

Standing In their Inheritance.

Judges 11:12-28.

Sunday afternoon, July 17, 2011.

I. What's the problem.

- A. Jephthah gets right to work once he takes the leadership over the region of Gilead. He contacts the king of Ammon to find out what their beef is with the people of Israel. "What do you have against me, that you have come to fight against me in my land?" Vs. 12.
- B. The answer comes without delay: "Because Israel took away my land, when they came up out of Egypt, from the Arnon as far as the Jabbok, and to the Jordan." A condition for peace came along with the explanation: "Now therefore, restore those lands peaceably."
- C. We are talking about a piece of land about 50 miles from North to South, and about 20 miles from East to West. The Arnon and the Jabbok are tributaries to the Jordan River, and they flow from East to West.

Application:

Jephthah shows wisdom and maturity here. Rather than gathering Israel for battle first thing, he decides he will try to understand what the problem is with these Ammonites. We would do well similarly first to gather all the facts before we act in rash judgment. If we are to love our enemies and pray for them, as the Lord teaches us in Matthew 5:44, then they are worth understanding.

II. Get all the facts.

- A. Jephthah takes the time to review the historical facts surrounding the claim of the king of Ammon that Israel took away its land when they came up out of Egypt. Is this in fact what happened?
- B. When Israel came up out of Egypt they came to the border of the land of Edom, which were the descendants of Esau, Jacob's brother. To the North of Edom lay the country of Moab, who were the descendants of Lot by way of one of his daughters. Genesis 19:38. Both were distant relatives of the people of Israel.
- C. In order for Israel to get to the East bank of the Jordan River they had to pass through both these countries, along the shore of the Dead Sea. Both countries refused however to give Israel passage.
- D. Israel honored their decision and traveled around both countries, staying to the South and East of their borders. Then they came to the border of the land of the Amorites who lived to the North of Moab. Israel desires to cross their land to get to the Jordan River, and they ask permission of Sihon who was the king of the Amorites. Rather than answering Israel as Edom and Moab had done, Sihon comes out at Israel with his army to engage them in battle. Sihon lost, and the Lord gave his land to Israel. Numbers 21:21-32.
- E. Where were the people of Ammon during this time? They still lived further to the East; the modern city of Amman, Jordan, has its origin among the Ammonite people.
- F. The fact was that not the Ammonite people, but the Amorite people were

dispossessed from the land when the Lord gave it to Israel.

III. Further Arguments.

- A. Jephthah not only argues from the historical facts, but he also advances a theological argument:
 - 1. Jephthah says that it was the Lord who dispossessed the Amorites, and who gave the Land to Israel. He says that whatever land the Lord God takes possession of and gives to them, with that they will be content.
 - 2. Then he says: “and won’t you be content with whatever your god Chemosh gives you to possess?”
- B. Next Jephthah argues from historical precedent. He cites the actions of King Balak of Moab; the one who tried to have Balaam curse Israel. Did he ever engage Israel in battle for taking the land of his neighbor to the North, the Amorites? No, so why would the Ammonites do so now, some 300 years later? Judges 11:25.
- C. Finally Jephthah argues from silence. Some 300 years have gone by, and nobody has made a claim, demanding that Israel give the land of the Amorites back to whoever made a claim to it. Nobody said anything for 300 years, and now the Ammonites want to press their claim to it? Judges 11:26.
- D. From all these arguments Jephthah concludes that it is the Ammonites who are in the wrong, and he appeals to the Lord as Judge to do justice between the people of Israel and those of Ammon.

IV. Jephthah’s stand.

- A. On a few occasions in this passage Jephthah begins to draw the lines, and he begins to define where he stands in this conflict.
 - 1. In Vs. 24 he draws the line saying that whatever the Lord takes possession of before them, that they will possess and be content with. He suggests the Ammonites do the same with their god.
 - 2. In Vs. 27 he appeals to the Lord as Judge, asking the Lord to render judgment, now that the Ammonites are seeking to take His inheritance away from His people Israel.
 - 3. In summary, for better or for worse (for Israel had sinned), Jephthah takes his stand with the Lord, and with the inheritance the Lord had given to Israel as a possession. He is not about to hand over the Lord’s inheritance to the enemy without taking such a stand.

Application:

Has not the Lord provided us with an inheritance also? It is not a tangible land; it is rather the inward blessings of the presence of His Person in our hearts assuring us of full forgiveness with the Father; a purpose in life as opposed to the vanity of all else; a love, joy and peace that defies understanding, and a hope that never fades away. But are there not the Ammonites around us also who demand that we hand over our inheritance? All too often it is to be feared that we all too readily hand over the Lord’s inheritance to the enemy. Here let us be aware, and take our stand with Jephthah; a stand with the Lord and with the inheritance we were freely given through the finished work of Christ.