

Judges Chapter 12 Commentary

1 ¶ "And the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and went northward, and said unto Jephthah, Wherefore passedst thou over to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go with thee? we will burn thine house upon thee with fire."

This is not the first time that the tribe of Ephraim has risen up in pride and wrathful jealousy. Remember when they came at Gideon in: **Jg 8:1 "And the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And they did chide with him sharply."** In both cases, they seem to have wanted the glory that was not theirs. They threaten to destroy Jephthah and his household.

2 "And Jephthah said unto them, I and my people were at great strife with the children of Ammon; and when I called you, ye delivered me not out of their hands. 3 And when I saw that ye delivered me not, I put my life in my hands, and passed over against the children of Ammon, and the LORD delivered them into my hand: wherefore then are ye come up unto me this day, to fight against me?"

Jephthah tells them that he called, and they did not come. This is a stiff-necked bunch, and they will not listen to reason, even when Jephthah gives them an out.

4 "Then Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead, and fought with Ephraim: and the men of Gilead smote Ephraim, because they said, Ye Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites, and among the Manassites. 5 And the Gileadites took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites: and it was so, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped said, Let me go over; that the men of Gilead said unto him, Art thou an Ephraimite? If he said, Nay; 6 Then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth: and he said Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand. 7 And Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then died Jephthah the Gileadite, and was buried in one of the cities of Gilead."

The Ephraimites bring up Jephthah's family lineage again as an excuse to make war against him and slay him. They do not even consider the fact that God has used Jephthah to defeat the Ammonites. This is an example of what we find in the New Testament in: **Ro 12:18 "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."** Some people will not live peaceably with you, no matter what you say or do; in which case, you must do what is necessary to keep yourself from harm.

God gives Jephthah the victory over the Ephraimites. Jephthah's cause is just, and God sustained him. They took the land and got control over the place the Ephraimites had to cross over Jordan. There they put the Ephraimites to test. They killed all who could not pass the test of truthfulness.

God gave Jephthah six years of judgeship over Israel and then he died.

8 ¶ "And after him Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel. 9 And he had thirty sons, and thirty daughters, whom he sent abroad, and took in thirty daughters from abroad for his sons. And he judged Israel seven years. 10 Then died Ibzan, and was buried at Bethlehem."

The next judge we are told of is Ibzan, who was judge for seven years. Apparently, he thought it necessary to create a large family, to form relationships with many of the forces around Israel. This is wrong of him, because, God has told Israel; do not marry strangers, who are not of their nation.

11 "And after him Elon, a Zebulonite, judged Israel; and he judged Israel ten years. 12 And Elon the Zebulonite died, and was buried in Aijalon in the country of Zebulun."

After him, Elon judged Israel ten years and died.

13 "And after him Abdon the son of Hillel, a Pirathonite, judged Israel. 14 And he had forty sons and thirty nephews, that rode on threescore and ten ass colts: and he judged Israel eight years. 15 And Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died, and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the mount of the Amalekites."

Next is Abdon, who judged Israel for eight years. Apparently, Abdon also felt the need to have a large family. Abdon did not follow God's commandment for kings, for he gathered many horses for his sons and nephews to parade the land with.

A lesson we can learn from this chapter: It is not good to be lifted up in pride, as we are told in: **Pr 16:18 "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."** We saw this displayed with the Ephraimites, who made war against Jephthah, before whom they fell. In their pride, they failed to acknowledge and be thankful for the deliverance God wrought through Jephthah.

We should be thankful that another has already won the war on our behalf. Jesus Christ, as prophesied in: **Isa 40:2 "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins."** has already won the eternal victory for us, as verified in the New Testament in: **1Co 15:57 "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."** Thank you, Lord Jesus, for our eternal life and salvation. Hallelujah! Amen!