**Judges 10 & 11**

**Chapter 10:**

Start with a brief historical account of God’s deliverance through two “minor judges”. Timeline is approximately 1150 – 1100 BC.

*Why are they called “minor judges”?* It doesn’t mean they were less important than “major judges” but they are judges were very little information is revealed other than basic facts of their judgeships. However, we do know that God raised them up to deliver Israel. We will hear of 3 more “minor judges” next week in Ch. 12.

*Why does the does the author mention these minor judges at all?* He wants us to be aware of how many judges God raised up, how many times Israel was given over to oppressors because of their sin, and how great God’s grace is (more judges, more grace shown).

**Tola’s Judgeship (v1-2)** *What do we know about Tola?*

His name means “crimson or reddish dye” in Hebrew. Follows Abimelech (ch. 9). He is son of Puah from the tribe of Issachar. Puah is Abimelech’s uncle and brother of Gideon. He “rose to save” Israel and judged 23 years from Shamir in the hills of Ephraim. Died and buried there.

**Jair’s Judgeship (v3-5)** *What do we know about Jair?*

His name means, “he enlightens”. Follows Tola. He is son of Segub, who was son of Hezron and daughter of Makir the father of Gilead (1 Chron. 2:22-24). He judged Israel 22 years. He had 30 sons, who rode 30 donkeys, and controlled 30 towns in Gilead called “Havvoth Jair” or “Villages of Jair”. Evident he had great wealth. Died and buried in Kamon.

*Why was it important to know that these judges died?* It is not mentioned; perhaps their tombs were a memorial or reminder of God’s deliverance through these judges.

**Ammonite Oppression, Israel’s Repentance, and God’s Mercy (v6-18)**

**10:6** Re-start of the downward side of the Cycle of Sin- once again the Israelites do evil in the LORD’s sight. First time specifically told that they worshiped other gods; matter of fact the text mentions 7 false gods (reach new depths). In the Bible 7 is a sign of completeness- appears to be symbolism that the Israelites completely abandoned God. They once again embrace the godless culture around them and fall into sin & idolatry. They forgot and forsook the LORD and served other gods (similar to Judges 2:11-12).



\* We can relate to the pattern of Judges since it symbolizes our Christian lives. Today we can be just like Israel- we walk with God, tank Him for granted, drift away from God as we worship things that He created rather than the creator who made them, then misery and destruction comes from the sin, and they we cry out for help to the LORD. Some similarities- we worship our idols (work, technology, money, people, and possessions). Times of disobedience crop up in times of peace and relative prosperity, we start become more self-reliant and worship things falling into sin/idolatry. Then we cry out to God for help when things turn bad enough.

V7 *God’s response-* He becomes furious with them and sells them/ gives them over to the Philistines and the Ammonites (they originated from Lot’s union with his younger daughter- Gen 19:38). This is first time we see God turning them over to 2 enemies. God allows misery, as he is jealous for His people. Ironic- they surrendered their freedom and followed the people around them only to be conquered by the same people and culture they copied.

V8- 9 Israel is oppressed for 18 years and in great distress. Focus is on Ammonite oppression in Gilead on the east side of the Jordan River.

V10 Israel’s response- cried out to the LORD and confess their sin of forsaking God and serving the Baals”. First time in the book, they admit & confess their sin. “How sincere were they? Sounds more like a ‘sorry’, no noticeable change of heart. God calls their bluff.

V11-14 the LORD responds first with a question “did I not deliver you from…” List 7 nations which shows he is more than a God of 2nd chances but 7 chances (and more). It is a list of Israel’s failures and reminds them of His faithless in delivering them. In V13 God gives them ‘tough love’ “but since you abandoned me and worshiped other gods, I will not deliver you again”. What Israel has done is very personal to God and he terribly upset & angry. God is feed- up, but He gives them in alternative in v14 and tells them to go seek deliverance from the gods they have chosen (likely with a touch of sarcasm).

V15-16 Israel’s plea- they recognize their hope and help is not in the false gods they have been worshiping. They realize their sin brought about by their own foolishness. Now they not only confess their sin, they expect disciple/punishment for it. They plead with God for deliverance this last time; they want it immediate due to their intense difficulties- now/ today. Israel repents and turns away from their sin by throwing away foreign gods and worshiping the LORD. *Contrasting with V10*- we see they confessed but did not take action or get serious about repentance (“sorry”). Then in V16 they show genuine regret, and repent by turning away from their foreign gods by tossing them out. There is a change of heart, and repentance is required for change. God grants repentance (2 Tim 2:25). Then they worship the one true God.

V16- God could no longer bear their suffering. He knew His people were sincere. God’s heart is moved and He shows his compassion and pours out His grace. God grants repentance

*Q- Do you tell God you’re sorry or do you repent (action)?*

V17-18 Tension escalates between the Ammonites and Israelites. Ammonites move their army to Gilead (before was smaller attacks) and Israelites set up camp in Mizpah due to growing concern. Israel is in search of a leader to lead them against the Ammonites and no-one steps up for their military.

**Chapter 11: Jephthah’s Deliverance:**

Enter Jephthah.

V1-3 We learn of Jephthah’s background. *What do we know about him?*

Jephthah is a Gileadite. He is son of Gilead and a prostitute. Seems his father Gilead was from the tribe of Manasseh (1 Chron. 7:14-17). He is driven away by his half-brothers (appears the father had passed away). God turned his situation into a learning opportunity. The rejection he experience prepared him to be a leader when war was threatening. He was a great warrior and apparent leader as he had a gang of lawless/worthless men followed him (military chief, “Robin Hood”). This occurs today in land of Arabs. It is not deemed dishonorable when the expeditions are directed against those out of his own tribe or nation (probably Ammonites). Jephthah's mode of life was similar to that of David when driven from the court of Saul. Resided in the land of Tob, which was an outlying area north of Ammon. His judgeship lasted 6 years (12:7) around 1110 BC.

*Why did the brothers drive him away?* Was it really about the inheritance? Doesn’t appear so as custom would not allow an illegitimate son to inherit from the father’s estate. Jealousy?

V4-5 the Ammonites attack Israel. The elders of Gilead turn to their only apparent hope and go to Tob to recruit Jephthah.

*Why did the elders pick an outcast to lead them?* No leader emerge from their troops when assembled at Mizpah (means ‘watchtower’, several places). The crisis demanded that they do whatever was necessary to protect themselves. Jephthah was their natural choice since he had proven himself as a warrior and leader in exile.

V7-11 It appears the Israelites forgot to call on their God to ask Him for guidance in their need of deliverance. They had forgotten how to follow God; they ask Jephthah to serve as their commander. He is never specifically identified in the text as one who God appointed to deliver His people (unlike 3:9,15; 4:6-7; 6:14). Negotiations take place between Jephthah and the elders of Gilead. Jephthah didn’t trust their word (reacted like God did). V10 Jephthah makes them offer the deal to lead now and after battle by making an oath with God as their witness V11 Then to be doubly assured he repeated the pledge in front the great assembly and before the LORD to solemnize the agreement. Implies his inauguration of judge with divine blessing.

**Jephthah’s Tries Diplomacy and Reason**

V12-28 The first act of judge Jephthah reflects great character showing prudence and wisdom while seeking justice and peace for Israel. Brave leaders and officers have always been averse to war. Jephthah resolved not only to make it clear those hostilities were forced upon him, but also that he took measures to avoid it.

With use of messengers, Jephthah tries diplomacy to defend Israel and tries to make his case to the King of the Ammonites. He first asks why he is attacking “our” country. The King of Ammon makes bogus land claim. Jephthah defends Israel by giving the King a history lesson with these key points of reason:

1. Israel didn’t take the land from the Ammonites, as the King falsely claimed, but the Amorites.
2. The land was given to Israel by Israel’s God and they should possess it. Each nation should possess what their god has given them.
3. No one had contested Israel’s right to the land for 300 years, not even Balak son of Zippor (king of Moab at the time Israel defeated the Amorites to take the land on the east side of the Jordan River. Feared Israel as he knew God was with them per prophet Balaam- Num. 22).

V28 The king of Ammon disregards Jephthah’s message. Jephthah’s attempt at diplomacy failed; perhaps in part, because he identified Chemosh as the Ammonite’s god when in fact, Chemosh was god of the Moabites. Molech was god of the Ammonites (1 Kings 11:33). Ammon was north and east of Moab.

V29 The Spirit of the LORD comes upon Jephthah. He and his troops move on to fight the Ammonites.

**The Vow**

V30-31 Prior to battle Jephthah makes a vow. A most foolish vow as in exchange for victory over the Ammonites he will offer up a burnt offering of the first thing that comes out the door of his home to meet/ greet him.

V32-33 Jephthah attacks the Ammonites and the LORD gives them into his hands. He devastated 20 towns from Aroer to Abel Keramim.

V34-v35 the joy of victory suddenly turned to sorrow when he saw his daughter and remembered his vow.

V36-37 Response of a loving and obedient daughter. Tells him he must keep his word to the LORD. She asks for one final request- 2 months to hang out with her friends in the hills to weep as she will never marry and have children.

V38- 39 He grants her request and she goes with her friends. Upon her return he did to her as he had vowed. V39 has some debate as more modern theologians understand that Jephthah only dedicated his daughter to the Lord for lifelong service and perpetual virginity. While most hold that she was killed according to the Canaanite practices, which Jephthah embraced. Since he vowed to sacrifice a burnt offering this seems more likely.

*What is behind this crazy vow/ deal with God?* (v31, 39) This is a troubling story.

1. *Why would a man who was used by God take such a risk with his family?* The Spirit of the LORD was empowering him but this does not guarantee a person will be faultless in other areas of their life. He may have thought God would be impressed with his devotion (burnt offering was an expression of devotion). It was common practice at the time for generals on the eve of battle or outbreak of war to make promise to the god of their worship a costly sacrifice or some valuable booty for the price of victory. He was striking a deal instead of trusting in God. He thought he had to earn favor like those that worshipped pagan gods in the culture around him.
2. *Could God be honored by a sinful act (human sacrifice) if to fulfill a vow?* No. Fulfilling a vow was a high priority in biblical times (Lev 5:4, Deut 23:21-23) and Jephthah apparently didn’t want to be humiliated by reversing his promise. But God had outlawed human sacrifice (Lev 18:21, 20:1-5). God disapproves of sin, even if committed to fulfill a vow.
3. *Why didn’t Jephthah take some alternative action?* Jephthah knew his history pretty well but didn’t know God’s Word. He was following the Mosaic law of vows from Num. 30:2, that one must keep his vow. However, he forgot Deut 18:10 one should not sacrifice his son or daughter in the fire (burnt offering). He could have told God he made a big mistake and repented, paid ransom to temple, and been released from his vow/promise (Lev. 5:4-6)

\* This illustrates that even those God uses as leaders do not always follow His ways. Rather than trust God, Jephtah tried to bargain or manipulate God for his blessing. God was going to give him the victory; he didn’t need to make the vow. Jephthah didn’t realize that we don’t need to make sacrifices or promise to earn God’s favor. It is His gift to us. Only one way to please God is faith- faith in His loving grace. Eph. 2:8 “for grace you have been saved, it is a gift and can’t be earned.

**Good Character Traits of Jephthah:**

1. Had faith in God & followed Him. (listed in the Hall of Faith- Heb 11:32-34)
2. Despite mistreatment from his family & community he was willing to forgive and move forward (helped the Gileadites)
3. He was strong & courageous. He drew people to himself, a natural leader.
4. He made something of himself despite a tough childhood and upbringing
5. He was a student of history. We can learn from it, proved his case)
6. He was a family man (daughter was the apple of his eye)

**Not So Good** **Character Traits of Jephthah:**

1. He tried to manipulate God.
2. He made a very foolish promise and stubbornly kept it.
3. He didn’t know the scriptures.
4. While having faith in God, he had a very poor grasp of how God wanted him to live.
5. He killed his daughter.

**What lessons can we learn from Jephthah?**

1. Don’t mistake rejection from people as God’s rejection, remain faithful. It is a great testimony to the world when believers who suffer unjustly remain faithful to God.
2. While our upbringing shape us, it is not an excuse for bad behavior or not taking initiative in our lives.
3. God uses outcasts for His purposes and glory.
4. We need to remember all God has done for us (you). Be reminded of God’s past faithfulness & how He has never failed you. Write the times down He never failed you, it will build your faith. (Lam. 3:22-27 “great faithfulness of the Father)
5. Need to grow in our walk with God (in relationship).
6. We need to be in His Word, in prayer, and building strong relationships with other believers. Consequences if we are not, we will fall into temptation and not have the resource to get out of it. God’s Word will spare us a lot of grief.
7. Knowing our history as children of God will help us face the challenges of today and inspire our faith.
8. Never try to manipulate God. He desires to give us good gifts, don’t bargain with him.
9. Look for a deliverer- our deliverer is Jesus Christ.
10. Salvation is and always has been by faith. Praise God for His amazing grace.
11. Neither bad choices nor injustices done to a person must ever keep a child of God from completing his calling.
12. Forgiving our enemies and those who wrong us is important and Christ-like.
13. Think before you speak. Let your “yes” be yes and your “no” be no. Do not make promises you can’t keep or shouldn’t keep. Read Prov 20:25; Matt. 5:33-37; James 3:7-10, 5:12; Prov 12:18.