

Lesson 5 – Judges 10-12

Text: Judges 10-12

Main Characters: God, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, Israelites

Key Passages:

- Judges 10:6 – The Israelites began to serve many other gods and stopped serving the Lord.
- Judges 11:29-31 – Jephthah made a vow to God in exchange for His help.

Main Storyline:

After Abimelech's death, Israel was once again saved by another judge raised by God, Tola. After he died, another judge came named Jair. Not much is said about these two judges.

Once Jair died, Israel began to serve many different gods (note the number of different gods in 10:6). As a result, God allowed foreign nations (Ammonites and Philistines) to control and oppress Israel for 18 years. The oppression began on the east side of the Jordan (Gilead) but later invaded the west.

Finally, the people came to their senses and cried out to God, confessing their sin of idolatry to Him. God rebuked them for their constant idolatry and questioned why they would abandon Him after all of the help He had given them. He told Israel that He would not deliver them because they had forsaken Him; God told them to ask their idols for help, instead. Eventually they got rid of their idols and started worshipping God again. At that point, God could not endure the misery of Israel any more.

At some point before all of that, a man named Jephthah was born by a prostitute to a man named Gilead. Because of his origin, his brothers did not accept him as part of the family and drove him away. Jephthah decided to make friends with "worthless men" and participate in their evil behaviors.

In response to the Ammonites' warring, the men of Gilead discussed who would be their leader. They decided to ask Jephthah, who was reluctant because of how he had been treated. Eventually, he accepted the position in exchange for being leader of Gilead once the campaign was over.

Jephthah sent messengers to Ammon to ask why they were fighting against them. The king of Ammon told them that they were fighting because Israel had taken their land away from them after they had left Egypt. Jephthah sent messengers to correct Ammon, because they had not done that (Deuteronomy 2:19ff). However, the Ammonites did not listen and were committed to fighting.

God then came upon Jephthah, who then led his men toward the Ammonites to fight with them. As they were going, Jephthah made a vow to God. He would sacrifice the first thing that came out of his house to meet him when he got home if God would win the battle for him. God delivered the Ammonites into Jephthah's hand, and they were completely subdued, freeing the Israelites.

When Jephthah got home, his daughter, his only child, came out dancing with music with joy at seeing her father return. He tore his clothes, remembering his vow to the Lord. His daughter told him to go through with his vow to the Lord, realizing it was necessary. Jephthah allowed her to have two months with her friends before dedicating her as holy to the Lord (no work/marriage, Leviticus 27:1-8).

Ephraim later became upset that Jephthah did not call on them to help and decided to attack the land of Gilead. As a result, there was a civil war, and the Ephraimites were decimated.

Jephthah later died, and after him came another judge, Ibzan. After Ibzan died, Elon judged Israel, and after Elon died, Abdon judged Israel. There was not much said about these three men.

Lessons/Applications:

- 1.) Imperfect origins do not prevent someone from great achievements for God (1 Samuel 16:7ff).
- 2.) Those who do not want to believe the truth will not believe it even after being confronted by it.
- 3.) Promises to God (and others) are a serious matter; we must keep our word (Matthew 5:33ff).