

## **Judges 9-12**

### **“Seven Leaders of Israel”**

#### **Introduction:**

- Tonight we continue in the book of Judges and we have come to chapters 9-12 in our jog through Judges – jogging thru Judges that sounds nice, some of it feels like a sprint.

#### **Now the section we are covering tonight covers about 100 years of Israeli history.**

- The book of Judges in its entirety covers about 350 years from the time the elders who outlive Joshua died, until Saul is anointed as the first King of Israel.
  - That time period is about 350 years.
- In these four chapters we are going to fly over 100 years of that period.
  - And in that time Israel has 7 leaders.

#### **They are not all judges.**

- Because the first guy we are going to meet tonight is Abimelech who is not a God appointed judge.
  - Maybe he is judgment, but he is definitely not a judge.
  - He is a self appointed tyrant who really acts more like Adolf Hitler than he does his father Gideon or any body else we are going to talk about tonight.

#### **But each of these 7 leaders, though only six of them are God appointed Judges, can teach us some important lessons.**

- Because as the old adage says – “no man’s life is completely worthless, you can always serve as a bad example.”
  - And there will be plenty of that tonight.

#### **7 “Leaders” of Israel – Judges 9-12**

##### **#1 – Abimelech – Judges 9:1-57**

##### **#2 – Tola – Judges 10:1-2**

##### **#3 – Jair – Judges 10:3-5**

##### **#4 – Jephthah – Judges 10:6-12:7**

##### **#5 – Ibzan – Judges 12:8-10**

##### **#6 – Elon – Judges 12:11-12**

##### **#7 – Abdon – Judges 12:13-15**

- So here is our complete list and we will go through that list one at a time and where the Bible slows down and gives information we will slow down and where the Bible summarizes, we will summarize.

#### **7 “Leaders” of Israel – Judges 9-12**

##### **#1 – Abimelech – Judges 9:1-57**

- Abimelech was the half son of Gideon, our hero from last week.
  - But Abimelech was a product of Gideon’s later years when he did not finish well.

#### **Like the Apostle Paul, we want to say I have finished the race.**

- But in order to do that we need to keep pressing on because if not, we won’t naturally stay strong.
  - Gideon took on many many wives and if that wasn’t enough to deal with his obvious lust problem, he took on Concubines as well – basically a second-class wife.
  - The son born of a concubine was named, “My Father is King” – which is a far cry from where Gideon was in chapter 8:23 where he says – I will not rule over you, nor will my sons rule over you.

#### **“Abimelech” – means, “My Father is King.”**

- By the end of his life he is naming this child of a concubine – “My Father is King.”

**Abimelech is another reminder of the importance of passing your faith on to the next generation.**

- And just like us finishing well – please hear me on this, it won't happen by default.
  - You have to work at it; you have to have a plan.
  - And it is so important – oh, there is always the chance you will end with an Abimelech.

**This guy is not a judge – he is going to elevate himself by going to those in his hometown and saying - who would you rather have rule over you?**

- It is classic politics – if you elect me I will make sure the Vista road gets taken care of because I am Vista, the other guy is Oceanside – boo.
  - Crazy – happens today – happened back then.

**Abimelech misunderstands how this judge of Israel thing works.**

- He doesn't understand it is God who picks the judge; it doesn't pass on to the judge's sons.
  - He figures one of the Gideon's 70 legitimate sons will rule and he tells the people of his hometown, you would rather have me, because I am from here.

**So they give him some money and with that money he hires a bunch of thugs who then go to the hometown of Gideon and kill 69 of his 70 sons.**

- Now you would think if that was the first thing your candidate did you would want to string him up – this is guy is obviously insane, a mad man.
  - But the people of Shechem think he is great and they ask Abimelech to rule over them.
  - It just goes to show you what a wicked time in Israel's history this was.

**One of Gideon's 70 legitimate sons survives and goes up on mount Gerizim (Picture of Mount Gerizim) and He speaks forth the first parable in the Bible.**

**In the parable – all these trees are asked to rule over the other trees.**

- And everyone who is really qualified doesn't want to lead.
  - That is totally how it is in our world today – the real good men and women don't run for office – so we are stuck with brambles on both sides of the isle.
- The ones, who are qualified to lead, don't want to lead, but then the bramble speaks up.
  - Come take rest in my shade – what shade?
  - Come follow me and if you don't I will consume you with fire – typical Bramble speech.

**Listen if you are at the point where you have to demand people follow you, whether that is in your business or with your friends or in your marriage, you have a problem.**

- Listen woman – if you don't want my wrath you will follow me.
- That is bramble stuff – you have already missed it at that point.
- Instead of being a good leader, a loving husband and faithful friend, where people want to follow you – you are demanding – and it won't work.

**The self appointed leader starts to wreak havoc on the land for the 3 ½ years he is in power.**

- He comes to his hometown and kills everyone, burning down the tower that held 1,000 survivors and he burns women and children alive.
  - This guy is a monster.
  - He is real picture of the future Antichrist – who will have a similar length of reign – 3 ½ years and he will say the same thing to Israel – come and follow me – or I will burn you with fire.

**Abimelech gets his when he is trying to do the same thing to the city of Thebez he had done to his hometown.**

- The people are gathered in a tower and Abimelech is going to burn it down.

- But then, I love it, just like king Jabin, Abimelech is killed by a woman with something she would have found in her kitchen.
- Great way, for this loser to go down.
- But such will be the end for everyone who does his own thing, his own way, with no heart for God.
  - Hitler died in a bunker alone.
  - The Antichrist will be thrown into a pit.
  - And even a regular person like you or me – if we will not acknowledge the Lord in our lives – our lives may be full of riches and power – but our end will always be just as disastrous – because eternity is coming! – Don't ever forget it.

## **7 “Leaders” of Israel – Judges 9-12**

### **#1 – Abimelech – Judges 9:1-57**

### **#2 – Tola – Judges 10:1-2**

- After the mess that was Abimelech, God gave the nation a judge by the name of Tola.
  - And I love this guy, because the Bible describes him as a savior of Israel and the word literally, more exact – defender of Israel.
- In one-way or another each of the judges are a picture of our ultimate deliverer Jesus Christ.
  - Othniel operated in the power of the Spirit just like Jesus.
  - Ehud used the sword of the Spirit – just like Jesus.
  - Shamgar used what was in his hand as Jesus used five loaves and two fish to feed the multitudes.

### **Deborah was a mother for Israel just like Jesus cried out with a mother's heart – Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem.**

- How I long to gather you like a mother hen gathers her chicks.
  - Gideon had light shine through a clay pot to defeat the enemy, just as Jesus shined through the light of God through the clay of His earthly body.

### **And now as we come to Tola – he is described as a defender of Israel just as Jesus is our defender.**

- We have an enemy called the Devil.
  - **The term “Devil” – means “Accuser”**
  - And certainly he is.
  - He accuses us day and night before the throne of God.
- And most of us give the Devil plenty to talk about.
  - But we know from scripture - I John 2 says:

### **“My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” – I John 2:1-2**

- John is telling us that when you and I sin, then Satan accuses.
  - Jesus Christ comes as our defender.
  - Our defender because He paid the price for my sin and yours.
  - Our defender because that is simply who He is, that is His nature.
- That when Satan says, did you see that Jason, did you see the attitude he had – He says, “What sin?? - Stop accusing the brethren!!!! – What a defender!!!!”

### **We have a defender.**

- Jesus, who stands up and says, Jason has been washed by my blood, he is innocent.

### **And maybe you think that is a nice reminder for me, but how do I apply that to my life.**

- Number one – we can celebrate – because not only are we forgiven, but also we are being defended right now.
  - Number one – celebrate, and number two...
- But #2 – We need to Imitate – we too need to be defenders of God's people.

- I really believe this is God's word for us today.

**You see as we study the Judges and we learn what they did for God, the reality is what most of them did, you may not be able to do.**

- Maybe you can't stand against 600 men by yourself like Shamgar.
- Maybe you can't push down walls like Samson.
- Maybe you can't lead an army like Gideon.
  - But you can be like Tola.
  - Every single teenager, every single husband, every single wife, every single senior citizen – every one of you can be a Tola, a defender of God's people.
- How?? - As you and I refuse to take part in the accusatory nature of Satan.
  - As we refuse to listen to or talk about anything negative concerning God's people.
  - You become a Tola, a defender of God's people.

**Some want to come and share gossip with you.**

- Refuse to give in – say no – I don't want to hear that – I want to be a defender of God's people.

When I first came back from Texas I had a guy pull me aside and say something about one of the other pastors here – do you know what he is really up too – I don't, but lets go talk to him about it – that guy never has approached me again - But I am the listening ear of people – no let's be honest, you are the acceptor of gossip – I would far rather be seen as unsympathetic and be a defender of God's people.

**7 “Leaders” of Israel – Judges 9-12**

**#1 – Abimelech – Judges 9:1-57**

**#2 – Tola – Judges 10:1-2**

**#3 – Jair – Judges 10:3-5**

- It is easy for us to read about these judges, where little to nothing is said about them and think; well these were minor league guys.
  - The major league judges were Gideon, and Samson, and Jephthah, but who has ever heard of Tola or Jair.
- Now consider how long God had them rule, 23 years for Tola and 22 years for Jair.
  - And you realize Samson ruled for 20.
  - The next two and half chapters are about Jephthah, but he only reigned 6 years.

**Maybe it's not that the guys who have the longest stories are the major league judges and Tola and Jair are in the minors.**

- Maybe it was just that these guys faithfully served God with much drama in their lives and ministries.
  - And if that is the case in heaven – Tola is going to be the hero – Jair is going have the huge mansion.

**We can look at Samson and say, He was famous, and he had the big muscles.**

- He is the one who all the kids in children's ministry know about - And in our celebrity drive culture that is easy to fall into, but do you really think God sees it that way.

**I mean we will look at Samson next week, most of his life is a huge disappoint – just one wasted opportunity after another.**

- He is in bondage to lust and pride his entire life.
  - I think that the Lord would say, precious church, Samson is not the goal; the goal is guys like Tola, Jair, faithful and drama free.

**7 “Leaders” of Israel – Judges 9-12**

**#1 – Abimelech – Judges 9:1-57**

**#2 – Tola – Judges 10:1-2**

**#3 – Jair – Judges 10:3-5**

**#4 – Jephthah – Judges 10:6-12:7**

- Start reading the section – make comments at...

- **The end of chapter 10** – Israel is in a stage of repentance, God can no longer bear their misery, His heart breaks too, but who will deliver them. – chapter 11

### **After reading 11:1-12**

- Jephthah is a son of a harlot, but when God is looking for someone to lead His people, He doesn't care who your parents were or what they did or how you look.
  - He is looking at your heart.
- He finds a man in Jephthah.
  - He is little rough around the edges, he has been a mercenary by leading some tough men and to lead those kinds of men that is the kind of man you have to be. But God has been preparing him his whole life for this moment.
  - The people of Israel want him to lead them and if he is successful they want him to rule over them.
  - So Jephthah heads out and I find it interesting that he starts with diplomacy – men who have really been to war try to talk it out before war happens – so look at this interesting dialogue between Jephthah and the King of Ammon.

### **After reading 11:12-28**

- The King of Ammon says – you took our land.
  - And Jephthah has to review history for this king – we didn't take your land – we were trying to peaceably pass through and your forefathers attacked us – and then you lost the war.

### **That was seen in the ancient world as your God giving you the land of the people you defeated.**

- Jephthah is saying that we took the land our God gave us just as you would have.
  - And we have been in the land 300 years – how come you are just coming in and making a big deal of it now?

### **It is amazing to me because it is so much like the same conversation that still goes on in the Middle East.**

- Give us back our land the Palestinians say.
  - What do you mean your land?
  - The Jewish people bought most of the land of Israel from the Arab peoples.
  - They are the only country on earth that paid and has title deed to their land.
- And then in 1948, 1954, 1967, and 1971 – the Arabs attacked them – outnumbered them and God beat back Israel's enemy – and they took additional land.
  - Not that they started a war to win like Germany.
  - Land they won when others attacked them.

### **And more than that, just like Jephthah is saying, when the Jews weren't in the Middle East, I mean in 1901 there were more Jews living in New York City than anywhere in the middle East.**

- Why didn't you take possession of the land then?
  - Why didn't nations like Jordan and Egypt just give the Palestinians the land back?
  - Because this discussion is a farce.
- Now that we have developed the land, built houses on the land, made farms out of deserts, now you want the land - A little too late for that is what Jephthah was saying and it should be what Israel is still saying today.

### **I mean the USA did some pretty shady things to gain the land we have today.**

- As has every country in the world by the way, every major country on every continent at one time in history won that land from others who lived there before them.
  - The USA did some shady things 2- 300 years ago.
  - But if a Native American comes to my house and says, I want your house – you know – I pay the mortgage – so sorry what happened to your relative 200 years ago – this is my house.

- I am not saying that to be edgy or politically incorrect.
  - In the church in Texas we had many native Americans in the church – I love those guys, I am not saying anything about those people – I am just saying – I had to jump through hoops with a bank to buy my home and I work hard to pay that bill every month – that is my house.

**So all I am saying – that is Jephthah’s point.**

- You attacked us – we won the land fair and square – we have developed it – you haven’t shown up for 300 years.
  - Get out of here!!!
  - But the King of Ammon wouldn’t listen – so the battle is on.
  - This is where the plot thickens – verse 29.

**Read the rest of chapter 11.**

- Wow – the Lord gives Jephthah a great victory and God never asks for Jephthah to make a vow, but he does.
  - He says – Lord if you give me victory I will offer whatever comes out of my house first to greet me as a burnt offering.

**And after the victory as Jephthah returns home – it was his daughter who met him.**

- Oh no – Jephthah tears his clothes and is obviously upset with himself and the whole situation.
  - The daughter says to her dad, whatever you told God you would do to me – do it.
- Let me go to the mountains for 2 months and bewail my virginity and when she returned home, verse 39 it says Jephthah carried out the vow.

**Now the first question to answer is did He really kill his daughter – I have added some of what I am about to say to the back of your study guide so you have it in your notes.**

- Some people think – no way, there is no way Jephthah would have offered his daughter as a burnt sacrifice, and there is no way God would have accepted that.

**And the reasoning for that goes like this.**

#1 – Jephthah was familiar with the Law and would have known God never wanted man to sacrifice a human for him.

#2 – The frequent use of the term, “her virginity” seems to indicate that was what Jephthah and his daughter was sad about. She was his only child meaning he would never have any grandkids.

#3 – In verse 31 when Jephthah says, “it shall be the Lord’s and I will offer it up as a burnt offering”, the Hebrew word “waw” translated “and” could also be translated, “or” i.e. – “or a burnt offering”.

#4 – In verse 40 when it says the young women of Israel “went four days every year to “lament” Jephthah’s daughter”, that word “lament” could be translated, “talk to”. They went to keep her company.

- So he didn’t kill her, he just dedicated her to the Lord -now if that makes you feel better awesome but I don’t think that is accurate, let me explain.

#1 – Just because He knew the law forbid human sacrifice didn’t mean Jephthah didn’t do it.

Jephthah was not an American pastor – he was ruff - King David knew the law forbade adultery but he knowingly broke that commandment.

#2 – It is true that the phrase, “her virginity” is used over and over again, but if she was put to death, she also would have no children.

#3 – It is true you can translate “and” in verse 31, and “lament” in verse 40 as “or” and “talk to” respectively. However, it is rare and for these translations to happen twice in one story is even more rare. The author could have used much more clear language if all Jephthah was doing was dedicating his daughter to God. Think of the story of Samuel in I Samuel chapter 1.

#4 – It has been the clear teaching of Jewish scholars and the teaching of the Christian church up until recent times that although God would never have required such an offering, that the offering of Jephthah's daughter as a sacrifice is exactly what he did.

**Now we can say – that is horrible – right – Did God want Jephthah to offer his daughter – of course not – God tells us in the New Testament not to make foolish vows.**

- But let's not forget this man shows up again in Hebrews chapter 11.
  - The hall of faith.
  - And I think at the very least it shows the value God puts on integrity that we as a society today have totally lost.

**Put out of your mind that he killed his daughter – God never wanted that – but whether he did kill her or just dedicated her to God – Jephthah kept his vow. We live in a world where our leaders wiggle all the time – well that is not really what I meant.**

- We are church leaders, leaders of home – our Word is fluid with the situations.
  - And I don't know where we learned to be that way, but it is not from God.
  - He wants you and I to be men and women of integrity – let your yes be yes and your no, no – Jesus told us that in the Sermon on the Mount.
- If we say you are going to do something – do it.
  - If you make a promise – keep it.
  - David wrote this in Psalm 15.

**“LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? He who walks uprightly, And works righteousness, And speaks the truth in his heart; He who does not backbite with his tongue, Nor does evil to his neighbor, Nor does he take up a reproach against his friend; In whose eyes a vile person is despised, But he honors those who fear the LORD; He who swears to his own hurt and does not change;” – Psalm 15:1-4**

- He swears to his own hurt and does not change.
  - Jason, that is not really what that verse means does it??

**Well I looked it up in a few more translations...**

- **In the NIV – “He who keeps his oath, even when it hurts”** - how about another???
- **In the NAS – “He who swears to his own hurt, and does not change”** – One more???
- **In the NLT -- “Those who keep their promises even when it hurts.”**
  - Wow – You see this is why I have a problem with this story saying Jephthah is only an example of what not to do.
  - Of course God did not want him to hurt his daughter – clearly – But he did honor his word.

**Well let's read a few verses in chapter 12 and get to the end of Jephthah's life – 12:1-7**

- The Ephraimites had a bad habit of showing up after the fighting was over and then getting mad they were not invited to the party.
  - If you remember last week, the same thing happened to Gideon.

**Now he handled it very diplomatically, Jephthah again is a little rougher – He says – you are all going to die, I invited you to help, you stayed home, I wasn't bitter but now you are coming and pulling this – prepare to die - And they ran.**

- But as the men of Gilead catch them as they are trying to cross back over the Jordan, they set up a test to see whether or not they were really from the tribe of Ephraim.
  - They were all Jews – so how would you know?
  - Well apparently the Ephraimites had an accent.

**Jephthah has them say the word Shibboleth and if they could not pronounce it correctly they were caught and killed.**

- Shibboleth by the way means creek.
  - But just like in parts of our country it is not pronounced creek, but crick.
  - So those Ephraimites would say – crick.
  - And they get cricked – because you don't mess with Jephthah.
- All this happened in a six-year period of time – let's read the rest of the chapter and deal quickly with the last three judges of Israel.
  - Just a sentence or two is given for each.

## **7 “Leaders” of Israel – Judges 9-12**

**#1 – Abimelech – Judges 9:1-57**

**#2 – Tola – Judges 10:1-2**

**#3 – Jair – Judges 10:3-5**

**#4 – Jephthah – Judges 10:6-12:7**

**#5 – Ibzan – Judges 12:8-10**

**#6 – Elon – Judges 12:11-12**

**#7 – Abdon – Judges 12:13-15**

- Next week we get the man of the book of Judges, the judge Samson – his entire life next week – we covered seven judges this week, just one next Wednesday Night, but you don't want to miss it.