

Title: 'As We See Fit': A study of the book of Judges- Part 13- "A Foolish Father"

Key text: Judges 11:29-11:40

Suppl. texts: Rom. 8:31, Deut. 23:21-23, Lev. 20:1-5, Jer. 7:31, Jer.

Introduction: Last time, we began to look at the life of Jephthah. We noticed that he is immediately described as both a mighty warrior and an illegitimate child. We also noticed typology, in which certain Old Testament figures were types & shadows of Christ. Jephthah was asked to be the warrior king of Gilead, but he mistrusted the intentions of the elders who came to him. Jesus is our Mighty King, the King of kings, & the Lord of lords. Though Jep is the son of a prostitute, his reputation garners the attention of other men who find their identity in his leadership. We concluded by looking at the conflict & confrontation with the Ammonites, as Jep tried to reason with their king by giving a history lesson. Tonight we move into the battle & see how God uses Jep's skill as a warrior to accomplish His plans.

Outline: read Judges 11:29-40. *Three questions for tonight?*

1. A Spirit-filled man?

- Last time, we explored the rejected warrior as a typological story pointing to Jesus.
- We've noted many similarities between the life & call of Jephthah & the life & ministry of Christ.
- **Here are a few more:** Jep was rejected because his brothers refused to share their inheritance. Jesus willingly shared His inheritance, making us joint heirs with Him & children of God.
- Jep was sought to gain victory over a temporary enemy, Ammon. Jesus will be sought in the end by those (Israel) who rejected Him to win the eternal victory over the real enemy, Satan.
- First time rejected, second time accepted, & firmly victorious are themes of both the life of Jephthah & Jesus.
- **Vs. 29; "Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah. He crossed Gilead and Manasseh, passed through Mizpah of Gilead, and from there he advanced against the Ammonites."**
- Another similarity is that Jep was empowered by the Spirit of God, while Jesus & the Holy Spirit are One in the Trinity.
- Again, we notice the Spirit of God coming to accomplish God's purpose but not permanently indwelling the man of God, as the Spirit empowered Shamgar & Gideon before. Another reason why we're blessed to live on this side of Christ.

2. A bargain with God?

- With the Spirit of God on Jep's side, we anticipate the victory that is to come.

- Apparently, Jep is not so sure. He thinks he needs to make a deal with Yahweh.
- He didn't yet know **Rom. 8:31**; *"If God is for us, who can be against us?"*
- Jep made a vow to **entreat** the favor of the Lord, while not knowing God had **ordained** his rise to warrior king status, & that he already **possessed** the favor of God because of the Holy Spirit.
- Therefore, his vow was ***hasty, ignorant, foolish, humanistic, & short-sighted.***
- Before we cast stones, how many times have we bargained with the Lord?
- *"God, if you do this for me, I will do this for you!"*
- **Vs. 30-31**; *"And Jephthah made a vow to the LORD: 'If you give the Ammonites into my hands, whatever (whoever) comes out of the door of my house to meet me when I return in triumph from the Ammonites will be the LORD's, and I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering.'"*
- Jephthah has shown knowledge of Israel's history, which was recorded in the Word of God. Therefore, it seems logical that he would've been aware of God's commands.
- **Deut. 23:21-23**; *"If you make a vow to the Lord your God, do not be slow to pay it, for the Lord your God will certainly demand it of you, and you will be guilty of sin. But if you refrain from making a vow, you will not be guilty. Whatever your lips utter you must be sure to do, because you made your vow freely to the Lord your God with your own mouth."* Several things are true about vows to the Lord.
- Vows were **voluntary**. You don't have to make one.
- Vows are **promises**. If you make one, fulfill it.
- Broken vows are **sin**. God holds us accountable for our words/promises.
- **Vs. 32-33**; *"Then Jephthah went over to fight the Ammonites, and the LORD gave them into his hands. He devastated twenty towns from Aroer to the vicinity of Minnith, as far as Abel Keramim. Thus Israel subdued Ammon."*
- Jep's victory is complete, destroying twenty strongholds that Ammon held. However, we know from later texts that Ammon is a thorn to Israel until David's time.

3. **Killed or dedicated?**

- **Vs. 34**; *"When Jephthah returned to his home in Mizpah, who should come out to meet him but his daughter, dancing to the sound of tambourines! She was an only child. Except for her he had neither son nor daughter."*
- Like Miriam who led the dancing before the Lord after the Red Sea, Jep's unsuspecting, likely **teenage** daughter comes out **leading** a celebration for her father's wonderful victory.
- What could've been a time of **rejoicing** quickly became a time of **immense** sorrow.
- Unlike his predecessors, who had extremely large families comprised of many sons & daughters, Jep only has one child, a daughter. She is the **hope** of his family for any **heirs**. Her desire is implied to be that she would marry & bear children.

- **Vs. 35**; *"When he saw her, he tore his clothes and cried, 'Oh! My daughter! You have made me miserable and wretched, because I have made a vow to the LORD that I cannot break.'" His hasty words have now filled him with deep regret.*
- Before we cast stones, how often have we regretted & wished to take back our words which caused damage to us or others?
- The wording in question here is important. All my life, in church, when Jep's story has been taught (which was rare), it was taught that he sacrificed (killed) his daughter.
- ***Let's look at the various translations of these verses.***
- Modern readers, theologians & commentators have questioned whether Jep, a man whom God used, a man who leads an entire area of Israel, a man whose family & neighbors would've tried to stop him, a man whose reputation would've been destroyed by this detestable act, a man who would face the death penalty for such action, could he really offer his daughter as a burnt offering to the Lord?
- Furthermore, if we claim Jep knew God's commands on vows, would he not also know God's commands prohibiting human sacrifice?
- **Lev. 20:1-5**; *"The Lord said to Moses, 'Say to the Israelites: 'Any Israelite or any alien living in Israel who gives any of his children to Molech **must be put to death**. The people of the community **are to stone him**. I will set my face against that, man, and I will cut him off from his people; for by giving his children to Molech, he has defiled My sanctuary and profaned My holy name. If the people of the community close their eyes when that man gives one of his children to Molech and they fail to put him to death, I will set my face against that man and his family and will cut off from their people both him and all who follow him in prostituting themselves to Molech.'"*
- **Jer. 7:31**; *"They have built the high places of Topheth in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to **burn their sons and daughters in the fire-something I did not command, nor did it enter My mind.**"*
- **Jer. 19:5**; *"They have built the high places of Baal **to burn their sons in the fire as offerings to Baal-something I did not command or mention, nor did it enter My mind.**"*
- Every time human sacrifice is mentioned in the Word of God, it is clearly prohibited & always associated with the pagan practice & worship of false gods.
- Yet, several things are true: Israel is far away from God. God's Spirit did not indwell Jep, only empowered. Jep, though more righteous than his peers, is a sinner. Human sacrifice was common, even in Israel, among the worship of foreign gods. Finally, all of Israel has been doing what is right in their own eyes.
- Result: it is entirely possible & likely that Jephthah sacrificed his daughter as a misguided offering to the Lord.

- **Vs. 36-37**; *"My father," she replied, "you have given your word to the LORD. **Do to me just as you promised**, now that the LORD has avenged you of your enemies, the Ammonites. But grant me this one request," she said. "Give me two months to roam the hills and weep with my friends, because I will never marry."* What **maturity**!?!
- Some see these verses as proof that Jep didn't sacrifice his daughter as a burnt offering, but dedicated her to the Lord, for His service, possibly paying the redemption price for her life. Because of this, she could never marry or have kids.
- Nonetheless, we note her **quiet submission** to her father, in another type & shadow, as Jesus quietly, somberly (a Man of Sorrows) submitted to the will of His Father & offered His life as a ransom. She was saddened over the outcome but willing to submit herself to her father.
- Jep **permits** her to go & she does not **attempt** to run away.
- **Vs. 38**; *"You may go," he said. And he let her go for two months. **She and the girls went into the hills and wept because she would never marry.**"*
- **Vs. 39-40**; *"After the two months, she returned to her father **and he did to her as he had vowed. And she was a virgin.** From this comes the Israelite custom that each year the young women of Israel go out for **four days to commemorate** the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite."*
- Some see these closing verses as proof that Jep did actually sacrifice his daughter due to the phrase: *"he did to her as he had vowed."*
- They also question whether a commemoration would occur annually if she was only dedicated to the Lord. We don't have the perfect answer to this question, but I lean towards the literal understanding of this text.

As We See Fit

A Study of the Book of Judges- Part 13

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1. A _____ - _____ man?

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- **Here are a few more:** Jep was rejected because his brothers _____ to share their inheritance. Jesus _____ shared His inheritance, making us joint _____ with Him & _____ of God.
- Jep was sought to gain victory over a _____ enemy, Ammon. Jesus will be sought in the end by those (Israel) who rejected Him to win the _____ victory over the real enemy, Satan.
- First time _____, second time _____, & _____ are themes of both the life of Jephthah & Jesus.
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- Jep made a vow to _____ the favor of the Lord, while not knowing God had _____ his rise to warrior king status, & that he already _____ the favor of God because of the Holy Spirit.
- Therefore, his vow was _____, _____, _____, _____, & _____.

- Vows were _____. You don't have to make one.
- Vows are _____. If you make one, fulfill it.
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- Like Miriam who led the dancing before the Lord after the Red Sea, Jep's unsuspecting, likely _____ daughter comes out _____ a celebration for her father's wonderful victory.
- What could've been a time of _____ quickly became a time of _____ sorrow.
- She is the _____ of his family for any _____.
- His hasty words have now filled him with deep _____.
- What _____!?!
- Nonetheless, we note her _____ to her father, in another type & shadow, as Jesus quietly submitted to the will of His Father & offered His life as a ransom.
- Jep _____ her to go & she does not _____ to run away.

Small Group Questions:

- 1. Jephthah is the mighty warrior who conquered Ammon & saved Israel, though only temporarily. Jesus Christ is our Warrior King who conquers sin, death, & the grave & gives us eternal victory over the enemy. Discuss the typology we've noted in the story of Jephthah. Do you agree that Jep is a type of Christ? Why or why not?**
- 2. Why is it bad theology to attempt to make 'bargains' with God?**
- 3. What other vows could Jephthah have made? Discuss why we make vows in the first place. Do they have a purpose & reason today in your relationship with the Lord?**
- 4. How should we react when we read of such flawed human beings in the Word who were still greatly used by the Lord to fulfill His purposes? Does the knowledge that God uses sinful people, despite their flaws, give you peace & joy?**
- 5. What do you think happened to Jephthah's daughter? Do you see typology in her sadness & submission?**