

The Raising Up of Jephthah – A Call to Repentance

Three hundred years after the wanderings in the desert (Judges 11:26), Israel is still doing evil in the eyes of the Lord. Will God get tired of dealing with this backsliding people? Will He continue to rescue them even though their depravity gets greater and greater? Let's examine Judges 10-12 and see what lessons we can learn about ourselves, our God, and the people God uses for His glory.

Stop and Pray - Lord, reveal to me Your heart in the face of fallen humanity. Help me to evaluate my sin in a way that will lead to a greater repentance.

1. What are some experiences in your life that have impacted your character today?

Read Judges 10-12. We will study all the minor judges later. Now we will focus on Jephthah. Reread Judges 10:6-16 – They Repented! Or did they? Mark this text, found on pages 6-7.

2. What did Israel do in Judges 10:6 that moved God to sell them yet again? How is this “evil” greater than in past cycles?
3. To better understand the heart behind Israel's actions, look up “forsook” in a dictionary for a definition and in a concordance for synonyms.
4. Consult a map of Israel and locate Philistia, Ammon, Gilead, the Jordan River, and the tribal territories of Judah, Benjamin and Ephraim. Then describe the oppression that finally led Israel to cry out to the Lord. (*Note: Jephthah's story is about the breaking of the Ammonite oppression. Samson will deal with the Philistines.*)

5. Read 2 Corinthians 7:8-10. How would you describe the difference between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow? (You may want to look up repentance in a Bible or dictionary.)

6. What kind of a heart attitude do you think was behind Israel's first cry to God, found in Judges 10:10?

7. God took notice of Israel's cry and did not turn a deaf ear. When Israel began to repent, God sent a message in Judges 10:11-14 that was designed to increase their repentance so that they might be prepared for deliverance.
 - a. Note how God confronts Israel with their increased repentance in mind:
What did God say? What do you think was His reason for saying it?

 - b. What can we learn from God's example in Judges 10:11-14 about confronting a fellow believer's sin in a way that will encourage a deeper repentance?

8.
 - a. Compare Israel's second appeal to God in Judges 10:15-16 with their first call in 10:10. Do you think anything had changed in the people's hearts? Support your answer.

 - b. How are you similar to Israel here? Reviewing your past with 20/20 hindsight, evaluate the quality of your own repentance when you have brought repeated sins before the Lord. To what extent can you relate to the sincerity or depth of Israel's confession and plea in verses 15-16?

9. Even though Israel's repentance may not be to the fullest extent it could be, after hearing Israel's confession and plea, God could bear Israel's misery no longer. How would you explain His response in a way that correlates with His character and Romans 5:8?

Reread Judges 10:17-11:11 – The Raising Up of Jephthah. Mark this text on page 7. The threat of God was to convict and humble Israel. Because this threat produced its desired effect, it was revoked that their deliverance might begin.

10. a. What main things are we told about Jephthah in Judges 11:1-3?
- b. How did God use the experiences in Jephthah's life to prepare him to be Israel's deliverer?
- c. Before being called by God to shepherd Israel, what other biblical characters were thrust out by men and thus encountered experiences that prepared them for God's service?
- d. What assurance do we find in Romans 8:28 when wrestling with the hardships dealt to us in life?
11. How was the deliverance initiated? Note how Jephthah's call to be judge was similar or different than the past judges' calls (Judges 10:17-18; 11:1-11).

“That people had by their idolatry made themselves children of whoredoms, and aliens from God and His covenant, and therefore, though God upon their repentance will deliver them, yet, to mortify them and remind them of their sin, He chooses to do it by a bastard and an exile.”
(Matthew Henry on Judges 10-11)

Likewise, God continues to use parallels in life to illustrate Israel’s relationship with God.

12. How does Jephthah’s interaction with the elders of Gilead in Judges 11:6-11 resemble God’s encounter with Israel in 10:11-14?

13. Based on Jephthah’s past, what would you imagine Jephthah’s inner thoughts to have been during the negotiations with the elders of Gilead? Support your answer.

14. After gaining for himself the title of commander and head of his father’s people:

a. How did Jephthah begin his rule (Judges 11:11)?

b. What do you think that action entailed?

c. Why do you think he began that way?

d. What can we learn for our own endeavors for the Lord from Jephthah’s example here?

15. How will you apply something you have learned from this lesson?

Final Thoughts: Again we ask, why would His people choose to aggressively reject the infinite One and follow idols who are impotent under God's power? "Idols give you what you want sooner. However, what the Lord is committed to is building character in us, bringing about change that lasts forever. Judges presents us with an option. We can serve a God whose mercy extends to us even when our repentance is shallow, and we're immature and prone to foolishness, even when our weaknesses seem to clutch at us, when our sins are embarrassing for us to face. In all of that, He cannot bear the misery of His people, so He extends mercy toward us. We can serve that kind of God, whose power, purity, and wisdom are infinite. Or we can listen to some set of lies that says we can have it all much sooner and much more easily, without any breaking of our pride, without any learning of hard lessons. But if we seek to have it all quickly, we will find ourselves over and over again "crashing and burning," afflicted, sold into slavery. The choice is yours." (From Steve Zeisler's message on Judges 10:1-11:11)

When we come to our senses and call on God, will we accept His rebuke and deepen our repentance? If God Almighty requires something of us prior to our deliverance, will we again return to our idols to fix our mess? May we allow God to orchestrate our deliverance in a way that will shine His pure light into our souls and reveal the depth of our sin, knowing that His ultimate desire is to forgive us our sins and deliver us from evil. "For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." (Doxology from The Lord's Prayer)

Pray - Forgive me for I have sinned. Help me to welcome Your rebuke and conviction until I wholeheartedly return to You. Help me to realize that even the troubles in my life can be redeemed in Your hands for the good of Your plan, my life, and possibly the lives of many others. Help me to welcome the troubles as possible training grounds for Your future calling.

Kyna Ritchie (original 2002; revised 2013)

Lesson 16 — Jephthah Part I — Judges 10:1-11:33

Examine your text, when instructed to in your lesson, by marking it in certain ways.

Mark your text. Put a box around time words (e.g. then, now, when). Put a circle around conditional words (e.g. so that, yet, but, therefore). Put a brown jagged line under references to locations. Put a black jagged line under references to idols. Underline all references, including pronouns (e.g. he, they, their, you, our, we):

- Jephthah in green
- an enemy in black
- Jephthah's brothers/clan in orange
- Israel in blue (specify tribes with letter above)
- God in red

Judges 10:1-5 — Minor Judges (to be dealt with in Lesson 17)

1 Now after Abimelech died, Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar, arose to save Israel; and he lived in Shamir in the hill country of Ephraim. 2 He judged Israel twenty-three years. Then he died and was buried in Shamir. 3 After him, Jair the Gileadite arose and judged Israel twenty-two years. 4 He had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys, and they had thirty cities in the land of Gilead that are called Havvoth-jair to this day. 5 And Jair died and was buried in Kamon.

Judges 10:6-16 — They Repented! Or Did They?

6 Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, served the Baals and the Ashtaroth, the gods of Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the sons of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines; thus they forsook the LORD and did not serve Him. 7 The anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the sons of Ammon. 8 They afflicted and crushed the sons of Israel that year; for eighteen years they afflicted all the sons of Israel who were beyond the Jordan in Gilead in the land of the Amorites. 9 The sons of Ammon crossed the Jordan to fight also against Judah, Benjamin, and the house of Ephraim, so that Israel was greatly distressed. 10 Then the sons of Israel cried out to the LORD, saying, "We have sinned against You, for indeed, we have forsaken our God and served the Baals." 11 The LORD said to the sons of Israel, "Did I not deliver you from the Egyptians, the Amorites, the sons of Ammon, and the Philistines? 12 "Also when the Sidonians, the Amalekites and the Maonites oppressed you, you cried out to Me, and I delivered you from their hands. 13 "Yet you have forsaken Me and served other gods; therefore I will no longer deliver you. 14 "Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your distress." 15 The sons of Israel said to the LORD, "We have sinned, do to us whatever seems good to You; only please deliver us this day."

16 So they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the LORD; and He could bear the misery of Israel no longer.

Judges 10:17- 11:11 — The Raising up of Jephthah

17 Then the sons of Ammon were summoned and they camped in Gilead. And the sons of Israel gathered together and camped in Mizpah. 18 The people, the leaders of Gilead, said to one another, "Who is the man who will begin to fight against the sons of Ammon? He shall become head over all the inhabitants of Gilead."

Chapter 11

1 Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a valiant warrior, but he was the son of a harlot. And Gilead was the father of Jephthah. 2 Gilead's wife bore him sons; and when his wife's sons grew up, they drove Jephthah out and said to him, "You shall not have an inheritance in our father's house, for you are the son of another woman." 3 So Jephthah fled from his brothers and lived in the land of Tob; and worthless fellows gathered themselves about Jephthah, and they went out with him. 4 It came about after a while that the sons of Ammon fought against Israel. 5 When the sons of Ammon fought against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to get Jephthah from the land of Tob; 6 and they said to Jephthah, "Come and be our chief that we may fight against the sons of Ammon." 7 Then Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, "Did you not hate me and drive me from my father's house? So why have you come to me now when you are in trouble?" 8 The elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, "For this reason we have now returned to you, that you may go with us and fight with the sons of Ammon and become head over all the inhabitants of Gilead." 9 So Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, "If you take me back to fight against the sons of Ammon and the LORD gives them up to me, will I become your head?" 10 The elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, "The LORD is witness between us; surely we will do as you have said." 11 Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and chief over them; and Jephthah spoke all his words before the LORD at Mizpah.

(Judges 10:1-11:11)