

Judges 11 Jephthah, the Ninth Judge

11 Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a valiant warrior, but he was the son of a prostitute. And Gilead had fathered 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 men gathered around Jephthah, and they went wherever he did.

4 Now 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 leader, that we may fight against the sons of Ammon." 7 But 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 the sons of Ammon, and become our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead." 9 So Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, "If you bring me back to fight against the sons of Ammon and the LORD gives them up to me, will I become your head?" 10 And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, "The LORD is witness between us; be assured we will do as you have said." 11 Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and leader over them; and Jephthah spoke all his words before the LORD at Mizpah.

12 So Jephthah sent messengers to the king of the sons of Ammon, saying, "What conflict do you and I have, that you have come to me to fight against my land?" 13 And the king of the sons of Ammon said to the messengers of Jephthah, "It is because Israel took my land when they came up from Egypt, from the Arnon as far as the Jabbok and the Jordan; so return them peaceably now." 14 But Jephthah sent messengers once again to the king of the sons of Ammon,

15 and they said to him, "This is what Jephthah says: 'Israel did not take the land of Moab nor the land of the sons of Ammon. 16 For when they came up from Egypt, and Israel went through the wilderness to the Red Sea, and came to Kadesh, 17 then Israel sent messengers to the king of Edom, saying, "Please let us pass through your land"; but the king of Edom would not listen. And they also sent messengers to the king of Moab, but he would not consent. So Israel remained at Kadesh. 18 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; but they did not enter the territory of Moab, for the Arnon was the border of Moab. 19 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.”

20 But Sihon did not trust Israel to pass through his territory; so Sihon gathered all his people and camped in Jahaz, and fought with Israel. 21 And the LORD, the God of Israel, handed Sihon and all his people over to Israel, and they defeated them; so Israel took possession of all the land of the Amorites, the inhabitants of that country. 22 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. 23 And now the LORD, the God of Israel, has driven out the Amorites from His people Israel; so should you possess it?

24 Do you not possess what Chemosh your god gives you to possess? So whatever the LORD our God has dispossessed before us, we will possess it. 25 Now then, are you any better than Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab? Did he ever contend with Israel, or did he ever fight against them? 26 While Israel was living in Heshbon and its villages, and in Aroer and its villages, and in all the cities that are on the banks of the Arnon, three hundred years, why did you not recover them within that time? 27 So I have not sinned against you, but you are doing me wrong by making war against me. May the LORD, the Judge, judge today between the sons of Israel and the sons of Ammon.” 28 But the king of the sons of Ammon disregarded the message which Jephthah sent him.

Jephthah’s Tragic Vow

29 Now the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and 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. 30 And Jephthah made a vow to the LORD and said, “If You will indeed hand over to me the sons of Ammon, 31 then whatever comes out the doors of my house to meet me when I return safely from the sons of Ammon, it shall be the LORD’S, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering.” 32 So Jephthah crossed over to the sons of Ammon to fight against them; and the LORD handed them over to him. 33 He inflicted a very great defeat on them from Aroer to the entrance of Minnith, twenty cities, and as far as Abel-keramim. So the sons of Ammon were subdued before the sons of Israel.

34 But Jephthah came to his house at Mizpah, and behold, his daughter was coming out to meet him with tambourines and with dancing. And she was his one and only child; besides her he had no son or daughter. 35 So when he saw her, he tore his clothes and said, “Oh, my daughter! You have brought me disaster, and you are among those who trouble me; for I have given my word to the LORD, and I cannot take it back.” 36 So she said to him, “My father, you have given your word to the LORD; do to me just as you have said, since the LORD has brought you vengeance on your enemies, the sons of Ammon.” 37 And she said to her father, “Let this thing be done for me; allow me two months, so that I may go to the mountains and weep because of my virginity, I and my friends.” 38

Then he said, "Go." So he let her go for two months; and she left with her friends, and wept on the mountains because of her virginity.

39 And at the end of two months she returned to her father, who did to her what he had vowed; and she had no relations with a man. And it became a custom in Israel, 40 that the daughters of Israel went annually to commemorate the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite for four days in the year.

We will use five tools on our expedition that are built around five questions

What questions were provoked within you?

Did anything confuse you?

Did anything move you emotionally?

Did God instruct you to do something?

Did you gain any insight into God's character?

Pauls Observations and insights

1. A new judge is on the horizon, Jephthah the son of a harlot, who was a valiant warrior.
2. Because he was not a pure brother and of the same mother as his brothers, they drove him away. Why?
3. They did not want to share their family inheritance with him, so Jephthah fled!
4. What is it to flee?
5. Why did worthless fellows gather towards Jephthah?
6. Amon wages war against Israel, so Israel seek out Jephthah to see if he will lead them against their enemy Amon.
7. Jephthah replies, 'Why would you dare come and ask me to lead you? You drove me out from among you.'
8. 'Why would you expect that you could ask this of me?' I wonder what you would have done in response?
9. 'Because we are prepared to let you become our leader when you win these battles.'
10. Jephthah sought confirmation of this agreement with them through declaration, knowing God would be witnessing. Did he then not trust them?
11. Jephthah asked the kings of Amon 'why are you attacking Israel'?
12. The dispute was over land that had been fought over in previous battles.
13. Amon's kings put forward what they see as logical reasoning as to why they want the land back. They say Israel took it from us!
14. Jephthah's justification is - that is not true the battles were because Amon's kings historically refused to let Israel pass through the land when they came out of Egypt.
15. It was only then, under God, did Israel take possession of the land, having defeated the armies the kings sent against them.
16. Amon's kings disregarded what Jephthah had said.

17. Jephthah states 'you have had three hundred years to settle what you consider to be this injustice and you never did'.
18. Jephthah declares 'it is you that is making war against Israel, it is you who has sinned'.
19. Jephthah is happy to let God make the judgement as to who is in the right.
20. What is it for the Spirit of the Lord to come upon Jephthah?
21. Let your yes be yes and your no be no!
22. Why did Jephthah feel the need to make a vow to God to offer a sacrifice that ended up being his daughter?
23. Notice it is the Lord who fought and won the battles.
24. The statement vow that Jephthah made to the Lord was reckless! Have you ever done anything so foolish?
25. Would Jephthah have won the battle had he not made the vow? It was God who struck Amon.
26. When Jephthah's daughter came to meet him, he was in a conundrum that he could not get out of!
27. Did God want this to happen?
28. Did God win the battle because of the pledge?
29. This conundrum of soul must have been incredibly painful for Jephthah, but the daughter is accepting of her father's foolishness!
30. Why did she need two months mourning over her virginity?
31. Why did she ask to go to the mountains? And did Jephthah know she would come back?
32. Why did Israel set into motion, after this, a four day ritual ceremony on behalf of the girl? Was this in the will of God?