

# Biblical Horror Story 1 – Jephthah Swear

## BIBLICAL HORROR STORY BUMPER

### What do you think of when you hear the word horror?

Do you think of a scary movies?

- Stories of a masked killer taking out their rage on teens camping on the lake?
- Perhaps a creepy clown inviting you into the sewer?
- Some kind of twisted sadistic entity that controls your dreams?

What do you think of when you hear the word horror? What if I told you that you ought to think of your Bible?

Welcome everyone to Redemption Church of Plano Tx! My name is Chris Fluitt and I am blessed to serve a brave and completely unstoppable church in North Dallas. We are a mighty church that believes Jesus is the answer to every problem.

Horror – noun an intense feeling of fear, shock, or disgust. You may be surprised to know that horrific stories are in your Bible.

In this Biblical Horror Story series we will be investigating mysterious stories that may fill your heart with fear, shock, and even disgust. You will likely wonder why God put such stories within His Word. Let's be brave and search it out together.

### Anonymous text line

Before we jump in I want to remind you of our Anonymous Text Line! 214 856 0550. This line is completely anonymous and you can let us know anything or ask us anything. Go ahead and pull out your phone and answer a question for me. Text us the answer.. here is the question. What was the last scary movie you watched?

### Biblical Horror Story

What if I told you there was a man in scripture who was used mightily by God, yet while in service to God made a promise that turned horrific? Do you know this story? Turn to Judges 11.

Judges 11:1 (NIV2011) Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty warrior. His father was Gilead; his mother was a prostitute.

Judges 11:2 (NIV2011) Gilead's wife also bore him sons, and when they were grown up, they drove Jephthah away. "You are not going to get any inheritance in our family," they said, "because you are the son of another woman."

Judges 11:3 (NIV2011) So Jephthah fled from his brothers and settled in the land of Tob, where a gang of scoundrels gathered around him and followed him.

If you have a group of scoundrels gathered around you and call you their leader... then you are probably a really big scoundrel yourself.

Judges 11:4 (NIV2011) Some time later, when the Ammonites were fighting against Israel,

Judges 11:5 (NIV2011) the elders of Gilead went to get Jephthah from the land of Tob.

Judges 11:6 (NIV2011) "Come," they said, "be our commander, so we can fight the Ammonites."

Judges 11:9 (NIV2011) Jephthah answered, "Suppose you take me back to fight the Ammonites and the Lord gives them to me—will I really be your head?"

Judges 11:10 (NIV2011) The elders of Gilead replied, "The Lord is our witness; we will certainly do as you say."

A major turn of events! When Gilead was in a troublesome war with the Ammonites, Gilead turned to the biggest scoundrel they could think of. Gilead turned to the one they pushed out of his inheritance – Jephthah.

Judges 11:29 (NIV2011) Then the Spirit of the Lord came on Jephthah. He crossed Gilead and Manasseh, passed through Mizpah of Gilead, and from there he advanced against the Ammonites.

The Spirit of the Lord moved on the scoundrel Jephthah . It is good news when God is moving on your behalf. Look out Ammonites! God's Spirit is ready to work in Jephthah's life.

Good stuff is happening for Jephthah all of a sudden! Here is how he responds...

Judges 11:30 (NIV2011) And Jephthah made a vow to the Lord: "If you give the Ammonites into my hands,

Judges 11:31 (NIV2011) whatever comes out of the door of my house to meet me when I return in triumph from the Ammonites will be the Lord's, and I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering."

Judges 11:32 (NIV2011) Then Jephthah went over to fight the Ammonites, and the Lord gave them into his hands.

Judges 11:34 (NIV2011) When Jephthah returned to his home in Mizpah, who should come out to meet him but his daughter, dancing to the sound of timbrels! She was an only child. Except for her he had neither son nor daughter.

Judges 11:35 (NIV2011) When he saw her, he tore his clothes and cried, "Oh no, my daughter! You have brought me down and I am devastated. I have made a vow to the Lord that I cannot break."

Judges 11:36 (NIV2011) "My father," she replied, "you have given your word to the Lord. Do to me just as you promised, now that the Lord has avenged you of your enemies, the Ammonites.

Judges 11:37 (NIV2011) But grant me this one request," she said. "Give me two months to roam the hills and weep with my friends, because I will never marry."

Judges 11:38 (NIV2011) "You may go," he said. And he let her go for two months. She and her friends went into the hills and wept because she would never marry.

Judges 11:39 (NIV2011) After the two months, she returned to her father, and he did to her as he had vowed...

Did you know this story was in your Bible? Raise your hand if you don't know this story. Now raise your hand if you have never heard someone preach this story.

This story is horrific. Jephthah kills his daughter for God.

## **Jephthah kills his daughter for God**

Think about that sentence. He vowed to the Lord...

Judges 11:31 (NIV2011) whatever comes out of the door of my house to meet me when I return in triumph from the Ammonites will be the Lord's, and I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering."

Do you understand burnt offering? It was designed for animals. You would take a male bull, sheep, or goat, (it had to be perfect without blemish) and kill it at the entrance to the tabernacle. All the blood would be poured out and then the remains were taken to the brazen altar where it was burnt as a judgment for sin.

Jephthah took his only child and... It's a biblical horror story.

You may be wondering, why is this story in the Bible?

## **Why is this story in the Bible?**

What am I supposed to do with this!? Does this story serve a point? Is it supposed to teach us something? Jephthah's guide to parenting?

We understand why the 'sermon on the mount' is in the Bible. We get why the Parables of Jesus are in scripture. We see the value in stories like the red sea parting, David & Goliath, or Daniel in the lions' den, BUT WHAT GIVES GOD? What is up with Jephthah?

2 Timothy 3:16 (NIV2011) All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

This gross story is the Word of God. It is useful. We have to figure out how.

Allow me to share some key theological information!

**God does not endorse everything that happens in the Bible.**

The story of Jephthah is often used by non-believers/atheists as a reason to not believe the Bible as the Word of God. They argue that

because this story is in scripture, God must be happy with the actions of Jephthah.

Adam & Eve sinned in the Garden. It's in the Bible and God was against it.

Cain murdered his brother Able. It's in the Bible but God pleaded with Cain to do what was right.

Some Old Testament Patriarchs had multiple wives & concubines. It's in the Bible, and throughout the Old Testament God is silent on the issue, but Jesus reveals in the Gospels that from the beginning God meant marriage to be 1 man and 1 woman.

David committed adultery with a married woman and had the husband conveniently left to die on the battle field. It happened in scripture... but God does not endorse everything that happens in the Bible.

Sometimes you reveal truth with light. You shine a light to reveal truth. The Bible often shines light on characters in adverse situations... Moses at the Red Sea, David facing Goliath, Mary receiving news that she was carrying a child... The light says to us... respond like Moses, David, Mary.

But there are times when the Bible teaches truth through an absence of light. Our story today is not the Bible shining light on Jephthah saying "be like Jephthah and offer a human sacrifice." This story is a cautionary tale. This story screams DON'T BE LIKE THIS.

**God does not endorse everything that happens in the Bible.**

**The Bible usually teaches by shining light, but there are instances where the Bible teaches through an absence of light.**

With that understanding, let's see what we can learn from this horrific story.

## **Jephthah made an un-needed vow**

In verse 29 God's Spirit moves upon Jephthah as he advanced against the Ammonites. God is communicating to Jephthah "Jephthah I am with you in battle."

Can I tell you something? **The only assurance you need in life is that God is with you in battle. Questions like "How? When? Why?" aren't nearly as important as "God are you with me?"**

As God's Spirit is moving, Jephthah makes a vow. It appears to me that Jephthah is trying to tip God's scales in his favor. Perhaps Jephthah is thinking "God will be more favorable towards him if I makes a vow."

We do this don't we? God if you will do this, then I promise to do this.

- If you will give me this job, then I will live for you forever. I mean God... don't you want me to live for you forever?
- If you will heal me, I will never miss another church service. I mean God... don't you want me to go to Church?
- If you will make my mom and dad get back together, then I will believe in you. I mean God... don't you want me to believe?
- God if you could just allow this lottery ticket to hit it big, then I would give to help others. I mean God... don't you want me to help others
- God I will start tithing as soon as I make this amount of money... I mean God... don't you want me to tithe?

**People often make promises to God as an attempt to bribe God. You don't need to bribe God into doing good for you. God always does good for you! God is good!**

God was doing good for the scoundrel Jephthah. There was no need for a vow.

I want to remind you that God's Word clearly says we are saved by grace through faith and not by works. (Ephesians 2:8-9) Making a vow like "God I will never watch television again" is not going to save you

**Jephthah made an un-needed vow**

**Jephthah tried to honor God in a dishonorable way**

One reason someone would make a vow is to honor God, but this vow is not God honoring.

**You can't sin for God.**

- You can't rob a bank FOR GOD.
- You can't behead someone or strap a bomb to yourself and blow up bystanders FOR GOD.
- You can't hate someone FOR GOD.

**Sin is a dishonor to God. You can't honor God through sinning.**

**You can't honor God with the "right words" and yet have the wrong heart, thoughts, & motives.**

So Jephthah made a dishonorable vow in an attempt to honor God.

Understand this. While Jephthah is feeling God's Spirit, Jephthah does the wrong thing. Just because you feel God doesn't mean you are getting everything correct with God.

I felt God's presence today in worship, so I don't need to go pray at the end of service... I felt God so I must be ok. Jephthah was not ok! In the very presence of God, he made a terrible choice.

## **Why didn't God say something?**

If God's Spirit was there, then why didn't God say something? Why did God allow Jephthah to do this horrible vow without saying something?

God did say something!

## **Why didn't God say something? He Did!**

The Word of God says clearly to not sacrifice your children. There is the example of Abraham & Isaac (Genesis 22) as well as numerous passages that said do not offer your children in sacrifice. (Leviticus 18:21, Leviticus 20:2-3, Deuteronomy 12:31)

Anyone that says Jephthah was doing the will of God when he killed his daughter is wrong. Anyone who uses this story to try to show a contradiction in scripture is wrong.

When Jephthah sees that his vow is going to cost the life of his only child he is devastated.

Judges 11:35 (NIV2011) When he saw her, he tore his clothes and cried, "Oh no, my daughter! You have brought me down and I am devastated. I have made a vow to the Lord that I cannot break."

He is devastated but says it can't be undone because he made a vow that he can't break.

## **Unbreakable vow?**

Is it true that you can make an unbreakable vow?

Leviticus 5:4 (NIV2011) if anyone thoughtlessly takes an oath to do anything, whether good or evil (in any matter one might carelessly swear about) even though they are unaware of it, but then they learn of it and realize their guilt—

Leviticus 5:5 (NIV2011) when anyone becomes aware that they are guilty in any of these matters, they must confess in what way they have sinned.

Leviticus 5:6 (NIV2011) As a penalty for the sin they have committed, they must bring to the Lord a female lamb or goat from the flock as a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for them for their sin.

This is the most sickening thing. His vow was completely breakable. All he needed to do was confess his sin and have it covered by the blood of the lamb.

**Jephthah made a vow to a God he didn't know or understand. He didn't understand that God could cover every sin or Jephthah was unwilling to confess his sin.**

For 2 months his daughter mourned her fate. For 2 months her father refused to repent.

## **Jephthah kills his daughter for God**

Let's not forget this heart breaking point. His daughter died needlessly. She was offered as a burnt sacrifice.

Burnt offerings were meant to be an acknowledgement of sin and a request for renewed relationship with God.

In the end Jephthah didn't even understand the purpose of the act. (I wonder if that could be us today..)

## **Why is this story in the Bible?**

This story has a sad lesson about responsibility, especially in the area of parenting.

## **Irresponsible Horror**

Jephthah was given the opportunity of his dreams – but made the situation a nightmare.

Jephthah's mouth caused his daughter's death.

Jephthah had a supernatural moment with God – but in that moment made a decision that 100% against God and His Word.

Jephthah didn't repent. He didn't confess his sin. He held on to a vow he should have never made.

What if Jephthah would have fallen on his face and said – “Forgive me God. I said something stupid. Save my little girl.”

That would have been taking responsibility.

What if Jephthah would have said “God take me instead. I won't let my child be punished for something I did.”

That would have been taking responsibility.

## **Musician**

There is so much horror in the world today because someone didn't take responsibility.

Babies left in trash cans.

No food on the table but they have a \$100 cable tv package.

Relationships destroyed because someone can't take responsibility for a wrong.

A hidden addiction, but not seeking help.

Worried sick about the future, but not coming to the altar to pray.

Always blaming someone else instead of taking responsibility for the problem.

These are horror stories in everyday life. The cause is irresponsibility.

All Jephthah needed to do was confess his sin and have it covered by the blood of the lamb. He didn't take responsibility.

Irresponsible, careless, thoughtless...

Jephthah made a mess of things, but there was a God who could have solved the problem.

What kind of mess are you dealing with today? Do you know God can solve it?

Will you take responsibility by coming to this altar today?

Will you confess your sin and have your sins covered by the blood of Jesus?

God would meet with a scoundrel like Jephthah. Do you understand that God will meet with you today?