

Title: 'As We See Fit': A study of the book of Judges- Part 14- "Four of a Kind"

Key text: Judges 12:1-15

Suppl. texts: Matt. 12:36-37, Heb. 11:32

Introduction: Last time, we saw the Spirit-filled man named Jephthah. Though his filling was temporary & only to accomplish the purposes of God, Jep was ready to lead the armies of Israel. However, this man who was called by God, given the Spirit of God, & was given the favor of God needed more assurance & attempted to bargain with God. He foolishly & hastily swore an oath that he would always regret. We then ended our time discussing various ideas about what happened to Jephthah's daughter as a result of Jep's foolish vow. Tonight, we conclude Jep's story, as he, like Gideon, is forced to defend his methods of victory to his own countrymen.

Outline: *read Judges 12:1-15.*

1. Harsh accusations & murderous threats

- If we thought the worst part of Jep's story had passed, we'd be wrong.
- Still grieving from the loss of his daughter & all the repercussions that came from it, now his life is in danger along with the rest of his family.
- **Vs. 1:** *"The men of Ephraim called out their forces, crossed over to Zaphon and said to Jephthah, "Why did you go to fight the Ammonites without calling us to go with you? We're going to burn down your house over your head."*
- Unlike in Gideon's feud, the Ephraimites come ready to do Jephthah's family even more harm, burning his house down with him in it.
- They are completely ungrateful to Jephthah for his victory over Ammon.
- They are completely insensitive to the death of Jephthah's daughter.
- They are completely committed to starting a second war against Jephthah & his men.
- At this moment of conflict, we learn new information: Jephthah called for help; he was refused & no one answered his call.
- **Vs. 2:** *"Jephthah answered, 'I and my people were engaged in a great struggle with the Ammonites, and although I called, you didn't save me out of their hands.'"*
- Now, this is twice any kind of celebration has been denied to Jep. First, when Jep's daughter came out leading the celebration, the joy quickly turned to sorrow.
- Now, when your countrymen should rally to his side for his national victory, they are ready to kill him.
- **Vs. 3:** *"Then I saw that you wouldn't help, I took my life in my hands and crossed over to fight the Ammonites, and the LORD gave me the victory over them. Now why have you come up today to fight me?"*
- Jep & his men are physically spent, & at least Jep, is emotionally drained.

2. Brother against brother

- The next few verses portray a predictable outcome.
- **Vs. 4:** *"Jephthah then called together the men of Gilead and fought against Ephraim. The Gileadites struck them down because the Ephraimites had said, 'You Gileadites are renegades from Ephraim and Manasseh.'"*
- We now understand that Ephraim had gone further by insulting & taunting the men from Gilead. Because Gilead was more of a region than a tribe, they basically called them outsiders or refugees. They insulted their lineage, acting as if they were better.
- **Matt. 12:36-37:** *"But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."* God hears our words.
- However, let us not forget, Jep was God's mighty warrior & judge, so when Ephraim battles against Jephthah, they are taking up arms against the Lord.
- Ephraim is totally defeated & forced to run away, but they are trapped.
- **Vs. 5:** *"The Gileadites captured the fords of the Jordan leading to Ephraim, and whenever a survivor of Ephraim said, 'Let me cross over,' the men of Gilead asked him, 'Are you an Ephraimite?'"*
- Jep's men even capture the escape routes across the Jordan River & they devise a simple test to determine if someone is from Gilead or Ephraim. 'Warsh' or 'wash'.
- **Vs. 6:** *"If he replied, 'No,' they said, 'All right, say 'Shibboleth.' " If he said, 'Sibboleth,' because he could not pronounce the word correctly, they seized him and killed him at the fords of the Jordan. Forty-two thousand Ephraimites were killed at that time."*
- Though both Hebrew, the dialects of these two groups differed.
- If you had the mental picture that it was just a few men causing trouble for Jephthah, you'd be wrong, as Ephraim's ranks are decimated (42,000 men died).
- The men from Ephraim used their words to besmirch Gilead. Gilead used Ephraim's words to reveal their tribal affiliation. Their words brought their death & demise.
- Ephraim had called Gilead outsiders & refugees; now they are the ones forced to flee like aliens & refugees. What a man sows, he will also reap!
- Those who speak against the Lord, who actively fight against His people, will have those words replayed for them in eternity, & face eternal judgment for them.
- **Vs. 7:** *"Jephthah led Israel six years. Then Jephthah the Gileadite died, and was buried in a town in Gilead."* Jephthah's judgeship is sadly short, only six years.
- The bible doesn't say why this mighty warrior died so soon. Jewish tradition (Midrash) states that God judged him for the sacrifice of his daughter & that he developed a skin disease akin to leprosy, which caused his death.
- **Heb. 11:32** includes Jep in the Hall of Faith. Many use this to uphold the 'dedication view' of what happened to Jep's daughter.

- However, his inclusion there is with other judges (Gideon, Barak, & Samson), none of whom are stellar human beings. Gideon's life ended in the failure of idolatry. Barak is characterized by cowardice. Samson is ruled by lust & pride.
- Jephthah's legacy is one of a mighty warrior but also of **foolishness** & **filicide**.

3. Four **short** reigns

- The latter half of chapter 12 quickly runs through three more judges that follow Jep.
- Like Jep, their reigns as judges are short in length. They rightly **dovetail** Jep's story.
- There are **major** judges: Othniel, Ehud, Deborah/Barak, Gideon, Jephthah, & Samson. The bible commits more time to their stories, background, & victories.
- There are **minor** judges: Shamgar, Tola, Jair, Ibzan, Elon, & Abdon. The bible commits little time to this group, mainly stating who they were & where they were from.
- Because there are twelve judges total, it makes us think of the twelve tribes of Israel.
- First up is a leader from Bethlehem, Ibzan, whom we might think ought to be a good picture of Christ since he's likely from Judah. *Which Bethlehem? Zebulon or Judah?*
- **Vs. 8-10**; *"After him, **Ibzan of Bethlehem led Israel. He had thirty sons and thirty daughters. He gave his daughters away in marriage to those outside his clan, and for his sons he brought in thirty young women as wives from outside his clan. Ibzan led Israel seven years. Then Ibzan died and was buried in Bethlehem.**"*
- **An interesting note**: many ancient rabbis & the Talmud claim that Ibzan is none other than **Boaz** of the book of Ruth.
- However, there's no **biblical** proof that they are the same person.
- We can see this man must've had more than one (previous to Ruth?) wife and/or concubine to produce this many children.
- Rabbinic tradition states that all of his children had died as judgment from the Lord before the time of Ruth & that Obed, who is listed as the son of Boaz & Ruth, is his only living heir. Obed the father of Jesse, Jesse, the father of David.
- We are told that he sought spouses outside his clan. This means he likely created **alliances** among other tribes of Israel. Not likely outside of Israel.
- Next is Elon; there's not much in the way of **details** given about him.
- **Vs. 11-12**; *"After him, **Elon the Zebulunite led Israel ten years. Then Elon died and was buried in Aijalon in the land of Zebulun.**"*
- The final of the minor judges is Abdon. Like Ibzan, he had a big family & seems to be an **older** man (grandsons) when he comes to lead Israel.
- **Vs. 13-15**; *"After him, **Abdon son of Hillel, from Pirathon, led Israel. He had forty sons and thirty grandsons, who rode on seventy donkeys. He led Israel eight years. Then Abdon son of Hillel died, and was buried at Pirathon in Ephraim, in the hill country of the Amalekites.**"* From Jephthah to Abdon, the 'four of a kind' amount to **31** years.
- This sets the stage for the final major judge to rise & most **infamous**, Samson.

As We See Fit

A Study of the Book of Judges- Part 14

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- They are completely _____ to the death of Jephthah's daughter.
- They are completely _____ to starting a second war against Jephthah & his men.
- Now, when your countrymen should _____ to his side for his national victory, they are ready to kill him.
- Jep & his men are _____ spent, & at least Jep, is _____ drained.

2. Brother _____ brother

- We now understand that Ephraim had gone further by _____ & _____ the men from Gilead. Because Gilead was more of a region than a tribe, they basically called them _____ or _____.
- God _____ our words.
- However, let us not forget, Jep was God's mighty warrior & judge, so when Ephraim battles against Jephthah, they are _____ up _____ against the _____.
- Jep's men even capture the escape routes across the Jordan River & they _____ a _____ test to determine if someone is from Gilead or Ephraim.
- Though both Hebrew, the _____ of these two groups _____.
- The men from Ephraim used their words to _____ Gilead. Gilead used Ephraim's words to _____ their tribal affiliation. Their words brought their _____ & _____.
- Jephthah's legacy is one of a mighty warrior but also of _____ & _____.

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- There are _____ judges:
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- The final of the minor judges is Abdon. Like Ibzan, he had a big family & seems to be an _____ man when he comes to lead Israel.
- From Jephthah to Abdon, the 'four of a kind' amount to _____ years.
- This sets the stage for the final major judge to rise & most _____.

Small Group Questions:

1. Again, we see conflict at the center of people's relationships. Why are we so hard-wired for conflict with one another? Read Matthew 18:15-17. How should believers handle conflict with one another?
2. Have you ever experienced multiple hits of bad news or conflict back-to-back, as Jephthah did? How'd you react? Did you learn anything from those times?
3. We discussed using our words as insults & the consequences. Since God hears every idle word, what are some ways that you can guard your mouth from getting you in trouble?
4. What have you learned about some of the judges that we have studied up to this point?