

A REJECTED HALL OF FAMER (Judges 11:1-40)

1.The rejection of Jephthah (Judges 11:1-3).

- a. When you read these first three verses, you don't really see a hall of fame life coming into existence.
- b. First of all, though born to a prominent man, he was brought into this world by a prostitute.
 - i. This was not a very auspicious beginning.
 - ii. His name means "God opens the womb", which may have been given to the surprise conception of a prostitute.
- c. Gilead was married and had sons with his wife.
 - i. Those sons would not allow him to inherit with them because of his illegitimate beginnings.
 - ii. It must have been potentially life threatening to Jephthah, because we are told that he fled from them.
- d. He went to the land of Tob, which was northwest of his homeland of Gilead, which was part of the land taken for inheritance by the Reubenites, Gadites, and half tribe of Manasseh, on the west side of the Jordan River.
 - i. This was kind of a wild west type area.
 - ii. It was a no man's land with little to any type of settlements there.
- e. We are told that vain men gathered to Jephthah, and he became their leader as they went out on raids.
 - i. It seems this was somewhat like the beginnings of David's days after being chased by Saul.
 - ii. Remember that men who had been rejected by Israel gathered to David and he would raid enemies lands and provide support to Israelite villages while he was on the run from Saul.
- f. Some have said that he was simply the leader of a gang, like Jesse James, or Butch Cassidy.
 - i. The phrase in verse one about Jephthah describes him as a mighty man of valor.
 - ii. That description does not sound like a bandit.
 - iii. When you keep reading, as we will, there is something much more to this man and his character than simple raiding and pillaging.
 - iv. He then agreed to lead them if they would allow him to remain as leader after God gave them the victory.

2.The restoration of Jephthah (Judges 11:4-10).

- a. At the end of chapter 10, we learn that Ammon had come against Gilead.
- b. We are now brought back to that situation.
- c. The people of Gilead were in desperate need of a leader.
 - i. So much so that they were willing to call Jephthah home.
 - ii. They wanted the rejected son to come back home.
- d. What these men did was seemingly forget the past to help them in the present.
- e. Jephthah did not allow them to do that.
 - i. Notice his words recorded in verse 7 (Judges 11:7).
 - ii. He said you hated me and kicked me out and now you want me back.

- iii. Based on the wording, it is very possible that some of the ones asking him back were responsible for kicking him out.
- f. They simply glossed over that fact and asked him again.
- g. He told them that the only way he would do it was if, after God gave the victory, they would allow him to rule over them.
 - i. Notice his belief in God.
 - ii. He knew the victory would come from God and not himself.
- h. They agreed to that and called God as their witness.
- i. The rejected son had now been restored.

3. The reliance on God of Jephthah (Judges 11:11-33).

- a. When the pact was made between Jephthah and the elders, Jephthah showed his reliance on God by praying to Him.
 - i. He uttered all these words to God we are told.
 - ii. There in Mizpeh where they made him leader
 - iii. No victory would be won by the Gileadites without God and he knew it.
- b. As his first move as leader of Gilead, Jephthah wrote to the Ammonite king and asked him why he had come to fight.
- c. The Ammonite king claimed that he was simply reclaiming land that Israel had taken from them.
- d. Jephthah proceeded to make four arguments to prove the right of ownership of the land and the falsity of the claim by Ammon.
- e. The first argument is found in Judges 11:14-22.
 - i. This argument was based in the Mosaic records and is very important.
 - ii. It points out the fact that there was a copy of God's word and it was known even by someone who had been out of the land for some time.
 - iii. Some of the statements in this argument are direct quotations of passages from Numbers.
 - iv. It shows a reliance on God's word for proof.
 - v. The summary of Jephthah's argument here is simply that Israel had not taken the land away from the Ammonites at all, but had defeated and displaced the Amorites who were originally the inhabitants of the land.
 - vi. It was a perfectly true and reasonable argument.
- f. His second argument is found in Judges 11:23-24.
 - i. Jephthah pointed out that it was the God of Israel who had given the Israelites this land and, because such, the Israelites had no right to give it away or the Ammonites to take it.
 - ii. He then told them that whatever land their god would give them they should possess and that Israel would possess what land God gave them.
 - iii. Jephthah was simply making an argument from the Ammonites belief, he was not saying that Chemosh really existed.
- g. His third argument is found in Judges 11:25.
 - i. Balaak had tried to get Balaam to curse Israel, but he never disputed the land they had.
 - ii. Moab had once owned that land and had it taken from them by Sihon, yet they did not claim the land.
 - iii. This also shows a great knowledge of the writings of Moses.
- h. His fourth argument is found in Judges 11:26.
 - i. This argument could be called the statute of limitations.

- ii. Basically, Jephthah asked him why they had not tried to get the land in the last 300 years.
- iii. This is a very important passage when it comes to dating the time of the exodus out of Egypt, which would also help in dating the writings of Moses.
- iv. Notice this statement from D.K. Campbell: "Since Jephthah's judgeship began about 1100 B.C., adding the 300 years mentioned here dates the conquest at approximately 1400 B.C. The exodus took place forty years earlier in 1440 B.C., the so-called 'early date' held by most evangelical scholars."
- i. These arguments show a deep reliance on God and His word by Jephthah.
 - i. He appealed to scripture.
 - ii. He appealed to the power of God.
 - iii. All of this shows a man who relied on God despite having been rejected by God's people for several years.
- j. The Ammonite king wasn't persuaded by any of the arguments made by Jephthah, so there was going to be a fight.
- k. Judges 11:29 tells us that the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah.
 - i. This showed him and others that God was with him in his efforts.
 - ii. Adam Clarke wrote, "the Lord qualified him for the work he had called him to do and thus gave him the most convincing testimony that his cause was good."
 - iii. This same phrase is used of Othniel, Gideon, Samson, and Saul as well.
- l. He then went around the land of Gilead and surrounding areas rounding up troops to fight against the Ammonites.
- m. He then made a vow to God that whatever came out of his house first, that would he offer as a burnt offering to God, if God allowed him to be victorious.
 - i. He was showing his reliance on God here.
 - ii. However, it was a rash vow, with him not giving full thought to all the ramifications of what could happen, as we will notice.
- n. God did give Jephthah a great victory.
 - i. The Lord delivered Ammon into their hands we are told.
 - ii. It was a very great slaughter and tremendous victory.
- o. All through these events, we see a man, though rejected, still relying on God for all things.

4. The realization of Jephthah (Judges 11:34-40).

- a. Jephthah had made a vow and now he had every intention of fulfilling it.
- b. Sadly, not having thought through all the probabilities, Jephthah is going to come to a realization of just how rash his vow was.
- c. When he came to his house, the first thing to come out of that door, was not a thing, but his only child, a daughter.
- d. It was a common practice in that day to have baby animals in the house that needed care.
 - i. This is believed to be exactly what Jephthah originally had in mind.
 - ii. Remember the wording "whatsoever" not "whosoever".
 - iii. Also, he said he would offer it.
- e. To Jephthah's credit, he fulfilled the vow that he made to God (Judges 11:39).

- f. The question arises then, how did he fulfill that vow.
- g. I do not believe for an instant that he offered his daughter as a burnt offering.
 - i. Remember when he made the vow: after the Spirit of the Lord came over him.
 - ii. Not only that, this was a man who knew God's word and would have known the commands against offering human sacrifices.
 - iii. The Hebrew allows for an either/or situation: he would either offer it as a burnt sacrifice or dedicate it to the Lord (such as Hannah did with Samuel).
 - iv. The request of Jephthah's daughter doesn't make sense if she was to be killed.
 - (1) She would not be upset that she was going to die a virgin, just that she would die.
 - (2) She would want to bewail her virginity if she realized that she was going to the tabernacle to work and never to marry.
 - v. Also, why would we be told after Jephthah is said to have kept his vow that she never knew a man?
 - vi. This would have been offered at the tabernacle and there is no way the priests would have allowed this to happen.
- h. I believe that Jephthah's daughter was dedicated to God in His service at the tabernacle because of the vow made by her father.

5. Reasoning from the life of Jephthah.

- a. Jephthah was willing to put the past in the past to serve God.
 - i. He could have held a grudge against the Gileadites.
 - ii. It would have been easy to do but he didn't.
 - iii. You and I can't hold the past against people, especially brethren.
 - iv. Grudges, I believe, will keep a lot of Christians out of heaven.
- b. Jephthah did not simply rush into battle.
 - i. He asked what the cause of the conflict was.
 - ii. Too many people rush to judgment and start fights that may be avoided if a little asking was done first.
- c. Jephthah was given a commission by God.
 - i. The Spirit of God came over him.
 - ii. You and I have been given a commission as well.
 - iii. We have been empowered by God through the means of the gospel to accomplish that mission.
- d. Jephthah took the battle to the enemy.
 - i. At the end of verse 29, we are told that Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon.
 - ii. We need to be willing to take the fight to the enemy, whoever or whatever that enemy may be.
- e. Jephthah kept his vow to God.
 - i. It may have been a rash vow, but he kept it nonetheless.
 - ii. You and I, if we have been baptized, made a vow to God that we would live for Him.
 - iii. Are we keeping it?
 - iv. If you are married, you made a vow to your spouse.
 - v. Are you keeping it?

vi. Other vows are made throughout our lives.

vii. We made them before God and we must keep them.