



Judges 11-12

Tape #7074
Judges 11-12
By Chuck Smith

Now we turn in our bibles to Judges, chapter eleven.

Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a man of valour, and the son of a harlot: and Gilead begat Jephthah (11:1).

Gilead was an area on the east bank on the Jordan. It was an area that was occupied by the tribe of Gath. There was a mountain range called Mount Gilead. This man Gilead somehow picked up the name of the area in which he lived. He had a son named Jephthah, who was a son of a harlot. His son Jephthah became a very mighty man of valor, but Gilead's wife had other sons.

And it came to pass in time, that the other sons ordered Jephthah out. They said unto him, You will not inherit our father's house; for you are the son of a strange woman. [So, Jephthah was more or less banished from the area of his family, his brothers.] And Jephthah fled from his brothers and he dwelt in the land of Tob: and there were gathered with him vain men, and they went out with him (11:2-3).

The area of Tob would be east of Gilead, and into the area of Syria. It is necessary to understand that he grew up then in this area of Syria, which was an area that was filled with paganism. He became sort of a Robin Hood, of sorts. They are gathered around him, a bunch of rugged fellows, who made their living by marauding the villages, and plundering the area. Just a bunch of bandits, really. He was sort of looked upon as a Robin Hood type. You see it was alright to plunder a village as long as it was the village of an enemy. You wouldn't plunder your own, but with an enemy village, if you took and plundered it, people looked at that as an okay thing.

And it came to pass in the process of time, that the children of Ammon made war against Israel. And so it was, that when the children of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob (11:4):

Evidently they realized that they didn't have any man with strong leadership characteristics. They didn't have anyone who was experienced in warfare at all as was this fellow Jephthah. So, they came on over to the land of Tob, to recruit his services, against this invasion by the king of Ammon.

And they said to Jephthah, Come, and be our captain, that we may fight with the children of Ammon. [And Jephthah was a little reluctant to go immediately go with them.] He said, Did you not hate me, you expelled me out of my father's house? why do you come to me now just because you're in distress (11:6-7)?

So he's more or less turning them down. "You didn't want me before, you kicked me out of the place. Now you're in trouble and you come for help." He's just reluctant to join forces with them.

And the elders of Gilead said, We turn to you now, that you might go with us, and fight against the children of Ammon, and be the head over all of the inhabitants of Gilead. ["Hey, we want to make you our chief! The head over all the area of Gilead."] And Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, If you bring me home again to fight against the children of Ammon, and the Lord deliver them before me, shall I be your head? And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, The Lord be witness between us, if we do not so according to your words (11:8-10).

In other words, they took a poll, they swore to him before the Lord, that if indeed he came, he led them to victory over the people of Ammon, that they would make him the ruler over their territory. They swore before the Lord that that would be so.

Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and captain over them: and Jephthah uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh (11:11).

You remember when Jacob was fleeing from his uncle Laban, and Laban finally caught up with him. That they had this confrontation. A rather tense situation, and as they departed, Laban said unto Jacob, "Mizpeh". The Lord watch after me and thee while we're absent one from another." Now many people have

taken that as a very beautiful kind of parting statement. You know, “The Lord walks between us while we’re absent from each other”.

But, in reality it was not intended to be a pleasant parting. It was a really tense parting and really sort of transliterated it would be, “Now that you are leaving with my daughters and I can’t watch over you anymore, may the Lord watch over you”. It’s really a sharp barb And they called the place where they parted Mizpeh. It was in this area of Gilead. So they’re back where Jacob and Laban had their confrontation, and it became a city and this is the place where he came, in the land of Gilead; and, more or less set up his headquarters. Moved his family here.

And Jephthah sent messengers unto the king of the children of Ammon, saying, What have you to do with me, that you are come against me to fight in my land. [Notice he lays claim to the land. “You’re coming to fight against me in my land. What’s your problem?”] And the king of the children of Ammon answered unto the messengers of Jephthah, Because Israel took away my land, when they came out of Egypt, from Arnon [Which is the river to the south.] even unto Jabbok, [Which is the river that Jacob crossed over, you remember when he crossed over Jabbok the second time coming back from his uncle Laban. He said, “When I crossed over this stream, all I had was a staff, but now, God has blessed me so much I’ve had to divide my group into two companies. Great is thy faithfulness O God, morning by morning the mercies of God I see”. And so, this stream Jabbok. We go back to the times of Jacob somewhat in this particular territory here. He’s claiming that the Israelites took from Ammon, this territory from the Arnon to Jabbok, unto the Jordan river.] now therefore restore those lands again peaceably. [In other words you know, “Just give us back our land.”] And Jephthah sent messengers again unto the king of the children of Ammon: And he said unto him, Thus saith Jephthah, Israel did not take away the land of Moab, nor the land of the children of Ammon: But when Israel came up from Egypt, and walked through the wilderness unto the Red sea, they came to Kadesh; Then Israel sent messengers to the king of Edom, saying, Let me, I pray thee, pass through thy land: but the king of Edom would not hearken thereto. And in like manner they sent to the king of Moab: and he would not consent: and Israel stayed in Kadesh. Then they went along through the wilderness, and encircled the land of Edom, and the land of Moab, and they came by the east side of the land of Moab, and they pitched on the other side of Arnon, but came not within the border of Moab: for Arnon was the border of Moab. And Israel sent messengers unto Sihon king of the Amorites, the king of Heshbon; and Israel said unto him, Let us pass, we pray thee, through thy land into my place. But Sihon trusted not Israel to pass through his coast: but Sihon gathered all his people together, and pitched in Jahaz, and fought against Israel. And the Lord God of Israel delivered Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they smote them: and so Israel possessed all of the land of the Amorites, the inhabitants of the country (11:12-21).

Now, Jephthah was a good student of history. You will find that he is giving an accurate account of what happened. This is an accurate historical account. He gets an A in his history class. He has studied well, the history of the people. What he is saying is exactly true.

When the children of Israel came out of Egypt, they came up into the land of Israel, they came to Kadesh Barnea. It was there that the ten spies came back with the evil report, and the people, struck with fear, did not go directly into the land, and God there said, “Alright, because you haven’t believed me and trusted me, you’re gonna roam in the wilderness until you all die.” And they said, “Come on we’ll go”, and they tried to go, and they were defeated. So, then they wanted to sort of encircle the land of Canaan, going up on the opposite side of the Dead sea, and the Jordan river on the eastern side, which would cause them to pass through the land of Edom, and then through the land of Moab.

They said to the king of Edom, they said, “We want to pass through the land, we’ll eat our own food we won’t touch your food or crops or whatever, but we just want passage through your land”. But the king of Edom said, “No”. And so they sent to the king of Moab. He answered, “No”, and so they made a long journey into the wilderness, encircling around behind the nations of Edom and Moab. They came then back towards the land, between the valley of the Arnon and the Jabbok, which was not the land of Moab or Ammon. They did not take the land of Ammon. Actually, this was the land of the Amorites. Sihon was the king of the Amorites.

So Jephthah is absolutely correct. These people are laying claim to land that did not belong to them. Now, they had claimed this land earlier, way back in their history. But it actually belonged to the Amorites at the time that Moses conquered this land. He conquered Sihon and the Amorites and he took the land from the Amorites, not from Moab. So, Jephthah is absolutely correct and if you go back to Numbers and a couple of chapters of Deuteronomy, you'll see how accurately he is declaring their history. In fact he's pretty much quoting verbatim out of Numbers and Deuteronomy. So the fellow's a good student. He knows well the history. The king of Ammon is claiming this as his territory. It never did belong to him. The Israelites did not take it from him. They took it from Sihon, the king of the Amorites. "So, the Lord God of Israel delivered Sihon and all of his people into the hand of Israel, and they smote them: so Israel possessed all the land of the Amorites, the inhabitants of that country."

And they possessed all the coasts of the Amorites, from Arnon even unto Jabbok, and from the wilderness even to the Jordan river. So now the Lord God of Israel has dispossessed the Amorites from before his people, and why should you possess it? ["The Lord is the one who dispossessed the Amorites, why should you take it over?"] Will you not possess that which Chemosh your god gives you to possess? [You know, "Our God gave us this. Now you can possess what your god gives you."] So whomsoever the Lord our God shall drive out from before us, them will we possess. [We're gonna take the territory that God gives to us.] And now are you any thing better than Balak the son of Zippor, the king of Moab? did he ever strive against Israel, or did he ever fight against them, ["You know, God delivered Balak the Moabite king, and you're no better."] So while Israel dwelt in Heshbon and her towns, and in the Aroer and in her towns, and all of the cities that are along the coasts of Arnon, [Or the Arnon, or the shores, or the river, those that lived along the river] these three hundred years? why therefore did you not recover it within that time 11:22-26)?

It had been 300 years since Moses had conquered this area. This is about the year 1143, and it was about 1460 or so that Moses first conquered the land of the Amorites, and so "Hey we've had it for about 300 years. There are certain proprietary rights now! Why didn't you take it back then, you know earlier? What's your trouble now? Why are you trying now to take this land?"

Wherefore he said, I have not sinned against you, but you are doing wrong in warring against me: and the Lord the Judge be judge this day between the children of Israel and the children of Ammon. Howbeit the king of the children of Ammon hearkened not unto the words of Jephthah which he sent. And then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead, and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over unto the children of Ammon [So, he went through the territory, gathered the troops, and came out against the king of Ammon.] (11:27-29).

Now, Jephthah growing up in Syria, having been kicked out by his brothers and moving to Tob, actually grew up in a pagan culture. In the pagan culture in those days human sacrifice was a common occurrence. To us who live under the influence of western civilization, which has been highly influenced by the Christian ethic, human sacrifice is reprehensible. It's an abomination. It was to God, and the bible speaks all the way against human sacrifice, but it was a common practice among the other nations. Human sacrifice is something that was practiced not only among the nations of the middle east, it was something that was practiced even by the American Indians. By the Aztecs, the Mayans.

Human sacrifice is something that is practiced today by those who are in satanic cults. Into Satanism. As horrible as it is to our own consciousness, human sacrifice is practiced in the United States today, by those who are involved in Satanism and the satanic cults. You can talk to any major police department in the United States, and they will confirm the evidence of human sacrifice led by satanic groups. It's horrible! It's something that's repulsive to us. We can't conceive it! How a person could take another person's life, to sacrifice it to their god.

Jephthah coming from this pagan background, having been cast out of Israel, has a certain knowledge of God, but not a thorough knowledge. He has a knowledge of the law of God, but not a thorough knowledge. He has sort of a weird mixture of pagan practices along with the practices of Judaism.

[Because of this pagan background] *he vowed a vow unto the Lord and said, If you shall without fail deliver the children of Ammon into my hands, Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of*

my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering (11:30-31).

So, "Whoever comes out of the door of my house when I come home, I will offer it Lord to you, as a burnt offering". Now we read through the old testament how that in the worship of Molech, they were constantly burning their children in the fires, unto Molech. Common practice. Even the children of Israel practiced this in their time to come, and these were the things that brought God's judgement against them. Because they followed after the practices of the pagans around them and they were causing their children to pass through fire unto Molech. It was part of the worship of Baal.

In the history, in the Museum of Natural History, in Israel, you will see many little representations of Molech, or Baal. Little iron gods. These little iron gods have their little arms in front of them outstretched with their fingers, hands pointing upwards. That was so that they could cradle the babies. They would put them in the fire and heat them until they were glowing red, and then they would set their babies in their arms. That's what it was to cause your children to pass through the fires of Molech. Horrible! Repulsive! Reprehensible! Yet it was a common practice of the people. So here Jephthah, is making this horrible vow.

And Jephthah passed over to the children of Ammon to fight against them; and the Lord delivered them into his hands. And he smote them from Aroer even till you come to Minith, even twenty cities, and to the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel. And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; and beside her he had neither son nor daughter. And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he tore his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! you have brought me very low, you are one of them that trouble me, for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back (11:32-35).

Now, you wonder who it was that he expected to come out of the door of his house. You can pretty well guess, I guess because, he only had one child, a daughter, maybe he was expecting his wife to come out. Horrible thing indeed. His only daughter, his only child. Came out the door with a timbrel, the tambourine, and dancing, to celebrate her father's homecoming. Seeing her, his heart is torn.

Now here's the problem of his not knowing the whole law. For under the law, though it did declare that if you were to make a vow unto the Lord, you are to keep that vow and see that you keep it, yet in Leviticus, chapter twenty seven, the Lord spoke to Moses saying, "Speak unto the children of Israel, say to them, when a man shall make a singular vow, the persons shall be for the Lord by thy estimation. And thy estimation shall be of the male from twenty years old even unto sixty years old, even thy estimation shall be fifty shekels of silver, after the shekel of the sanctuary. If it is a female, thirty shekels. If they are from five to twenty years old, then for a male it is twenty shekels, for a female ten."

No doubt she was between five and twenty years old, which means that he could have redeemed her from the vow. He could've instead have given the Lord, ten shekels of silver. I don't know that he knew the law. Maybe he didn't know that the Lord had provided the out in the law. If you vowed a vow, as a devoted thing, "Lord, I'll give you this.", and you wanted to take back. You could take back by redeeming it. He could've redeemed his daughter from the vow, according to the law for ten shekels of silver. Yet, he said, "I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back."

She said unto him, My father, if you have opened your mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of your mouth; forasmuch as the Lord has taken vengeance for thee on your enemies, even of the children of Ammon (11:36).

Now it is interesting, and truly commendable for her, her acquiescence to her father in this issue. "Dad if you've done this, you've said it, taken a vow, go ahead and do it."

However, she said, Let this be done for me: let me alone for two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, and let me take my girlfriends with me (11:37).

It was a cultural shame for a woman not to bear a child. So she wanted the opportunity to just grieve over the fact that she would not be able to bear children.

And it came to pass at the end of the two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew no man. And it was a custom in Israel, That the

daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite for four days in a year (11:39-40).

So, it became a practice, it's the only place in the scripture we are told it's a practice. And it's one that faded out in time, but for at least a time, the girls would go for four days and bewail the fate of Jephthah's daughter.

In the reign of Saul, we find that one morning his son, Jonathan had awakened early, could not go back to sleep, he had a nagging thought that kept him awake. It was this, "If God wants to deliver the Philistines to Israel today, God doesn't need the whole army. God can use one man, just as easy as He can the whole army." Interesting thought. God doesn't need a whole army to do His work, He only needs one man. As Moody said, "The world has yet to see what God can do, just through one man, who will dedicate his life wholly to God." "I wonder if God wants to deliver the Philistines today, to Israel." This was just, it was just one of those thoughts in his mind that wouldn't let him go back to sleep. He finally woke up his armor bearer and he said, "I've been thinking this weird thought! If God wants to deliver the Philistines to Israel, He doesn't need the whole army. He can deliver to one man just as easily. Why don't we go over and see if God wants to deliver the Philistines today."

So, Jonathan ventured out in faith, to see what God might want to do. I love these ventures in faith. "Let's see what God might want to do today. Let's venture out." And as they were going towards the Philistines, Jonathan said to his armor bearer, "Now we want to make sure that God is in this thing, so when we get close to them, and they discover us, if they say, "Hey you guys! Come up here, we'll show you a thing or two", then we'll know that God wants to deliver the Philistines and we'll go for it." "If they say, "Hey you guys! Wait down there! We'll come down and show you a thing or two!" Then we'll know that God doesn't want to deliver the Philistines, and we'll get out of there as fast as we can!"

So, as they got close to the Philistines, the centry spotted them, "Hey you guys, what are you doing, come up here, just show you a thing or two." Jonathan said to his armor bearer, "Alright, let's go!" and they scrambled up the hill into the camp of the Philistines, where Jonathan began to smite the Philistines, and his armor bearer came around behind him, just running through. And the Philistines began to fall back before Jonathan and his armor bearer.

On the other side of the camp was ole Saul, rubbing his eyes, looked towards the Philistines, and he saw the Philistines falling back, and two guys in the middle, just wailing away. And he said, "Number off quickly! See who's missing!", and they numbered off, and they said, "It's Jonathan and his armor bearer", and he made a foolish vow. He said, "Cursed be the man who eats anything today until Saul is avenged of all of his enemies". Foolish fellow.

So, the men of Israel rose up against the Philistines and began to pursue the Philistines through the woods. The Philistines were on the run. Toward late afternoon, Jonathan running through the woods, saw a beehive. He took the end of his spear, and put it in the hive and got some honey. Immediately he was enlightened he was refreshed. Because his energy was getting low, blood sugar was getting low. He was weak. He was tired of chasing the Philistines. But the honey gave him a quick jolt of energy. And he went on pursuing the Philistines.

As the evening drew on, the men of Israel gathered together and they said, "Shall we pursue them tonight? All night long? Or shall we wait and take it up again in the morning?" And they inquired of the Lord, but the Lord didn't answer. There was no answer from the Lord. Saul said, "Alright someone evidently broke my vow and God help me, if it's Jonathan, he'll be put to death! Let's draw straws." The straws fell on Saul and Jonathan. He said, "Alright Jonathan, what did you do?" He said, "Well dad, I wasn't here when you made that vow. I didn't know you said that, and as I was pursuing them through the woods, I saw this beehive, and I put my spear in and I ate some honey. Immediately my soul was refreshed. I was charged again! Dad, you shouldn't of made that vow. You should've allowed the fellows to eat. You see they're so tired tonight, we can't chase them any further. Had these guys been able to eat, we could've totally wiped out the Philistines!" And stupid Saul said, "Put him to death!" There was the violation of the vow you see. The men, the army, they said, "No way are we going to touch that guy! God fought with him today and we're not laying our hands on him." So Jonathan was spared. But Saul would've been so foolish at that point

as to put his own son to death because of a stupid vow that he made.

Sometimes people make stupid vows. That in the keeping of the vow, you sin. In other words, you box yourself in. Because it is a sin not to keep a vow, but some vows that are made would be sinful if you did keep them. So you put yourself in a no win situation, and that's exactly where Jephthah was. It was a no win situation. To keep his vow would be sinful. Human sacrifice is sinful. It is something God never required, in fact, something that God forbid. Wrong. So it was a foolish vow, but it probably stemmed from Jephthah's pagan background, living in the area of Syria, where human sacrifice was a common thing, does not excuse Jephthah. Only perhaps just a little better understanding. Vows were something that were very common in the old testament times. It was a promise made to God, in order to solicit God's help or God's aid in a particular situation. "Lord, if you'll do this for me, I'll do this for you."

There are people today who still feel that vows are necessary in order to solicit God's aid. False. God wants to bless you. God is gracious. God does not reward us for our goodness. We do not have a legal kind of a relationship with God. We have a loving relationship with God. He's not Santa Claus. He's not making a list, and checking it twice, to find out who's naughty and nice. For the naughty ones they get the bundle of sticks. For the good ones, they get special goodies. Not so. God is merciful, God is gracious, God is loving, God is kind, and God bestows upon us His abundant grace and mercy; and, thus I receive from God, His blessings, His goodness. I don't have to promise God that I'm going to be good, or I'm gonna be better. "I won't do that anymore. God help me out! Help me out this time God and I promise I'll never do it again!" I've done that a few times. I've been out in some storm surf and I got up from on top of a wave and looking down, and I said, "Lord, if you get me into shore, I won't come back out again!" "Today", I always add that! Sort of a vow, you know, "Lord send me in! This is horrible out here!" Promises made to God.

Now, it is not necessary to make promises to God, but if you do, then you should keep them. You shouldn't break your vow that you make to the Lord. But no, the vows are not necessary. They are something that were not practiced in the new testament, except that Paul took a vow which was the vow of the Nazarite, just to shave his head, to signify a period of total consecration unto God. The Nazarite vow.

Chapter 12

Now, the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and they went northward, and said to Jephthah, How come you passed over to fight against the children of Ammon, and you didn't call us to go with you? we're gonna burn your house with fire (27:1).

Now these guys from Ephraim are an interesting type. Or they're an interesting group. You remember when Gideon fought against Midian, this was just a couple Sunday nights ago. When Gideon was fighting against the Midianites, after he had wiped them out and had them on the run, the men of Ephraim joined in the battle. They happened to catch Zeeb and Zalmonah, the two chiefs of the Midianites and kill them. But then after the battle of the Midianites was over, they came to Gideon and said, "What's the big idea not calling us to help you! We're gonna get you man!", and Gideon said, "Hey man! What have I done, compared to what you did? Man! You captured the kings, all I did was wipe out 135,000 of the army." He used sort of an allegory he said, "Is not the gleanings of Ephraim better than the vintage of Gideon?", and those are terms that unless you were from Napa valley, you wouldn't understand. The vintage is the full harvest of Gideon, and the gleanings are just the grapes that are left over after the harvest. They go through, the little clumps of grapes that they happen to miss when they're picking, are the leftovers that Ephraim has. They're more than the whole vintage of Gideon. And he appeased the guy. He was a diplomat, he appeased him. Hey, this guy is a bandit. He's tough. He doesn't take anything from anybody! The men of Ephraim they come and they try to do the same old trick, "Hey why didn't you call us? Why didn't you go fight without us? We're gonna burn your house!" They're dealing with a whole different type, when they're dealing with Jephthah.

He said, I and my people were at great strife with the children of Ammon; and I called for your help, but you didn't deliver me. [You didn't respond.] And when I saw that you would not respond, I put my life in my hands, and I passed over against the children of Ammon, and the Lord delivered them into my hand: wherefore are you come this day to fight against me (12:2-3)?

I mean, he stands up to them. Gideon appeased them, but this guy stands up to them, “Hey! I called for your help. You didn’t come. You didn’t deliver me, so I put my life in great jeopardy. I went against them without your help, and the Lord delivered them. Now why have you come to fight against me?”

And Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead, and fought with Ephraim: and the men of Gilead smote Ephraim, because they said, Ye Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites, among the Manassites (12:4).

So, they came over and they were rude, they were crude, they were calling them a bunch of fugitives. “You really don’t belong to us, you bunch of fugitives over here!” So, the Gileadites smote Ephraim, and the Gileadites took the passages of Jordan, the area where the Jordan was crossable, and when the Ephraimites, which had escaped, came to these passages, the men of Gilead were there guarding them, and they said,

Let us cross over to Jordan, and they said, Are you an Ephramite?, And if they said no, then they said unto him, Say Shibboleth: and the fellows would answer Sibboleth: for they could not frame the word to pronounce it right (12:5-6).

They had like a, you know, like a southerner, they had their own accent. For it is interesting I’ve noticed, that the people from Mexico have a hard time with the “sh” sound. The “cherish”, and they usually will say, “cheris”, instead of the sh, cherish. Japanese have a hard time with you know, some of our sounds. They use “r’s” instead of “l”. You know what it is, they have some problems there. We have a problem with some of the sounds in German, some of the guttural sounds that are Hebrew, cha the cha, and we’re not used to the cha sound you know. And it’s hard to, it takes a long time to be able to develop that because it’s part of your speech apparatus that we don’t use for English. So there are certain sounds that we are just unfamiliar with, and we cannot make without a lot of practice.

So it was among the Ephraimites. They could not pronounce the “sh” sound. The “sh”, but it was a Shibboleth, instead of a Sibboleth. It’s interesting that when they came over, they were saying to these guys, “You’re half breeds, you’re fugitives from Ephraim.”, and they were bragging about their tribe Ephraim. But now, when they’re trying to get back, they’re denying that they are Ephraimites. As they meet them at the river they say, “Are you from Ephraim?” “No, we’re not from Ephraim.” “Say Shibboleth!”, and those that could not pronounce it were slain.

They took him, and killed him at the passages of Jordan: and there fell that time of the tribe of Ephraim, about forty thousand men. [Forty two thousand.] And Jephthah judged Israel for six years. Then Jephthah the Gileadite died, and was buried in one of the cities of Gilead (12:6-7).

It is thought by many of the commentaries, commentators, and probably rightfully so, that his deep grief over his daughter, shortened his life. He spoke of being bowed down by the grief that he felt for his daughter, which he came out to mean, “You bowed me down”, literally, “You bent me over”. There are many commentators and I think that they are probably correct that the grief over the loss of his only child, just really shortened his life. So he only reigned for a short period of time. Just six years, and he died and was buried in one of the cities of Gilead.

So after him Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel. [So, probably from the, not the Ibzan of Judah, down near Jerusalem, but the one that was up near Nazareth.] He had thirty sons and thirty daughters, [And what he did is he sent his daughters abroad to marry foreign princesses, and he brought in foreign princesses to marry his sons. It was one of the common practices, which is still practiced today, you know, among the royalty, if you’re a princess you’re only supposed to marry a prince, and vice versa] so he sent his daughters out to marry those from abroad, and he took thirty daughters from abroad for his sons. He judged Israel for only seven years. He died and was buried at Bethlehem. And after him Elon, a Zebulonite, judged Israel; [Notice the judges come from the various tribes. There’s no ruling tribe, but it’s just men from various tribes rise up and judge over Israel.] he judged Israel for ten years. Elon the Zebulonite died, and was buried in Aijahlon in the country of Zebulun. [So that is not the Aijahlon of Joshua’s fame, where God threw the rocks at their enemies.] And after him Abdon the son of Hillel, a Pirathonite, judged Israel. And he had forty sons and thirty [Better translation would be grandsons. Sons of his sons in Hebrew.] that rode on seventy ass colts: and he judged Israel for eight years. Abdon the son of Hillel died, and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the mount of the Amalekites (12:8-15).

So, a quick succession of judges, one for six years, another for seven years, short reigns. But then we come to the fascinating story of Samson. We will find in our lesson next week, the thirteenth judge of Israel, Samson. An interesting character study. So, we'll take, actually next week, to get the story of Samson, we'll cover thirteen through sixteen. We'll try, but I doubt if we'll make it, might take it a couple weeks, but we'll try. If we can get it all in one night it would be great. So, next week, the reign of Samson.

I like the thought that Jephthah expressed when he said, "I've opened my mouth before the Lord, and I cannot go back." In certain ways we have opened our mouths before the Lord. Confessed Him to be our Savior, confessed Him to be our Lord, confessed our love for Him. "Having opened my mouth before the Lord, I cannot go back." I can't go back into the life of sin. I can't go back into the life of self-centeredness. I belong to Him forever. "I have opened my mouth before the Lord, I cannot go back."

God help us this week, that we might go forth serving the Lord. That we might show by our actions, a life of commitment, and our love for Him. May the Lord help you this Christmas season, not to get so caught up in the commercial aspects of the celebration of the day, that you neglect the worship of the Lord. May God help us to be even more diligent in gathering together to worship Him, in this time of the year.

Traditionally, attendance lags, as we come closer to Christmas day, during the week. Oh you know, Christmas day, everybody comes, but during the week, attendance often lags because people get caught up in the commercial aspects of Christmas.

May the Lord help us, that we will not be caught in that trap. That we will be very diligent in spending time in worshiping Him. Expressing our love to Him, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but faithful and diligent in gathering together, especially as we see the Day of the Lord approaching. God bless you, strengthen you, and give you a beautiful week. In Jesus' name.