

LIFE IN THE SIN CYCLE

(A Study in the Book of Judges)

Pembroke Bible Chapel
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Judges Message #12
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JEPHTHAH (Judges 10-12)

SIN CYCLE RENEWED (10:6-18)

- Israel falls back into its sinful, idolatrous ways, resulting in Philistine/Ammonite oppression for eighteen years (10:6-9).
- Israel cries out to the Lord in repentance and seeks someone to lead them in battle against Ammon (10:10-18).

JEPHTHAH CHOSEN (11:1-28)

- Jephthah was born of a prostitute; an outcast from his family, he banded together with “worthless men” and was eventually invited by his desperate countrymen to be their military leader (11:1-11).
- He unsuccessfully attempts to negotiate peace with Ammon; ultimately, he trusts God to judge between Israel and Ammon (11:12-28; *Hebrews 11:32-34*).

A TRAGIC VOW (11:29-40)

- Jephthah makes a foolish vow to God in preparing to battle the Ammonites (11:29-31).
- He is victorious over the enemy, but fulfilling his vow costs him the life of his only child (11:34-40; *Hebrews 11:32-34*; *Numbers 30:2*; *Deuteronomy 23:23*).

CIVIL WAR (12:1-7)

- War erupts between Gilead and Ephraim, resulting in the death of 42,000 Israelites (12:1-6).
- Jephthah dies after judging Israel for six years (12:7).

APPLICATION

Although Jephthah had faith in God, his vow demonstrates that he didn't understand the character and nature of God. He thought it was necessary to "pay" God for the victory He would ultimately give Jephthah and his countrymen. As a result, he swore an unnecessary, evil oath. Our Heavenly Father is characterized by grace – He gives freely, expecting nothing in return, except our faith in Him. This truth is best demonstrated in God giving His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, as an offering for the sins of the world (*Ephesians 2:8-9*). When God freely offers us forgiveness and delivery from the oppression of sin, we don't have to "pay Him back". The proper response is to trust God and abide in His grace and love for us.

The New Testament states that we are not to swear oaths as Jephthah did (*Matthew 5:33-37; James 5:12*). We are to live by faith in the strength of God's Word, not our own. Stating our intent with a simple 'yes' or 'no' is sufficient, if we are people who abide in God's truth. Anything beyond this is evil.

James 4:1-10 sheds light on Israel's spiritual condition at the time of Jephthah. The civil war that erupted between Ephraim and Gilead was caused by worldly desire and hatred, rooted in selfish pride. Christians have much to learn from the history of Israel (and the exhortation given in James 4). When fights break out amongst us, we can be sure that pride, selfishness and evil influence are at the heart of the problem. Are you at war with someone? Consider the call to draw near to God in humble faith and submission – He can miraculously change hardened hearts and heal broken relationships.

*“Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes’ and your ‘No’ be ‘No’;
anything beyond this comes from the evil one.”
(Matthew 5:37)*