

JEPHTHAH

Jephthah is pronounced jef`-the.

1. Describe the stereotype of the person God can or will use.

There is no substitute for the knowledge of God that comes through the knowledge of His Word. Take time to pray before you begin. Ask the Holy Spirit to be your teacher and to reveal to you something about our awesome God.

Read Hebrews 11:32-34, Judges 10:6-11:40 and I Samuel 12:11.

2. a. According to Judges 10:6, what is the spiritual condition of the Israelites at this time?

b. How does God respond to this cycle of apostasy?

c. Why do you think that the Israelites keep forsaking the Lord?
3. a. What is the difference between regret and repentance?

b. In verse 10:10 do you see regret or repentance on the part of the sons of Israel? Explain your choice.

c. How about in verses 15-16? Again explain your choice.
4. In verse 16 we are given yet another glimpse into the heart of God. What do you see? What do you learn about God from this?

Gilead in its broadest sense refers to all the land which the Israelites occupied on the east side of the Jordan. During the time of Moses it was occupied by the Amorites and

the Moabites. However after they were driven out of the land by the Lord, the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half of the tribe of Manasseh settled it (Numbers 32). Jephthah was a contemporary of Samson. Both lived in approximately 1070 B.C. At the time Samson was engaging the Philistines west of the Jordan, the Lord was raising up Jephthah to fight the Ammonites, who were oppressing the Israelites living east of the Jordan.

5. What information are we given about Jephthah in the first three verses of chapter 11?

6. According to 10:18, 11:6 and 11:8 what do the elders promise Jephthah?

7. What things do you notice in Jephthah's dealings with the Ammonites in 11:12-27? What arguments does he use to defend his position?

Now go back and re-read 11:9 through 11:27. Note how many times Jephthah uses LORD, the personal and covenant name of God. It's interesting that he uses it more than any other person in the book of Judges.

8. Why might that be significant?

9. How does the Lord enable Jephthah for his task (11:29)?

10. Read about the victory in Judges 11:32-33. What words used by the author of Hebrews 11:32-34 could be applied to these events?

Neder is a Hebrew word meaning a vow or votive offering. "It is used of one who swears to God with an oath and binds one's self with what proceeds from one's mouth." The biblical vow is always to deity, and never used as a promise between man and man. Generally, it was a promise made in expectation of a divine favor eagerly sought. (See Numbers 30:2, Deuteronomy 23:21-23, and Leviticus 27:1-8.)

11. a. Why was Jephthah's vow unnecessary? Do you think the battle was won because of the vow? Elaborate.

b. Describe a time when you tried to bargain with God.

c. What are we forgetting about God when we try to strike a deal with Him?
12. What do you think Jephthah actually promised to do here? Support your answer from the text.
13. What detail are we told in the last part of 11:34 and why is that significant?
14. a. When Jephthah's daughter came out to meet him, what choices did he have?

b. As horrible and rash as Jephthah's action was, what do you see about his commitment to God?
15. Describe Jephthah's daughter and her response to her father's folly.

Read Judges 12:1-7.

Time will not allow an in-depth study of these verses. It is valuable to think of them in the context of the entire book of Judges. Remember that Judges is an account of how the people of Israel were faring as settlers in the promised land. Over and over we read of a cycle of apostasy, judgment, repentance and deliverance. Their walk might best be described as a downward spiral. At this point we see God's people not only fighting foreign enemies but destroying each other.

16. Make special note of 12:7. What can you conclude concerning the promise the elders made to Jephthah in 11:6-11?
17. a. Do you think it is possible to have a great zeal for the Lord and yet be spiritually ignorant? Explain.
- b. How can we prevent this being true of us?
18. What have you learned about God from studying this portion of Scripture?

Thoughtfully read Hebrews 11:1-34. It's incomprehensible and yet at the same time encouraging that Jephthah's name is found there. Our minds whirl as we ponder, "Why is he there?" It's true that Jephthah's trust and dependence were in the Lord, and that by faith he did become mighty in war and subdued the Ammonites. It's true, that though rashly and foolishly made, he kept his vow to the Lord at great personal cost. But it's equally true that he made his deplorable vow with its resulting consequences. That he is listed in the heroes of faith is such an example of God's amazing grace! In the final analysis we are forced to conclude that the wisdom of God's choice is not always observable to us. There is much that we just do not understand, and. . . actually that seems like a very healthy and honest conclusion for us, as finite creatures, to make about our sovereign and omniscient creator.

19. How comfortable are you about leaving things that you do not understand in God's hands?

One message that comes through both in Judges and in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews is that God is able, by his indwelling power, to do extraordinary things through ordinary, sinful people. People just like you and me.

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