the land of the Philistines. These nations were located north, south, east, and west of the Israelites. God was angry over their sixth cycle of sin and disobedience. So, *He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and the Ammonites*, nations to the west and east. There comes a time when God holds us **accountable** for learning our lesson.

These chapters concentrate on the Ammonites to the east and across the Jordan River. The Philistines will be dealt with by Samson, the next judge. The Ammonites oppressed the Israelites in Gilead for eighteen years. They crossed the Jordan to fight against Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim. The Israelites cried out and confessed their sins to God. They wanted their misery to end. However, Israel had done this many times in the past. This time, God had something more to say to them.

Did I not deliver you from the Egyptians, the Amorites, the Ammonites, and the Philistines before? God also reminded them of His deliverance from the oppression of the Sidonians, the Amalekites, and Maonites when they cried to God. Yet you have forsaken Me and served other gods. Therefore I will deliver you no more. WHAT? These were not the words the Israelites had wanted to hear!!! God, in His mercy, had always delivered Israel in the past! Stop for a moment and imagine how disappointing these words would have been for the Israelites. Have you ever wanted something very much? Did you cry out to your parents and beg? When the answer to our requests is 'no,' it can be heart breaking.

A time comes when God says, "No more." One day, the age of grace, which we live in today, will end. Jesus will return to judge every man, woman, and child. Have you put your faith in Him? Scripture says, *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved* (Acts 16:31). You must accept that you are a sinner and that Jesus came to this world to restore peace through the blood of His cross. He paid the price for sin. If you accept that you are not your own, but belong to Him to be ruled, taught, and saved, then you are His child. *He who believes and is baptized will be saved* (1 Timothy 1:15, Colossians 1:20, Ephesians 1:3-10). If you are not sure, please talk to your parent or Disciplers leader.

God told the Israelites, *Go, cry out to the gods which you have chosen, let them deliver you in your time of distress*. Will the things you and I have put ahead of God help us in our times of distress? Israel was desperate and called out again saying, *We have sinned! Do to us whatever seems best, to you; only deliver us this day we pray*. They confessed their sins, put away their pagan gods, and served the Lord. God accepted their repentance and gave them His mercy. *His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel*. Our God is a *gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness, One who relents from doing harm* (Jonah 4:2).

II. Introducing Jephthah - Judges 11:1-11

God chose a man named Jephthah to be Israel's deliverer. He lived in Gilead, the area on the east side of the Jordan River where the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh had settled. He is introduced as a *mighty man of valor* which is what the Angel of the Lord had called Gideon also (Judges 6:12). Jephthah did not have the same mother as his brothers and, when they grew older, they made him leave their town saying to him, *you shall have no inheritance in our father's house, for you are the son of another woman*. He left Gilead and lived in Tob where he led a group of men raiding.

Meanwhile, the Ammonite's gathered their forces and camped in Gilead. Israel's forces were gathered in Mizpah. They looked for a deliverer,

someone to lead them against the Ammonites. Going to Jephthah in Tob, the elders asked him to command their armies against Ammon. He was understandably unsure. He had been unwanted and thrown out of town. Why did they want him to be their leader? Jephthah asked, *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?* They answered, *The Lord will be a witness between us, if we do not do according to your words*. Jephthah had faith in God. He counted on the Lord to win the battle and recognized God as Lord over himself and his words. It is the strength of this commitment that holds him to a **rash** vow later.

III. The Victory and Vow - Judges 11:12-40

Jephthah showed wisdom by sending messengers to the Ammonites and asking what the war was all about. The Ammonite king answered, *Because Israel took away my land when they came up out of Egypt...now therefore restore those lands peaceably*. The Ammonite king was claiming the rights to the land Israel occupied. (Things have not changed much in Israel today.) Jephthah set the king straight by giving him a history lesson.

It had been more than two hundred years since Israel came from Egypt. At that time, Moses had asked permission to pass peacefully through the land of the Amorites but was refused. Then, King Sihon of the Amorites had attacked them. Moses won the battle and the land fairly. Furthermore, the land had belonged to the Amorites, not the Ammonites. Jephthah knew Israel's history and God. Jephthah declared his moral ground, *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*. Jephthah had no doubt about God's will for Israel and for himself. Ammon paid no attention. Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah. War ensued and Israel won.

Going into battle, Jephthah made a **rash** vow to God which resulted in sacrificing his daughter

as a burnt offering to God. He vowed, *If you will indeed deliver the people of Ammon into my hands, then it will be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house when I return in peace... shall surely be the Lord's and I will offer it up as a burnt offering.* When he returned home and saw his daughter come out to him, he said, *Alas, my daughter...I have given my word to the Lord and cannot go back on it.* His beloved daughter agreed that he must keep his vow and only asked a delay of two months while she bewailed her virginity. He granted her request and carried out his vow. Afterward, it became a custom for the virgins of Israel to lament Jephthah's daughter four days each year.

Today, the idea of a human sacrifice is shocking. We are blessed to live in a culture which does not tolerate such actions. There is much debate between scholars about this passage of the Bible. Was Jephthah's vow sinful? Was it a sin to follow through on the vow? Did he sacrifice his daughter as an actual burnt offering or in some other way? The questions go on and on. We cannot answer all of the questions that arise in the Bible. God has made it so that some meanings are secret and others are known (Deuteronomy 29:29). Thankfully, salvation is not one left unclear: believe, repent, be baptized, and obey (John 3:16, 11:25-26, 15:10, Acts 2:38). Nonetheless, *all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for ...instruction in righteousness* (2 Timothy 3:16). That means, we must always ask ourselves when reading God's word, "What does God want me to learn from this?" Jephthah's vow and the sacrifice of his beloved, only daughter teach us many important truths, such as:

1. Do not make rash vows. Think before you speak. Use your words wisely.
2. Vows made to God are not to be broken (Numbers 30:2, Ecclesiastes 5:4-5).
3. Jephthah's daughter willingly obeyed her father to the point of death. How does your obedience compare? Do you honor your mother and father with your words, but resent obeying them in your heart?
4. Do you find the idea of a human sacrifice horrible? Are you disgusted and angry that

Jephthah could have made such an atrocious act take place? Do you realize that you are no better than Jephthah? ...It is your sin and my sin that put Jesus on the cross. Jesus was the ultimate, human sacrifice. He also was given as an offering by His Father in Heaven... Why? Because we have failed so miserably to keep God's law. In fact, we cannot even begin to try until we have His Holy Spirit to help us. And, even then, we continue to break His law every day. When you think back to studying this passage about Jephthah and his daughter, remember the emotions you first felt...sadness, anger, horror, disgust. Pause and think. Those emotions are just a glimpse of how you and I should feel about our own sin. Then, I pray you will bow your head and offer your own sacrifice to God, one of thanksgiving. Praise God, your Heavenly Father, who loved you enough to offer His only, beloved Son, as a human sacrifice on the cross. God's sacrifice made it possible for you to enter His kingdom, know Him, and be a child of the One True God. †

Prayer

Spend three minutes giving thanks to God without asking for anything.

Memory Verse 2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Vocabulary

corrupt - characterized by improper conduct

accountable - responsible to explain one's actions; answerable

endure - to continue on, even in pain or suffering

relent - to become less determined

rash - doing something quickly and without thinking carefully of what will happen

QUESTIONS FOR JUDGES/RUTH LESSON 9

All questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible.

DAY ONE: Read all notes and references.

1. a. In what ways were Jephthah and Abimelech alike?

- b. In what ways were they different?

2. What did you learn about vows?

DAY TWO: Read Judges 12:1-4.

3. a. Why were the men of Ephraim angry with Jephthah?

- b. What did they threaten to do?

- c. ☆ (Memory Question) Who had the men of Ephraim been angry with before? Why? (Judges 8:1-3)

- d. ? (Thought Question) Why might the men of Ephraim have felt they had a claim to leadership? (See Numbers 13:8 and 16 and 14:30 for help.)

4. How did Jephthah answer Ephraim's complaint? Underline the correct answer(s) below and give the verse where you found each.

- a. We were in a great struggle with the people of Ammon. vs. _____

- b. You didn't come to help when I called you. vs. _____

- c. My men and I had to fight the battle without you. vs. _____

- d. God delivered the Ammonites into my hand. vs. _____

5. a. In verse 4, what name did the Ephraimites call the Gileadites?

- b. What happened as a result (see verse 4)?

DAY THREE: Read Judges 12:5-7 and Hebrews 11:32-34.

6. a. After being defeated, the Ephraimites tried to escape back home across the Jordan River where they were met by the men of Gilead. How did the Gileadites determine if a man wanting to cross the river was an Ephraimite? Circle the correct answer(s) below.

DNA test checked their right shoulders for a tattoo flipped a coin

checked their I.D. cards made them pronounce the word "shibboleth"

b. What did the Gileadites do when they determined that a man was an Ephraimite?

c. What was the result?

7. Do you ever judge people by the way they speak? If so, in what way?

8. a. What does your speech tell others about you?

b. What does your speech reveal about your place in God's family?

9. a. How long did Jephthah judge Israel?

b. From the list of judges in Hebrews 11:32-34, which ones have we studied so far?

c. From the list of mighty deeds in the Hebrews passage, which ones could be applied to Jephthah?

DAY FOUR: Read Judges 12:8-15.

10. List the next three judges, where each one came from, and how long each one judged.

1)

2)

3)

11. a. What more is mentioned about two of the judges?

b. What would you like people to remember about you?

DAY FIVE: Read Judges 13:1-5.

12. a. How many cycles of disobedience does this make?

b. Who did the Lord send to oppress Israel this time?

c. How long did the oppression last?

13. a. To whom did the Angel of the Lord appear? What do you learn about this person?

b. What good news did the Angel deliver?

c. What warnings did the Angel give?

d. What two facts did the Angel reveal about the child who would be born?

14. From Numbers 6:2-8, what was a Nazarite?

VOCABULARY FOR JUDGES/RUTH LESSON 9

***"The more words you know, the more clearly and powerfully you will think...
and the more ideas you will invite into your mind."***

— Wilfred Funk

DAY ONE: Write the definition of each vocabulary word.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

DAY TWO: Write three sentences using three different vocabulary words from this lesson.

1.

2.

3.

DAY THREE: Circle the word's synonym(s). (Synonym is a word/phrase that means the same thing.)

- | | | | | | | | |
|------|----------------|-------|----------|-------|---------|-------|-------------|
| 1. . | corrupt | | honest | | immoral | | good |
| 2. . | relent | | give in | | release | | grow |
| 3. . | rash | | unrushed | | hurried | | thoughtless |

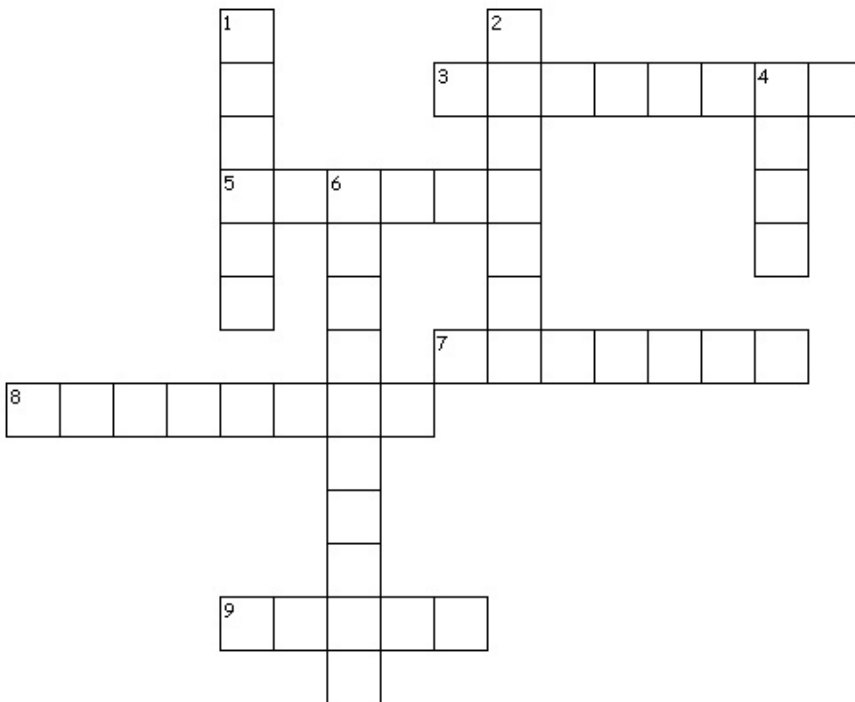
DAY FOUR: Match the word to its meaning.

<u>Word</u>	<u>Definition</u>
rash	characterized by improper conduct
endure	doing something quickly and without thinking carefully of what will happen
relent	responsible to explain one's actions; answerabl
corrupt	to continue on, even in pain or suffering
accountable	to become less determined

DAY FIVE: Review previous vocabulary words. Try to work from memory.

Crossword: Review previous vocabulary word(s). Try to work from memory.

Fill in the boxes with the correct words.

**Across**

3. the practice of having several spouses, especially wives, at one time

5. bitter disagreement; struggle; fight

7. series of rulers from the same family or group

8. desire for fame, power, or a goal

9. to raise in power; glorify

Down

1. to follow in order to capture; chase

2. free from vanity; concerned with descent behavior, clothing, speech

4. to make fun of; ridicule; treat with scorn

6. a statement or question to make a point without expecting an answer

AMBITION

DYNASTY

MODESTY

POLYGAMY

MOCK

EXALT

PURSUE

STRIFE

RHETORICAL