

## =UNUSUAL BIBLE STORIES=

### Lesson 4

### Jephthah

SCRIPTURE: Judges 11

AIM: to teach my pupils the importance of keeping their vows to God

POINT OF CONTACT: Ask the pupils to share with you some promises they have made to God. This could be a promise of faithfulness to church, having private devotions, tithing, etc. Ask them to list some promises they have made to God through the years.

INTRODUCTION: Jephthah was a Gileadite. He was a great man, but he was the son of a harlot. Because of that, his brethren cast him out and said that he would not inherit what was his. Jephthah went and dwelt in the land of Tob until the day came when the Ammonites warred against Israel. When this happened, those who had cast him out (the elders of Gilead) went to Jephthah, since he was a mighty man, and asked him if he would come and be the captain for them in the battle against the Ammonites. Jephthah reminded them that they had cast him out of his father's house and now they were coming and asking him for help when they were in trouble. They promised him, however, that even after the battle was over, he could still be the captain; so he went with them and became their leader.

Jephthah made a very foolish decision, however. Though the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, and though the victory would have been obvious, he made a vow to God that if God would give him the victory over the Ammonites, then when he returned home, he would sacrifice to God the first thing that came through the doors of his house to meet him.

The Lord did give the victory to Jephthah and his warriors. He came home from the battle, and to his complete dismay, his own daughter came out to meet him. In fact, she was his only child. Jephthah had made a promise, and he felt he could not go back on his promise. Consequently, he told his daughter, and she agreed that he should offer her as a sacrifice. For years the daughters of Israel went annually to lament her death. This was a four-day vacation they had each year.

- I. JEPHTHAH HAD A BAD HERITAGE; YET HE WAS USED MIGHTILY FOR GOD. Read Judges 11:1. You will notice here that he was the son of a harlot. In other words, he was the son of a woman who was a prostitute, one who sold her body to any man who had the price. In spite of this fact, Jephthah became a great man. This should be a tremendous encouragement to many of our boys and girls. We have hundreds of children who ride the buses as well as children who come on their own whose heritage is not to be compared with that of other children; yet God can and will use a person in spite of such handicaps. (Teacher, have the class give you some people in the Bible who had bad backgrounds and who did great things for God—such people as Ruth, Rahab, Mary Magdalene, and others.)
- II. JEPHTHAH WAS A SUCCESS EVEN THOUGH HE WAS HATED BY THOSE WHO KNEW HIM BEST. Jephthah was the son of Gilead by a harlot. His brothers, who were born from Gilead's wife, hated him and cast him out of the house. Though one is cast out, poor, hated or rejected, he can still do mighty things for God. Again, this should encourage the hearts of many of our young people and children. (Teacher, spend some time here discussing people in the Bible who were rejected—people like David, when the sons of Jesse were being considered for the throne; Joseph, etc. Even our Lord was rejected by men.)
- III. THERE IS ALWAYS A NEED FOR THE ONE WHO HAS THE GOODS. Jephthah had the goods; hence, there was a need for him. Notice Judges 11:5. The important thing is that we have the goods. If one becomes what he ought to be, he will have the opportunities to do what he ought to do. Far too many of us are concerned about learning to do things when we ought to be concerned about learning to be something. Though Jephthah did not have the accreditation, he had the goods; and one who has the goods will be called on to do something.

God knows where we are. If we qualify ourselves to become what we ought to become, the day will come when we are needed and God will call us. Sometimes God waits and does it in His own good time. We wonder why we have to wait. Somebody had said, "There is always a place for a prepared man." The most important thing about this preparation is becoming what we ought to become.

- IV. JEPHTHAH RENDERED GOOD FOR EVIL. See Judges 11:11. Now he could have said, "You kicked me out, so drop dead!" but he did not! Though he did not know what our Lord was to say in the Sermon on the Mount, he knew the principles involved. We are to pray for those who spitefully use us, love those who hate us, bless those who curse us, etc. There are many people whom one has to help and should want to help who do not deserve help. We should bathe ourselves in a life lived for others, not just others who deserve our help, not just others who are worthy of our help, those who have earned our help or have helped us—but we should be willing to help those who have spurned us before or even done injury to us.
- V. JEPHTHAH MADE A FOOLISH VOW. Read Judges 11:29-31. The vow he made was not necessary. The Spirit of the Lord was all that he needed. In verse 29, we find that the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah. God would have delivered them from the Ammonites in spite of this vow; yet Jephthah made a foolish decision.

Foolish decisions can wreck the lives of young people. The wisdom of God and the advice and counsel of wiser people is needed in the choosing of a college, the choosing of a mate, the choosing of a vocation, etc.

- VI. JEPHTHAH KEPT HIS PROMISE. Notice Judges 11:32-35. What promises have you made to God? You promised God that you would tithe. Are you keeping that promise? Have you promised God that you will have daily devotions? Are you keeping that promise? Have you promised God that you would be faithful to the services? Are you keeping that promise?
- VII. JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER ENCOURAGED HIM TO KEEP HIS PROMISE. Read Judges 11:36. Here is a good place to stress to young people the importance of keeping their word. Stress here the paying of debts, paying the tithe, etc. This is very important for young people.

CONCLUSION: Once when Bro. Hyles had occasion to talk to Dr. John R. Rice, he asked what his opinion was about the secret of rearing good children. Four things were given: (1) Immediate obedience, (2) Love, (3) Work, and (4) The Bible. It might be wise to close the lesson out dwelling on the importance of each of these. Parents should be reminded to heed these four things and teach them to their children. Children should be reminded of the importance of these four things if they want to turn out right.