

Judges Ch 10-12

Ch 10 opens with the mention of Abimelech, which you remember was the son of Gideon. But since he was the son of a concubine all the other brothers would receive apart of the inheritance of their father of which he wouldn't. So even though he was as much a son as the rest of them his inheritance was forfeited because of who his mother was. And so what he did was contrive a conspiracy to have all his brothers killed and him made the leader, Abimelech was a very wicked man who ruled as a tyrant and wound up having those who assisted him in his rise to power actually turn against him because in reality as the son of Gideon told them he was a worthless bramble. Good for nothing but trouble and pain and in the end his over confidence got him killed by a woman who dropped an upper millstone off the tower in which the people were seeking refuge, giving him literally a splitting headache. It crushed his skull, but it must have just clipped him or something because it didn't kill him but he knew he was dying and so lest he be known as the tyrant who was killed by a woman (which would've been a major insult) he asked his armor bearer to thrust him threw with the sword and finish him off. And so that's what the young man did but it didn't do him any good because he still went down in history as the son of Jerubbaal who was struck by a woman who cast a piece of a millstone on him from the wall, so that he died in Thebez. And having the wicked shepherd struck down, all his sheep scattered, notice vs 55-57 of ch 9.

Now ch 10 introduces 2 more judges, those whom we would consider as minor judges simply because we don't know much about them, nor is there much recorded concerning what they did or why they became the judge. It's basically believed that these next two guys were basically the men who more or less mopped up the mess that Abimelech made, they were the ones who basically restored order to Israel after Abimelech had done his best to mess everything up.

Vs1-2

And that's all we have concerning him, so not much to comment on, he was a man who was used to grant Israel 23 years of peace.

Vs3-5

Again, not a whole lot recorded, now we do see mention here a little bleep about his family and the fact that he had 30 sons who rode on 30 donkeys and ruled over 30 towns. So Jair was the primary judge and then he delegated 30 towns, 1 to each of his boys. And we see that Jair was a man of affluence, in the fact that they each rode a donkey. In that day a donkey was the animal of choice for kings, and so in making sure that each of his boys had a donkey he's making a statement. Horses being the animal for war, donkeys being the kings animal of peace, you remember when the King of kings, Jesus Christ came riding into Jerusalem just prior to the cross what animal He was riding, it was a donkey. And J Vernon McGee sees in this man 3 things, prosperity with out purpose, affluence with out influence, and prestige with out power. Jair was obviously a very wealthy man, had a 30-donkey garage and was generous to his kids, spoiled them all with the latest rides and gave them each a city, but we don't read of any

particular thing that he did for Israel. All that's recorded of him is the fact that he was rich and delegated power to his sons, prestige, no purpose, affluence, but no apparent impacting influence, prosperity but no effecting power. And it's not that we're to seek a name for ourselves, the bible says do you seek great things for yourself, don't do it, we talked Sunday morning about being mindful of the things of others. But don't you want your life to make an impact, we all do, but the important thing is to whose glory do we want that impact to be made?

When it's all said and done I hope that my life has made an eternal impact in people's life to the glory of God. And that what's recorded of me, if anything isn't, well, he made a lot of money (which isn't presently true) and spoiled his kids. I mean don't get me wrong a good man leaves an inheritance for his children's children. But I would hope that I would be remembered (if I'm going to be remembered) as a servant of God, whom God used to make a difference to His glory. And maybe Jair was a great man who did lots of good things, but all the bible eludes to is he had lots of money, didn't really do anything else worth mentioning, (so after 22 yrs he died).

Vs6

So here we go again and this time it seems to be much worse in that a 7-fold abomination is recorded for us that encompasses all the various borders of the tribal land Sidon to the North, Ammon to the east, the Philistines to the west and Moab down south. And so the nation is being inundated with idolatry, it's like adding insult to injury; they forsook the one true Living God Who loves them and has cared for them. And as if that wasn't bad enough, I mean it's one thing to quit following the Lord, but then to begin to worship idols who aren't even gods in the place of God is a proverbial slap if you're willing in the face of God. And the worship of these gods were in essence in direct antithesis to all that God stood for, some of the most detestable, depraved and perverted acts and forms of worship ever known to man were practiced in these pagan religions that they were taking part in.

Vs 7-14

Ouch! God is in essence saying you made your own bed, now you lie in it. And I don't say this to sound like a prophet of doom or the anti-Barnabas, son of discouragement. But mark my words as one who knows, the reason that I had you mark those last 2 words in vs 9 is because there are times in all of our lives that due to one circumstance or another we become severely distressed. Or greatly distressed, sore distressed or whatever your bible may say, the word means vehemently or intensely vexed or distressed. Jesus said that the rain falls on the just and unjust alike; there are in the bible what we refer to as common graces. Meaning that there are certain things that due to the grace of God benefit all of mankind. Sunshine is a common grace; rainfall to produce crops is a common grace, the breath of life, common grace. But there is also unfortunately what I guess I would term as common woes as well, things that happen to us as humanity that bring great distress into our lives. The loss (possibly) of a loved one, the loss of a job or home, being terminally ill or injured in an accident in such a way as to cause permanent damage. There are things that happen that bring severe distress in our lives, and in that day it's absolutely critical who your god is. We talked a bit about this Sunday morning,

where do you place your trust and I encouraged you to think about that. Because if you're a materialist through and through, and the loved one of your life becomes terminally ill, or you find yourself diagnosed with terminal cancer suddenly all those nice things mean nothing, nor do they comfort you, nor can they deliver you or offer you hope. If your god is alcohol you simply find yourself as empty as the bottle you just finished, simply a hollow shell that could easily shatter under much more pressure. But if your God is the Lord, then you will find comfort in your time of need, strength in the day of trouble, and you will remain focused when everything seems so fuzzy and uncertain. Make certain that your hope is in the Lord, that He truly is your God, your rock and the shield about you, because if He's not when the storm comes, when your day of distress is upon you, your foundation will crumble and great will be your fall. God says, whatever god you've chosen; in your day of distress, call upon him.

This is the 6th time so far in the book of judges that Israel has forsaken the Lord, and if I were God I'd be sick of people doing what they want to do until the day of distress, everyone calls upon God in the day of distress, but this is Gods council. Whatever god you choose to serve in your day of "peace", call upon him in your day of distress. What a profound exhortation for us to be confronted with tonight.

Vs15-16

You know, I guess it's due to the Law and people reading of how God cleansed the Promised Land and all that they get this "God of Judgment" idea out of the OT. But I can't help but see a God of tender mercies all throughout the scriptures, One Who would be completely just in wiping a people out or letting them simply destroy themselves, but instead due to grace and mercy just forgives and forgives and forgives. And constantly restores His people; but what we need to recognize here is the difference between regret and repentance. There is a sorrow of the world that leads to death and regret, but a godly sorrow produces repentance. 2 Cor 7:10 *"For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death."* It's like the story of the Christian who was visiting a man in jail and he said, "I hope you've repented so that when you're released you won't repeat the same mistake." And the man answered and said, "No sir I sure won't, the next time I pull a job I'll be sure and wear gloves." You see that's not repentance that's regret. Regret touches the emotions, but doesn't run much deeper than that, Judas was full of regret, but you see repentance involves a change of mind, and a change of the will which results in a change of habit or lifestyle. It's possible to have repentance with out sorrow, and sorrow with out repentance, regret is remorse over the consequences of our actions. But repentance involves a complete reordering of our lives around the Lord and His will for us, His desires towards us, you see back in vs 10 we see regret, they were sorry for what was happening to them as a result of their actions. And God says too bad so sad, call upon those gods whom you've been so faithful to, let them save you.

But when we get down to vs 15, and 16 we're seeing repentance, we see confession; they say "we have sinned" 2nd we see submission, they came to a place where they began again to trust in the Lord.

They said, “do to us whatever seems best to You” a readiness to face the consequences and consume the harvest that they had sown if that was what was necessary in order to set them straight once more with the Lord. And then finally accompanied with all of this is actions, they put away, meaning they burned or crushed, somehow destroyed the foreign gods who were among them and the clincher, they served the Lord. And when there was a genuine repentance God responded in mercy and that’s always the way it is, God responds to repentance.

Vs17-18

So Ch 10 closes setting the stage for the next scene, if it were a movie it would have just flashed from this meeting of the leaders to this fellow that had been earlier drove out of town because he didn’t fit the mold of the type of people that they wanted in their community.

Ch11

Vs1-3

So we have a rather interesting account unfolding here before us, Jephthah was known to be a mighty man of valor, but there was a major stigma that cloaked him and that was the fact that he was an illegitimate son, he was the son of a harlot. And so when his dad died, which is the assumption in vs 2 because they wouldn’t be discussing inheritance if the dad was still alive. And so when Gilead died his others sons drove Jephthah out of town because in reality they were too greedy to split the inheritance. And so Jephthah took off out of town and went to the land of Tob and banded up with what we read here were worthless or vain men. Basically poor men who owned nothing and were seen as social outcasts and they all rallied behind Jephthah and they became mercenaries and they would fight against certain enemy tribes or groups of people for hire. Really they were very similar to David and his might men of valor who were really just the social outcasts of the day in need of a leader and they rallied behind David; here we have a very similar type of occurrence. But what’s in here to encourage us is the fact that God chose this “social outcast” to lead the people out of oppression and into freedom. And so what we see here is that regardless of your past, the things you may have done or been apart of, if you’re willing God can use your life in a mighty way. People think that if they haven’t gone to bible college or if they don’t fit the mold of a certain stereotype then God can’t really uses them, maybe they’re uneducated or have had a checkered past that they believe prohibits them from ever being used. But God delights in taking the social outcasts, those who are despised of the world and using them for His glory. And He works in our lives often times years before we even realize it to get us to that place of humility and usability. He humbled Joseph, for years before causing him to be great leader, he humbled Moses for years, Moses was a murderer that fled from the scene of the crime. Paul was a man of such a cruel and calloused past that when he did get saved the church didn’t even believe it, Christ Himself was despised and rejected of men, the stone which the builders rejected and yet He became the chief cornerstone. So no matter how hopeless you may have once been or others presently are, God can use such lives, Jephthah was in exile, a social outcast with a humiliating past but now he’s being exalted, God having prepared him in such circumstances to be a vessel of honor.

Vs4-7

So under pressure the leaders of Gilead go to Jephthah and humble themselves and ask for his assistance, why, because quite frankly he was the toughest guy they knew. Asking this guy to fight with you would be like asking Mark Maguire to help out on the church softball team or Jeff Gordon for a ride to the super market, this guy was the best at what he did, he was a fighter for higher.

Vs 8-11

Notice they avoided his question and reverted to addressing the situation, we came to you because you're the best. And he says fine, but if you want me, we do it my way no questions asked and so humbling themselves they consent to his conditions. And so Jephthah before he just goes out and commences to wipe these guys out he seeks to reason with the king of Ammon 1st and I Love that about the Lord, He gives people opportunity to rethink things through before just wiping them out, people make a conscious decisions to do what they do and God holds them accountable for their actions. And so we read in vs 12

Vs12-28

So the king of Ammon says hey, you guys ripped off our land and we want it back and so Jephthah recounts for the king the reality of how the history was laid out and how they obtained the land and says besides all this we've been here for over 300 years, I think that you're rights are long gone to the land you've had centuries to seek the rights to the Land but now it's too late. And he basically says if you're god can give it to you fine, but we're trusting in our God, the only God to reserve our rights in the land.

Besides if you notice the reality, it wasn't the Ammonites who lost the land in the 1st place, it was the Amorites vs 23 (read) so you see they're messed up in their history anyway. And so vs 27 (read)

Vs29-31

Now this is obviously a rash statement from an excited man, the Lord nowhere requires a vow from us; as a matter of fact it's highly discouraged, but here he is, he's gone from being an outcast to the judge of Israel literally overnight and he's up against a big challenge humanly speaking. Now obviously the Lord had gotten him this far he should have trusted Him to complete the work He'd started but he didn't and it's going to cost him big.

Vs32-40

Now I'm not going to spend much time on this, there's great debate between the commentators as to did he really cause his daughter to be a burnt sacrifice. And they say that understanding Jephthah's times in that he was surrounded and inundated with pagan practices in which human sacrifice was acceptable mingled with the fact that he would have had a limited knowledge of the scriptures, it's actually possible that he did.

Now again nowhere did God ask him to do that nor did he require that and had he known the scriptures he'd have known that there was a law made for the redeeming of a life that he could have lawfully applied and spared her. And people wonder well why didn't the Lord see to it that she kicked the family cat out in front of her? And I don't know, but if indeed he did sacrifice her (which the bible doesn't give reason necessarily to believe otherwise) it was an absolute tragedy and God takes no pleasure in such things and expressly forbids it in His word. The other view is that back in vs 31 some translators (though no bibles that I read translated it this way) but where it says, "and I will offer it up as a burnt offering", they say that that word "and" could have been translated "or" meaning it will surely be the Lord's, or I will offer it up as a burnt sacrifice.

So if it's an animal it'll be a burnt offering, if it's a person they'll be dedicated to the Lord their whole lives for temple service. And so they say that the tragedy is that she was Jephthah's only child and he would now have no offspring because she was dedicated to the Lord so she would be a virgin her whole life consecrated to the Lord. And there are great debates both ways; I'll let you wrestle that one. Because I believe that the point is, and the reason he wound up in Heb 11 hall of faith is because he made a vow before the Lord and regardless of the repercussions he kept it. Ps 15:4 in speaking of the Lord says, "*But he honors those who fear the LORD; He who swears to his own hurt and does not change.*" And something about sacrificial commitment moves the heart of God, how many times have you or I made a commitment to the Lord and then when it begins to be an inconvenience or the excitement of it wears off or maybe it brings some personal set back and so we drop the deal. This year Lord I'm going to be at every Wed night study, but that was before I realized that Survivor was going to be on at the same time. Sacrificial commitments move the heart of God, time forbids us to get into examples but believe me they're laced all throughout the scriptures. And I'm not speaking about legalism but simply keeping your commitments I tell the servants around here that the blessing is found not in convenient commitment but consistent commitment, you might call it faithfulness, God honors it, be a person of your word, Jephthah was such a man. (Lets run through ch 12)

Ch 12

Listen, when you're dog tired at the end of the day, make sure it's not because you've been biting and barking about others, Paul the apostle warned us that biting and devouring one another would result in consuming one another and such is the lesson of Ch 12.

Vs1

You remember these guys, Gideon encountered the same problem, the Ephraimites were chronic complainers. They never wanted in on the action but when it was all said and done they were whining that they weren't apart of it.

Vs2-4

So for the sake of the fact that the fight was still on Gideon humored them, but Jephthah was a different man, the fight was over and he wasn't going to take any of their mouth and so he said fine you want some of us come and get it, and then Jephthah's men whipped the snot out of them. You know not to get into it but there are a lot of believers today that fall into the category of the Ephraimites in that they're all willing to complain and criticize those who are doing the work, but they're not willing to be apart of the solution. They criticize those teaching the kids or those leading worship, those who may be on the frontlines of service, but they don't want to be apart of it themselves, they simply want to reserve the right to criticize those who are. The story is told of a man who came up to D.L. Moody and said, "Mr. Moody, I don't like the way you preach the gospel." And Mr. Moody responded by saying, "You know, I'm always willing to learn. Tell me about the method you use." And the guy said, "I guess I don't really have one." And Moody said, "I'll tell you what, I like the way I do it better than the way you don't do it." The Ephraimite attitude is destructive and divisive and I would encourage you to guard against it. Instead be responsible to take part in the work and be apart of the solution instead of the problem.

Vs5-7

So the dialect would give them away and if they couldn't pronounce the word right, they'd be killed, Jesus said by your words you'll be justified or by your words you'll be condemned, how often our words betray us, Jephthah judged Israel for 6yrs and then he died.

Vs 8-15

And so this ch closes as ch 10 opened, with simply some minor judges who apparently kept the peace but did nothing else that was really worth mentioning. Let's be careful to guard against the attitude of the Ephraimites and get behind what God is doing lest we be apart of the problem rather than the solution.