

## S H I B B O L E T H

Jephthah the Gileadite was made captain over the Gileadites and, with their aid, successfully subdued and smote the children of Ammon (Judges 11). Following this victorious battle, *“the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together”* and went unto Jephthah, and expressed their indignation that Jephthah had not summoned their aid when he went *“to fight against the children of Ammon,”* Judges 12:1. Incidentally, these would-be warriors had not formerly offered their services, but now that the battle was fought and won, they were probably resentful that they could not share in the triumph, as well as the spoils of victory. Quite probably they also suffered from injured pride (this **always** hurts!).

This uprising of the Ephraimites provoked Jephthah to gather the *“men of Gilead”* to fight against the Ephraimites (Judges 12:4). In the course of action that ensued some men were captured who denied being Ephraimites. In order to determine whether or not their denial was true they said *“unto him, say now SHIBBOLETH”* (It appears that the Ephraimites spoke the same language as other Israelites, but with a different dialect) *“...and he said SIBBOLETH (He did not pronounce the “h” letter, bw): for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passage of Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand,”* Judges 12:6.

Between these Ephraimites and deliverance from death, there was one word — SHIBBOLETH,” and it had to be pronounced correctly! With these people, one word was not “as good as another,” nor could they all be spared by saying just any word.

This Old Testament incident introduces us to an important truth, which is revealed over and over in the Bible. How often the safety and salvation of precious souls depended upon one item. Let us note some of these incidents.

1. During the time of Noah there was **one ark**, which also possessed **one door**, and **one window**. During the flood, which came in *“the six hundredth year of Noah’s life,”* and which lasted *“forty days and forty nights,”* **one family** was saved, the family inside the one ark. Every other living person on earth lost his /or her life (Genesis 6,7).

2. The preservation of the lives of the firstborn among the children of Israel depended upon **one blood**, the blood of the Passover lamb. Furthermore, this blood had to be applied to *“the two side posts and on the upper door posts of the house”* (Ex. 12:7), so that the firstborn occupants therein might be saved. At every place where God did not *“see the blood”* a life was taken.

3. Today there is *“one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,”* I Tim. 2:5. This is Christ — not a priest on earth, nor a “Father Divine,” nor anyone else. There is but *“one mediator,”* and every person who refuses to draw nigh unto God through Jesus Christ will be lost. Cf. John 14:6.

4. There is **one blood** through which we can obtain redemption, the blood of Jesus Christ, Eph. 1:7. Animal blood will not suffice, Heb. 10:4. Apart from the blood of Jesus Christ, we today have no more hope of salvation than did the firstborn of Israel apart from the blood of the Passover lamb.

5. There is **one** culminating **act of obedience** that puts one “*into Christ*,” Gal. 3:27, that being scriptural **baptism**. Every other act of obedience to the fundamentals of the gospel (faith, repentance, and confession — Rom. 10:10; Acts 11:18) brings one “*unto Christ*.” Those who have thereby been brought “*unto*” Christ must then be “*baptized into Christ*.” Likewise **baptism** is the culminating act of obedience that grants a person entrance **into** the **kingdom** of Christ and the **church** (John 3:1-6; I Cor. 12:13). This, of course, suggests that all who are “*in Christ*” are also **in** the church and **in** the kingdom — the words “*kingdom*” and “*church*” referring to one and the same thing. Cf. Matt. 16:18-19; Col. 1:13,18).

6. There is “*one body*,” or church, wherein is reconciliation, Eph. 1:22,23; Eph. 4:4; Acts 2:47; Eph. 2:16. Every denomination of men represents an attempt to get away from the oneness that is in Christ. Inasmuch as the church was purchased by Christ’s blood (Acts 20:28), it therefore becomes “*the house of God*,” I Tim. 3:15) to which the blood (of Christ) was applied. Apart from this blood-bought institution, there is no reconciliation (Eph. 2:16).

7. There is “*one faith*,” Eph. 4:4, or Gospel, that directs us to the **one blood** of the “*one Mediator*,” I Tim. 2:5, which is contacted in the “*one baptism*,” Eph. 4:5, which grants us entrance into the “*one body*” (or church) over which Jesus rules and reigns as head, Col. 1:18, and of which He is the **one Savior**, Eph. 5:23.

Dear reader, when you recall the word “SHIBBOLETH,” don’t forget the other **ones** which we have herein mentioned. It **does** make a difference!

\*\*\* —B. Witherington

### **Why Haven’t You Obeyed The Truth?**

If you are one of the thousands of people in this country who have not obeyed the truth of God, please examine your heart and search your soul to see if you can determine **why** you haven’t. **Is it because:**

**1. You don’t know the truth?** If this is the reason you haven’t obeyed the truth, let me assure you that you can know the truth if you are willing to give diligence (study). In John 8:32 Jesus said to some Jews that believed on Him, “*And ye shall **know** the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*” In 2 Timothy 2:15 Paul exhorted Timothy to “*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*” In Ephesians 5:17 Paul says: “*Wherefore, be ye not unwise, but **understanding** what the will of the Lord is.*” See also John 5:39; John 17:17; Acts 17:11-12. Christians would be willing to come into your house (or go elsewhere) and study God’s Word with you. **May they?**

**2. You don't believe the truth?** If you know the truth and don't believe it, you have a serious problem. The only way you can receive faith is by hearing the Word of God (See Romans 10:17). Only you can believe for you. You will make up your mind to believe or not to believe. It is a matter of choice. But in order for you to have eternal life, **you must believe!**

**3. You don't love the truth?** If this is your problem, you have a very serious one. You had better change your heart (mind) or you will be lost forever! Many will perish *"because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause, God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness,"* 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12. You may be among those described in this passage! Are you?

**4. You don't want to be happy here?** Surely, you desire a life of happiness here on earth. The only way you can have genuine happiness is by obeying the truth. Please read and study I Peter 3:1—11; Luke 11:28; John 13:17; Psalm 1:1-6; Psalm 23; and Eccl. 12:13-14.

**5. You don't want to go to heaven?** Surely you desire to go to Heaven, don't you? But your going to Heaven is conditioned upon your obedience to the truth,. (Revelation 22:14) If you haven't obeyed the truth, **Why Haven't You?**

\*\*\*\* —By Carol R. Sutton

**So True:** "One measure of a man's strength of character is what he does under pressure."