

Judges 10:6 – 11:11

Introduction – The book of Judges is good news for God’s people, contrary to one’s cursory reading. As we have seen, this history is the story of God’s deliverance and salvation of His people. These stories involve real people with real sins, struggles, and compromises. The stories also remind us that we have not gathered together to simply affirm a number of cold propositions we deem true. We have gathered to worship a personal God, who has called His people into a relationship with Him. This relationship is called a covenant that rests upon the Self-initiated, merciful love of God.

Forsaking the Lord Again (vv 6-9) – Every time a judge dies, we see the people falling back into idolatry. But we have never seen it to this extent. Seven gods are named, a number of completion and fullness; and the heart of their idolatry was that they forsook the Lord. Any god was preferable to the Lord.

Hot Anger – Unfortunately, our view of sin boils down to breaking a set of laws or rules. Here we see that at center is offending a personal and jealous God. The object of God’s wrath was not simply at Israel’s sins, but upon Israel herself. It is not true that God ‘hates the sin but loves the sinner.’ “...the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel...” (v7). His anger was manifest; from that year they were *shattered and crushed* (v8), as the land was invaded (v9). This oppression lasted for eighteen long years and came from both the NE (Ammonites) and the SW (Philistines).

Sorrow Unto Death (vv10-14) – Apparently, the cry of repentance is received by the Lord as just another song and dance. The Lord reminds Israel that seven times (fullness) He delivered them, yet after each time they forsake Him and serve other gods. God sees no change in their hearts and responds with the chilling words of vv 13-14. God had given fair warning that He would respond in just this way (Deut 32:37f).

A Godly Sorrow (vv15-16) – Those frightening words, however, are used by God as means to give Israel true repentance. They ‘put away’ the false gods and ‘served’ the Lord. Paul speaks of these two sorrows (2 Cor 7:9-11). Christians must beware of making God a safe, warm, vending machine in the sky.

The Soul of God (v16b) – This is very important to notice. It does not say God was impressed or moved by their repentance. “And His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel.” We must never forget that our hope in the mercy of God does not rest in the sincerity of our repentance, but in the intensity of God’s compassion. Repentance, like faith, is never the ground of our salvation or pardon. It is the unilateral mercy of God given in His once-for-all sacrifice of His Son that we rest in. It is His kindness that leads us to repentance.

The Personality of God – Here is a glimpse of the personality of God. We are not given this picture just to communicate in human terms to us what happened. The God who decrees everything that comes to pass also is the living God of Scripture. It is possible for Him to decree everything and yet really respond to all that is happening.

In Search of a Head (10:17-11:11) – The beginning of the story of Jephthah is full of comparisons and contrasts. First we might notice how Jephthah looks a lot like Abimelech. Both are sons of a mix representing faithfulness and unfaithfulness. Both are surrounded with worthless men. But Jephthah is different as well. He is listed as a believer, a man of great faith (Heb 11:32), a mighty man of valor (Judges 11:1), one who speaks with and worships the Lord (11:11). In addition, this part of the story (Gilead and Jephthah) closely parallels the exact situation of Israel and the Lord.

He is Rejected (11:1-3) – just as God was rejected (10:6).

Gilead comes to Jephthah (v4-6) – just as Israel tried to return to the Lord (10:10).

He Rejects Their Cry (v7) – just as God rejected Israel’s cry (10:11-14).

Gilead Appeals, and Jephthah Returns (vv8-11) – in some fashion like the second cries of Israel and the answer of the Lord (10:15-16). The parallel here is more flawed, for Jephthah is imperfect in his motives (remember the context of all the judges from Gideon through Abdon) to rule Israel.

More Gospel Pictures – Once again, we see the pictures God gives to us of His plan to raise up a perfect and final Deliverer through His imperfect yasha’s in the book of Judges.

Despised and Rejected – Like Jephthah, Jesus was despised and rejected (Is 53) and was not the kind of man who would impress sophisticated folks (1 Cor 1:21). And in one sense, Jesus has surrounded Himself with ‘worthless’ people (1 Cor 1:26-27).

Our Rejection and the Lord’s Mercy – We are guilty of rejecting Jesus Christ many times. You have been guilty of resenting having Him rule over you; you have desired to serve other gods of the nation and of the nations around you. But He pours His mercy over you and works in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. He has freed you from your sin.

Savior and Head – Like Jephthah, but with pure and perfect motives, the Lord Jesus is not simply our Savior. He is our Lord and He is the Head of the Church, His body. He is not satisfied to simply deliver you. He will rule and He will use His power displayed through His gospel-preaching to spread His gospel to the ends of the earth.