

Judges 11 – 12

{Use the following as a guide to discuss this as a group.}

11:1-11: What claim were the Ammonites making? Does Jephthah agree with them?

What points does he use to defend Israel against this claim?

Do you notice any similar situations in that area of the world today?

11:12-33 What vow did Jephthah make? Why would Jephthah make this vow?

How come Jephthah could win the battle?

Numbers 30:2 – A man must keep all the words of his vow.

Ecclesiastes 5:1-7 – Solomon's opinion of vows. Be careful.

Deuteronomy 23:21-23 – More on vows.

Was this vow a foolish vow? Have you made a promise that you later found you could not keep?

11:34-40 What was the result of his vow?

Can you think of anyone else in the Bible who regretted his vow? (The king who killed John the Baptist, Saul when he threatened death on whoever ate and he found out Jonathan ate.)

Can you think of anyone in the Bible that made good vows? (Mother of Samuel and Samson.)

What do you think actually happened to his daughter?

Leviticus 27:28-29 – It was possible to devote people to the Lord (see Samson and Samuel). A father would have had this authority at that time.

Deuteronomy 12:31 – Whether Jephthah did or did not sacrifice his daughter, this is clearly prohibited by Scripture.

What can we learn from this situation?

12: 2-3 : How did Jephthah's response to the Ephraimites differ from Gideon's, and what does this show about his leadership style?

Judges 8:1-3

12: 4-6 : What does the inability of the Ephraimites to pronounce "Shibboleth" (meaning a river or stream) tell us about the consequences of division?

Internal Strife: What does this chapter teach about the dangers of jealousy and disunity among believers, even after a great victory?

Proverbs 13:10; James 4:1-2; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

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## Verse by Verse Commentary

=11:1-11 The Amorites claimed that the land belonged to them. This was a lie.

Jephthah defends Israel's rightful ownership saying that A) Those lands were not in the possession of the Ammonites when Israel took them, but were Amorite lands.

B) Israel had been there 300 years in undisputed possession.

C) Israel didn't instigate the original conflict. \_\_\_\_\_ And

D) God gave them this land.

=11:12-33 Jephthah probably made the vow because he was some in doubt about the victory that God would give to him. He thought that perhaps through his devotion in making such a promise God would give him the victory. Interestingly, many people still try to "barter" with YHWH. God, if you give me a wife I will... God, if you let me get into this university I will... God, if you give me this job, I will... However, we should never barter with YHWH like that... This is misunderstanding His character.

He doesn't need anything from us. So, it is unlikely He will give us something to secure more devotion to Himself. If we are following Him fully, He already does what is best for us.

This is a lack of faith, thinking that in someone we can pay back what He has done for us or earn it. Neither is true. God is merciful and full of grace, but we cannot ever earn the blessings that He gives to us.

This is also often a lack of faith in His promises. People doubt God will do what He says so make a promise to do such and such if He does.

Although the Lord empowered Jephthah to have victory over Israel's enemies, it doesn't mean everything he did was from the Lord. In fact, like most of the other leaders at this time, we see exactly the opposite. The people were so tainted by the surrounding religions and evil beliefs that even those who worshipped the Lord committed a number of sinful acts, sometimes maybe unconsciously because it was part of the surrounding "culture" of the day. This is yet another example of the problems of man when man disobeys what God clearly reveals and goes his own way to do "what is right in his own eyes."

= 11:34-40 Shows us that the Bible is about the real world. It is not an imaginary or heavenly paradise where everything is perfect. That is not the situation of the world around us and if the Bible only describes perfect scenarios, it cannot really help us much about how to live in this world. (Maybe that is why heaven is not mentioned much.)

Reminds us again that the Bible tells the truth, whatever the truth is. It doesn't gloss over the ugly details like dishonest writers would. It is yet another evidence that the Bible is from God.

= In Judges 12, Jephthah gave the Ephraimites a good reason why he didn't wait for them before going to battle with the Ammonites, but they started a war anyway. Some people want to argue and disagree no matter what the facts. They are driven by emotion (and often sin) which causes them to act irrationally.

Misunderstandings and assumptions can lead to conflict. Effective communication is crucial in maintaining unity and resolving disputes. Just as the tribes of Israel were meant to work together, the church today must strive for unity, valuing each member's contribution

Judges 8:1-3 Similar conflict with the Ephraimites during Gideon's time, showing a pattern of pride and contention within the tribe.

Proverbs 13:10 Speaks to the role of pride in causing strife, relevant to the Ephraimites' attitude.

James 4:1-2 Discusses the source of quarrels and conflicts, applicable to the internal strife among the Israelites.

1 Corinthians 12:12-27 Emphasizes the importance of unity and diversity within the body of Christ, contrasting the division seen here.

=**John 17:1-26** the unity of God the Father and God the Son, and what should be with God the Son and all Believers