

## 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

#### c. Jephthah's Family Tragedies Due To Compromised Bible Beliefs

#### (Judges 11:29-40)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) Fred Barnes' op-ed, "Hillary Is In Big Trouble" (The Wall Street Journal, January 20, 2016, p. A13) told of a marital tragedy that is being played out in our national politics: when she started her run for the presidency, Hillary Clinton's "past was expected to be a great benefit to her campaign. It hasn't been. To begin with, her husband, former President Bill Clinton has turned into an albatross," for when Mrs. Clinton said that "Donald Trump," the Republican frontrunner, "has 'demonstrated a penchant for sexism,' Mr. Trump answered on Twitter . . . recalling her husband's history of womanizing, accusing him of 'a terrible record of women abuse.'" Even politically liberal columnist Ruth Marcus of the Washington Post responded, writing that "Mr. Trump 'has a point'" and Kirsten Powers in USA Today wrote that the remarks by Mr. Trump was "bad news for the Clintons," Ibid.

Peggy Noonan, one-time speech writer for former President Ronald Reagan in her column, "The High Cost of a Bad Reputation," Ibid., January 16-17, 2016, p. A11, noted "Mrs. Clinton's reputational problems are evident in this week's polls," citing among other things "her part in her husband's dramas."

(2) However, the marital and family tragedies played out at the top of the political spectrum merely reflect what occurs at much of the country's grassroots levels: we all know about failed marriages, adulterous affairs, disintegration of family units not to mention a seemingly endless barrage of dysfunctional relationships.

Need: *So we ask, "Is there a cause and a spiritual cure for tragedies in family life today?!"*

- I. **Though God equipped Jephthah to lead Israel to great victory over the Ammonites, his lapse of faith in God followed by a dreadful vow to the Lord led to multiple tragedies in his family life, Judges 11:29-40:**
  - A. The Holy Spirit came upon Jephthah, giving him great victory over the Ammonites: Israel slew the enemy over an area of land that included twenty cities, a huge triumph for the nation of Israel, Judges 11:29, 32-33.
  - B. However, doubting God's help even after the Holy Spirit had come upon him, Jephthah vowed that if the Lord would **surely give** (expressed as an infinitive absolute, *naton* ["to give"] before the main verb *titen* ["You give"] to emphasize the main verb, Kittel, Bib. Heb., p. 387; B. D. B., A Heb.-Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 678-681; G. K. C., Gesenius' Heb. Gram., 1970, p. 342) the Ammonites into his hand, he would give God whatever first came out of his house to greet him when he came home, offering it up as a burnt offering, Jud. 11:30-31.
  - C. Some hold verse 31b reads " . . . shall surely be the Lord's (if a human being comes first) **or** I will offer it up for a burnt offering (if an animal appears first)" (Ryrie St. Bib., KJV, 1978, fn. to Jud. 11:31). Yet, the phrase "and/or I will offer it up for a burnt offering" uses the letter *waw* ("and" or "or") plus the verb "offer" (*'alah*, Ibid., Kittel; Ibid., B. D. B., p. 748-750) in the **perfect** tense, and by far this format (cf. Gen. 34:15-16 and Ex. 18:16) leaves the *waw* in this phrase meaning "and" to show **how** the subject becomes God's possession, that Jephthah pledged to offer as a burnt offering what first came out of his house (<https://bible.org/netbible>).
  - D. When Jephthah actually returned home in victory, his only child, a daughter, was the first to come out of his house, causing Jephthah great anguish as he had made a vow that he had to keep, Judges 11:34-35. Were he to offer her up as a burnt offering, not only would there be the tragic loss of the life of his virgin daughter, but Jephthah would be left with no heirs through her as she, his only child, would die childless.
  - E. Jephthah's daughter acted as a heroine, urging her father to fulfill his vow, but asking him first to let her go up and down on the mountains for two months, bewailing the fact that she would bear no children, a great tragedy to a woman in that era, and he gave her permission, Judges 11:36-38.
  - F. After her two months expired, she returned and Jephthah fulfilled his vow, offering up his daughter as a burnt offering, Jud. 11:39, and the daughters of Israel after that memorialized the event for 4 days a year, Jud. 11:40.
- II. **Significantly, the context reveals that the CAUSE of Jephthah's lapse of faith and his dreadful vow that led to these family tragedies arose from BIBLE BELIEFS being COMPROMISED with PAGAN ones:**
  - A. Jephthah was the son of a Hebrew father and an immoral Canaanite pagan prostitute (Judges 11:1 NIV), so from his earliest days, he would have been exposed not only to Bible truth, but to Canaanite error.

- B. He was also expelled from his father's home while a young man, so he fled into the Gentile territory of Tob north of Ammon where he faced increased exposure to pagan beliefs, Jud. 11:2-3 Ibid., Ryrie, ftn. to Jud. 11:3.
- C. Jephthah thus adopted pagan beliefs along with Bible beliefs, compromising his Bible theology with pagan error, a syncretism that led to Jephthah's family tragedies as we can Scripturally document (as follows):
1. Evidence that Jephthah's theology was a mixture of pagan error with Bible truth is seen in Judges 11:24: while addressing the Ammonites there, he claimed the pagan god Chemosh had given the Ammonites their land to possess, but Deuteronomy 2:17-21 has Moses claiming that Israel's God, not Chemosh, had given the Ammonites their land. Thus, Jephthah revealed that his theology mixed belief in Israel's true God who was the Lord of heaven and earth, that is, of the entire universe, with the pagan belief in the sovereignty of local pagan gods like Chemosh who provided assistance and victory for respective local people groups.
  2. Jephthah's dreadful vow of offering whatever came out of his house as a burnt offering in violation of Deuteronomy 12:31 was also typical of ancient pagan practices (The New Bible Commentary: Revised, 1970, p. 268-269), so Jephthah had adopted the unbiblical, pagan belief in human sacrifice.
  3. Besides, Jephthah's lapse of faith in God even after the Holy Spirit had come on him to supply evidence of God's coming help in battle (Jud. 11:29-31) is explained in view of the paganism that influenced Jephthah:
    - a. Pagan man believed in capricious gods who had to be appeased or manipulated by magic to try to secure his welfare, leaving pagan man very insecure, Bruce K. Waltke, Creation and Chaos, 1974, p. 57, 64-65.
    - b. Jephthah's faith in a trustworthy, transcendent Creator presented in the Bible was compromised with paganism, so regardless if the Holy Spirit had come on him to equip him to give Israel victory, Jephthah's compromised theology led to insecurity and a weak faith that produced a vow that led to family tragedies.

***Lesson:*** *By compromising Scripture with pagan beliefs, Jephthah's victory over the Ammonites by God's help was followed by the family tragedies of Jephthah's sacrifice of his daughter and his subsequent loss of heirs.*

***Application:*** *(1) May we trust in Christ to be saved, John 3:16. (2) May we (a) part with false beliefs of the world around us (b) and read and adopt Scripture truth (c) to avoid needless family tragedies and gain God's blessing.*

**Conclusion:** (To illustrate the message . . .)

Strange as it may seem to say it, I believe that the biggest, most costly tragedy in family life in America today is the failure of husbands properly to love their wives.

To illustrate, I refer to an incident I witnessed last Monday night in a local store. As I was walking in a-nuts-and-bolts section of the store, I came across a married couple, and she was trying to help her husband look for an item he desired in a realm that was clearly not her area of expertise. He was describing what he wanted, and she eventually picked up an item from one of the shelves and asked if that was what he wanted.

Her husband glanced at the object and then bluntly charged, "You're not listening to what I'm saying!"

The woman was surprised and hurt at this, seen in her turning to him and softly saying, "Yes, I'm listening!"

He flatly retorted, "No, you're not!"

I suddenly felt angry at the man, and the conversation left me feeling ill, for the woman was hurt, and I was upset upon realizing that this kind of verbal interchange occurs too often in too many marriages!

Ephesians 5:25-33 teaches that a man is supposed to love his wife as Christ self-sacrificially loves the Church. That husband in the store should have responded to his wife's question by assuming he had failed to clarify what he sought, for she had no possible motive for trying to ignore his directions if she was trying so hard to help him! The problem lay with the husband -- first in his failure to communicate and then in his verbal abuse of his wife!

In keeping with this sermon, I find that what largely produces this dysfunction is the adoption of the world's errant view of women in general: the mainstream media often presents women as valuable only if they are young, physically attractive objects of male lust, and this value system often corrupts the view that husbands have of their wives and at times the view that women have of themselves. When husbands fail to show a selfless love toward their wives because they have adopted the worldly view of women in general, and if their wives view themselves as worthless because they fail in their own estimation to measure up to the world's criteria for womanhood, it is difficult if not impossible for wives to respond or submit to their husbands. This complication leads to many troubles.

I am convinced that if men were to practice Christ's Ephesians 5:25-33 self-sacrificing love toward their wives, they would be overwhelmed by the positive response of their wives, for God made women to crave such love.

**So, all of us, men and women alike, need to trust in Christ to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Then we will have the power to resist the world's values and fill our minds with Scripture to know blessing, not tragedy.**