

Jephthah Part 2

Intro/Review:

- Israel cried out to God, even showed signs of repentance....moreso than we've seen before.
- Israel petitioned to God for deliverance.
- Israel went and procured their own deliverer
 - God used Jephthah, but not clear indication that Jephthah was God's choosing
- Jephthah was a questionable character.....he attracted worthless men. Rabble of bad news bears
- Elders humbly went to Jephthah to request his military services
- Jephthah agreed to Gileadites only if they agreed to make him ruler.
- God gave Jephthah the victory over the Ammonites

2 Main Themes – Both a Result of Jephthah's Hybrid Character As Man of God & Rebel of Men

1. Jephthah will sacrifice his only daughter.
2. Jephthah will ultimately be responsible for a civil war between Gilead & Ephraim

I. First Tragic Event – Jephthah Sacrifices His Only Daughter 11:29-40

- Vs. 30-31 ***“Jephthah made a vow to the Lord....If you give me victory, I will sacrifice whatever comes out of my house first to greet me.”***
- Vs. 34 ***“his one and only child came out to greet him first with celebration and dancing”***
 - **Exodus 15:20** Miriam sang a song and danced w/ tambourine when God slew Egyptians
 - **1 Samuel 18: 6** The women came out dancing and playing tambourine after David's victory
 - **Jer. 31:4** is a prophesy about God eventually delivering and women celebrating similar
- Dancing/tambourines not unique practice Israel history. Not prescribed by God, but traditional.
- Jephthah should have been acutely aware that daughter was a likely candidate to come out first.

- Vs. 35 ***“Jephthah tore his clothes and showed great sorrow for the consequences of his vow”***
- Vs. 36 Daughter said ***“You have given your word to the Lord, do as you have said”***
- Vs. 39-40 ***“He did to her according to the vow which he had made.....”***

So We Have a Dilemma or Some Controversy Here. What Did Jephthah Promise to God?

There are 2 Main Positions

- 1. Jephthah dedicated his daughter to the Lord's service**
- 2. Jephthah pledged to literally sacrifice whoever or whatever came out first.**

1. Jephthah Dedicated His Daughter to Lord's Service

(Some People Attempt to Resolve Perceived Conflict in Scripture That Doesn't Exist)

- **Hebrews 11 includes Gideon, Jephthah, Samson as examples of faith.**
 - Author of Hebrews & author of Judges have different objectives
 - **Hebrews reveals the accomplishments by those who acted in faith**
 - These accomplishments would have been logically impossible without faith
 - The result is a litany of impossible accomplishments through faith
 - The intent of Hebrew author is not praising men, but the possibilities in God
 - **Judges reveals God's faithfulness in light of a nation routinely rejecting Him**
 - Judges author includes sin & character flaws of men to highlight God's faithfulness
 - Judges does not condone the sin, nor does Hebrews.

So we don't have to reconcile these two scriptures because they are not in contradiction.

- **Some say the Word “Whatever” & not “Whoever” Implies He Intended Animal Sacrifice**
 - Problem w/ this is:
 - A poorly constructed vow doesn’t negate the terms of the vow.
 - If he intended an animal he would have said as such.
 - If he intended an animal why was so troubled about daughter coming out first?
 - Not likely that animal would be coming out of the doors of his house.

2. Jephthah Sacrificed His Daughter

1. This is most natural reading of text & doesn’t require gymnastics to say otherwise
2. **Vs. 31 “burnt offer”** does not mean dedicating to Lord’s service. **It means burning.**
3. Jephthah extremely upset when he saw his daughter who came out first
 - He would not have torn clothes and languished dedicating her to Lord’s service.
4. **Vs. 40** women of Israel made a tradition of going out and remembering Jephthah’s daughter
 - Literal translation of **“commemorate”** is **to lament**
 - Why would women lament someone being dedicated to Lord’s service?
 - Women would lament someone’s unfortunate death.

Eventhough This is Difficult to Digest, We Must Realize Jephthah Was Still Human

- Israel surrounded by Canaanite cultures who regularly practiced human sacrifice
- Jephthah likely influenced by these cultures and practices.
- Gideon’s own household worshiped Baal. He later fashioned an idol to worship.

****Point is not to twist scripture so its more palatable to us.****

Instead, we see God’s faithfulness toward a fallen creation He seeks to redeem to Himself.

II. Second Tragic Event – Civil War Between Gilead & Ephraim (12:1-7)

- **Vs. 1 “Then the men of Ephraim were summoned, why didn’t you call us....burn your house.”**
 - Pretty strong accusations.
 - **“Summoned”** indicates they clearly gathered with intent to battle.
 - Vs. 3 indicates Jephthah knew they had come to fight as well.
 - **“burn your house down”** is likewise a very strong position to take.
- Does this account sound familiar? Ephraim did this before w/ Gideon **Judges 8:1**
 - they accused Gideon of not calling them
 - Gideon defused matter by diplomatically padding their ego.
 - Jephthah not as delicate and diplomatic.
 - As Israel spirals downward, we wouldn’t expect Jephthah to be more delicate considering what we know about him.
- **Vs. 2-3 “When my people were at great strife I did call you, you did not come to help us.....”**
 - Its hard to determine whether Jephthah’s account here is accurate however.....
 1. No denial by Ephraim that he called for their help.
 2. Jephthah had similar exchange w/ King of Ammon where he spoke truthfully & put the king in his place. King never refuted Jephthah’s words.
- **Vs. 4 “Then Gilead defeated Ephraim because they called them fugitives**
 - The implication here is that Ephraim flat-out insulted Gilead
 - NIV says “renegades
 - NET says “refugees” not in your own land

- MSG “nothing but half-breeds & rejects”
- (Think about this accusation in light of what Jephthah experienced personally by his family 11:2)
- We cannot assume this Civil War is 100% result of Jephthah having “chip on his shoulder”
 - However, early treatment in life & this recent accusation do not help.
 - Ephraim definitely came to fight....but the insults likely fueled Jephthah
- Vs. 5-6 ***“Gileadites captured fords of the Jordan & slaughtered Ephraimites trying to retreat”***
 - Gave them a test to determine telling truth

Illustration: Susan is from Philadelphia says “wooter”, not “water”
American South say “far” not “fire”

The Result of this Civil War within Israel Is = 42,000 Men of Ephraim Died

Conclusion

1. Jephthah’s story is somewhat characterized by “deals” that aren’t necessary.

1. He agrees to lead the Gileadites to victory under 1 condition – they make him ruler.
2. He makes a vow to offer a burnt offering if God will give him victory.

These vows weren’t necessary. These vows were not something God commanded of him.
Today we hear a lot of people make vows to God.

“If you just get me out of this situation then I promise I will _____”

Interesting thing about Jephthah is that he knew enough about God that he knew it was against the law to break his vow to the Lord. But, he DIDN’T know enough about God to abstain from pagan practices around him.

James instructs us to let our yes be yes and our no be no.

James is speaking to a Jewish practice of heaping on extraneous terms to promises.

He says, “You don’t need to do that. Just be honorable and upright. Yes, or No.

Anything else is going to get you in trouble, its going to bind you beyond what is necessary.”

God expects a simple Yes, or No in response to the Gospel.

- He does not expect us to receive Jesus’ free gift and then heap on conditions to the promise
- We are not saved because we have made a vow that if God redeems us we’ll work for Him.
- We are saved by a simple yes or no.

2. Eventhough Many of the Judges Were Used By God– They Were Not Sinless

1. Jephthah does a pretty awful thing to his only child.

All sin is an equal transgression to God.

Some are more gruesome and grotesque in practice. But all carry the same consequence.

We have activities in our own lives that appear dispicable to a Holy God.

II Corinthians 3:18 *“But we all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”*

God is not satisfied with leaving us the way we are. He is continually transforming us into Christ’s image. We will not *be* Christ or *be* divine, but we will be *like* him.

Though we are sinful now like Jephthah, we have God’s promise that one day we be sinless like Jesus.