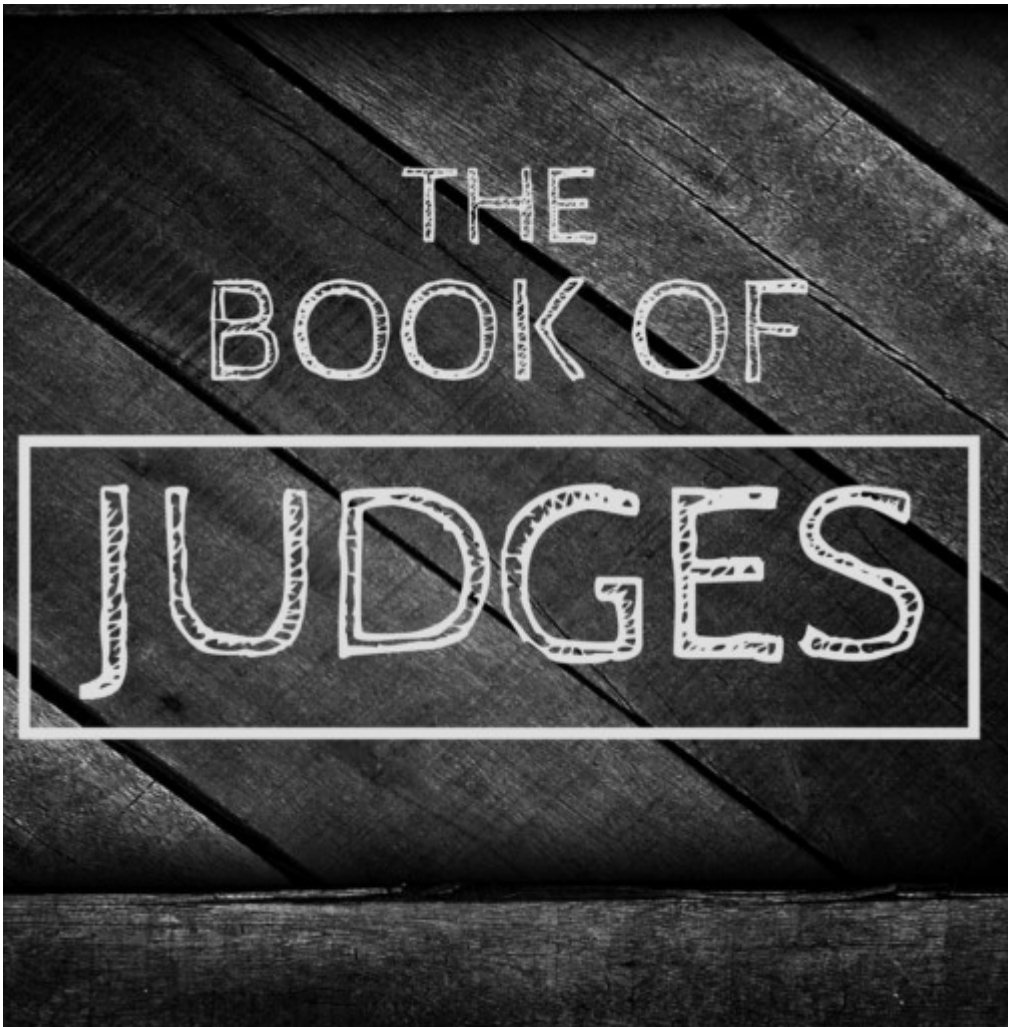


Let's Worship God

11th-16th April 2022
Judges



JUDGES

Monday - Judges 11:29-33 - The Spirit of the LORD

Once it was clear the king of the Ammonites would not listen to reason, Jephthah led his forces through the land of Gilead to Mizpah, near where the Ammonite army was encamped (probably just across the Jabbok River). From there he attacked the Ammonites. Not only did he soundly defeat the Ammonites encamped near Mizpah, but he fought them at Aroer, forty miles to the south, in the land of the tribe of Reuben, driving them back into Ammonite lands (the neighborhood of Minnith) where he struck twenty cities, as far as Abel-keramim, about nine miles from the Ammonite capital of Rabbah (modern-day Amman, Jordan).

Jephthah was able to accomplish such a great feat only because "the Spirit of the LORD was upon Jephthah" (as verse 29 tells us). God the Holy Spirit came upon Jephthah in a special way, empowering him for this great task. Each believer in Jesus Christ has gifts from the Holy Spirit, as well. Paul tells us in I Corinthians 12:4-7 "Now there are a variety of gifts, but the same Spirit, and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." We cannot accomplish anything for Christ's Church unless we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to do so. Thanks be to God, He has given each believer gifts for the common good of His people. Not all of us will accomplish the kind of things that get a great deal of attention, as Jephthah did, but each of us in Christ Jesus is empowered by the same Spirit of the LORD.

Questions

1. By whose power did Jephthah accomplish such a great victory?
2. How does the Holy Spirit empower us to serve Him?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that God can cause us to identify and use the gifts His Spirit has given us.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Then the Spirit of the LORD was upon Jephthah." Judges 11:29a

Praise: Psalm 67 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

JUDGES

Tuesday - Judges 11:30-40 - A Rash Vow

Just as having the Holy Spirit does not prevent Christians today from sinning or acting unwisely, the fact that the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah in this special way to empower him as God's instrument to defeat the Ammonites does not mean that everything Jephthah did was wise and good. It is by the Spirit's power that Jephthah gains victory over Ammon, but, even after the Spirit comes upon him, Jephthah makes a foolish vow. As if he could bribe God, he promises to sacrifice to Him the first thing he sees coming from his gates if he returns home victorious over the Ammonites.

It is wicked to take any oath or vow that would bind us to sin. An oath or vow is taken rashly if the one taking it gives no thought to the possible sins to which he is binding himself. As if to illustrate the rash nature of his vow, the first thing Jephthah sees coming from his gate when he returns home victorious is his only child, his beloved daughter. Leviticus 5 not only warns against rash oaths and vows, it sets forth the appropriate sacrifices that were to be made in Jephthah's time as offerings to the LORD if a rash vow had been made. However, rather than repent of his sin and make the appropriate sacrifices, Jephthah adds to his sinful vow the sin of carrying it out. He offers his daughter as a sacrifice - a sacrifice that he should know, as Deuteronomy 12:31 says, that God abominates. (Some have argued that she was offered as a "living sacrifice," never to marry, but verse 31 makes it clear that Jephthah's vow was to offer her as a "burnt offering").

If we find that we have rashly taken an oath or vow that binds us to sin, we must not follow through with it. We must repent, ask God's forgiveness, and willingly accept any consequences that might come from not keeping the vow.

Questions

1. What makes Jephthah's vow so rash?
2. Why should he not have kept this vow?
3. What should he have done instead?

Prayer Points

1. Pray for the wisdom never to take a rash oath or vow.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Then the Spirit of the LORD was upon Jephthah." Judges 11:29a

Praise: Psalm 68 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

JUDGES

Wednesday - Judges 12:1-7 - A Civil War

Much as they had done in the time of Gideon (see Judges 8:1-3), the Ephraimites make undue accusations against Jephthah, waiting until the victory is won and then accusing the judge of having excluded them from the glory of helping to defeat Israel's enemies. They cross the Jordan and gather at Zaphon, in the land of the tribe of Gad and threaten to burn Jephthah's house down around him. Jephthah answers that the Ephraimites never came to the aid of the tribes east of the Jordan in all the years the Ammonites had oppressed them, why should they expect a share in the glory (and spoils) of the war against Ammon now that it is already won.

Jephthah and the men of Gilead fight and defeat the Ephraimites. In the days of Gideon, the Ephraimites held the fords of the Jordan against Midianites escaping eastward. Now the Gileadites hold the fords of the Jordan against Ephraimites escaping westward. The Ephraimites speak their own dialect of Hebrew in which the "sh" sound has fallen out of use. The Gileadites use this to identify escaping Ephraimites. A man who could not say "Shibboleth" (meaning "ear of grain"), but would instead pronounce it "Sibboleth" was identified as an Ephraimite trying to escape and was killed. Forty-two thousand Ephraimites died in this battle and its aftermath.

What a tragedy it is when God's people fight among themselves. Often, infighting in the Church is the result of selfish ambition. Equally as often, it is the result of misunderstanding. In many cases, it continues because of a lack of mercy and forgiveness. Had the Ephraimites been willing to listen to reason the battle could have been avoided. Had the Gileadites been merciful when the battle was over, so many of their brother Israelites would not have died at the fords of the Jordan.

Questions

1. Why is the Ephraimites' claim against Jephthah unjust?
2. How did the Gileadites know a man trying to cross the Jordan was an Ephraimite?
3. What makes this event so tragic?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that God will help us to be merciful and understanding in our dealings with one another in the Church.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Then the Spirit of the LORD was upon Jephthah." Judges 11:29a

Praise: Psalm 69 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

JUDGES

Thursday - Judges 12:8-10 - Ibzan

As we have noted before, the Book of Judges tells us of twelve judges. Six of these - Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson - are considered major judges, because the book tells us much about their judgeships. The other six are considered minor judges. Again, this is not because they are unimportant individuals, but only because the book tells us little about them. We have already learned of Shamgar, Tola, and Jair. The other three minor judges are mentioned in the last verses of Judges 12.

Jephthah's judgeship lasted only six years. After that, Ibzan of Bethlehem served as judge for seven years. We know so little of this man that scholars even debate which Bethlehem - Bethlehem of Zebulun or the better known Bethlehem of Judah - was his home. That he had thirty sons and thirty daughters suggests that he likely had multiple wives. That he married his children outside of his clan suggests he either was making many marriage alliances to strengthen his position in Israel, or he wanted simply to encourage closer relationships between the tribes of Israel following the tragic civil war in Jephthah's day.

The judgeships of Jephthah and, perhaps to a lesser extent, Ibzan demonstrate that God uses flawed people to accomplish His plan. That you and I are fallen, flawed, and even foolish does not mean the LORD will not use us. In Luke 10:21, Jesus thanks the Father that He has hidden the wonders of the Gospel from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children. May we also rejoice that God uses us, flawed though we are.

Questions

1. What do the judgeships of Jephthah and Ibzan teach us about God's use of flawed people?
2. Why might Ibzan have married his children to husbands and wives from outside his clan?
3. Can God use you, even if you are very flawed?

Prayer Points

1. Thank God that He has not chosen many wise or powerful, but has revealed Himself to the unwise, meek, and lowly.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Then the Spirit of the LORD was upon Jephthah." Judges 11:29a

Praise: Psalm 70 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

JUDGES

Friday - Judges 12:11-12 - Elon

After Ibzan, we meet Elon the Zebulunite. Of all the minor judges, we are told the least about Elon. We can gather a few things about his background from other Scriptures. According to Genesis 46:14, Zebulun, son of Jacob, had a son named Elon. Numbers 26:26 tells us there was a clan in Zebulun, the Elonites, who were descended from Elon son of Zebulun. It is likely that the judge Elon was of this clan, a descendant of Elon son of Zebulun.

Elon judged Israel for ten years. We are not told any of his accomplishments. Whether he defended Israel against enemies or made good judgments, keeping peace between the Israelite tribes is not known. All we are told is that at the end of his ten years of service, he died and was buried at Aijalon in the land of Zebulun. It may even be that this town was named after Elon (the Hebrew consonants are the same in both Elon and Aijalon).

There are many people of whom we know even less than we know about Elon the Zebulunite whom God has used mightily for His Church. Whether our labors for the kingdom are known on a wide scale and recorded in the history books, or whether they are known to few and will fade soon from human memory, is unimportant. The LORD knows our deeds and our hearts. On the last day, may we hear our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ say to each of us, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Questions

1. Why is Elon important, even though we know little about him?
2. Did God use him for His good purposes?
3. Is it important that we get credit among men for serving the LORD?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that we may serve Christ faithfully, whether it is known to others or not.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Then the Spirit of the LORD was upon Jephthah." Judges 11:29a

Praise: Psalm 71 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

JUDGES

Saturday - Judges 12:13-15 - Abdon

Last of the minor judges is Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite. It is clear that Abdon was wealthy and powerful. His forty sons and thirty grandsons rode on seventy donkeys, suggesting Abdon had gathered a great deal of wealth, even before his brief eight-year judgeship. Again, we note that God's creation intent for marriage between one man and one woman was probably not honored. That Abdon had forty sons suggests he had multiple wives.

Despite his shortcomings, the LORD used Abdon for the security, peace, and stability of Israel. Pirathon was a town of the tribe of Ephraim where Abdon was born, lived, and was buried. Twenty-three years after a civil war between Gilead and Ephraim, during the judgeship of Jephthah the Gileadite, an Ephraimite is judging Israel. (Why the Scripture says this part of Ephraim where Abdon was buried was called the "hill county of the Amalekites" is unknown. Whether this is a reference to a time when the nation of Amalek invaded with the Midianites in the time of Gideon, or if it refers to a village known as Amalek in that region is unclear).

Here we see God's gracious healing of the divisions among His people. We may look forward to the day when He heals all the divisions present in the Church today.

Questions

1. What makes us think Abdon did not honor God's creation principle for marriage?
2. Where was Pirathon? Why is it significant that Abdon was a Pirathonite?
3. Why is it remarkable that an Ephraimite would be judge over Israel at this time?

Prayer Points

1. Pray for the preaching and hearing of God's Word tomorrow.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters

Memory Verse

"Then the Spirit of the LORD was upon Jephthah." Judges 11:29a

Praise: Psalm 72 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

The goal of Let's Worship God is to encourage and help you in your worship of God each day.

**God tells us that
Ezra read from
the book of the Law
day after day
and that
the people of God
were filled with joy!**

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