

Sacrifices



In Judges, chapter eleventh, starting with verse 30, we find the story of Jephthah and his daughter which has been widely misunderstood. Jephthah was fighting the people of Ammon.

Judges 11:30, 31

And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands,

Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.

Now this does not mean that the person will be killed and burned on the altar, as many have thought. God has never required that mankind bring human sacrifices.

A person who is dedicated to the Lord is sent to serve in the temple and they will never marry. It is like the nuns and priests which we see in the Roman Catholic Church today. The basis for this is found in Lev. 27:2: "Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When a man shall make a singular vow, the person *shall be* for the LORD...."

Judges 11:32-38

So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them; and the LORD delivered them into his hands.

And he smote them from Aroer, even till thou come to Minnith, *even* twenty cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel.

And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she *was his* only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter.

And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes (this should be mantle) and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me, for I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back.

And she said unto him, My father, *if* thou hast opened thy mouth unto the LORD, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the LORD hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, *even* of the children of Ammon.

And she said unto her father Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows.

And he said, Go. And he sent her away *for* two months: and she went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains

This was a common occurrence when women were preparing to enter the service of the temple. They receive all their friends and relatives, and bewail the loss of their worldly life. Jephthah's daughter was a princess; she would have had fine clothes and jewels and servants; she would have married and given Jephthah the joy of grandchildren and heirs to succeed to the throne. But all this was now out of the question, since Jephthah had made the vow.

When the virgin is brought to the door of the temple at the end of the two months, she is prepared to enter the service of the temple. Her hair is shaved off to signify that she is laying aside the glory of her head so that she may serve God. Her fashionable clothes are exchanged for the white robe which is the symbol of purity and sanctity. And so it was with Jephthah's daughter.

Judges 11:39, 40

And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her *according* to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew no man. And it was a custom in Israel.

That the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year.

This word lament is a misplaced word. Some of you may have Bibles with a marginal note saying that this word should be "talk with". It seems strange to me that the truth is in the margin and the lie is left in the text. When are they going to throw out the mistake and put the truth in the text?

There is another much misunderstood passage relating to this same subject. It is found in I Corinthians 7:36, which the King James Version renders:

But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of *her* age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry.

This refers again to the man who has vowed to the Lord that his virgin daughter shall serve in the temple; but in the instance that this daughter changes her mind about marrying, Paul is saying that it is now acceptable for her to do so. This is another example of the change in the order of things after the coming of Christ. In Judaism, the religion of works, the believers found salvation through observing the law. But with Christ's coming, these works are secondary, and the primary consideration is salvation through grace. Of course, Paul explains in a later verse, it would be better to keep the vow to God, but it is also acceptable for the virgin daughter to marry.

The George M. Lamsa translation has a more correct translation of this verse. It reads:

If any man thinks that he is shamed by the behavior of his virgin daughter because she has passed the marriage age and he has not given her in marriage and that he should give her, let him do what he will and he does not sin. Let her be married.

All of this is in preparation for the time when we all should yield ourselves as a living sacrifice to God. We find this idea expressed by Paul in his letter to the Romans.

Romans 12:12

I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present (yield) your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may *prove* what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Amen.

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