

Judges 12:3

So when I saw that you would not deliver me,
 I took my life in my hands and
 crossed over against the
 people of Ammon; and
 the LORD delivered
 them into my hand.

Why then have you
 come up to me this
 day to fight
 against
 me?"

KALLERSON
 30th May 2024

וַאֲרָאָה כִּי-אֵינְךָ מוֹשִׁיעַ וְאֲשִׁימָה
 נַפְשִׁי בְּכַפִּי וְאֶעְבְּרָה אֶל-בְּנֵי
 עַמּוֹן, וַיִּתְּנֵם יְהוָה בְּיָדִי
 וְלָמָּה עָלִיתָ אֵלַי הַיּוֹם
 הַזֶּה--לְהִלָּחֵם בִּי.

Artwork by Douglas Kallerson

Judges 12:1-7 (Jephthah, Judge of Israel, Part V)

The linguistic challenge set before the Ephraimites in today's story is something we all would fail at, depending on the language. Unless you are practiced, there are some sounds that are just not possible for you to utter.

For instance, the "sh" sound is not easy for Danes. Some American Indian tribes lack it as well. An internet search said that Greek, Icelandic, Latin, Maori, Finnish, and Spanish have only a "ch" sound. The position of the tongue is what makes such sounds possible. They take practice.

The test in today's passage is meant to identify if someone belongs to a particular group of people. It is said that during World War II, one way of identifying German spies in American ranks was to ask questions about baseball stars. The Germans didn't follow baseball closely and were easily found out.

However, the British didn't follow baseball either and in David Niven's *The Moon's a Balloon*, Niven (who served with the commandos in WWII) says that he was queried concerning who won the '43 World Series. His response was, "I don't know but I starred in Bachelor Mother with Ginger Rogers." This helped him thread the needle.

In another example, John Lange notes, "When, during the Flemish war, the insurrection against the French broke out, May 25, 1302, the gates were guarded, and no one was suffered to pass out, except such as were able to say, 'Scilt ende friend,' which words no Frenchman could pronounce."

Text Verse: *"Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? ⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. ⁷So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. ⁸Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor." 1 Corinthians 3:5-8*

If you want to embarrass yourself, go to a foreign country, or try to identify with foreign language speakers here in the US. I attended a Korean church for several years. They only spoke in Korean. Therefore, it was necessary to learn Korean. They have some really difficult sounds. To me, learning to read it was way easier than trying to speak it.

Apparently, one of the hardest languages to speak is Icelandic. However, a savant, gifted in such things, was challenged to learn to speak it in one week. He did. You can watch that on YouTube.

God divided the languages for His purposes. Those divisions continue even today as people move, isolate, etc. When I lived in Malaysia, there were little pockets of Indians, first brought from India when the tea plantations were planted. They later settled in little villages.

Their dialects changed so much over the years that their language is complete gibberish to the Indian population that stayed together in the larger cities.

There is no end to the amount of diversity that various languages of the world have in relation to other languages. As a nice hint for you, if you are ever wanting to win a free dinner in Japan, just ask a non-English speaking Japanese person to say refrigerator.

Great things, such as diversity of speech are to be found in His superior word. And so, let us turn to that precious word once again, and... May God speak to us through His word today, and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. You Sould've Said Shibboleth (verses 1-7)

The next events are based on what occurred in the previous chapter. The king of Ammon challenged Israel for their inheritance. Jephthah told him why he had no right to it. The king refused to listen, and so Jephthah engaged him in battle. The narrative of Judges 11:29-33 said –

“Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah, and he passed through Gilead and Manasseh, and passed through Mizpah of Gilead; and from Mizpah of Gilead he advanced *toward* the people of Ammon. ³⁰ And Jephthah made a vow to the Lord, and said, ‘If You will indeed deliver the people of Ammon into my hands, ³¹ then it will be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the people of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord’s, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering.’

³² So Jephthah advanced toward the people of Ammon to fight against them, and the Lord delivered them into his hands. ³³ And he defeated them from Aroer as far as Minnith—twenty cities—and to Abel Keramim, with a very great slaughter. Thus the people of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel.”

It is based on those events that it next says...

¹ Then the men of Ephraim gathered together, crossed over toward Zaphon,

vayitsaeq ish ephrayim vavaavor tsaphonah – “And cries man Ephraim, and crosses over Zaphon-ward.” The idea of crying is that of someone yelling out to alert the people, mustering them for battle.

As for the word *tsaphonah*, it can mean either “northward” or “toward Zaphon.” The latter would probably be the case. It is a city east of the Jordan noted in Joshua 13:27. Zaphon means North, but also Concealed because the north is the hidden direction in the northern hemisphere.

Ephraim means Twice Fruitful and Ashes.

¹ (con’t) **and said to Jephthah, “Why did you cross over to fight against the people of Ammon, and did not call us to go with you?”**

vayomru l’yiphtakh madua avarta l’hilakhem bivne amon v’lanu lo qaratha lalekheth imakh – “and says to Jephthah, ‘Why crossed over to fight in sons Amon and to us no called to go with you?’” A battle has been won. Ephraim did not participate in it. and they were overcome with jealousy. It is the same wicked spirit they displayed in Chapter 8 when Gideon had gone to war against the Midianites –

“Now the men of Ephraim said to him, ‘Why have you done this to us by not calling us when you went to fight with the Midianites?’ And they reprimanded him sharply.

² So he said to them, ‘What have I done now in comparison with you? *Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?* ³ God has delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb. And what was I able to do in comparison with you?’ Then their anger toward him subsided when he said that.” Judges 8:1-3

Gideon’s humility alone kept things from getting out of hand. Ephraim’s jealousy over the events between him and his brother are once again on full display...

¹ (con’t) **We will burn your house down on you with fire!”**

beithkha nishroph alekha ba’esh – “Your house burning upon you in the fire.” The meaning is capital punishment. It is a phrase used again in Judges 14:15 in the passage about Samson and a Philistine woman. That punishment was actually carried out in Judges 15:6. It was used as a form of suicide in 1 Kings 16:18 as well.

² **And Jephthah said to them, “My people and I were in a great struggle with the people of Ammon;**

The sense of the Hebrew is lost: *vayomer yiphtakh alehem ish riv hayithi ani v'ami uvne amon meod* – “And says, Jephthah, unto them, ‘Man strife was I and my people, and sons Ammon exceedingly.’” Jephthah places himself as a warrior at a particular time for a particular purpose. He was challenged along with his people and he arose to meet the challenge...

² (con't) **and when I called you, you did not deliver me out of their hands.**

va'ezaq etkhem v'lo hovoshatem oti miyadam – “and crying, you, and no saved me from their hand.” In verse 1, a man of Ephraim cried to wage war against his brother and the tribe responded, but when his brother cried to him for help, they failed to show up and assist in the battle.

Nothing of this request is recorded in Chapter 11, but it is apparent from Jephthah's words that the call was made. Ephraim was either too pusillanimous or too arrogant to assist his own brother in the struggle he faced...

³ **So when I saw that you would not deliver me, I took my life in my hands and crossed over against the people of Ammon;**

Rather: *va'ereh ki en'kha movoshia va'asimah napshi b'khapi va'ebrach el bene amon* – “And seeing when you not saving, and setting it, my soul, in my palm, and crossing it, unto sons Ammon.” Jephthah says “palm” rather than “hand.” Though similar in meaning, the hand signifies power and/or authority. The palm (and sole) signifies possession and/or the state of something.

The meaning is that because of Ephraim's lack of assistance, Jephthah decided to go it alone. He set his soul into a state of peril, crossed over, and faced Ammon alone. One can think of something precious and brittle being set in the palm. Without care, it could tumble out and crash to the floor, shattering it. But he was unwilling to have the challenge against the inheritance harmed because of Ammon's invalid claim...

³ (con't) **and the Lord delivered them into my hand.**

vayitnem Yehovah b'yadi – “and gives them, Yehovah, in my hand.” Here, instead of palm, he says hand. Ammon was delivered into the power of Jephthah. Noting that it was Yehovah who decided the matter, it shows that Jephthah's actions were just and that the Lord approved of his decision to press forward alone.

It is unknown what tone he used, whether belligerent or conciliatory, but these words probably riled them up even more. Whether intended to instigate or not, it meant that

they failed to participate in the Lord's battle. But because it was the Lord's battle, Jephthah asks...

³ (con't) **Why then have you come up to me this day to fight against me?"**

v'lamah alithem elay ha'yom ha'zeh l'hilakhem bi – "And why ascending unto me, the day, the this, to fight in me?" Depending on where they are located, this could be a verbal poke at Ephraim. If they were at a higher elevation, then it would be appropriate to acknowledge the elevation. However, some scholars place Zaphon near the Jordan.

If so, it would seem more likely Jephthah would say, "Why have you crossed over to me?" Thus, to say ascend, may be his way of showing supremacy over them. Again, without hearing the tone of his voice, one can only speculate on his words.

One other possibility is that the word ascend could be used in a military sense because attackers are said to "go up" to battle when besieging a city. Cities are normally at locations where they can be defended from above armies gathered against them. This may be the best option because of the next words...

⁴ **Now Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead and fought against Ephraim.**

vayiqbots yiptakh eth kal anshe gilad vayilakhem eth ephrayim – "And gathers, Jephthah, all men Gilead, and fights Ephraim." Jephthah is from the half-tribe of Manasseh east of the Jordan. Ephraim is situated west of the Jordan. The name Ephraim, however, is often used inclusively of the half-tribe of Manasseh west of the Jordan. At times, it is also called the House of Joseph.

Jephthah has mustered troops from his half of Manasseh (He Forgets/From a Debt) who occupy Gilead (Perpetual Fountain) and engaged the western tribe. The reason is next explained...

⁴ (con't) **And the men of Gilead defeated Ephraim,**

vayaku anshe gilad eth ephrayim – "And strikes men Gilead, Ephraim." Some try to find fault in the text. The Pulpit Commentary says, "The English version of these somewhat obscure verses is obviously wrong, and devoid of sense." They do this because the words seem out of place. Any noted slaying of the Ephraimites comes in the next verse. Further...

⁴ (con't) **because they said, "You Gileadites *are* fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites *and* among the Manassites."**

ki amru p'lite ephrayim atem gilad b'thokh ephrayim b'thokh m'nasheh – “for said ‘Fugitives Ephraim, you, Gilead, in midst Ephraim and in midst Manasseh.’” Of these words, Cambridge and the Pulpit Commentary are completely befuddled, as if they are incomprehensible. It’s hard to understand why though.

Those of Ephraim (west of the Jordan) are saying to Jephthah, who is from Manasseh east of the Jordan, that the Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim and Manasseh who reside west of the Jordan, as if they didn’t want to share of life in Canaan with them and fled from them.

But this is wholly incorrect. The Gileadites had settled west of the Jordan, receiving their inheritance from Moses before Israel crossed the Jordan. However, they always considered themselves as a part of Israel. That is exactly why Joshua 22 is recorded.

After the land of Canaan was secured, the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh (here called the Gileadites based on Numbers 26:29, etc.) returned to their inheritance east of the Jordan. As they returned, they built the great and impressive altar as a witness, testifying to the fact that they were also the people of the Lord.

The tribes west of the Jordan saw the altar, freaked out because they thought it was for idolatry, and came ready for battle against the eastern tribes. At that time, however, the eastern tribes responded to them –

“Then the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh answered and said to the heads of the divisions of Israel: ²² “The Lord God of gods, the Lord God of gods, He knows, and let Israel itself know—if *it is* in rebellion, or if in treachery against the Lord, do not save us this day. ²³ If we have built ourselves an altar to turn from following the Lord, or if to offer on it burnt offerings or grain offerings, or if to offer peace offerings on it, let the Lord Himself require *an account*. ²⁴ But in fact we have done it for fear, for a reason, saying, ‘In time to come your descendants may speak to our descendants, saying, “What have you to do with the Lord God of Israel? ²⁵ For the Lord has made the Jordan a border between you and us, *you* children of Reuben and children of Gad. You have no part in the Lord.” Joshua 22:21-25

This is exactly what has happened. Jephthah accredited the battle to the Lord, saying that He had given Ammon into his hand. The implied response, which is here repeated in the text, was, “You Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites and among the Manassites.”

It is a way of saying, “You have no part in us. You are fugitives from us and the Lord couldn’t be with you. We are the people of the Lord.” The altar stood as a witness that this was not so, but that was ignored by these western brothers of theirs.

Remembering that the altar clearly pictured Christ, the passage makes complete sense. Because of the offensive accusation, the Gileadites mustered and attacked. Ephraim obviously retreated towards home because it next says...

⁵ The Gileadites seized the fords of the Jordan before the Ephraimites arrived.

vayilkod gilad eth mabroth ha’yarden l’ephayim – “And seizes, Gilead, fords the Jordan to Ephraim.” The meaning of “to” is “against.” They secured the fords of the Jordan (the Descender) against any possible passage by the Ephraimites in order to return to their inheritance in Canaan...

^{5 (con’t)} **And when any Ephraimite who escaped said, “Let me cross over,” the men of Gilead would say to him, “Are you an Ephraimite?” If he said, “No,”**

The words are ironic in the extreme: *v’hayah ki yomru p’lite ephayim eevorah vayomru lo anshe gilad ha’eprathi atah vayomer lo* – “And became when says fugitives Ephraim, ‘I crossing over,’ and says to him, men Gilead, ‘The Ephraimite, you?’ And says, ‘No.’”

This is where the confusion by those scholars mentioned above comes from. The same word is used now that was used in verse 4 –

“for said ‘Fugitives [*palyit*] Ephraim, you, Gilead, in midst Ephraim and in midst Manasseh.’”

“And became when says fugitives [*palyit*] Ephraim...”

These scholars think it is talking about the same people. In fact, it is an ironic twist of words. Those of the western tribes accused those of the eastern tribes of being fugitives. Now, the western tribes are the fugitives. They are trying to escape back to their own land, having been trounced by Jephthah.

Joshua 22 is the key to comprehending what is going on. These retreating fugitives were seized and asked if they were from Ephraim...

⁶ then they would say to him, “Then say, ‘Shibboleth!’” And he would say, “Sibboleth,”

Of these words, John Lange, unfortunately, says, “What ‘Shibboleth’ meant, is of minor importance.” *vayomru lo emar na shibboleth vayomer sibolet* – “And says to him, ‘Say,

I pray, Shibboleth.’ And says, ‘Sibboleth.’” There is a single letter difference between the two. The first letter is either *shin* (shhh) or *samekh* (sss).

Shibboleth comes from *shobel*, a flowing skirt, or a train. That comes from an unused root meaning to flow. Shibboleth signifies both a flowing stream and an ear of grain (as it grows out in a flowing manner). It is also used in Zechariah 4 when referring to an olive branch –

“And I further answered and said to him, ‘What *are these* two olive branches [*shibale*] that *drip* into the receptacles of the two gold pipes from which the golden *oil* drains?’” Zechariah 4:12

Saying branches there seems a bit forced. Rather, one can think of the olive streams flowing forth and dripping into receptacles.

In this verse in Judges, the Jordan is flowing from God, just as a grain is given the increase by God (see the text verse) and as the flowing of the fatness of the olive is metaphorically used of God’s religious privilege in Romans 11 (see our closing verse). God is the Source of each.

In the change of the letter from *shin* to *samekh*, the root word is changed. It is now identical in spelling to a word, *siblah*, as it is used six times in Exodus –

“Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens [*siblah*]. And they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Raamses.”

-Exodus 1:11

“Now it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens [*siblah*].” Exodus 2:11

“Then the king of Egypt said to them, ‘Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people from their work? Get *back* to your labor [*siblah*].’⁵ And Pharaoh said, ‘Look, the people of the land *are* many now, and you make them rest from their labor [*siblah*]!’” Exodus 5:4, 5

“Therefore say to the children of Israel: ‘I *am* the Lord; I will bring you out from under the burdens [*siblah*] of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.⁷ I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I *am* the Lord your God who brings you out from under the burdens [*siblah*] of the Egyptians.’” Exodus 6:6, 7

Both words, *sibboleth* and *siblah*, are derived from *sabal*, to bear (a heavy load). The reason for the change is next given...

6 (con't) **for he could not pronounce *it* right.**

The words “could not” may or may not be ultimately correct and they don’t properly convey the meaning: *v’lo yakhin l’daber ken* – “And no established to speak thus.” The word *kun* means to be erect, but that is applied in numerous ways. In this case, their lips and tongue were not established through use to properly pronounce a “sh” sound.

Because of their failure to fruitfully formulate the word, being found to not vocalize it validly, and not enouncing it with eloquence or pronouncing it with precision, the Gileadites probably chuckled out “Awww, shucks,” while the Ephraimites may have responded, “Oh, soot!”

6 (con't) **Then they would take him and kill him at the fords of the Jordan.**

vayokhazu otho vayishkhatuhu el mabroth ha’yarden – “And grasps him, and slaughters him, unto fords the Jordan.” It seems like a harsh thing to do to one’s brother. After all, this is the kind of thing the Lord looked down on Edom for –

“For violence against your brother Jacob,
Shame shall cover you,
And you shall be cut off forever.” Obadiah 1:10

However, the accusations and arrogance against these western inhabitants were insufferable, intolerable, insupportable, unacceptable, unendurable, and unbearable, and so the wrath of the Gileadites was taken out on them.

6 (con't) **There fell at that time forty-two thousand Ephraimites.**

vayipol ba’eth ha’hi me’ephrayim arbaim ushnayim aleph – “And falls in the time, the it, from Ephraim, forty and two thousand.” Of this, Cambridge arrogantly proclaims, as if they had any clue concerning the matter, “Obviously an exaggeration.”

The number itself is a derivative of forty-two and ten. Forty-two is one of the most interesting numbers of all. It is closely associated with the antichrist. Bullinger sums up the number saying –

“Being a multiple of seven, it might be supposed that it would be connected with spiritual perfection. But it is the product of six times seven. Six, therefore, being the

number of Man, and man's opposition to God, forty-two becomes significant of the working out of man's opposition to God."

⁷ And Jephthah judged Israel six years.

vayishpot yiphtakh eth Yisrael shesh shanim – "And judged, Jephthah, Israel, six years." For a guy that is so prominent in Scripture and who accomplished so much, six years is not a very long time.

It may be, however, that he was selected to lead the people at a later time in his life. Or he may have died of a broken heart over the offering of his daughter. Without more information, all we can do is speculate.

Of the number six, Bullinger says, "it has to do with man; it is the number of imperfection; the human number; the number of MAN as destitute of God, without God, without Christ." He also notes –

"Six, therefore, is the number of labour also, of man's labour as apart and distinct from God's rest. True, it marks the completion of Creation as God's work, and therefore the number is significant of secular completeness."

^{7 (fin)} Then Jephthah the Gileadite died and was buried among the cities of Gilead.

vayamath yiphtakh ha'giladi vayiqaver b'are gilad – "And died, Jephthah the Gileadite. And buried in cities Gilead." His full name is given. Jephthah the Gileadite means He Opens, the Perpetual Fountanite. Of him, it says he was buried "in cities Gilead."

The curious expression, using the plural instead of the singular has precedent elsewhere in Scripture, such as Genesis 19:29. In this case, it is a purposeful way of not giving the name of the city. Thus, typology is being maintained.

*Here is a challenge for you
And you'd better get it right
A simple thing I'll ask you to do
And then, things will turn out alright*

*A question that will reveal your doctrine
The answer is one that will affect your soul
A wrong answer, and you will be done in
Are you ready? Cue the drumroll*

*Who is Jesus to you?
What is it about Him that you proclaim?
What is it that you think you must do?
When speaking out His glorious name?*

*Speak your shibboleth wisely this day
Sould you fail, you'll be swept away*

II. Pictures of Christ

Verse 1 began by showing the passage is dealing with Ephraim, Twice Fruitful and Ashes. It speaks of the work of Christ being effective for both Jews and Gentiles, securing His people through His afflictions, symbolized by the ashes. Thus, these people claim to accept Christ's completed work.

Despite this, they head *tsaphonah*, meaning either toward the north or toward Zaphon, which means North. Either way, the north is the hidden direction in the northern hemisphere as the sun moves toward or away from it depending on the time of year. Thus, it signifies Concealed. Something is hidden that will be revealed.

To make the point about what is being pictured, and what will be seen as we continue, the Greek word that the Bible uses is the adjective *kruptos*, hidden. That is derived from the verb *kruptó*. It is the etymological root of our modern word crypto. The adjective is used in 2 Corinthians concerning what we are seeing now. It signifies something concealed –

“But we have renounced the hidden [*kruptos*] things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. ³ But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴ whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. ⁵ For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” 2 Corinthians 4:2-6

Jesus used the verb form, alerting the people to their need to pay heed to His instruction, but He knew they would keep it willfully concealed from themselves –

Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, ⁴² saying, 'If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things *that make* for your peace! But now they are hidden [*kruptó*] from your eyes.'" Luke 19:41, 42

The Ephraimites next ask Jephthah (He Opens) why he went to fight against the people of Ammon (A People) but didn't call them. The battle against Ammon, as seen, pictured the Jews who, after Christ's work, tried to take the inheritance through law observance instead of coming to Christ. It is they who were defeated.

Now, these Ephraimites are asking why they weren't called. As they are from west of the Jordan, they signify those who have come after Christ's incarnation. They say they will burn down Jephthah's house with fire. They intend to destroy He Opens, meaning Jesus and His being the only path to salvation.

Jephthah then notes (verse 2) that he was, in fact, a man of strife against Ammon (A People – the Jews trying to obtain the inheritance without Jesus), he and his people. Again, that pictures Jesus and His believers in a battle against the false doctrine of law observance to obtain salvation.

So duplicitous and pernicious is this infection that we see the cunningness of it in the words of verse 2, "and crying, you, and no saved me from their hand." They were, in fact called, but they refused to respond.

Such people claim one thing, but they do another. How many teachers say they believe in God's grace while they secretly (or even openly) teach law observance?

In verse 3, Jephthah notes that in being rejected by Ephraim, he set his soul in his palm. For the sake of grace, Jesus placed His life in a state of peril. He was unwilling to have the challenge against Him marred by those who hold to the law.

The thought is beautifully and exactly expressed in the 22nd Psalm, a psalm about Jesus on the cross –

"Deliver Me from the sword [חרב HRV (*kherev/Khorev* – the law)],
My precious *life* from the power of the dog." Psalm 22:20

In placing His precious life in His palm, Jesus prevailed. As it said, "and gives them, Yehovah, in my hand." He is the Victor!

Next, Jephthah asks, "And why ascending unto me, the day, the this, to fight in me?" Jesus is in the exalted position. Why anyone would ascend against Him is incredible to

imagine, but people do it every day of the week and twice on Saturday. There is no end to the attempts to undermine His authority.

Therefore, verse 4 says, “And gathers, Jephthah, all men Gilead, and fights Ephraim.” Jesus, He Opens, and all the men of Gilead, Perpetual Fountain (meaning those sealed with the Spirit because of the work of Christ), go to battle against Ephraim.

Ephraim in this case signifies any Jew or Gentile who claims Jesus after the cross, and yet who still teaches law observance. This will be clearly seen. Remember, they have crossed the Jordan. They are in the land of the inheritance prior to Christ’s coming.

Those with Jephthah prevail (verse 4) because they have the Lord on their side. The law observers make the claim that they are the ones who are right and that the Gileadites are fugitives. However, despite being east of the Jordan (prior to Christ’s coming), they are the ones in right standing with the Lord.

As such, they not only struck the Ephraimites in battle, but they also seized the fords of the Jordan (Christ, the Descender) to keep them from returning to any sort of inheritance they thought they had west of the Jordan.

In holding the fords, these church-age-supposed-Christian-law-observers are asked if they are of Ephraim. Ironically, they are now called the fugitives. If they answered yes, then no other explanation was needed.

However, if they said “No,” then they were subjected to a laughable little linguistic litmus test. They would say to him (verse 6) “Say, I pray, Shibboleth.” It signifies to flow. It is something that was seen to flow from God in each of its uses.

It is a picture of God’s grace that flows from God in Christ. However, these lifeless lackluster losers couldn’t say shibboleth, could they? They lacked the grace of God and lived without the loquaciousness to proclaim salvation by grace alone through faith alone. Instead, they said, Sibboleth.

They remain under the burdens of Egypt (man under sin), never coming to the grace of God in Christ. They continue to bear the heavy load of law upon them. In their case, it is not only the burden of Adam’s sin, but the imputation of Mosaic sin as well.

Of them, the words *v’lo yakhin l’daber ken* – “And no established to speak thus” are quite appropriate. They can almost speak about the grace of God. They claim it, but the very first hint of their speech, the *samekh* instead of the *shin*, betrays them, just as the very first part of their spiritual being, law over grace, betrays them.

Because of their failure to proclaim shibboleth (Christ's grace) correctly, they were taken and killed at the fords of the Jordan (the Descender, Jesus). The meaning is plain, poignant, painfully pitiful, and perfectly clear: those (supposedly) in the church after Christ's coming who hold to law observance will never go through Christ and into their supposed inheritance.

The text noted that forty-two thousand fell. It is beautifully and exactly described by Bullinger –

“Being a multiple of seven, it might be supposed that it would be connected with spiritual perfection. But it is the product of six times seven. Six, therefore, being the number of Man, and man's opposition to God, forty-two becomes significant of the working out of man's opposition to God.”

The law is completely opposed to the grace of God in Christ. As for being antichrist, that is explained by John –

“Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. ²³ Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.”

-1 John 2:22, 23

“For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ *as* coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.” 2 John 1:7

One could certainly argue this doesn't apply to law observance. It is speaking of the denial of the Father/Son relationship, specifically meaning the incarnation of Christ (coming in the flesh). However, that would be incorrect.

What does the gospel say? Christ died for our sins. Christ was buried. Christ rose again. To teach law observance is an implicit denial of the deity of Christ. If we must work in order to be right with God, it means that what Jesus did was insufficient to save us.

But if Jesus is the fulfillment of the law and the One who ends sin, then He must be God. John's words logically point to the doctrine of law observance for salvation as a denial of the deity of Christ and the Father/Son relationship of Christ.

Stated another way, if the hope is to be in fellowship with God the Father, and yet Jesus didn't accomplish that, then there is no Father/Son relationship as the Bible proclaims. Jesus explicitly states this in John 14 –

“Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, “Show us the Father”?’¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own *authority*; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.¹¹ Believe Me that I *am* in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.”

-John 14:9-11

Jesus is God. To say that one must observe the law (which He fulfilled) to be saved denies this truth. Thus, to rely on the law after the completion of His work is the spirit of the antichrist, denying the Father/Son relationship.

Verse 7 noted that Jephthah judged Israel for six years. Jesus accomplished the human work of man before entering His rest, exactly as Bullinger describes in the number –

“Six, therefore, is the number of labour also, of man's labour as apart and distinct from God's rest. True, it marks the completion of Creation as God's work, and therefore the number is significant of secular completeness.”

Finally, it said that Jephthah (He Opens) the Gileadite (the Perpetual Fountainite) died and was buried “in cities Gilead.” To avoid marring the typology, this is all it said. The meaning is that Jesus, the Giver of the Spirit rested from His labors and now is in the city (plural for the singular) Perpetual Fountain. He is in the city of God where His people will someday join Him.

This account was a necessary addition to what we have already seen. The previous account showed that those who came to God before Jesus came but who had faith under the Law of Moses, obtained their inheritance.

It will not be compromised, however, by those of Israel or the church who reject Christ after His incarnation.

This account, though similar, identifies a different group of people. They claim that they are of the inheritance after Christ's coming, using Jesus as a mere tool in their arsenal of law observance. Think of the Judaizers of Paul's time. Think of the Seventh Day Adventists. Think of Hebrew Roots Movement adherents.

Despite their proclamations, they implicitly deny the sufficiency and, thus, the deity of Christ through their doctrine and conduct. These had to be addressed separately from those of the previous passage because they are a separate, even if similar, category.

It may seem that these pictures of Christ deal an inordinate amount with law observance, as if other things should be seen in typology. This is totally incorrect. It is a main issue dealt with in Scripture. It is the introductory thought presented to man in Genesis 2, and it is the last thought presented to man in Revelation 22.

It is the main issue in Paul's epistles, taking up a large majority of what he says, and almost the entire book of Galatians deals with salvation by grace, not law. It is the key point to understanding the gospels as well, even if it doesn't appear that way on the surface.

Jesus is dealing with Israel under the law in the gospels. He is preparing the world for grace through His life and through His proclamations, but Israel is being instructed under the law about those things. If the issue of law observance is not cleared up, no other matters can be properly searched out.

The giving of the Spirit? Dealing with law must come first. Sharing the gospel? One can only do that if he understands grace, not law. Each aspect of our relationship with Christ is only possible because He has first dealt with the law.

He cannot be our mediating High Priest if we observe the law. The law already has a priestly system in place for that. What we need to do is to trust in the grace of God in Christ, first and foremost. This is, once again, the lesson that is taught in this passage that would be otherwise completely unnecessary to include in Scripture.

What possible difference does this passage make otherwise? Even if the battle had temporary effects for Israel, it has none now. But it is a part of God's eternal word. Therefore, we are being taught an important, eternal lesson about what God is doing, what pleases Him, and what He expects from His people. Faith! Have faith in the full, final, finished, and forever work of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Closing Verse: *"And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, ¹⁸ do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you."*

-Romans 11:17, 18

Next Week: Judges 12:8-15 *Get it on; get in the zone; your mind will be blown... it's so swell* (Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon, Judges of Israel) (38th Judges Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It is He who judges His people according to their deeds. So, follow Him, live for Him, and trust Him, and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Jephthah, Judge of Israel, Part V

Then the men of Ephraim gathered together
Crossed over toward Zaphon, and to Jephthah said
“Why did you cross over to fight
Against the people of Ammon leading them as their head?

And did not call us to go with you, so we inquire?
We will burn your house down on you with fire!”

And Jephthah said to them, “My people and I were
In a great struggle with the people of Ammon in these lands
And when I called you
You did not deliver me out of their hands

So when I saw that you would not deliver me
I took my life in my hands, understand?
And crossed over against the people of Ammon
And the LORD delivered them into my hand

Why then have you come up to me, how can it be?
This day to fight against me?

Now Jephthah gathered together
All the men of Gilead and against Ephraim fought
And the men of Gilead defeated Ephraim
Because they said words that were distraught

“You Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim (say your last rites)
Among the Ephraimites and among the Manassites”

The Gileadites seized the fords of the Jordan
Before the Ephraimites arrived
And when any Ephraimite who escaped said
“Let me cross over,” thus he was deprived:

The men of Gilead would say to him
"Are you an Ephraimite?" (If so, you'll meet your death!)
If he said, "No,"
Then they would say to him, "Then say, 'Shibboleth!'"

And if he would say, "Sibboleth"
For he could not pronounce it right
Then they would take him and kill him at the fords of the Jordan
There fell at that time forty-two thousand of the Ephraimite

And Jephthah judged Israel six years
Then Jephthah the Gileadite died
And was buried among the cities of Gilead
A humble man, lacking any pride

Lord God, turn our hearts to be obedient to Your word
Give us wisdom to be ever faithful to You
May we carefully heed each thing we have heard
Yes, Lord God may our hearts be faithful and true

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...