

Jephthah

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 08 September 2024

Preacher: Mark Harbour

[0 : 00] With that, we are studying in the book of Judges. I know in your little paper there that it says, what, verse 6 through, or chapter 6 through 10, but it's really, or 6 through 8, something like that.

Anyway, it's really chapter 10 through 12 that we will be looking at today. I was going to just cut this very, very short in the sense that I was only going to read one portion of this, the portion that everybody hates, and just concentrate on that.

But we are going to go through both chapters. So once again, you guys don't have to worry about standing up while I read the whole thing. But I do, one more time, request that you do stand up in your heart, and that you are attentive and listening and truly asking the Lord, what do you have for me in this story?

Because this story is one of the most difficult ones for people to grasp, to understand, to come to terms with.

It has a portion in it that just is very, very confounding. And so as we go through this, I want to go through the whole two chapters, but I'm going to go through it fairly quickly, some parts of it, but then I want to camp on this one issue.

[1 : 37] And you guys will understand, you'll see it, and if you remember the story, you'll go, oh yeah, that's why. Okay. So with that, let's just ask the Lord for guidance.

Father, we do ask for your guidance in what we are supposed to learn today. Holy Spirit, we ask that our eyes would be open, that our mind would be open, that our ears would be open, that we put aside any preconceived things, that we just hear your word today and get an understanding of what you are trying to tell us, what you're trying to reveal to us.

And we look forward to it, and we say this in your name, Jesus. Amen. Judges chapter 10, we're going to start in verse 6. Last time we did, we ended with, who was that guy?

Gideon, that was it. But there was a few other things that happened after that. But now we're going to be getting into the ninth judge, which is Jephthah.

Yeah, we'll get it. I'll stumble over it a few times. As we get to cities and people's names and things like that, you'll hear me. I'll just say, you can see it. You can read it. But, so we will be looking at this area up in here.

[3 : 04] Up there is where this story is taking place. Okay? So you see the river going up. Anyway, you'll understand all that here in a minute.

Let's get into God's word. Verse 6, chapter 10. Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, served the Baals and the Ashtoreth, 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.

Man, they put them all together this time. It's crazy. Thus, they forsook the Lord and did not serve him. 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.

They afflicted the Ammonites. They afflicted and crushed the sons of Israel that year. For 18 years they afflicted all the sons of Israel, who were beyond the Jordan in Gilead in the land of the Amorites.

The sons of Ammon crossed the Jordan to fight also against Judah, Benjamin, and the house of Ephraim, so that Israel was greatly distressed.

[4 : 31] So they're attacking a big area here. Then the sons of Israel, like always, as they should, cried out to the Lord, saying, We have sinned against you, for indeed we have forsaken our God and served the Baals.

Man, we did it again. We said we weren't going to do this, and we did it again. We're right back at it. We're sinning all over again. We're doing just what we said we weren't going to do. Verse 11. The Lord said to the sons of Israel, I'm getting a little tired of this.

Did I not deliver you from the Egyptians, the Amorites, the sons of Ammon, and the Philistines? Also when the Sidonians and the Amalekites and the Moanites oppressed you, you cried out to me, and I delivered you from their hands.

Yet you have forsaken me and served other gods. Therefore, I will no longer deliver you. I'm tired of it.

I've done it over and over again. Verse 14. Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen. Let them deliver you in the time of your distress.

[5 : 42] You want to worship these gods? Go ahead and let them save you. I'm tired of doing it. Nope. Not going to do it anymore. He's just... Verse 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.

So, they put away the foreign gods from among them and serve the Lord, and he could bear the misery of Israel no longer.

This time they took action. They didn't just cry out. But this time, they asked, No, we're going to go through our house. We're going to go through our lives. We're going to clean out the things that are causing us to stumble, that are causing us to worship other gods besides you, or instead of you. And we're just going to clean out. When God saw that they were doing that, he had mercy on them. He took pity on them. Verse 17.

[6 : 49] Then the sons of Ammon were summoned. These are the enemy. The sons of Ammon were summoned, and they camped in Gilead. And the sons of Israel gathered together and camped in Mizpah.

So, it seems as if God has summoned the Ammonites one more time to do battle. And it's like, wait a minute.

The Israelites had just said, or just, they asked God for help. He said, Nope, I'm not helping you. Ask your own gods, the ones that you're going after. And so, they say, No, all right.

We're going to get rid of our idols. We're going to put all that aside. Throw them away. Get rid of them. And we're going to worship only you, God. And then what happens? Now, all of a sudden, you're thinking that, All right, God's going to deliver.

No. Instead, what happens? God is now, he summons the sons of Ammon to their camping, and they're getting prepared to attack Israel.

[7 : 48] It's like, wait a minute. We said we weren't going to do this, and now we're trying to be obedient and stuff, and now you're bringing them to attack us? It's not looking good. It's looking very bleak at this point.

And it would make me wonder, How come it's going from bad to worse? I'm starting to follow you, God, and now all of a sudden it's getting worse. Well, we'll continue with the story.

They also gathered and camped in Bisba. Verse 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. There's got to be somebody around that we can tag to be the person that's going to lead an army to defeat the Ammonites.

There's got to be somebody. Who will we do? Who will we raise it? Who will we call? Who will we get? I find this interesting because at this point, the people are choosing their leader and not God, because they're not asking God who will do it.

[8 : 56] They're doing it themselves. They're saying, Who will do this? Chapter 11. Now, Jephthah, the Gileadite, was a valiant warrior.

So we found somebody. Yay, but there's something happening here. But he was the son of a harlot. Ew, no, that's not good. And Gilead was the father of Jephthah.

But 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.

Sorry, guys. You know, you don't get the inheritance is what they're saying. You're illegitimate. You're an illegitimate brother, son of our dad. And so you don't get any of the inheritance.

And to make sure you don't, we're driving you out. You don't get anything. 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.

[10:12] Now, these worthless fellows, because Jephthah got thrown out, you can imagine, since he doesn't have any inheritance or anything like that, he's got nothing to back them up financially or anything like that.

So these worthless fellows could very well be they're people just like him. And so worthless in this sense is meaning financially, not worthless in the sense that these guys are worthless guys and they're jerks and idiots and all that stuff.

That is not the connotation here, that this is, that they are poor people. And so that whole thing, birds of a feather flock together. And so you gather around you, you know, your friends and everything become people like you are.

And that way you can, commensur, whatever the word is. Yeah, that's the word. You can do that with one another.

So they gathered themselves about Jephthah, and they went out with him. It came about after a while that the sons of Ammon fought against Israel.

[11:20] So now Ammon is fighting them. When the sons of Ammon fought against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to get Jephthah from the land of Tob. So they figured it out.

All right, Jephthah is our man. He's a valiant warrior. And they said to Jephthah, Come and be our chief, that we may fight against the sons of Ammon. Then Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead like this, 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? Of course, we can look at that and draw a correlation to our own lives.

And we drive God out of our lives from time to time. With the things that we do. And then when we get in trouble, we cry out to him for help. Help.

Help. Oh, so now you want my help. Yep. Verse 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.

[12:31] 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? The elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, The Lord is witness between us.

Surely we will do as you have said. 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 Mizbah. Now Jephthah sent messengers to the king of the sons of Ammon.

So now he's going to try diplomacy. And so he's sending to the messengers of the king of the enemy, saying, What is between you and me that you have come to me to fight against my land? The king of the sons of Ammon said to the messenger of Jephthah, Because Israel took away my land when they came up from Egypt, from the Arnon, as far as the Jephah and the Jordan, therefore return the land peaceably now.

[13:39] So he's fighting because he says, he's thinking he has a right to the land. Well, first of all, he's got a little bit of his history mixed up. And so Jephthah is going to set him straight.

Let's see, verse 14. But Jephthah sent messengers again to the king of the sons of Ammon, and they said to him, Thus says Jephthah, Israel did not take away the land of Moab, nor the land of the sons of Ammon.

For when they came up from Egypt, and Israel went through the wilderness to the Red Sea, and came to Kadesh. See, now you've got to start remembering your history of everything that's been happening.

So if you can get pictures of all that. Then Israel sent messengers to the king of Edom, saying, Please, let us pass through your land. The king of Edom would not listen.

And they also sent to the king of Moab, but he would not consent. So Israel remained at Kadesh. Then they went through the wilderness and around the land of Edom, and the land of Moab, and came to the east side of the land of Moab, and they camped beyond the Arnon.

[14:52] But they did not enter the territory of Moab, for the Arnon was the border of Moab. Again, you're picturing all this. He's given the history.

And Israel sent messengers to Sihon, king of the Amorites, the king of Heshbon. And Israel said to him, Please let us pass through your land to our place.

But Sihon did not trust Israel to pass through his territory. So Sihon gathered all his people, encamped in Jahaz, and fought with Israel.

The Lord, the God of Israel, gave Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel. And they defeated them. So Israel possessed all the land of the Amorites, the inhabitants of that country.

So they possessed all the territory of the Amorites from the Arnon as far as the Jabbok, and from the wilderness as far as the Jordan. Nice little history lesson.

[15:54] Since, now the Lord, the God of Israel, drove out the Amorites from before his people Israel. Are you then to possess it? Don't forget, this is a message he sent to the king.

Do you not possess what Chemosh, or another name for Chemosh, and they're talking about one of their gods, is Molech. Do you not possess what Molech, your God, gives you to possess?

So whatever the Lord, our God, has driven out before us, we will possess. Now, are you any better than Balak, the son of the poor, king of Moab?

Did he ever strive with Israel, or did he ever fight against them? While Israel lived in Heshbon, in its villages, and in Aurora, and its villages, and all the cities that are on the banks of the Arnon, 300 years, why did you not recover them within that time?

You've had 300 years to claim your land. You've done nothing, and now you want it back. Don't understand what's going on. I, therefore, have not sinned against you, but you are doing me wrong by making war against me.

[17:05] May the Lord, the judge, judge today between the sons of Israel and the sons of Ammon. What's the response? But the king of the sons of Ammon disregarded the message which Japheth sent him.

He said, nope, don't care, not going to listen to reason. So, this is where we get into a part of the story that just really confuses people and gets them riled up in the spirit because it's a tough part of the story of what's going to go on here.

Verse 29, Now, the spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah so that he passed through Gilead and Manasseh.

Then he passed through Mizpah of Gilead, and from Mizpah of Gilead he went on to the sons of Ammon. So, he's going through these areas of the different tribes and he's gathering an army.

That's basically what's happening at this point. And because the spirit of the Lord came upon him, the people were following him, and so he's gathering an army. It doesn't tell us all that, but that is what is happening at this point.

[18:19] In fact, the battle and everything is very short, is a very short part of this entire story, the delivering the people. So, verse 30, Jephthah made a vow to the Lord and said, If you will indeed give the sons of Ammon into my hand, then it shall be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the sons of Ammon, it shall be the Lord's and I will offer it up as a burnt offering.

made a vow. Oops. What a heck of a vow. Stop there for a minute because we may not understand yet, if you haven't seen this story or read this story before, of how, what this vow all entails or what it's going to, how it's going to unfold.

But, pausing there for a moment, because we all, in one form or another, form or another, or at a time or another, make vows to God.

I almost made a vow this morning, a foolish vow. And, here I am studying this stuff. At my work, I am on call right now, and so I have to respond to an emergency.

That's the only reason why they call. And I am on call right now. And, so, if my phone rings, I have to leave. That's the truth.

[19:56] It's the condition of my employment. And so, once every six weeks, I am on call for a week. And this is one of those times. So, I'm thinking, Lord, gosh, I'm going to be up here preaching your word and everything.

Please don't let there be a call for me to have to go. I don't want to. I don't want to shortchange the people. I don't, I want to be able to speak your word and stuff.

So, I was making a deal with him. I was saying, Lord, if you just keep them, keep an emergency call quiet until after the sermon, you can do a hundred of them after that, and it'll be just fine.

What a stupid thing. I only thought it. I did not say it. Because, otherwise, there would probably be a hundred, emergency call between after the sermon and Wednesday when I'm off call.

So, I almost made a foolish vow and the Lord has just shown me. Are you going to do that, Mark?

No, no, I'm not going to do that. So, my phone is actually on silent and I don't care if there's a call.

[21 : 05] I trust the Lord that he can stave that off and I'm going to have faith in that and trust in that and I won't get in trouble by my employer for not answering my phone because there will be no call.

Anyway, so vows. We all do it one way or the other. You know, hey, if I, if you do this, Lord, then I'll do this. Get me out of this pickle, I'll do this and then we don't do it.

Anyway, you guys know what I'm talking about. We all do it from time to time and it's just, you need to be careful with those vows. Let's see if I want to go into this part next.

No, we'll get into that in a minute. Let's just see what happens. So, verse 32, so Jephthah crossed over to the sons of Ammon to fight against them and the Lord gave them into his hand.

He struck them with a very great slaughter from Aror to the entrance of Minith. Twenty cities and as far as Abu, whatever that place is, so the sons of Ammon were subdued before the sons of Israel.

[22 : 15] That's the whole battle, right? That's all we hear about right there. That's it. A great, huge battle. We don't know how many people died. We don't know how many people went with him. We just know that the people of Gilead were delivered from their oppressor and so that tells me that the, obviously the battle is not the, important part to focus on in this whole story of Japheth.

Japheth. Japheth. And so there's more to it. Let's find out. Verse 34. So, when Japheth came to his house, remember of his vow, at Mizpah, behold, his daughter was coming out to meet him with tambourines and with dancing.

Now she was his one and only child. Besides her, he had no son or daughter. What was his vow? Whatever first came out, I'm going to sacrifice?

When he saw her, he tore his clothes and said, alas, my daughter, you have brought me very low and you are among those who trouble me for I have given my word to the Lord and I cannot take it back.

What did he say he would do? Go back into verse 31. When I return in peace from the sons of Ammon, it shall be the Lord's and I will offer it up as a burnt offering.

[23 : 56] Who in their right mind would do that? What in the world is going on here? Did he think an animal was going to come out of his house? Isn't that?

But they say in the writings how it was written that he full knew, full well expected it to be a human being that was going to come out.

He didn't know it was going to be his daughter. That surprised him. So, he was shocked at that. But anybody else that came out, he was willing, he was saying, hey, it's going to be the Lord's and I'll offer it up as a burnt offering.

You can't get around those words. And I will offer it up as a burnt offering. You look at him, you look at him, and certainly there's different meanings of these words in there. Oh no, this is exactly how it's translated.

And when I read this, when I first read it, when I first heard about it, I was trying to rescue Jephthah, I was trying to rescue God, I was trying to rescue scripture and say, this cannot be what I'm reading.

[25 : 07] This cannot be true. Why would God put something in here like this? And it would be fine if there were a different outcome. Let's look at what happens. Verse 36, So she said to him, My father, you have given your word to the Lord.

Do to me as you have said, since the Lord has avenged you of your enemies, the sons of Ammon. She's saying, it appears, hey, you gave your word, dad?

You need to keep your word. That's important. Do to me as you said, as you vowed to the Lord. What's that saying?

That he's going to offer her up as a human burnt sacrifice. Now, does God condone that?

Does he say that's okay? Of course not. So many places in scripture, he condemns that behavior. You don't do that. So why, as we read, as we go anywhere else in the story here, any part coming up to this part, there's no condemnation of what Jephthah vowed.

[26 : 31] There was the author of the book, who is the Holy Spirit. He inspired man to write this. He didn't, there's no judgment here at all.

It just, I look at this and I'm going, what is going on? Why don't you address this issue? I don't get it. But you're letting it play out.

Very strange. So she says that, you know, Father, you've given your word and you need to do it. In Psalm 15, 4, the ending of it says, he who swears to his own hurt, does not change.

In other words, when you make a vow, you keep that vow even to your own hurt. And you can put other words in there too. A vow, a commitment, a promise to God, you're supposed to, even to your own hurt, keep that promise, keep that vow.

These are the lessons that are traditionally taught with this passage that if you make a vow, no matter how absurd, how wrong it is, you need to keep it.

[27 : 54] You need to be a person of your word. In Ecclesiastes 5, 4, when you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it, for he takes no delight in fools.

Pay what you vow. Then we have better yet, Jesus' own words about oaths and vows.

Matthew 5, 33, but I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is the footstool of his feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king, nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black, but let your statement be yes, yes, or no, no.

Anything beyond these is from the evil one. So Jesus says, don't even make a vow, don't even go there, because you're going to need to keep it.

You make a vow, you need to keep it. Jephthah made a vow. His daughter said, you need to keep it. Did she understand all about this, the laws and stuff?

[29 : 10] Apparently, to some degree. But why would Jephthah make a vow that said that he would offer whatever first came out as up as a burnt offering?

You've got to remember where he's living, and who he's living amongst. He's living amongst the other nations, the other nations that were supposed to be driven out from the land of Israel that God had given them.

But they didn't do it, and that's why they kept falling back into idolatry. Well, part of this idolatry that was going on was child sacrifice.

The god of Moloch, he's a statue with arms out like this, and they got him roasting red hot, and they placed children on the arms.

And they did it to appease their god, Moloch, and to also have victory in battles in the such. This is where Jephthah is living, is amongst this.

[30 : 20] So it's probably just natural for him to say, God, if you give me the victory, I'm going to dedicate it to you, and it will be yours, and it will be a burnt offering.

So do we blame him? Do we understand where he's coming from? You know, if Jephthah's, I'll read this part, if Jephthah's impetuous declaration received immediate censure, the reader us, might feel less obligated to stick with the text and seek out a deeper meaning.

In other words, if at this point there had been something where God spoke and said, and this displeased the Lord, the Lord did not condone this, whatever, whatever way, or that he stopped it, whatever.

If something like that were inputted into this, we would just be able to just go on. But by there not being any condemnation, by there not addressing the obvious tragic vow that he made, it causes us to dig deeper, which is a good thing.

So, that's what we're doing. We're digging deeper to find out what is really going on here. It would be easy to dismiss Jephthah as a mere, misguided, world-influenced Israelite, an ignorant worshiper of Yahweh, and, at the very least, a bad father.

[32 : 00] Because no such condemnation is forthcoming, however, the reader is forced to struggle with the text and ask more about what may be going on in the deeper than surface reading.

I hope you would agree with that. I don't know if you guys have ever read this story, but if you have, I would hope that it would cause you to pause and say, what is going on here?

There's got to be something here, and you start to dig into it, and then you give up because you're reading all these commentaries of what's going on, different views and everything, which I will give you right now.

There are two popular views that are given, and I will not give my answer, my take on which one I cite on, but in the original Hebrew, the word and, A-N-D, can be translated, it's Vav, or I, I don't even know how to say it in Hebrew.

Anyway, so the word that they use to translate as and can also be translated as or, all right, so this is a very popular reading of this.

[33 : 21] Let's go back up to verse 31 in the part, then it shall be that whatever comes out of the door of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the sons of Ammon, it shall be the Lord's, and here it says, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering.

So if you put in there in place the word or, this is how it reads, I return in peace to the sons of Ammon, it shall be the Lord's, or I will offer it up as a burnt offering.

So he was leaving the door open, he could make it whichever way he wanted to do it. That's if you throw that word or in there, and trust me, that's what I wanted to do.

I want to put that word or. If it can be translated and or, I'm putting in or, but why didn't the translators for the longest time, there are a few translations now that have it in there, but very few do.

Most translations leave the and, I will offer it up as a burnt offering in there. The first century, hmm? So, which is right?

[34 : 36] That's the question, which one is right? And so you need to dig deeper and to find out the first century Christians up until the, I forget, the sixth century, something like that, that all of them said it's exactly like it reads right here, and it's not or.

It wasn't until they started becoming uncomfortable with the story, and I'm not sure if it's just the Catholic Church, and it was a big part of the Catholic Church, where they didn't like the story because, just of how it read, and it didn't sound very well, but also in that time that they started having females that started dedicating their lives to the church, and so they became the nuns, and so in becoming a nun, that you renounce your virginity, and your, not renounce, whatever, anyway, you say, you put that aside, and you say, I'm not going to have kids, and so I'm going to dedicate my life to you, and so that's why in the rest of the story here, let's go and look at it real quick, let's see, she said, verse 37, she said to her father, let this thing be done to me, let me alone two months, that I may go to the mountains, and weep because of my virginity, I and my companions, then he said, go, he sent her away for two months, and she left with her companions, and wept on the mountain because of her virginity, at the end of two months, she returned to her father, who did to her according to the vow which he had made, and if we use the word or, so that he at this point dedicated her to the Lord, and didn't do the burnt offering because that was the or, he was going to do either or, dedicate her to the Lord, or do a burnt offering, well he chose to dedicate her to the Lord, took her to the temple, she was going to remain a virgin forever, and that's why it said that she had no relationship with a man, anyway, that's why the or became popular because it fit in with, it became reasonable, it became palatable to be able to accept this story and say, yeah, there, now we feel good, we've rescued

God, we've rescued Jephthah, we rescued scripture, that's good, now I feel good, now we can go on, right, however, like I said, only a few translations keep the or in there, but the scholars, and they wanted very badly for that to be the truth of this story too, but as scholars look at the verbiage, the nouns, the verbs, all the stuff, how it fits in the sentence and everything in the original Hebrew, they cannot help but come to the conclusion that it's and, and a burnt offering, so that's where the majority of people, scholars, have settled on, you will find, obviously, some preachers that will preach and say that it's or, because they want it to be acceptable, and I get it, I was going to come, I mean, as of Friday, that's what you guys were going to get, was the or, because I read all that, I'm going, yes, sweet, now I can make this wonderful and everybody lives happily ever after type thing, but after I read more and more, I came to the, I told you I wasn't going to say, but I came to the same conclusion, it's and, something else is going on here, it's weird, all right, so, let's continue with our story, let me make sure I didn't leave anything out, oh, here was another thing, this was pretty neat, in Leviticus 5, 4 through 6, and this has to do with, if you made a vow, and it happened to be a rash vow, oath, okay, it says, if anyone utters with his lips a rash oath to do evil or to do good, any sort of rash oath that people swear, and it is hidden from them, meaning that they don't understand what they're saying, they're just making a vow, when he comes to know it, when he goes, ah, that's what

[39 : 26] I said, oops, and he realizes his guilt in any of these, when he realizes his guilt in any of these, and confesses the sin, what it's getting at, to break it down, if a person makes a vow, and it would lead to breaking of another law of God's, in this case, human sacrifice, such as murder or sacrifice, then the person was not obligated to fulfill the vow, but was required to make a trespass

offering.

So at any point, if Jephthah knew his Bible, he could have claimed that. He could have at any point said, oops, I made a rash vow, I didn't mean to, ah, here's the money, and then get out of it, and he could have done that, but we're not told that he did that, and in fact, we are told at the end of the two months she returned to her father, who did to her according to the vow which he had made, and she had no relationship with man.

Thus it became a custom in Israel that the daughters of Israel went yearly to commemorate the daughter of Jephthah, the Gileadite, four days in the year. my translation says that they lamented, which to me, further shows that he was exactly, very good.

There are, the other word that's used instead of commemorate is to lament. Some people try to put in there the word communicate, that they went up to communicate, and because they're saying that she now lives up in the mountain, and she's living the life serving God somehow, up in the mountains, and she is a perpetual virgin, and they're just going up there to lament, or to communicate with her about that.

And it's like, also, pausing for a second, that why would the lamenting of virginity, and it's because it was so important to the Israelites to be fruitful and multiply, and to pass on your lineage, to pass on your line, and so to be barren or to not have children was a huge disgrace, and so that's why she was saying, alas, you know, I don't have any kids, I'm a virgin, and she's very distraught about that. [42 : 08] I mean, she's more distraught about not being able to have kids and remaining a virgin than she is about dying. Seems kind of weird, but that's how important having children were to them.

Let's see. I've got all kinds of notes on this stuff.

Again, I'm going to read some of this stuff only because my thoughts were better at that time when I was putting this stuff down, but they're also all over the place, so let's see if we can't make some sense of it.

We find this story appalling because we read of the vow and it being fulfilled, human sacrifice. How can God condone this or not stop it from happening? And we already said that Jephthah grew up among the idolatrous nations.

It's no big deal to him. Jephthah was surprised who had to be sacrificed his daughter. And then also in this story we see another reason why God wanted the Amorites, the Hittites, the Jebusites, all of them removed from the land because of the influence that they're having on the people.

[43 : 23] I mean, again, Jephthah is, it's no big deal to him. It's just part of the life now that we offer up to the gods a human sacrifice.

And so that's how much it influenced or infiltrated into their culture, into the Israelites' culture. And God wants nothing to do with that.

He wants them wiped out. So the nation of Israel, if you also noticed, was slipping from the stories earlier, starting in Judges 2, that they're slipping deeper, deeper, deeper, and deeper into idolatry as being evidenced by this child worship.

The nation of Israel compromised so much in their worship that they messed the true and living God with the gods of the enemy. In order to get victory, you had to promise an appeasement or a sacrifice to obtain it.

So the gods we read about in the book of Judges, this was interesting to me when I found this stuff out, that just some of them, it's the Baals, the Asterix, Molech, so many other gods and everything.

[44 : 39] Well, we read about them and we're going, you know, what could that be? But guess what? Those same gods are around today. Now you may better recognize them as, you ready for this?

Zeus, Aphrodite, Poseidon, Kronos, Thor, Hercules, it's the same gods. The Greeks just simply took it and made it into their culture.

They don't worship them the way that the other pagan nations did, but it's the same gods, just a different name.

I was very surprised to find that and to see how it just developed into these gods now. And when we hear those names, the Greek gods, it's palpable because, palpable, because, they are just a myth, right?

It's Greek mythology. And who believes that stuff is real? Well, guess what again? These same people, these same gods, they're worshipped in theaters, in our homes, they're worshipped on

t-shirts, on lunch boxes, and they're worshipped as superheroes.

[46 : 05] In fact, we want to emulate them and we wish at times we were them. Can you imagine? Look what we've been duped into just going, yeah, this is wonderful, we go to the movies, yay, this superhero and stuff.

These are things we have to think about when we are subjecting ourselves to different parts of culture. It's hard. Hollywood is breaking down our conscience and breaking into our culture and families.

we root for them, the superheroes, even though their origins are from ancient gods of pagan. God says, you shall not behave thus towards the Lord your God.

For every abominable act which the Lord hates they have done for their gods. For they even burn their sons and daughters in the fire of their gods. Some of the abominable acts practiced by the Canaanites included gross sexual immorality, which included all forms of incest, homosexuality, and sex with animals.

They are engaged in the occult or hostile towards parents and offer their children as sacrifices. And these are also God's chosen people doing these things.

[47 : 32] When we read about these things, we're surprised. And then we think of this story and we think this can't be true. Gephthas, here's the other part. He's in the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews. That's the shocker, too, to me. He's in the book of Hebrews, enlisted as one of the pillars of faith.

He's listed in the hall of faith. Jephthah is. And then we find out next week, Samson is. And Samson's even worse. Well, I shouldn't say that Samson didn't sacrifice somebody at the burnt offering.

But that's just the point about somebody being in the hall of faith, is that it is their faith to be able, that God is going to allow them to subdue a kingdom that gets them into the hall of faith.

It's just simply the faith. It's not their normal life or anything like that. If we did that, we would start questioning everybody, of course. we'd start questioning David and the whole thing with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband.

[48 : 48] And then you got Moses who murdered the guy and buried him in the sand. I mean, on and on we can go. There are just so many stories because the word of God does not hide from reality, from the truth.

It doesn't sugarcoat anything. No, it gives it like it is. That's why this story is in here. It's like it is. It's not sugarcoated. We don't like it. We say, what's going on?

Don't like it. But why do we not like that so much when there's other things out there that in our own modern world, do they shake us up?

Do they stir us to this point also? We got the stories of Stalin and Hitler, the Holocaust, and how about even bringing it closer home or more up to date?

The drug cartels that are out there and the abominable things that they do, human trafficking, pornography, abortion, redefining marriage and gender, on and on it goes.

[49 : 53] All this stuff is out there. It's just amazing to me. When we pull back from the shock of our conscience, and calm our hearts, letting the Holy Spirit minister to us, we start to realize and remember that all of this stuff will be addressed someday.

Don't worry, God will not be mocked. He will address all these issues in his time, in his way. So don't be shocked by all this stuff.

Remember also that God used flawed people. None of us are perfect, we all sin, and when God uses us, it's not that he is condoning our sinful practice, because sometimes we can think that we're in the middle of sinning, and God's, that our life, because we've taken a detour for a while, and God still uses us.

That amazes me. He still uses us, even while we're in the midst of our sins. grace, but that's also God's grace and mercy, and what a grace it is, right?

All right, let's move on, but we're going to come back to this in just a few minutes. Chapter 12, then the men of Ephraim were summoned, who summoned them, I wonder, it must have been God again, because something's going on again, and they crossed to Zaphon, and said to Jephthah, why did you cross over to fight against the sons of Ammon without calling us to go with you?

[51 : 38] We will burn your house down on you. Good old Ephraimites, they are always getting in the mix of this stuff, the arguments and the fights among their brethren.

Jephthah said to them, I and my people were at great strife with the sons of Ammon. When I called you, you did not deliver me from their hand. In other words, you didn't come up to help. When I saw that you would not deliver me, I took my life in my own hands and crossed over against the sons of Ammon and the Lord gave them into my hand.

Why then have you come up to me this day to fight against me? Then Jephthah gathered all the men of Gilead and fought Ephraim. So we got a civil war going on here.

And the men of Gilead defeated Ephraim because they said, you are fugitives of Ephraim, O Giladites, in the midst of the Ephraim and in the midst of Manasseh.

Verse 5, the Gileadites captured the fords of the Jordan opposite Ephraim and it happened when any of the fugitives of Ephraim said, let me cross over, the men of Gilead would say to him, are you an Ephraimite?

[52 : 46] If he said no, then he said, then they said, then they would say to him, say now, Shibboleth. but he said, Shibboleth, for he could not pronounce it correctly.

Then they seized him and slew him at the fords of the Jordan. Thus there fell at that time 42,000 of Ephraim. Jephthah judged Israel six years, then Jephthah, the Gileadite, died and was buried in one of the cities of Gilead.

So reads the story, so reads God's word of this Jephthah story. I'm going to, yeah, guess what guys, there's a little test here.

I've got a test for everybody. Can I have you guys pass these out please? Hope you all have pencils. I want your names on the top so I can judge you.

immensely and greatly and see who was listening. Is it open book or a closed book? Oh, it's open book.

[54 : 01] It's not a curve. Is it multiple choice? Multiple choice? No, no multiple choice in here. All right, so after reading this and researching it, I still did not come away feeling very good about this story.

I still was like, I don't like what I'm reading. What you're getting is in order of events in Judges. It's an outline of this particular, these two chapters that we just read. It's not really a test. I just thought I'd put the fear of God in you.

Oh, no, I didn't listen. Oh, no. And you don't have to put your name on the top of it. You can keep it in fact. so we're good. I got that.

But like what I was saying that this story still, there's something wrong, something I'm not getting with this story.

[55 : 13] And so there's got to be more to this story. what is the application of this for our own lives? Okay, we can go to the common application, the application that most churches will, preachers will give you, and that of course is don't make a rash vow.

In fact, don't make a vow at all. And then, but if you do make a vow or a commitment or a promise, keep it. And whatever hurt to you, keep it.

That's usually where this sermon winds up going, which is fine. It's definitely that, but that's on the surface. That's on the surface.

Remember, we're not told, we're not, we're not shown anywhere where this vow was condemned because it's supposed to cause us to dig deeper into the story.

So that means to me that something else is going on here. Something else is trying to be shown.

But what is that? If we look at the order of events, people did evil in the sight of the Lord, God sends the enemy to oppress the people, the people cry out for deliverance, God says, let your God save you, the people get rid of their idols, God gathers the enemy for war, a leader is chosen, he was born illegitimate.

[56 : 43] These are all the things that are in the story, as you remember. He was cast out by his family, he hung out with the rejects of society, he was called upon for help when the people needed deliverance from the enemy, he was made leader over the people, he gave a history lesson of who legitimately belonged in the land, in other words, he was teaching them, the spirit of the Lord came upon him, he made a vow about winning and sacrificing, he fought and won a battle, his one and only daughter became the subject of the vow, she came out and greeted him with tambourines and dance, he cried over her, she was a virgin, I have on there no other heirs, I'd rather say no husband, because that is germane to what, the rest of what I've seen, also went up, she went up to the mountains to wail her virginity for two months, returned and was offered as a burnt offering or service to God, the tribe Ephraim, wants to know why they weren't asked to help in the battle,

Jephthah has control of the river Jordan and he decides who crosses and who doesn't and they must say a name in order to cross over Shibboleth or Sibboleth or you know, Shibboleth, they have to be able to say, I probably wouldn't be able to cross they're killing me but it's like, oh, you blew that, but anyway, so, I don't know about you guys but when you look at this outline like this, is anything popping out at you?

Do you see any pattern here? Have you seen this type of outline that's happened before?

Let's look at it just a little bit more closely. people did evil in the sight of the Lord, human beings, humankind, okay, all mankind.

God sends the enemy to oppress us from time to time because we need it. When we finally come to our senses and we get tired of the oppression, we cry out for deliverance and God says from time to time, hey, you made your bed, now lie in it type thing.

[59 : 10] In other words, he's not going to be mean, he's trying to drive home a point. Well, you've decided that this was going to be your savior, this was going to help you out, let's just see how well it does.

Find out it doesn't. So then we say, we do a recommitment and we say, I'm going to get rid of these things that are holding me back and what happens?

Now God gathers the enemy for war because he wants us to see how serious you are and so now it looks worse than it did before and now you're questioning, should I even be following God or what? You know, whatever is happening in our life, but God does take pity and he raises up a leader, a deliverer. Who could that deliverer be in our life?

It's the Sunday school answer. Yay, Jesus! Part here where it says born illegitimate. Of course he wasn't born illegitimate.

[60 : 21] But, he was perceived to be illegitimate because Mary, the virgin, conceived and had a child.

Come on, right? Good story, good cover-up, not buying it. So, then as he gets older, he's cast out by his brothers in the sense that he doesn't want anything to do with them.

he's cast out by his own tribe, his own people. They cast him out. And, he hung out with the rejects of society, the prostitutes, the tax collectors.

he hung out with the rough and tough fishermen. You see it so far? He was called upon for help when the people needed deliverance from the enemy.

We already know that. And, he eventually became leader over the people, or he will be. Right now, he's not. He is in some of our lives.

[61 : 29] he gave a history lesson of who legitimately belongs in the land. He taught the people the history of being delivered, all the wonderful things that God had done for them, for us.

The spirit of the Lord came upon him. Now, this is where it takes a little bit of a detour. He made a vow about winning and sacrificing.

This is where I got stuck on the analogy and saying, I think that Jephthah is a picture of Jesus. And, this story is a picture of the life of Jesus.

But, when I got to this part, I got stuck. Going, this does not fit. Come on, it's got to fit. What's wrong here? So, we'll get back to that.

He fought and won a great battle. We know which battle that was. Against death. Right? He died for our sins. His one and only daughter became the subject of the vow.

[62 : 38] Again, how does this fit into this? See it. She came out and greeted him with tambourines. This may give you a clue. She came out and greeted him with tambourines and dance.

Does that remind you of anything the week before he was crucified? What happened? Entry into Jerusalem. That's right. The triumphal entry.

Lay down the palms and everybody shouting and screaming, Hosanna in the highest. Going to make him king, triumphant. You know, he's going to triumph. This is the people's take on it.

And of course, he didn't. So, but anyway, they did come out and greet him. And he cried over Jerusalem. Remember that? He was sorrowful that as a mother longs to gather her chicks under her wing.

And you guys know that. She was a virgin. Now, we're talking about the only daughter. She was a virgin. She had no husband.

[63 : 45] Went up to the mountains to boil her virginity for two months, returned and was offered as a burnt offering or service to God. So, we don't get that part of this where we start to get into the vow and then who the daughter is.

We have a clue. Could be Israel. Almost seems like. Now, we jump down to the tribe. Ephraim wants to know why they weren't asked to help.

Let me see if I got my note on. In the Old Testament, Ephraim often is used to represent the northern kingdom of Israel as a whole. This was a kingdom that separated from the rightful tribe of kingship and established a rival, unordained monarchy and priesthood.

Again, if you know the history of Israel. They no longer recognized their proper king and quickly set up a false cultic worship center. In this way, they represented all who leave the proper boundaries established by God in search of self- established greener pastures.

Ephraim was upset when God's plan for victory did not unfold the way they thought. That this usurping tribe would assert itself forcefully against our Jesus type after he had done the work of freeing God's people from the evil forces is not a shock to the thoughtful Jesus-centric reader.

[65 : 20] What that means is that when we're reading scripture, we're supposed to look for Jesus in everything, right? A type of, something that represents him.

That's what our goal is supposed to be. It's not about us. Yes, we can learn lessons and have applications and stuff for our lives, but ultimately, it's pointing to who Jesus was and how he's just throughout all the scriptures.

And that's why I love the Old Testament, because you really got to dig for it to find it and the correlations. So, the tribe of Ephraim wants to know why they weren't asked to help in the battle.

And Jethra, he now has control of the River Jordan. And who has control of the River Jordan? I believe that's Jesus. What do you think?

And what does the Jordan represent? And the crossing over into the promised land. Right? So, Jephthah gets to decide who crosses over and who doesn't.

[66 : 22] And he does it based on a simple test, a word. You have to say Shibboleth. And what would that be?

You have to say the name of Jesus, because he is the only way to get across into heaven. If you say Sibboleth, then you're not allowed in.

In other words, without declaring that Jesus is Lord and saying the name, the one name that gets you into heaven, and claiming that, you can't get in.

Right? You see the correlation here? I hope you do. see how all this fits together and points to that Jephthah is a type of Jesus. Now, back to the vow and winning the war and sacrifice.

I did not find this in scripture yet, because it just came to me this morning, because I was wrestling with this and saying, I don't know, Lord, you're going to have to give it to them, because I don't know. I have no idea how the rest of this part in here about the daughter and the sacrifice and all that fits in with this.

[67 : 43] I just still don't get it. So I wasn't able to look up certain scriptures that I wanted to, because it didn't come to me until about 7.30 this morning, so a little late.

But anyway, I would venture to say, again, I don't know what scripture to point you to, that there was a vow made in heaven that there had to be a sacrifice in order to save the people.

And that sacrifice had to be unblemished the Lamb of God. So hang with me on that for a minute. So that was the vow.

That if the battle got, or in order to win the battle, the sacrifice must be done. Hold on to that thought for a second.

The part where it says, his one and only daughter became the subject of the vow. daughter. We are told in Lamentations chapter 2, verse 13, we're given a, we're told who the virgin daughter is.

[69 : 10] To what will I liken you as I comfort you, O virgin daughter of Zion? Clearly says that it's Israel. So Israel is the only daughter of God.

Okay, following that so far? Again, see how it connects. She came out to greet him, we've already looked like that, looked at that. He cried over her, we looked at that. She was a virgin, at this point she had no husband.

Christ is supposed to be our husband, correct? He had, she had no husband at this point. But then, I think this is where, then it says, went up to the mountain, this part I still don't understand, went up to the mountain to wail her virginity for two months and when she returned, she was offered up as a

burnt offering.

And, so I don't understand that part. I don't know how that fits in, but somewhere it does. There's got to be two months that correlates with the nation of Israel and stuff.

However, I think this is also where the story takes a divergence because unlike Jephthah, what he should have done, what he should have done is given himself up as a sacrifice for his daughter.

[70 : 43] He made the vow, he should have done it. He should have said this is a rash vow and he should have given himself up for his daughter like Jesus did for his daughter, the nation of Israel and of course for us as well because we are grafted in to the family.

the deliverer stepped in and took her place and as we know, Jesus is the ultimate burnt sacrifice.

So do you see, to me, when I look at this story, it's all about Jesus. It's just telling the story of Jesus Jesus and how he is our deliverer.

I think that that's why we're not told, first of all, who the daughter's name was. Normally we're given a name. We're not even told that. We're supposed to figure it out ourselves by digging deep into the word of God, looking around, trying to find what all this means.

How does it, because these are just weird stories in here. When it says in verse 34, the end of verse 44, now she was his one and only child.

[72 : 07] What a weird thing to say. So that should make you pause and stop. Something going on here. Something is being told. What is being told? Beside her he had no son or daughter.

And then it goes on to say that, let's see, it goes on and on. so many times about being a virgin.

And so there's something in there about being a virgin. And there's also about the two months.

That's why I know that something is important in there. In three different places it says, let me alone two months that I may go to the mountains.

And then for two months she went away. And then at the end of the two months she returned. So we see these words repeated in here. And again, I haven't had time to develop the rest of this, but there's something else in there.

And I think it's going to be fascinating. So what this does for me is it takes a story that is very hard to digest and to accept and turns it into a wonderful story.

[73 : 12] Because if we see Jesus in here, he stepped in. and he became the sacrifice for us all.

I just hope that you guys can see that, that the lights go off or something like that for you. And if not, meditate on it. And I could be dead wrong here. I didn't find this stuff and other things, but it just popped out to me through reading of different things and just putting pieces together and going, wait, wait, I see a pattern here.

I see something. Anyway, so to me, the application is not only about making rash vows and keeping your commitment if you do, but to how important it is, the application for me is how important it is to dig deeper and mine the word of God.

Seek him as a precious jewel. Don't give up or you'll be a fool. Right? We sung it. Right?

When you're reading, find Jesus. He's not lost, but find him. All right. Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you that you can take stories that just seem so out there, so weird, so distasteful, and you can turn them around, just like you are able to do in our own life, turn our own life around when we've messed it up.

[74 : 48] And Jesus, that you came in to be our deliverer, to be our savior. And we just, we can never thank you enough for that, but may we show our gratitude by searching you more diligently, and not that we're making vows and promising that we're going to read your word three hours a day, however.

Father, that we would just make efforts and that we would appreciate all that you do do for us. So thank you for your love.

Thank you for your word. And we say this, Jesus, in your name. Amen. Amen.