

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Judges And Ruth: Personal Blessing Amid Group Apostasy

Part II: History Of The Era Of The Judges

B. The Record Of Specific Judges, Judges 3:7-16:31

10. Jephthah's Judgeship, Judges 10:6-12:7

a. God's Use Of Distress To Restore Proper Relationship Commitments

(Judges 10:6-11:11)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

There is a decline in commitment in many relationships today, and it negatively impacts human institutions:

(1) Peggy Noonan's editorial, "Will The New Year's Tumult Trump The Old?" (The Wall Street Journal, January 203, 2016, p. A11) charged that the Republican Party's leadership is complacently uncommitted to addressing the concerns of the party base: they tolerate "open-borders, donor-class interests and social liberalism" while taking little action over "how on-the-ground and unprotected people feel about illegal immigration" and "the deep and more dangerous implications of political correctness on a host of economic and cultural issues."

She added: "Mr. Trump and the Trumps of the future are the result, not the cause" of this state, but "(t)he [party] establishment does not see this. They think it's about him [Trump]. It's about them." (Ibid., brackets ours)

However, this problem extends far beyond the Republicans: Peggy Noonan reported that in travelling across America, as she talked "to Trump supporters, it often emerged that they were Democrats or independents" (Ibid.), so political leaders throughout the country are not committed to addressing the deep concerns of many voters.

(2) The slackening of relationship commitments affects us locally: in recent years I have heard of many potent relationship problems in marital or family life that have been caused by a lack of proper commitment at some level.

(3) There is a growing lack of commitment to the Bible's God even by some professing Christians: Brannon Howse's book, The Coming Religious Reich, 2015, p. 354 told how "Southern Baptist pastor Lynn Ridenhour . . . openly preaches from both the Bible and The Book of Mormon." In his talk at Brigham Young University, Ridenhour was recorded as saying, "(S)ometimes I tell my Baptist buddies, The Book of Mormon is more Baptist than the Baptist Hymnal . . . It's jam packed full of what I call 'cardinal themes of Protestantism.'" (Ibid., p. 357)

However, the Mormon view of God differs greatly from the Christian view: Orson Pratt, The Seer, I, No. 3, p. 37 as cited in Salem Kirban, Mormonism, 1973, p. 33, noted the Mormon view has "many Gods, each one of whom has his own wife or wives which were given to him previous to his redemption while yet in his mortal state."

Yet, the Bible teaches God is "the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God," 1 Timothy 1:17 ESV.

Need: *So we ask, "What is the cause and the cure for a lack of adequate commitments in relationships?!"*

- I. Following Jair's worldly judgeship, Israel failed to stay committed to God by adopting false gods to the degree that the Lord initially refused to help her when He judged her to face Ammonite oppression:**
 - A. Like Gideon who had slipped into worldliness and influenced Israel to turn to idolatry, Jair's mimic of Gideon's latter, worldly judgeship opened the door for Israel to worship multiple false gods, Judges 10:6.
 - B. The Lord was infuriated by these events, so He let Israel be oppressed by the Philistines and the Ammonites, with first the Ammonites vexing Israel for 18 years, Judges 10:7-9; Ibid., Bible Know. Com., O. T.
 - C. Israel reacted by crying unto the Lord for deliverance, confessing that she had sinned in forsaking Him to serve other gods (Judges 10:10), but God claimed He would no longer help her, Judges 10:11-14:
 1. The Lord explained that He had delivered Israel from multiple Gentile oppressors in her past, but that Israel had still forsaken Him to serve other false pagan gods, Judges 10:11-13a ESV.
 2. Accordingly, God said He would no longer help Israel, that she should try crying unto the false gods she had decided to follow to see if they would deliver her in her time of distress, Judges 10:13b-14.
- II. Accordingly, Israel confessed her sin, asking God to deliver her this one time while she also put away her foreign gods to cleave to the Lord alone in accord with His Word, Judges 10:15-16a with Exodus 20:1-6.**
- III. Israel's return to a healthy, biblical commitment to the Lord as her only God led Him to feel intense compassion for Israel's plight (Judges 10:16b) and to prepare to deliver her from Ammonite oppression.**
- IV. However, that deliverance came as Israel also learned to restore a proper relationship at the human level that was a by-product of her having failed fully to follow the Lord, Judges 10:17-11:11:**
 - A. When the Ammonites threatened Israel's Transjordan people in Gilead so that the people of Israel gathered at Mizpeh to address the Ammonite threat (Judges 10:17), the decline in Israel's morals due to her indulging in

- pagan, lewd worship had apparently so undermined the character and spiritual stature of Israel's men that there was no effective male leader left in Gilead capable of leading Israel in battle, Judges 10:18.
- B. Indeed, the only man able to handle such a task was himself the product of Israel's decline into idolatry, and he had suffered unjust rejection in human relationships as a by-product of that apostasy, Judges 11:1-2:
 1. Jephthah of Gilead was a mighty man of valor, but he had been born of the union of his Hebrew father, Gilead with a pagan harlot, a Canaanite who may have been a cultic prostitute, Judges 11:1; *Ibid.*, p. 400.
 2. Since Jephthah was viewed as a lower class son, his brothers heartlessly did not want to share their inheritance with him, so they with apparently Gilead's elders had expelled him, Judges 11:2, 7; *Ibid.*
 - C. Jephthah had thus fled from Gilead to struggle for survival in the land of Tob, becoming a great warrior in that struggle, and vain men gathered around him so that he led them to be a strong military force, Judges 11:3a,b:
 1. The verb *yasa'* ("went out" KJV, v. 3b) means Jephthah led those who gathered around him out on military expeditions like David later led his band in raiding Israel's foes as he hid from Saul. (Kittel, *Bib. Heb.*, p. 385; B. D. B., *A Heb.-Eng. Lex. of the O. T.*, p. 422-425; J. F. B., *Com. on the Whole Bible*, 1977, p. 193)
 2. Jephthah was thus put into the same position as David centuries later: by facing distress as an outcast, he was forced to become an accomplished, effective man of valor in combat necessary for his survival.
 - D. Gilead's elders heard of Jephthah's combat exploits, so when Gilead was threatened by Ammon and realized they had a vacuum of good military leadership, they turned to Jephthah to ask him to lead them, Jud. 11:4-6.
 - E. However, much as God had initially refused to help idolatrous Israel (Jud. 10:10-14), Jephthah questioned why Gilead's elders wanted his help after they with his brothers had heartlessly rejected him, Judges 11:7.
 - F. Thus, the elders of Gilead had to do with Jephthah akin to what Israel had to do with the Lord: they had to confess their wrong to him, promising to make him their head before Jephthah would lead them, Jud. 11:8.
 - G. Since Gilead's elders invoked the Lord as a Witness of their renewed commitment to accept and to follow Jephthah, he made a covenant before the Lord to lead Israel in war, Judges 11:9-11.

Lesson: (1) *When Israel grew lax in her commitment to God so that she immorally worshiped false gods, her human relationships also deteriorated.* (2) *God thus used the DISTRESS of Ammonite oppression to get Israel to confess her sin, He used DISTRESS in Jephthah's life to enhance his capability as a military leader through trials to lead Israel in war and DISTRESS in Gilead's elders that they might renew a right relationship with Jephthah.*

Application: *If we are distressed, (1) may we trust in Christ to be saved, John 3:16. (2) If distressed as a believer, may we test to see if we idolatrously rely on a crutch besides God for fulfillment and repent as needed. (3) If our distress arises from our being mistreated, may we view it as an opportunity (as in the case of Jephthah) to grow in testing by God's help that we might become more useful to Him. (4) To avoid a lot of distress, may we trust God alone for fulfillment. It will keep us rightly more committed and more peaceful in all relationships, Proverbs 16:7.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

Stephen Prothero's op-ed, "Are Allah and Jesus the Same God?" in *The Wall Street Journal* January 8, 2016, p. A9 caused me distress: it told how "Wheaton College in Illinois," a Christian college I once tried to attend, "(e)arlier this week . . . began termination proceedings" against "Larycia Hawkins, an associate professor of political science" for posting "on Facebook that she was donning a head scarf through the pre-Christmas season of Advent" and adding, "I stand in religious solidarity with Muslims because they, like me, a Christian, are people of the book."

Mr. Prothero's op-ed asked the question, "Do Christians and Muslims worship the same God?", what is often asked today, so I decided to apply this sermon and use the example of Jephthah to utilize the distress I faced upon reading this article to test the revelation of Allah in Islam's holy book the Qur'an against the Bible's revelation of God:

(1) First, "Muhammad . . . was particularly incensed by their [Christians'] avowal of Jesus as the Son of God, for -- as he often repeated -- 'It befiteth not (the Majesty of) Allah that He should take unto Himself a son' (Qur'an 19:35)." (citing Robert Spencer, *The Truth about Muhammad*, 2006, p. 114) However, John 20:31 KJV of the Bible states: "But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name," and Colossians 2:9 KJV claims of Jesus: "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Islam and Christianity do not agree on Jesus' deity, so they have different deities.

(2) Second, 1 Corinthians 12:3 shows that since Islam cannot confess Jesus is the Lord, it does not have the Holy Spirit, meaning Islam is a false religion. Biblical Christianity and Islam are not compatible.

Viewing Scripture then supported God's truth in my mind, removing the distress raised by the op-ed. Thus, may we trust in Christ for salvation and RESPOND biblically to DISTRESS in our lives!